PORÓWNANIA

COMPARISONS | СРАВНЕНИЯ | POROVNÁNÍ | VERGLEICHE

No. 2 (34), 2023

ISSN 1733-165X
e-ISSN 2956-6169

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Central European traumas – the space that doesn't want to go away

WYDAW-NICTWO PSP

UAM

JOURNAL ON COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
POZNAŃ 2023

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CZASOPISMO POŚWIĘCONE ZAGADNIENIOM KOMPARATYSTYKI LITERACKIEJ ORAZ STUDIOM INTERDYSCYPLINARNYM

POZNAŃ 2023

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Central European Traumas: Space That Refuses to Fade

In 2010, Timothy Snyder applied the category of bloodlands to describe Central Europe. He precisely delineated the area that he considered affected by the titular category of "bleeding"—this was an area that corresponded with the pre-partition borders of the First Polish Republic, and one that, in the twentieth century, was marked by a series of traumatic events: starting with pogroms, through various forms of organized genocide, to wars and revolutions. All these events not only led to mass death, but also revealed conflicts that often existed in otherwise tight-knit communities, between people living in the same village or on the same street. Twentieth-century traumas imbued the space of Central Europe with the memory of numerous wounds—so numerous that they often overlapped and were rendered susceptible to open dispute. In this issue of Porównania, we wanted to analyze various conflicts, especially their literary expressions, pertaining to recollections and memories that are firmly anchored in specific spaces: cities, regions, borderlands, concentration camps, and places of massacres. Particular attention was devoted to the current transformations of these traumas. Boris Buden described the broadly understood area of Central Europe as a transition zone, a place of global capitalism giving rise to new social divisions and forms of labor and population control, as well as to new historical policies. Therefore, we wanted to combine the traumas of the twentieth century with the trauma of the "Great Change," the economic

Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.1

Środkowoeuropejskie traumy – przestrzeń, która nie chce przeminąć

W 2010 roku Timothy Snyder zastosował do opisu przestrzeni Europy Środkowej kategorię skrwawionych ziem. Amerykański historyk dość dokładnie zakreślił obszar, który uznał za dotknięty tytułową kategorią „skrwawienia" – był to teren w zasadzie pokrywający się z przedrozbiowymi granicami I Rzeczypospolitej. W XX wieku te tereny zostały naznaczone ciągiem wydarzeń o charakterze traumatycznym: zaczynając od pogromów, przez różne formy zorganizowanego ludobójstwa, aż po wojny i rewolucje. Wszystkie te wydarzenia doprowadziły do doświadczenia masowej śmierci, ale też ujawniały konflikty – nierzadko między bliskimi sobie osobami, mieszkającymi w tej samej wsi czy przy tej samej ulicy. Dwudziestowieczne traumy naznaczyły zatem przestrzeń Europy Środkowej pamięcią licznych ran – tak licznych, że często na siebie nachodzących, skazanych na otwarty spór. W numerze chciałyśmy przeanalizować różne konflikty, a szczególnie ich literackie artykulacje, toczące się wokół pamięci mocno zakotwiczonej w konkretnych przestrzeniach – miast, regionów, pogranicza, obozów koncentracyjnych, miejsc masakr. Szczególnie wiele uwagi próbowałyśmy poświęcić dzisiejszym przekształceniom tych traum. Boris Buden określił szeroko rozumiany obszar Europy Środkowej jako strefę przejścia – miejsce globalnego kapitalizmu, w którym formują się nowe podziały społeczne oraz formy kontroli pracy i populacji, a zarazem nowych polityk historycznych. Dwudziestowieczne traumy chciałyśmy zatem połączyć także z traumą wielkiej

transformation that socialist societies underwent at the end of the twentieth century.

We were, therefore, interested in the conflicts, competitions, and rivalries of these traumas; how various memory politics take hold of categories in which trauma can be described (e.g. the use of the category of post-memory in a non-Holocaust contexts); the ethics of recognizing various traumas—who has the right to tell their own trauma (traumas of perpetrators of crimes; traumas that have been repressed and ignored for ideological reasons, e.g. traumas of privileged groups who have lost their status and today struggle to have their suffering recognized); trauma retrotopias, which are narratives about past traumas used as a means of constructing the past, as well as various local identities embedded in specific spaces and places; trauma caused from shifting administrative boundaries, which trigger identity disorders of residents/artists; the impact of these events on the literary reception of historical events; and trauma metaphors. We were also interested in how the experience of trauma was discussed in the era of censorship and how Central European artists constructed allegories and symbols of historical experiences and worked through them after the fall of communism.

After 1989, more and more books about the geographical coexistence of historical traumas began to appear in Central European literature (Polish, Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, Hungarian). Like a magnet, literature began to attract writers of narratives that point to one specific area as a site of wide gamut of traumas. Such writers as Ewa Kuryluk, Anna Janko and Marcin Pilis showed selected Polish spaces as nexus points of various kinds of suffering, particularly emotional and historical. The gradual emergence of the topic of transformation, first in the political sphere and, in recent years, in the energy sector, has given voice to the topic of environmental trauma, which has been neglected and silenced for the longest time. In this way, Snyder's bloodlands turned from a painful but anthropocentric metaphor back into a non-anthropocentric reality, in which nature is seen to have played the role of a slave and in which various attempts were made to strengthen it, while at the same time exposing the failure of anthropocentric thinking.

In this issue, we wanted to show that the problem of bloodlands and contaminated landscapes has, over the years of research, acquired meanings that go beyond the contexts in which these metaphors originated. We were interested in how these metaphors entrench themselves and become concrete along with the spread of rhetoric devices used to portray the Holocaust as well as the emergence of rhetoric giving voice to other genocides, especially the genocide of the Roma. This process would never have occurred had the humanities not broken the philological and hermeneutic barrier of reading texts and not gone

zmiany, transformacji ekonomicznej, jakiej uległy społeczeństwa socjalistyczne pod koniec XX wieku.

Interesowały nas przeto konflikty, konkurencje, rywalizacje traum; przechwytywanie kategorii opisu traumy przez różne polityki pamięci (np. zastosowanie kategorii postpamięci w kontekstach pozaholokaustowych); etyka uznania różnych traum – kto ma prawo do opowiadania własnej traumy (traumy sprawców zbrodni; traumy wyparte i pomijane z powodów ideologicznych – np. traumy grup uprzywilejowanych, które utraciły swój status, a dziś walczą o docenienie swoich cierpień); retrotopie traumy – narracje o przeszłych traumach jako konstruowanie przeszłości, a także różnych tożsamości lokalnych osadzonych w konkretnych przestrzeniach i miejscach; traumy wynikłe z przesuwania się granic administracyjnych skutkujące zaburzeniami tożsamości mieszkańców/twórców; wpływ tych wydarzeń na literacką recepcję wydarzeń historycznych; metafory traumy; sposób mówienia o doświadczeniu traumy w czasach cenzury; jak twórcy środkowoeuropejscy konstruowali alegorie i symbole doświadczeń historycznych i jak przepracowywali je po upadku komunizmu.

Po 1989 roku w literaturze środkowoeuropejskiej (polskiej, czeskiej, słowackiej, ukraińskiej, węgierskiej) zaczęło się ukazywać coraz więcej książek o geograficznym współistnieniu traum historycznych. Niczym magnes literatura zaczęła przyciągać autorów narracji lokalizujących na jednym, konkretnym terenie cały diapazon traum. Pisarze tacy jak Ewa Kuryluk, Anna Janko czy Marcin Pilis pokazywali wybrane przestrzenie Polski jako splot najróżniejszych cierpień – szczególnie emocjonalnych i historycznych. Stopniowe wyłanianie się tematyki transformacji, najpierw politycznej, a w ostatnich latach energetycznej, dopuściło do głosu temat traum środowiskowych – najdłużej ze wszystkich lekceważony i wyciszany. W ten sposób skrwawione ziemie Snydera z bolesnej, lecz antropocentrycznej metafory stały się na powrót nieantropocentryczną rzeczywistością, w której to przyroda odgrywała rolę niewolnika i ją właśnie starano się różnymi sposobami wzmacniać, pokazując zarazem klęskę myślenia antropocentrycznego.

Chciałyśmy w tym numerze pokazać, że problem skrwawionych ziem i skażonych krajobrazów przez lata badań obrósł znaczeniami przekraczającymi konteksty narodzin tych metafor. Interesował nas proces ich ukonkretniania i ugruntowywania się połączony z rozpowszechnianiem się retoryki Zagłady i dochodzeniem do głosu retoryk innych ludobójstw, szczególnie ludobójstwa Romów. Proces ten nigdy by nie zaistniał, gdyby humanistyka nie próbowała przełamać filologiczno-hermeneutycznej bariery czytania tekstów i nie wyszła w teren. Niektóre z prezentowanych artykułów sięgają wprost do metod

out into the field. Some of the articles here directly utilize field research (such as the articles by Wojciech Browarny and Paweł Tomczok); others draw on geography, architecture, and also photographic documentation (the article by Tomasz Łysak).

The articles gathered in the 34th issue of *Porównania* present various trends in the research on trauma and expand on well-known and extensively analyzed topics while touching on problems that may pose a challenge to contemporary humanities. Among the articles are groups of texts devoted to similar approaches and topics. Lucie Antošíková describes the experience of Czech dissidents and emigrants, victims of the totalitarian regime, forced to exist outside the country. She discusses problems related to the search for an appropriate language that would reflect traumatic experiences with recourse to Daňa Horáková's book *About Pavel*. Anna Janicka also looks at writing strategies by analyzing the text *My Star*, the memoirs of Felicja Raszkin-Nowak, a survivor of the Holocaust. Combining the perspectives of a child and a mature woman, the experience of childhood with the experience of emigration, is possible thanks to the innovative technique chosen by Raszkin-Nowak, which is that of "empathic realism." Kornélia Faragó, who reconstructs the process of manipulating how anti-Hungarian repressions are remembered in the former Yugoslavia, poses questions about the language in which one may express traumatic experiences. She is interested in the political strategy of silence with regard to events that are inconvenient for the authorities, such as genocides, and how public awareness of mass graves is obscured in literature. With policies that inhibit reliable research, literature begins to play a unique role, as it somehow takes on the responsibility of conveying knowledge about the past, and therefore also about the roots and identity of second- and even third-generation people. Tomasz Basiuk examines the functionality of the concept of the 3G generation, which was criticized by Menachem Kaiser, who rejected the vicarious identification with the victims and survivors of the Holocaust in favor of a careful examination of the consequences of historical trauma. Marina Ortrud Hertrampf and Kinga Piotrowiak-Junkiert look at the phenomenon of identity loss and marginalization resulting from the camp experience. Hertrampf describes the phenomenon of treating Porajmos as "another type of genocide." Refusal to acknowledge the Roma and Sinti genocide bears the signs of psychological stigma and rejection, influencing in turn how these experiences have been formulated and expressed. Piotrowiak-Junkiert examines post-war Hungarian literature from the perspective of the political strategy of silence about the Holocaust and its impact on narratives. Tomasz Łysak examines strategies for commemorating people who saved Jews during World War II. Taking into consideration the ambiguity of the various lists of

badań terenowych (jak artykuły Wojciecha Browarnego i Pawła Tomczoka), inne posługują się językami geografii czy architektury, ale też – dokumentacją fotograficzną (artykuł Tomasza Łysaka).

Teksty zebrane w 34 numerze „Porównań" prezentują różne nurty badań nad traumą, poszerzając dobrze znane i obszernie przeanalizowane zagadnienia o problemy, które mogą stanowić wyzwanie dla współczesnej humanistyki. Wśród artykułów wyraźnie zarysowują się grupy tekstów poświęconych podobnym ujęciom i tematom. Lucie Antošíková opisuje doświadczenie czeskich dysydentek i emigrantek, ofiar totalitarnego reżimu, zmuszonych do egzystencji poza granicami kraju. Badaczka omawia problemy związane z poszukiwaniem odpowiedniego języka, który miałby oddać traumatyczne doświadczenia na przykładzie książki Daňy Horákovej *O Pavlovi* (O Pavlu). Anna Janicka również przygląda się strategiom pisarskim, analizując tekst *Moja gwiazda*, wspomnienia Felicji Raszkin-Nowak, ocalonej z Zagłady. Łączenie perspektyw dziecka i dojrzałej kobiety, doświadczenia dzieciństwa z doświadczeniem emigracji, jest możliwe dzięki nowatorskiej technice "empatycznego realizmu", którą wybrała Raszkin-Nowak. Pytanie o język, jakim można opowiedzieć traumatyczne doświadczenia, stawia także Kornélia Faragó, rekonstruując proces manipulowania pamięcią o antywęgierskich represjach na terenie byłej Jugosławii. Badaczkę interesuje strategia polityki przemilczania niewygodnych dla władzy wydarzeń, m.in. ludobójstw, i zacierania wiedzy o masowych grobach w kontekście literatury. W przypadku polityki, która nie pozwala na prowadzenie rzetelnych badań, literatura zaczyna pełnić wyjątkową rolę, bo niejako bierze na siebie odpowiedzialność za przekazywanie wiedzy o tym, co się wydarzyło, a zatem także o tym, jakie są korzenie i tożsamość przedstawicieli drugiego, a nawet trzeciego pokolenia. Tomasz Basiuk przygląda się funkcjonalności pojęcia pokolenia 3G, które krytykował Menachem Kaiser, postulując odrzucenie zastępczego utożsamiania się z ofiarami i ocalałymi z Zagłady na rzecz uważnego zbadania następstw traumy historycznej. Marina Ortrud Hertrampf i Kinga Piotrowiak-Junkiert przyglądają się zjawisku tożsamościowego osamotnienia i marginalizacji doświadczenia obozu. Hertrampf opisuje zjawisko traktowania Porajmosu jako „innego ludobójstwa". Takie „nieuznane" doświadczenie ludobójstwa Romów i Sinti miało znamiona psychicznego napiętnowania i odtrącenia, co oddziaływało także na sposób formułowania przekazu o tym, co się przeżyło. Piotrowiak-Junkiert przygląda się literaturze węgierskiej czasów powojennych pod kątem politycznej strategii przemilczania Zagłady i jej wpływu na narracje. Z kolei Tomasz Łysak bada strategie upamiętniania osób ratujących Żydów w czasie II wojny światowej, zwracając uwagę na dwuznaczność sporządzanych list zasłużonych osób

distinguished people, he draws attention to the fact that documenting personal relationships, conducting and recording audiovisual interviews tend to be more convincing. These interests are also related to the treatment of space as an element that plays a very important, perhaps even key role in gaining a fuller understanding of the phenomena that we recognize when examining human fate from the perspective of administrative borders, industrialized spaces or knowledge about "contaminated landscapes." Ryszard Kupidura analyzes the textual representation of the Polish migration experience, focusing on problems related to the difficult and sometimes impossible process of assimilation in new conditions. The sense of otherness and strangeness provokes questions about identity, which is arbitrarily and definitively determined by "our people." Paweł Tomczok also asks questions about the possibility of crossing borders and spatial thinking by depicting the history of tensions between nature and industrialization. Modern history is, in fact, a record of a very dynamic relationship between mankind and nature. Sometimes, this difficult co-existence entailed the violent occupation of virgin areas, as well as the loss of devastated space, and sometimes it demonstrated the possibilities and effectiveness of taking over the landscape. Everything that violated the boundaries of nature resulted in the trauma of industrialization. The fact that humans has been present in some place, and especially the legible traces left in spaces once occupied by people, allow us to treat the landscape as complementary to factual knowledge. Wojciech Browarny examines the intangible heritage and traumatic biographies of trees. Analyzing the fate of individual plants and noticing that nature bears traces of the existence of former territories and, consequently, regional identities, can be a starting point for reflecting on how knowledge about the past can be communicated non-verbally.

Kinga Piotrowiak-Junkiert,
Marta Tomczok

i bardziej przekonujące rejestrowanie osobistych relacji, przeprowadzanie i nagrywanie wywiadów audiowizualnych. Te zainteresowania mają także związek z traktowaniem przestrzeni jako elementu odgrywającego bardzo ważną, a może nawet kluczową rolę w pełniejszym zrozumieniu zjawisk, które rozpoznajemy, badając ludzkie losy z perspektywy granic administracyjnych, przestrzeni zindustrializowanych czy wiedzy o „skażonych krajobrazach". Ryszard Kupidura analizuje tekstową reprezentację ukraińskiego doświadczenia migracyjnego, skupiając się na problemach związanych z trudnym, a czasami niemożliwym procesem asymilowania się w nowych warunkach. Poczucie inności i obcości prowokuje do pytań o tożsamość, która jest orzekana przez „swoich" arbitralnie i ostatecznie. Pytania o możliwość przekraczania granic, o myślenie przestrzenią stawia także Paweł Tomczok pokazując dzieje napięć między naturą a industrializacją. Historia czasów nowożytnych jest w istocie zapisem bardzo dynamicznej relacji człowieka z naturą. Czasami ta trudna współobecność oznaczała przemocowe zajmowanie dziewiczych terenów, bywała doświadczeniem utraty przestrzeni zdewastowanej, a niekiedy popisem możliwości i skuteczności zawłaszczania krajobrazu. Wszystko, co naruszało granice natury, skutkowało traumą industrializacyjną. Obecność człowieka w przestrzeni, a zwłaszcza czytanie śladów pozostawionych w przestrzeni niegdyś zagospodarowywanej przez ludzi, pozwala na potraktowanie krajobrazu jako dopełnienia wiedzy faktograficznej. Wojciech Browarny bada niematerialne dziedzictwo – traumatyczne biografie drzew. Analiza losów pojedynczych roślin, dostrzeżenie, że przyroda nosi na sobie ślady istnienia dawnych terytoriów, a co za tym idzie – regionalnych tożsamości, może być punktem wyjścia do refleksji nad sposobami niewerbalnego komunikowania wiedzy o przeszłości.

Kinga Piotrowiak-Junkiert,
Marta Tomczok

Środkowoeuropejskie traumy

| Central European Traumas

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DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.2

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Giving Space to the Tabooed Trauma: Sofia Taikon's Testimony in *Katitzi Z-1234* and *Sofia Z-4515*

> *Then for the first time we notice that our language lacks the words to express this offence, the demolition of a man. Suddenly, with almost prophetic intuition, the reality was revealed to us: we have reached the bottom. It is not possible to sink lower than this: a more miserable human condition is unthinkable. Nothing is ours anymore; they have taken our clothes, our shoes, our hair too; if we speak, they will not listen, and if they listen, they will not understand. They will take away even our name: and if we want to keep it, we will have to find in ourselves the strength to do so, that behind the name, something of us, of us as we were, remains. (Levi 26–27)*

> *auschwitz is my coat*
> *are you afraid of the dark?*
> *i'll tell you where the path is free of people,*
> *so you don't need to be afraid.*
> *i'm not afraid.*
> *my fear remained in auschwitz*
> *and in the camps.*
> *auschwitz is my coat,*
> *bergen-belsen my dress*
> *and ravensbrück my vest.*
> *what should I be afraid of?*
> *(Stojka 2014: 7)*

1. The Porajmos: a concealed and tabooed trauma

Unresolved collective trauma never passes, more so, Holocaust survivors unconsciously pass on their traumatic experiences to their descendants (Cohen; Danieli; Schwab).[1] Thus, many children, grandchildren, even great-grandchil-

1 It should be mentioned here that the theory continues to be the subject of controversial discussions. However, the numerous studies show that collective trauma has lasting

dren of Holocaust survivors who have kept silent for decades suffer trauma without knowing why. However, the scientifically proven connection between trauma and repression does not only concern the survivors of the Shoah, but to the same extent those of the Porajmos—only this and the associated trauma of all the members of Europe's largest minority all too often continues to be an excluded part of the Holocaust:

> The other genocide under the Nazis, the genocide of the Sinti and Roma, is still marginal in the public perception. The Nazi genocide brought death to approximately 500,000 European Roma and almost all Sinti living in Germany. (Bauer 2018: 87)[2]

As the moving mottos of this contribution by Primo Levi and Ceija Stojka show, the memories and injuries of surviving Jews and Roma are very close. And yet there are differences between the Nazi extermination campaigns against the European Jews and Roma. In fact, the implementation of the Romani genocide took place very differently in the occupied countries of Europe and those allied with the Nazis.[3] Little known to this day is the fact that most Roma from Poland and the Soviet Union were not killed in concentration camps, but in mass executions carried out on site by the German police, Wehrmacht and SS Einsatzgruppen. In the Auschwitz concentration camp, the third largest group of victims among the Roma came from occupied Poland. During the Second World War, about one third of all Roma who had lived on Polish territory before the outbreak of the war died. Exact figures cannot be determined, the perpetrators did not document their barbaric crimes against the Roma in detail, but estimates put the death toll at at least 500,000.

While the denial of the genocide of the Roma[4] was for decades the prevailing opinion of politicians, jurists and the public in Europe, and despite the differences regarding the motivation and implementation of the "Final Solution of

effects especially in those groups where the traumatic experience is systematically repressed or concealed.

2 "Der andere Genozid im Nationalsozialismus, der Völkermord an den Sinti und Roma, ist in der öffentlichen Wahrnehmung immer noch marginal. Der nationalsozialistische Völkermord brachte ungefähr 500.000 europäischen Roma und nahezu allen in Deutschland lebenden Sinti den Tod."

3 For comprehensive information on the Romani genocide see, e.g. Central Council of German Sinti and Roma; European Holocaust Memorial Day for Sinti and Roma, https://www.roma-sinti-holocaust-memorial-day.eu/de/.

4 The term Roma is used here as an umbrella term for all subgroups of the minority.

the Jewish Question" and the "Final Solution of the Gypsy Question" (*Zigeunerfrage*), it is nowadays considered completely undisputed that both the Shoah and the Porajmos were genocides (cf. Wippermann 2005: 141–146). With the "Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered Under National Socialism" in Berlin, designed by Dani Karavan and inaugurated in 2012 after long debates, the Porajmos was officially recognised as genocide by the German government (cf. Fings).[5] However, the continuing public ignorance of the genocide of the Roma is shown by the fact that the term "Porajmos" (in addition to the spelling used here, the graphic "Porrajmos" can also be found), in contrast to the Hebrew term "Shoah" (שׁוֹאָה = "catastrophe," "downfall"), is little known. The term in itself is a neologism coined in the 1990s by the US activist Ian Hancock from Romanes, which means "the devouring." Although the term is not entirely uncontroversial,[6] it has become widely accepted among minority activists as well as in the research literature on the Nazi genocide.

However, it is not only the European majority societies that have not addressed the issue of the Porajmos. Although virtually all Roma in Europe are descendants of survivors of the Porajmos, knowledge about it is not widespread even among their children and grandchildren. What was endured was experienced by the survivors as an insurmountable humiliation, which remained visible in the concentration camp imprisonment numbers as a physical stigma for life and was therefore hidden as far as possible. Likewise, the trauma itself was all too often experienced and repressed as a psychological stigma, so that speaking about the unspeakable was and is a kind of taboo for a large number of affected families. Knowledge about the Porajmos was therefore rarely passed on to the next generations through communicative memory.[7] However, the children and (great-great-)grandchildren feel the trauma of their (great-great-) grandparents, which remains unarticulated, and have to deal with it. Due to

5 For more detailed information on the genocide of the Roma, see, e.g. Bastian, Thelen and Zimmermann. For a collection of eyewitness accounts, see the "Voices of the Victims" section of the RomArchive online platform curated by Karola Frings: https://www.romarchive.eu/de/voices-of-the-victims/.

6 Matras (2004: 195) points out that the term is virtually unknown to the victims and their families. The French linguist Marcel Courthiade, on the other hand, prefers the neologism "samudaripen" which means "mass murder." Cf. also Auzias.

7 Of course, this does not mean that there were not also voices that spoke about the unspeakable, but since discrimination against Roma was the order of the day almost everywhere in Europe after the Nazi dictatorship, many of those affected tried to conceal their Roma identity. An open reappraisal of the many forms of extermination of Roma was thus denied. The contributions in Donert and Rosenhaft (2022) provide

the lack of institutionalisation of remembering, for example through consistent treatment in school lessons, the lack of knowledge among the members of the minority is at least as great as among those of the majority society. This is a problem that is particularly serious because of the transgenerational transmission of trauma mentioned above. This is all the more serious in the case of the trauma that has hardly been dealt with in the minority and the majority in view of the fact that there are hardly any survivors alive today who can bear direct witness. This lack of knowledge about a diffuse family trauma can have a deeply destabilising effect and massive psychological consequences. It is therefore all the more important to talk about the Porajmos. This educational work is relevant both for the affected descendants of the eyewitnesses and for the majority society. Only when the descendants understand, can the process of coming to terms with the past begin, and only when the majority society is aware of what happened, can acceptance take place.

2. Breaking the silence: Female voices on the Porajmos

But in fact, they do exist, the eyewitness accounts of survivors of the Porajmos. Even if the majority of these reports "slumber" in oral archives and therefore remain unheard for the vast majority (Brooks), there was a courageous and committed woman who was the first (at least in the German-speaking countries) to speak and write openly about her painful experiences in the concentration camps under the Third Reich: Philomena Franz (b. 1922 in Biberach, Germany) published her memories of imprisonment in Auschwitz in her autobiography *Zwischen Liebe und Hass. Ein Zigeunerleben* in 1985. Only three years later, Ceija Stojka's (1933–2013) autobiography *Wir leben im Verborgenen: Erinnerungen einer Rom-Zigeunerin*, the first eyewitness account by a representative of the minority was published in Austria. Asked about her motivation to paint and write, she explained: "I had to open up, I had to scream."[8] (Kleine Zeitung) Thus, contrary to the stereotype of oppressed Romani women, they are the ones who first broke the silence and tried to articulate the unspeakable and thus counteract the taboo trauma.[9]

a differentiated insight into how the horrific experiences shaped the lives of Romani survivors and their families in Eastern and Western Europe after the Second World War.

8 "Ich musste mich öffnen, musste schreien." The translation of this excerpt—as well as in case of Taikon 2016 and Taikon 1976—by M.O.H.

9 Of course, there are also male representatives of the minority who dealt with the trauma in literature. An important German-speaking male representative of the minority who broke the silence and articulated his very personal trauma was Otto Rosenberg, who,

While Philomena Franz and Ceija Stojka fought for their rights as engaged women and actively worked to make the genocide of the Roma known, Sofia Taikon, who was born in 1931 in an unknown place in Poland as Sofia Brzezinska, is one of the non-silent but quiet voices who spoke out about the Porajmos. Like so many other concentration camp survivors, it was difficult for her throughout her life to deal with the trauma and memories of dehumanisation and to talk about them with her children and grandchildren. And yet her memories of the trauma were brought up by people close to her in fictional form especially for a young readership: As early as 1976, Katarina Taikon told Sofia Taikon's painful story in the children's book *Katitzi Z-1234*, and in 2005, Gunilla Lundgren and Amanda Eriksson created a graphic memoir about her traumatic experiences.[10]

3. Fictionalisations of Sofia Taikon's memories of the Porajmos

3.1. *Katitzi Z-1234* (1976)—a children's book by Katarina Taikon

From Sofia's husband's Stockholm-based Kaldarash family, Katarina Taikon (1932–1995) is one of the best-known personalities. She was not only a prominent activist and leader of Romani civil rights movement in Sweden (Mohtadi), but also author of the autobiographical children's book series *Katitzi*, which was published between 1969 and 1979 and became known far beyond Sweden in translations into Czech, German, Hungarian, Romanian and in 2008 also into Romani. In the 1970s, Katarina Taikon took the children's books to Swedish schools in order to raise awareness and tolerance for Roma through educational work.

The first volume of the series begins with a brief explanation of how the Polish Roma-family Taikon came to Sweden at all:

> It was winter 1940. World War II was raging in Europe, but in Sweden there was peace. Katitzi arrived with her family in Vännäs, a small town in the northern Swedish landscape of Västerbotten. Her father, Johan Taikon, was very worried. Like many others, he feared that the war might spread to Sweden. But it was not only the war that frightened him. Right now he was worried that he might not get permission to settle

with the help of Ulrich Enzenberger, published his autobiographical memoirs of the Porajmos in 1998 under the title *Das Brennglas*. In 1999, his memoirs were also translated into English (*A Gypsy in Auschwitz*) and into Polish in 2010.

10 For the genre of the Porajmos comic in general and a critical analysis of different examples, cf. Hertrampf.

> here. Katitzi and her family were Gypsies and always had problems with the authorities because of that. (Taikon 1976: 5)

Although the family has escaped the war, Katitzi encounters racist discrimination that is completely incomprehensible to her in her childlike naivety. A parallel is drawn with the persecution of the Jews. For example, in a scene where Katizi goes from house to house selling bowls:

> Another had shouted "Jew pig" after her. Startled, she had turned around and said, "I'm a Gypsy!" Then the man shouted even louder: "Gypsy devil! You are the same pack! Just wait until the Germans come! They'll put an end to you!" Katitzi was scared and frightened, she didn't understand the whole thing. (Taikon 1976: 21)

Even though the series brings up the social disadvantages of Roma, 12 of the 13 *Katitzi* books tell the adventures of the wild girl Katitzi in the style of Swedish children's books à la Pipi Longstocking (Zahova). Only the ninth volume, entitled *Katitzi Z-1234*, deals with the commonly tabooed subject of Porajmos and tells the story on the basis of Sofia's experiences (Snelling), without this becoming explicit, however. Katarina Taikon merely uses the real testimonies of Sofia Taikon as a factual basis to weave them into the story of her protagonist Katitzi. In contrast to the other volumes in the series, the focus here is on a look back at the time of the Third Reich, the persecution, torture and extermination of the Romani people. This is triggered by the fact that the twelve-year-old Katitzi is worried about her much older cousin Zoni, who seems desperate. When the fun-loving girl asks the reason for Zoni's deep sadness, she begins to tell her about her youth, which is anything but carefree:

> Still smiling and with trembling lips she said: I will never get over it… I will always be afraid. They won't even let me go in my sleep. They come in dreams. They haunt me. With their uniforms… contemptuous, cruel. These people are devils. (Taikon 2016: 24)

As a daily physical reminder of the horrors suffered, the concentration camp number takes on a special significance:

> Zoni stretched out his bare arm and Katitzi saw the tattooed number on her arm. In front of the numbers was a Z. Why did they do that? Katitzi asked. For the pleasure of humiliating us. To make us feel like

> animals. Marked as cattle, we were driven to the slaughterhouses, the gas chambers. (Taikon 2016: 25)

In fact, the stigma of the tattooed concentration camp number becomes a sign of her own identification with the fate of her ethnic group for Katitzi, who is deeply shocked by this chapter of her minority's history. In a mixture of empathetic attachment, the childlike instinct to imitate and the desire to visibly belonging, Katitzi decides to paint a Z on her arm as well: "You know, I think I want a number like that too. Because if someone wants people to be different, I want them to see that I am Rom." (Taikon 2016: 31). Without the theories of transgenerational trauma transmission having been widespread at the time of its creation, reference is made here—admittedly in a child-friendly, simple manner—to precisely this phenomenon. At the same time, the episode of the Katitzi story reflects the survivors' children's ignorance about the Porajmos. The fact that this volume of the series, which was otherwise so popular in the 1970s and 80s, is the least known also illustrates the deliberate suppression of the topic in public discourse. This may also be due to the fact that Taikon's descriptions of the unspeakable in their direct embellishment hardly correspond to child-friendly narration. The author lets Zoni tell openly about the atrocities of the soldiers in Poland:

> From our hiding place we could see the Roma being lined up and shot with machine guns. Babies were thrown into the air and shot at close range. Mothers tried to hide their infants under their skirts. The soldiers thought this was very funny and shot the children right through the skirts and into the mothers' abdomens. It was a terrible slaughter. (Taikon 2016: 29)

The focus precisely on the inhumane murder of children and mothers makes the narrative almost unbearable—even for adult readers: "In Auschwitz I once saw an officer slash a pregnant woman's belly with a bayonet. The foetus was fully delivered and fell out…. onto the ground… the officer he…. Zoni fell silent." (Taikon 2016: 30) Although Zoni is aware of the extremely disturbing effect of her account, Katitzi urges her to continue telling of the unspeakable trauma that is thus given space in an otherwise light-hearted children's book in a disturbingly drastic way.

3.2. *Sofia Z-4515* (2005)—a graphic memoir by Gunilla Lundgren and Amanda Eriksson

The graphic memoir *Sofia Z-4515* was created by the Swedish renowned children's author Gunilla Lundgren and the illustrator Amanda Eriksson in three years of work with Sofia Taikon.[11] The comic, published in Swedish and Romanes in 2005, was very positively received by the public due to its historical, but also socio-political relevance: "This is an important graphic novel, retelling the incredible life of a courageous and, although living through hell, constantly positive and generous person. A story that as many as possible should read" (Strömberg). In 2006, the book was awarded a prize by the Swedish Foundation Artists against Nazi Fascism (*Stiftelsen Hela Sverige. Artister mot Nazister*). The prize money made it possible to produce a comic book edition that is distributed by Roma in street sales together with the magazine of the Roma Interest Association in Sweden *Folk* är *Folk*. In addition, the comic was published in English translation in 2012 and in a Romanian/Romani bilingual edition in 2016. *Sofia Z-4515* is primarily to be understood as an educational medium: as is usual with documentary and educational comics, it contains maps, overviews and panels explaining the historical background. In addition, the comic is followed by an information section, in which private photographs of Sofia Taikon, who died in 2005—shortly before the comic was published—are included along with linguistically simply formulated background information on the Holocaust.

The short comic is divided into a frame narrative and an interior narrative. The narrative frame of the comic is anchored in 2005 and begins with Sofia Taikon's refusal to face her own past and talk about the traumatic experiences—a problem that Gunilla Lundgren also encountered in her conversations with Sofia Taikon. The fact that talking about the trauma was a taboo for Sofia and her husband is shown on the one hand quite explicitly in the manner in which, when asked about the origin of her tattooed concentration camp number, she reacts almost automatically with the defensive sentence "Let's talk about

11 Amanda Eriksson (*1970) is an illustrator and author of more than 60 picture books and children's books. Gunilla Lundgren (*1942) came into contact with children and young people of the Roma minority in Sweden as early as the late 1960s through her work as a teacher. Inspired by Donald Kenrick's school programme for Roma children in England, she herself became actively involved in educational work for Roma in Sweden. In 1972 she wrote her first book, *Maritza en zigenarflicka* ("Maritza a Roma Girl"), co-authored with three young Roma girls, Nina Taikon, Senia and Gino Tan-Mercowiç. In the following decades, Gunilla Lundgren published a number of books for children and young people with, about and for Roma (Lundgren 130–134).

something else!". On the other hand, the repression is also expressed in the fact that only 16 of the total of 31 pages report on the Porajmos and that the countless brutal atrocities are hardly mentioned or shown. Even though, at the request of her grandson—and Gunilla Lundgren—Sofia Taikon agreed to articulate what had been concealed and repressed, at least in rudimentary form, it was important to her not to shock either her children and grandchildren or the potential readers of the book too much; the worst physical and psychological injuries and humiliations are thus left out.

The trigger for the look back into Sofia's childhood and youth is the persistent insistence of one of her grandchildren to learn more about the origin and meaning of the tattoo "Z-4515" on Sofia's left arm (cf. fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Taikon, Lundgren, Eriksson 5.12

In the following internal narrative, Sofia reports on her life that began in Poland. The family's simple but content everyday life is abruptly interrupted by the German invasion. Persecution, deportation and terrible years in the Auschwitz and Ravensbrück concentration camps follow before Sofia is rescued by the Swedish Red Cross and arrives in Sweden, where she starts her own family with the young Roma Janko Taikon. At the end of the comic, the narrative returns to the initial scene: the mood between Sofia, her husband and grandson is depressed by the terrible stories. To her husband's reproach that she should not have told this story, the boy replies that he really wanted to know and thus speaks for the part of the grandchild generation of Holocaust victims who deliberately want to break the silence in order to get to the bottom of the causes of transgenerational traumatisation and come to terms with them.

12 Reprinted from the English edition with kind permission of Gunilla Lundgren, Amanda Eriksson and Janna Eliot.

Sofia's biography is presented in short, highly fragmentary episodes, whereby the series of images hardly describe sequences of action, but rather have a descriptive effect. This becomes particularly evident on the first page of the internal narrative, which appears to be a simultaneous image. What is striking is the strongly belittling, childlike, naïve imagery of the drawings (cf. fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Taikon, Lundgren, Eriksson 6.

This simplifying imagery is deliberately chosen to a certain extent. On the one hand, it illustrates the mechanism of repression of any negative memories. There is no doubt that life before persecution and deportation was difficult and full of privation. The protagonist is well aware of the alterity of her family:

> As I grew older, I realised that my family weren't as ordinary as I'd thought / Other Polish children went to school. But me and my sisters didn't. / Other Polish children spoke Polish to each other. In my family we spoke Romani. (Taikon, Lundgren, Eriksson 8)

Yet in retrospect and against the background of what she subsequently endured, this time seems almost carefree. On the other hand, the way the story is presented reflects the naïve, ignorant perspective of the experiencing child ego. This can be seen in the fact that the imagery changes with the increasing horror (deportation, arrival and "life" in Auschwitz). The simple character stroke continues to recall children's book illustrations, but loses much of the trivialising elements. Just as the child Sofia Brzezinska became the "Zigeuner" with the number 4515 (cf. fig. 3), the experiences turned the gaze of a child into that of an adult who wanted to survive. With concentration camp internment and the loss of all individuality, idealising representations have become impossible. All victims of the Holocaust are the same and can only be distinguished by their patches and tattoos. The imagery now makes frequent use of images of

Fig. 3: Taikon, Lundgren, Eriksson 18.

the Holocaust that are anchored in the collective visual memory (e.g. the view of countless rows of camp barracks or the entrance gate to Auschwitz with the "Arbeit-macht-frei" grille).

Finally, the comic also shows that Sofia's life is permanently marked by the traumatic experiences despite her rescue and the possibility of a new start in Sweden (cf. fig. 4). At night, she is plagued by terrible memories. The fact that she is permanently stigmatised by the tattoo, that she cannot talk to anyone about what she has been through, and the fear that her stories of the unimaginable would not be believed anyway, gradually set in motion a mechanism of repression that eventually leads to silence and talking herself out of it.

Fig. 4: Taikon, Lundgren, Eriksson 30.

4. Conclusion

The study of the children's book and the graphic memoir shows how deep the trauma resides in the survivors. It is interesting to note that the tendency of omission and silence about the horror that is taboo is very pronounced in the explicitly autobiographical book. In contrast, Katarina Taikon lets Zoni, Sofia's fictional alter ego, speak out about the crimes in all their inhuman brutality and thus breaks the taboo.

Thus, the trauma of the Porajmos is still a taboo subject in the majority as well as in the minority itself. Especially in view of the fact that only a few of the survivors are still alive and the trauma of the Porajmos continues to have an identity-destabilising effect on younger Roma generations, it is of central relevance to educate especially younger generations about the atrocities committed against the Roma by the Third Reich. Therefore, it seems an essential task to make the voices of the survivors of the porajmos audible, who dared throughout their lives to articulate what had been repressed and tabooed for so long. Whether the autobiographical texts of Franz, Stojka, Taikon or many others, it is important to enable their transnational circulation.

In conclusion, it can be stated that both works make a central contribution to closing the void of memory and creating the basis for a conscious postmemory (Hirsch). By contextualising the all too often only indirectly passed on, barely comprehensible fragments of memory of the Porajmos and reconstructing them with individual stories and concrete images into a comprehensible narrative, the overwhelming inherited memories of experiences that preceded one's birth can advance the understanding of intergenerational trauma and its inheritance. At the same time, the autobiographical testimonies enable the later generations to "remember" the Porajmos and make it part of their consciousness. The knowledge of the Porajmos and the transgenerational traumatisation of Roma is the *sine qua non* for overcoming trauma and establishing sustainable understanding and mutual recognition.

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| Abstract

MARINA ORTRUD M. HERTRAMPF

Giving Space to the Tabooed Trauma: Sofia Taikon's Testimony in *Katitzi Z-1234* and *Sofia Z-4515*

Repression and concealment of one of the worst traumatic experiences of the 20th century affects Europe's largest minority in a massive way. In contrast to the Shoa, the Porajmos is little known to many people of both the majority and the minority. Often repressed as a taboo, breaking the silence about this trauma is of central relevance for the self-confidence of the Roma, especially those born afterwards. In fact, in the case of victims and their children and grandchildren, there is a tension between repression and concealment on the one hand and the need to overcome trauma on the other. Using the example of two educational works for young minority and majority readers in which the painful memories of Polish Romani Sofia Taikon,

born Brzezinska, are fictionalised, the article illustrates how this tension is dealt with and how space is given to the long-tabooed trauma.

Keywords: Porajmos, Holocaust, testimony, taboo, repression, educational work, children's book, graphic memoir

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.3

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Changing Narratives of Jan and Maria Malisz's Case (1933): Social, Legal and Cultural Perspectives

Introduction

To those not versed in legal studies, the law is merely a bundle of legal provisions. However, the law is a collection of interconnected stories written by many authors and told from various vistas, strictly speaking, through various interwoven narratives. Legal texts, understood as a collection of legal norms that express orders or prohibitions, can be used to reconstruct legal reality, but so can courtroom statements, academic commentaries, and, last but not least, press and cultural specimens.

In this paper, we compare and contrast various narratives of the most sensational, yet unfamiliar to the foreign readership, trial of Jan and Maria Malisz, using the premise that law is "narratively based and culturally embedded" (Olson 2014: 1).[1] The main aim of this survey is to show the changing narratives of Jan and Maria Malisz's case by investigating a variety of existing sources, specifically the extant trial transcripts, 1933 press reports, literature, Grzegorz

1 Another type of narrative about the case of Jan and Maria is Polish legal literature (cf. Szerer 1966; Waltoś 2010). The case was vivisected by Polish lawyers, both representatives of the academia and practitioners. In legal commentaries, we find descriptions of the case with references to the brief and documents, as well as analyses in terms of legal aspects—in particular, the summary procedure and the defendants' mental states. Due to space constraints, we do not refer to this type of sources.

Królikiewicz's 1972 film, and Internet podcasts and forums. Such an analysis of this trial has not been conducted up to this date. By incorporating the trial and post-trial narratives, this research sheds new light on the reception of the case in question in Poland. What is also important, as the trial happened in a specific legal and historical context, we argue that the case of Jan and Maria serves as an excellent illustration of the shift from the anthropological to postmodernist philosophy of criminal law that took place in the 1960s in Poland.

In one of his publications, Professor Richard Sherwin writes:

> A basic premise of popular legal studies holds that the study and critique of law must now take into account new developments in popular culture and communication technology and the socioeconomic conditions under which popular legal representations are produced. (Sherwin 2004: 100)

Following this statement, this contribution seeks inspiration from law and popular culture studies (cf. Adams 2017). Another scholar Kaarlo Tuori points to the connections between law and culture. He introduced the theory about the three levels (also known as layers) of the law, which are the surface, legal culture, and deep culture of the law. The surface level is constructed by legal provisions. It entails legislation and court decisions reached in individual cases. The legal culture level relates to legal practice and scholarship; in other words, the culture of the community of lawyers as opposed to the general culture of society. This type of culture is built by the opinions of the lawyers; hence, it is also called the "expert legal culture." The deep culture of law encompasses universal values such as human rights and dignity (Tuori 2002, 2011). As we will demonstrate below, the narratives of Jan and Maria Malisz's case reflect Tuori's idea of the law as a three-level cultural construct.

1. The crime on Pańska Street—factual and legal background

On 2 October 1933, in one of the apartments on Pańska Street (today Maria Skłodowska-Curie Street) in Cracow, three bodies were discovered. The victims of the bloody onslaught were a 30-year-old postman named Walenty Przebinda, and an elderly couple, Michał Süskind and his wife Helena. Only one person, Eugenia, a 47-year-old spinster, Michał and Helena's daughter, survived the attack. Eugenia, the direct witness of the events, testified that a few days before the murder of her parents, a man named Rotter had visited their house to rent a room. It was soon revealed that the strange "Rotter" was in fact Jan Malisz (1908–1933), a 25-year-old unemployed artist and photographer. The intruder

did not perpetrate the crime alone, however. Jan shed blood in cahoots with his wife Maria (1908–1946), also 25 years old. Past traumas and emotional whirlwinds, as well as abject poverty and unemployment, made Jan and Maria partners not only in life but also in murder and robbery. As a solution to their problems, Jan had invented a scheme of robbery. The plan began as a simple attack on the postman but quickly escalated into murder. After the crime, the couple tried to escape and conceal the traces of their deeds, but with no success.

Apprehended by the police, who promptly cracked the murder case on Pańska Street, on 31 October 1933, Jan and Maria were put on summary trial on the charges of assault and robbery, and murder. The case was subjected to the summary procedure under the Council of Ministers Regulation of August 26, 1932. The Act provided for the death penalty as a punishment for the crimes charged against the couple. According to the then-binding law, the verdicts could not be appealed, and the execution was to be carried out within 24 hours after sentencing. To the surprise of the legal officers and the large audience who had gathered at the court to watch the trial, Jan lied about his wife, claiming that she had only been a passive witness to the murder. Jan attempted to persuade the court that he had murdered all of the victims without his wife's assistance. Maria, contrary to her husband and to the dismay of her defence counsel, asserted she had been actively involved in committing the crime. She testified that she had pulled the trigger on Helena Süskind. The truth about Maria's involvement in the crime came to light after the trial. In a letter sent to her defence counsel, Maria confessed that she had lied in court and thus exposed her participation in killing Helena, only to die together with her husband. After two hours of deliberation, three judges reached a verdict. Both Jan and Maria were found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging and the deprivation of public rights. Jan was executed on 4 November 1933. Maria escaped death, however, by being pardoned by President Ignacy Mościcki. She left the female prison in Fordon after the outbreak of the war in 1939. She returned to Cracow, where she died in 1946, aged 38.[2]

The dramatic events in the courtroom did not happen in a legal and social vacuum. To fully comprehend the case of Jan and Maria, and more specifically the reasoning of the Cracow court in sentencing the offenders to death, a brief overview of the 1933 criminal law and criminology is required. A new approach to criminal law appeared in the first half of the twentieth century. It was believed that the classical school of criminal law, which was widely promoted in

2 The facts of the case are reconstructed from the 1933 press listed in the bibliography and two legal commentaries by Szerer (1966) and Waltoś (2010).

the Enlightenment by such thinkers and philosophers as Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham, was not effective, as it did not prevent crimes. According to the anthropological and social schools of criminal law, the assessment of criminal conduct, frequently linked with mental disorders, was the domain not only of lawyers but also of doctors, psychiatrists and sociologists. The supporters of this view held that certain people were born criminals. Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), an Italian psychiatrist, anthropologist and criminologist, the father of Italian positivism in criminal law, maintained that it was possible to measure the tendency to anti-social behaviour based on biological features. A criminal was an individual that displayed a variety of physical characteristics that distinguished him or her from other people. According to Lombroso and his followers, a human being was biologically conditioned to perpetrate crimes (Adalbert 1910: 71–83; Ellwood 1912: 716–723; Gibson 2002). Lombrosian criminology popularised the image of a "criminal animal" (Olson 2013). As illustrated below, the criminal beast trope, which was the bedrock of the Lombrosian school of criminal law, permeated the 1933 Polish legal and press narratives.

2. Court narratives

As explained above, Jan and Maria were tried in a summary procedure. The first hearing at the Cracow County Court took place on 31 October 1933. The court sessions were presided over by Leonard Krupiński. The panel of judges also included Mieczysław Pilarski and Józef Horski. Feliks Lewicki acted as a prosecutor. Both Jan and Maria were defended by their counsels. Jan's defence counsel was Tomasz Aschenbrenner. Maria was represented by Leon Warenhaupt.[3]

After reading the indictment, Jan's defence counsel, Tomasz Aschenbrenner, spoke. He pleaded to transfer the case to an ordinary procedure, explaining that trying the defendants who were charged with murder summarily triggered the impression that there were two types of justice. The summary trial, in contrast to the regular procedure, was quick and predictable, according to the lawyer. The man also expressed his doubt as to the relevance of the psychiatrist's expertise. Jan had been put under a short-term psychiatric observation that lasted only several days. It was not enough, according to Aschenbrenner, to assess

3 The brief of the case is archived in Kraków under the number: III K 1150/33 t. II, k. 314, A.P. Kr. – SOKKr. The materials from the trial, such as police reports, the indictment read by the prosecutor, witness testimonies, and speeches of the defence lawyers and the defendants can be accessed from the published commentaries on the case (56: 619–654, 48: 223–282), and 1933 press (*Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, in particular, no. 304, 305, 306, 307, 308).

a person's mental state in such a short period. Similar concerns were raised by Maria's defence counsel, Warenhaupt. The public prosecutor, however, expressed a dissenting opinion. He refuted the allegation of the duality of justice. Furthermore, the representative of the state asserted that Jan and Maria must have been aware of the consequences of their deeds. The prosecutor pointed out that both Jan and Maria must have been familiar with the Regulation on the Summary Procedure, specifically its section that specified which offences were punishable by death. Still, the severe punishment for murder envisaged in the Act did not deter the defendants from killing three people on Pańska Street. The prosecutor's words express the conviction that by breaking the well-known, binding rules, people incur the risk of punishment. The court confirmed the legality of the summary procedure in the defendants' case. Firstly, it stated that the summary trial was conducted for the crimes specified in Articles 225 and 259 of the Criminal Code, specifically for murder and robbery. Significantly, the regulation introducing the summary procedure was properly issued in Cracow on 31 August 1933 (*Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 304, 2 November: 13).

One of the key issues that had to be decided during the trial was the mental state of the defendants. The experts who confirmed the sanity of the culprits were Jan Olbrycht and S. Jankowski. Both specialists agreed that Jan and Maria did not suffer from any mental diseases or impairments that would exclude criminal liability (*Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 294, 23 October: 18). The experts diagnosed Jan as "psychopata konstytucjonalny," which in English translates into a "constitutional psychopath." The medical opinion also identified variables in Jan's mental health (*Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 307, 5 November: 12). Olbrycht and Jankowski decided that Maria, on the contrary, was of a sound and disposing mind, mentally healthy and capable of controlling her behaviour. From the testimonies, Maria appeared as a person who was clever and calm, mentally surpassing her neurosis-stricken husband (*Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 307, 5 November: 13). The witnesses, including Maria, confirmed Jan's mental issues which, surprisingly, did not put the judges on alert. They testified that on many occasions Jan had suffered from uncontrollable attacks of frenzy, during which he was screaming, had epileptic fits, and facial spasms that culminated in losing consciousness. The periods of emotional stability were interrupted by periods of turmoil (*Dziennik Białostocki*, 3 December, 1933; *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 290, 19 October: 17; *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 305, 3 November: 10).

To get the full picture of the case, specifically the language that dominated the court narrative, it is necessary to comment on the final speeches of the prosecutor and defence lawyers. In his closing statement, the prosecutor

accentuated the preventive and deterrent functions of criminal law, as well as the principle of social order that was violated by the culprits. He emphasised how heinous the crime committed by the defendants was. He reminded the audience and the court that murder driven by greed for money belonged to the gravest offences that deserved condemnation. What is even more shocking, the crime had also been perpetrated by a woman. To support his indictment, Lewicki mentioned the victims. Those who had been affected by Jan and Maria's criminal acts were not only Michał, Helena and Walenty but also their families, the surviving daughter Eugenia, Walenty's wife and his small son. Lewicki's discourse is infused with the idea that punishment should deter other potential offenders from committing such a crime. "Let this verdict take the murderous weapon away from anyone who would ever follow in the footsteps of the Malisz couple,"[4] said Lewicki in court (*Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 307, 5 November: 15). Aschenbrenner, Jan's defence counsel, tried to prove that his client's sanity was wrongly diagnosed and based on insufficient data. He appealed to the judges to summon new experts who could reassess the defendant's mental condition. In his closing statement, he mentioned how the war had left scars on the post-war generation. Jan belonged to the post-war generation that was burdened with the trauma of the war. He had survived the genocide but had become morally handicapped. Similarly to Lewicki, Jan's representative mentioned another person who was marked by the offence, which was the mother of the defendant. He appealed for life imprisonment rather than death for the sake of Jan's ailing mother (*Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 307, 5 November: 15–16). Warenhaupt, who defended Maria, used all the means at his disposal to refute the woman's confession of killing Helena Süskind. He contrasted the letter of the law with other values such as those of the heart, feelings and humanity in his speech: "Refer to your heart, affection, and humanity rather than the letter of the law."[5] He ended his speech with the following words: "do not kill these poor people, save their lives"[6] (*Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 307, 5 November: 16).

In light of what has been established thus far, we can conclude that two issues dominated the court narrative. Firstly, the court speeches feature Emanuel Kant's formalism, which can be summarised by the famous principle *dura lex sed lex*. To paraphrase the Latin maxim, violating the binding rules justifies

4 "Niech wyrok ten wytrąci morderczą broń z ręki tych, którzy by kiedykolwiek chcieli pójść w ślady Maliszów!"

5 "Nie kierujcie się suchą literą prawa, tylko względem serca, uczucia i ludzkości."

6 "Nie zabijajcie tych biednych ludzi, darujcie im życie."

punishment. The prosecutor and the judges, as agents of the state, strongly adhered to the legal provisions, irrespective of the existing doubts as to the justness of the verdict and the mental state of the defendants. The second issue that surfaces in the court narrative is that of (true) justice. Jan and Maria's defence lawyers opposed the formal, rigid law and appealed to sympathy and common sense instead.

3. 1933 press commentaries on the case

The case that shook Cracow also attracted the press. During his testimony, Jan confessed that he had been inspired by one of the articles published in *Tajny Detektyw* (Undercover Detective), which gave an account of the robbery of a postman. In light of the anthropological school of criminal law, *Tajny Detektyw* presented Jan and Maria as beasts devoid of any human features, who were predisposed to crime. In number 42, the article titled "Ludzie-Bestje" ("People-Beasts") was published in which we can find biographies of the culprits. The bestiality of the couple is not only indicated by the suggestive title, but also by one of the sections of the text "Historja Potwornej Pary" ("The History of the Bestial Couple"). Jan is introduced as a greedy man who used to spend most of his time at parties. He is referred to as "niebieski ptak" (parasite), the expression that in Polish depicts a person who is careless, spendthrift and lives at the expense of others. Likewise, Maria is portrayed as a woman leading a frivolous lifestyle. It is no wonder, we read, that Maria's family did not support the girl and her husband. They simply did not wish to offer food and shelter to people who had no prospects of correction. The language used to refer to the Malisz pair implies their alleged degeneration and guilt, for example, "mordercy" (murderers), "zbrodnicza para" (felonious couple), "dobrana para" (well-suited couple), "młodociany zbrodniarz" (juvenile delinquent), "ohydny czyn" (heinous act) (*Tajny Detektyw*, vol. 3, 1933, no. 42, 14 October: 3). The article "W Sieci Pająka" ("Inside a Spider Web") in number 43 depicts Jan as a spider who uses his web covertly to entangle and destroy anyone who gets in his way. The text asserts that he was the mastermind behind the carefully planned crime (*Tajny Detektyw*, vol. 3, 1933, no. 43, 21 October: 4–5). The same tone is preserved in another article published in number 45. The journalist debates the origin of criminal conduct, indicating three driving forces that incited an individual to break the law. The readers are informed that the inclination to commit crime rests on three elements: genetics, upbringing and social conditions. Regarding Jan and Maria, it was also their alleged weak morality and will that encouraged them to murder. The narrative of dehumanisation reverberates in this text too. The focus is on the defendants' appearances. Jan is depicted as a handsome

man with a vulgar, poker face. Maria is portrayed as ugly, slim and dark-eyed. The text further reads that Maria's persona constitutes a constellation of many unpleasant features not desired in a woman. It is not hard to see parallels between the portraits of the culprits and typical depictions of offenders in the anthropological school of criminal law that was briefly introduced above. Then the personality of the partners in crime is investigated. Jan is presented as an impulsive and aggressive man. According to *Tajny Detektyw,* Maria is a fallen woman with an overly mature sexual life who is also a suicidal addict (*Tajny Detektyw*, vol. 3, 1933, no. 45, 5 November: 3).

Similar depictions of the couple appeared in other media. *Kurjer Polski*, number 301, presented Jan as a degenerate villain. The Polish word *degenerat* is used to denote a person with no moral values. Jan is compared to his two elder brothers. The criminal's siblings gained an education and found employment in public administration. In stark contrast to his brothers, Jan did not learn any profession. Maria is depicted as a woman notorious in Cracow's criminal world (*Kurjer Polski*, vol. 36, 1933, no. 30: 6). *Express Mazowiecki*, another magazine from interwar Poland, repeated the narrative. Number 284 includes the criminal history of both offenders. We find here a short note about Maria's previous marriage with Kocwa. It is emphasised that Maria had been Kocwa's wife only for three years, implying the emotional instability of the woman. After the divorce, she joined Cracow's scum of the earth (*Express Mazowiecki*, vol. 4, 1933, no. 284: 1). Similarly to *Kurjer Polski*, *Express Mazowiecki* refers to the couple's degeneracy, in number 303. It is even implied that Jan was homosexual before marrying Maria and had affairs with men (*Express Mazowiecki*, vol. 4, 1933, no. 303: 1). Number 304 raises the issue of Jan's artistic gifts. He was a talented man, but his artistic soul was tarnished by his poor morale. If he had had more moral balance, as we read in this text, he could have played a significant role in the world of art (*Express Mazowiecki*, vol. 4, 1933, no. 304: 2). *Kurjer Polski* in number 302 pays heed to the outward features of the Malisz couple. Jan is compared to Konrad Veidt, a German actor. He is introduced as slim, tall and wide-eyed with an attractive profile. Maria is depicted as short-haired and dark, resembling a servant or a schoolgirl. Number 302 also discusses the crime's motivations. During the trial, the couple admitted that poverty drove them to rob. It is, however, inconsistent with their conduct after the tragic events on Pańska Street. Soon after killing their victims, they squandered money at restaurants and cabarets. They did not try to save money for a better future. The text, which was a commentary on the testimony delivered by Jan in court, concluded that the offender's speech painted a picture of a morally weak man prone to lying, greediness and sham, destroyed by the war and post-war conditions (*Kurjer*

Polski, vol. 36, 1933, no. 302: 7). Jan and Maria were depicted in a negative light in *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*. In number 284, for example, the criminal past of the culprits is highlighted. Interestingly, the paper implies that Jan was incited to murder by Maria, his wife (*Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 284, 13 October: 8). The analogous accusation is levied against Maria in *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny* in number 286. The press cites the testimony of a man named Słotwicz, the owner of a shop with paintings who was also selling Jan's art, claiming that Jan was influenced by Maria (*Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 1933, no. 286, 15 October: 17).

Before concluding this part, let us add that Jan and Maria's trial did not only hit the first pages of the 1933 newspapers. It also stirred the attention of the men of art. The trial became the topic of mass culture,[7] as evidenced by a 1934 song by Jan Lidke titled "Straszna Zbrodnia Maliszów" ["The Horrible Crime of the Malisz Couple"]. This piece of work, written in the form of rhyming stanzas, tells the story of Jan and Maria's trial. It goes into detail about the case, including the planning of the crime, the murder of Helena, Michał Süskind and Walenty Przebinda, and the arrest of the perpetrators by the police. The poem ends with a verdict. The tone of the text tallies with the 1933 press coverage. Jan and Maria are named by the author "zbrodniarze" (murderers), which highlights their degeneration and malice. The song also implies that the robbery and murder were planned. Nothing is revealed about the real circumstances of the shooting. Also, the author praises the police and the court. The poem reads that Jan and Maria were sentenced to death after a careful examination of the case which, considering the summary procedure, is far from being true (Lidke 1934: 2–5).

4. Grzegorz Królikiewicz's *Na Wylot* (1972)

The social revolution that took place in the 1960s augured changes in criminal law and criminology. All the new approaches aimed at fighting oppressive, unjust, discriminatory and inhumane building blocks of the social order. The criminologists of that time started to perceive crime and criminals through new lenses. The offenders who experienced poverty and social exclusion were seen as the victims of the economic situation. The subjective approach to an individual also changed the narration about the law. The postmodernist re-definition of the social world threw new light on the principle *dura lex sed lex*, which was viewed as the marker of injustice (O'Brien, Majid 2016: 128–129; Austen, Cowburn 2013: 21–3; Taylor et. al. 1973). The subjectivity of criminal

7 In the interwar period, writing poems and songs about the trials was common, as evidenced by the ballad authored by Adolf Dolleczek-Opiński about Rita Gorgonowa's trial.

liability, a humane approach and sensitivity, were three determinants of the legal changes that have influenced the perception of the case of Jan and Maria. One of the illustrations of the new interpretation of the trial of Jan and his wife Maria is Grzegorz Królikiewicz's film.

In 1972, Grzegorz Królikiewicz directed a film titled *Na Wylot* with Franciszek Trzeciak and Anna Nieborowska starring in the main roles. The film, classified in the subject literature as one of the masterpieces of Polish cinematography, is a psychological drama that revolves around the intense relationship between Jan and Maria. Królikiewicz's intention was not to make a courtroom drama with legal roller coasters but a film about people overwhelmed by consuming emotions, passions and personal demons, trapped in the social and economic upheavals of 1933. The Polish director sought inspiration from cinema direct and expressionism. *Na Wylot* also echoes the 1960 American film *Primary*, featuring John F. Kennedy (Dondzik 2019: 170–189).

The music composed by Henryk Kuźniak and Janusz Hajduk adds special effects. A recurring musical theme that repeats throughout the film is Hanka Ordonówna's evergreen *Na pierwszy znak* which was a hit in 1933 in Poland. The story is told through black-and-white images and music. There are almost no dialogues. The characters are silent in most parts of the film. The camera is focused on their facial expressions, eyes and body language instead. The audience has to decode the meaning of the visual and auditory material. The viewer is bombarded with single, silent scenes from the lives of Jan and Maria backed by music. We see the scene of a drinking spree in an alcoholic den in Cracow with Maria in the distance, a photography studio in which Jan worked, or a scene of Jan and Maria's wedding in church and, in the finale, the court scene.

Królikiewicz did not emulate the portraits of Jan and Maria presented by the 1933 court and press. His Jan has nothing in common with the image of this character that appears in the Polish interwar magazines. As explained earlier, to the 1933 audience, Jan was a person of attractive appearance. When looking at the photographs published by the press, attention is instantly caught by his strange, big eyes that show wickedness. Jan in the film is the complete opposite of the man created by the 1933 press. Królikiewicz presents Jan as an average individual who does not stand out from the crowd. Small and slim, he does not resemble Conrad Veidt. The issue of Jan and Maria's mental states was paramount to the court. In the film, Jan does not show any psychotic traits. The crime scene, concealed from the viewer by the image of a closed door, reveals that Jan was overwhelmed by sudden panic. He is extremely brutal and unable to control his behaviour. After the murder, he utters a terrifying scream, which might be an indication of his awakening from his frenzy. One scene gives some

insight into Maria's mental condition. At the beginning of the film, we see her making repetitive, compulsive gestures with her hands. She is restless and nervous. The sound effects in the distance intensify the feeling of emotional arousal.

5. The case goes to the Internet

Technological advancement has allowed for the re-discovery of old, forgotten cases. The protagonists from old newspapers have returned to public view. One of the criminal cases that has attracted the attention of contemporary audiences is the trial of Jan and Maria. It is worth presenting the Internet narrative of the case as it shows the changes in the perception of the couple, especially regarding their guilt and punishment. Two examples will suffice.

The case of Jan and Maria was the subject of the podcast *Kryminatorium* entitled "Napad na listonosza. Plan Maliszów" ("The Attack on the Postman. The Malisz's Plan"). It was also analysed in another podcast "Zbrodnie Zapomniane" ("The Forgotten Crimes"). Jan and Maria were the dramatis personae of one of the episodes of this podcast "Sprawa Maliszów: Najgłośniejszy proces międzywojennego Krakowa" ("The Case of the Malisz Couple: The Most Famous Trial of the Interwar Cracow"). The comments posted by anonymous viewers demonstrate the shift in perception of the case. What surfaces in the material is sympathy for the criminals. Many viewers admit that they were moved by the story of the culprits. Some of them shed tears when listening to the tragic story of the lovers. Jan and Maria are not ostracised as was the case in the 1933 discourse. The viewers mention the social conditions of the 1930s that prompted Jan and Maria to commit the crime. Extreme poverty and a lack of institutional support made these people criminals. Some comments refer to the law of the 1930s which is seen as unjust and biased. If tried today, comments one of the viewers, the couple would be sentenced to 25 years, not the death penalty. The summary procedure did not find support in the opinions of Internet commentators. Some critics put the blame for the crime on the owner of the photography studio in Mikołów who placed the charges on Jan for theft. The man deprived Jan of employment, which had a bearing on the decision to rob and murder. The portrait of Maria is also drastically different in the contemporary readings of the case. The female commentators describe her as a victim of abuse and violence rather than a fallen, promiscuous woman who should be condemned. What is also interesting, Maria's appearance is judged differently. Through the eyes of contemporary observers, Maria is seen as a young, pretty girl, entirely alone in the world. Her devotion to her husband is frequently raised by the viewers. Internet commentators paid attention to the couple's great, almost unreal love (Myszka; "Zbrodnie Zapomniane").

6. Conclusions

According to Touri's theory, law is rooted in culture. To be more specific, there are strong connections and interdependencies between law and culture. In the present paper, we examined the legal narrative about the case of Jan and Maria Malisz and we compared it with its counterpart in popular culture and the media. Based on the analysed case, we can conclude that the law operates predominantly at a deep culture level. The legal provisions do not convey the entire knowledge about the law in a specific case. The existential dimension of law and its effect on the specific situation can be reconstructed from the narrative referring to deep levels of the law, i.e. the legal culture and the culture of legal professions such as judges and lawyers. The reception of legal narratives by public opinion is also significant. In this study, we extended Touri's theory by supplementing it with the analysis of comparative and source materials. We exposed the aspect of the changeability and dependence of law on culture over time. As the research conducted here has demonstrated, the same concepts, which are perceived as deeply and permanently rooted in a legal way of thinking (justice, punishment and liability), are read and understood differently depending on the social and cultural contexts. What is more, the very assessment of the facts important for the recognition of the case by the court is also contingent on a specific historical moment. The narratives discussed in this paper allow us to answer the question of how has the public perception of the case of Jan and Maria changed. A half-century after the couple was sentenced, the public perception of the trial and the defendants shifted dramatically. It seems that the experience of the Second World War boosted the shift in attitudes toward crime and criminals. The individualization and subjectification of the case characterise the post-war discourse. What is also quite interesting is that the case of Jan and Maria brings to light the evolution in the perception of women thanks to the second wave of feminism.

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| Abstract

In 1933, Cracow was the scene of a brutal murder of three people: Helena and Michał Süskind and Walenty Przebinda, a postman. The bloody slaughter of the victims had taken place on Pańska street, in the city centre of Cracow. It was soon revealed that the crime had been perpetrated by the impoverished couple Jan and Maria Malisz. The speedy public trial of the culprits ended with two death sentences. Jan was hanged after rendering the verdict. His wife Maria escaped death by being pardoned by the president of Poland, Ignacy Mościcki (1867–1946). The case triggered the attention of many commentators. It was widely described in the press. It was also the topic of many books and papers, especially documentaries dealing with the theme of famous crimes in Poland in the 1930s. Despite the great interest in the case, no critical research has been devoted thereto, which is the rationale behind this scholarly contribution. The paper discusses how the case of Jan and Maria was framed in various narratives. The analysis combines social, legal and popular culture perspectives and entails such sources as court documents, the press coverage, post-war legal documentaries, and Internet forums, as well as the 1972 film *Na Wylot* directed by Grzegorz Królikiewicz (1939–2017). It is of particular interest to show how the case was presented in the source material. The paper also investigates the effect of such a presentation on the changing perception of the case in question. The case prompts discussion on issues such as female versus male crime, partnership in crime, victim-oriented versus perpetrator-oriented approaches, and the intersection between legal and popular culture narratives. As far as the methodology is concerned, it employs Kaarlo Tuori's theory of three levels of the law.

Keywords: law, language, narratives, Jan and Maria Malisz, culture, society

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.4

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Menachem Kaiser's Quest for Family Heirloom and the Aftermath of Historical Trauma

Menachem Kaiser's debut *Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure* (2021), winner of the 2022 Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature, is a third-generation account of a Jewish Canadian writer's multiple journeys to Poland, where his family, many of whom perished in the Holocaust, had once lived.[1] Speaking with writer Maia Ipp, who accompanied Kaiser on a trip to Poland, and Arielle Angel, editor of *Jewish Currents*, which published their conversation, Kaiser points out some generic limitations of the staple "3G (third-generation) memoir," such as its sentimental tenor and contrived sense of illumination experienced by a first-person narrator. "A lot of these 3G books are, I feel, stuck on that first stage of horror and grief," he notes, adding that readers:

> want very personal stories with big, universal themes. They want to hear about someone who went somewhere and had a series of epiphanies. Often what gets neglected is geography [and although] there is a relationship with history…, if it's not anchored in the place, it gets very diffused. (Angel)

1 A Polish translation of *Plunder* was published in May 2023; a Dutch edition was published in 2021 and a German edition is forthcoming.

A generalized relationship to history bespeaks the "3G" memoir's investment in postmemory (Hirsch) and, more specifically, in trauma transmitted from the generation who experienced the Holocaust first-hand to their children and grandchildren, for example, via lacunae of silence engulfing events and figures from the past. Attempts by third-generation vicarious witnesses to address trauma experienced by Holocaust survivors may prompt a problematic identification with them, an eventuality which should exact an obligation to mark the distance dividing contemporary writers from past actors and events (LaCapra). The genre is thus ridden with ethical and esthetic pitfalls, as Kaiser's mocking mention of serial epiphanies suggests.

The "3G" memoir answers also to a different ethical imperative—and a related esthetic challenge—to instill and preserve an awareness of the Holocaust in those who may have only a tenuous personal connection to it, or no such connection at all. Difficulties posed by this challenge, which the passing of time makes increasingly common, have occasioned debates about the appropriateness of blockbusters such as Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), which lionizes non-Jewish Germans at the expense of Jewish background characters (Loshitzhky), and of such out-on-a-limb depictions as Roberto Begnini's sentimental comedy *La vita è bella* (*Life Is Beautiful*, 1997) about a father heroically protecting his young son from knowledge that they are inmates in a Nazi camp (Gilman). How can contemporary representations of the Holocaust and of its aftermath, including those by second- and third-generation writers, avoid instrumentalizing historical trauma?

Finally, writers tracing their family members' fate in the Holocaust face objective obstacles which may prevent them from learning about the past. How does one research events whose archive "has been demolished as a component of genocidal violence" so that, like Walter Benjamin in *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, one is "writing about the past when finding oneself among the debris of violence" (Navaro 163)? Yael Navaro suggests that writing in the aftermath of mass violence requires a "negative" methodology, one acknowledging the cognitive and ethical limitations of such a project.

Attuned to these challenges, Kaiser speculates that the "3G" memoir's generic possibilities will likely be exhausted: "It could be that for the next 30 years, we'll just have memoirs of people going to Poland" (Angel). Could these travelogues become less formulaic without losing sight of the Holocaust and of the aftermath of trauma? *Plunder* raises this very question and attempts an unexpected answer.

Kaiser's memoir has at least two notable predecessors. While unacknowledged, they are important to mention because *Plunder* is a rhetorical tour de

force on a par with them. The similarity to Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002) lies in Kaiser's use of outrageous humor, especially when describing local helpers. For example, Kaiser's impressions of his lawyer, an elderly woman nicknamed the Killer, are unrelentingly comedic, as is her daughter and helper's misnomer, "forever book," a literal (mis)translation from Polish for mortgage register. To give another example, a scene in which Kaiser socializes with Nazi-era treasure hunters in Lower Silesia swiftly descends into slapstick as they all sit around a bonfire downing beers and shots while Menachem, whom they have nicknamed Manhattan, and who is himself drunk, attempts to have a meaningful conversation. Kaiser's humor exoticizes these locals, for example, by citing their imperfect English and their propensity for excessive drinking, in a manner reminiscent of Foer's work; both writers use humor to subvert the convention of a sentimental pilgrimage with its attendant epiphanies. *Plunder*, however, is nonfiction. This may make readers more interested in the story: "I do wonder if people are less patient and less receptive if you don't have a familial connection," Kaiser remarks (Angel). On the downside, writing nonfiction prevents him from simply inventing things; for example, little is learned about his long-dead grandfather, whose papers originate his quest. (Kaiser admits to creating a minor composite character, however, suggesting how easily the divide between fiction and nonfiction is crossed.)

Another prominent predecessor is Daniel Mendelsohn's monumental memoir *The Lost: The Search for Six of Six Million* (2006). Like Mendelsohn's account of his investigation into his ancestors' past, *Plunder* consists of twists and turns which read like a detective story. Moreover, like Mendelsohn, Kaiser interlaces his narrative with argumentative points drawn from the Judaic tradition, though he eschews Mendelsohn's erudite style.[2] For example, when noting the various blind alleys down which he goes again and again—mistakes that "put into relief and reinforce the distance between you and whatever or whoever it is you think you are connecting with… [and which thus] (e)xpose the fiction of sentimentalism,"—Kaiser compares a no-longer relevant narrative detail, in this case, a house which he mistook for the one that had belonged to his grandfather's family, to

> an object that is *kadosh*, holy [but which] loses its holiness—like a Torah scroll that loses a couple of letters and thus becomes unusable—it does not then become spiritually meaningless, does not revert to a mundane

2 Mendelsohn is a classics scholar and author of a previous memoir *The Elusive* Embrace (1999) about his identity as a gay man, in which he draws on the ancient Greek tradition.

> object; rather it becomes an object that once was holy, and must be treated accordingly: you cannot put it in the trash, you have to give it a proper burial. (Kaiser, *Plunder* 171)

Kaiser's investigative approach and his palimpsestic commentary are strikingly like Mendelsohn's, creating a sense of emotional and intellectual distance from the past.

What distinguishes Kaiser's work from his predecessors is meta-level critique of the "3G" genre as dependent on a market niche in which it prospers. This critique rings loud and clear even though multiple passages have apparently been excised. In the *Jewish Currents* conversation, aptly titled "Selling the Holocaust," Kaiser is forthcoming about the extent to which his original manuscript and the book that finally saw the light of day differ. Paradoxically, the reason behind the revisions, which he insists he does not regret, was commercial, "I've been warned not to say this, but I didn't go into this without careerist ambition," he admits. And with a nod toward his growing readership, he adds, "(a)t some point I came to terms with the fact that I'm not writing for me, even though it's my story" (Angel). Kaiser's acknowledgement and exploration of his own mixed motives for delving into a past indelibly marked by atrocities of the Holocaust—in particular, of motives which may be read as ulterior—make his memoir stand out. The very title, *Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure*, speaks to his unusual approach. Kaiser opens with a description of his idyllic childhood but soon enough his close-knit extended family is rent apart by a conflict over inheritance and a wedge is driven between his father and his father's brother. In turn, Kaiser's subsequent decision to visit Poland is triggered by a sheaf of papers belonging to his long-dead grandfather, documenting the man's erstwhile attempt to obtain compensation for a house in Sosnowiec which his family had owned before the war. With copies of these documents in hand, Kaiser hires the Killer to help him win back the property, and his journey is launched.

A focus on property, rather than on more elusive ghosts of the past, distinguishes Kaiser's memoir from the usual pilgrimage plot. On the one hand, the stakes are raised because money is involved, and readers' interest is sparked in an unexpected way; on the other, emphasizing property chops away at the sentimental presumption of a vicarious identification with long-dead relatives. Instead of learning about their lives or the ways they died, Kaiser zeroes in on real estate, which seems, *prima facie*, the more palpable object. This deliberately crass focus makes his account more authentic by suggesting that the "3G" memoir is itself a business venture whose generic conventions obscure

the economic aspect. But the goal of reclaiming property proves more elusive than might be expected while it also produces some surprising results. As he tries to locate his family's house and attends to the painstakingly slow court proceedings, Kaiser meets others questing for objects from the past. He gets to know an informal community of people whose hobby it is to search for lost, abandoned, and hidden valuables, mostly dating to World War Two. He notes:

> My experience with the treasure hunters ended up being very freeing: it put the blankness I felt toward my grandfather's story into relief and allowed me to be honest about my ambivalence. And the story got so weird that I felt I had no choice but to try and write it. (Angel)

Lower Silesia, where the treasure hunters operate, is thought to be rife with Nazi-era troves left behind by the retreating German forces and the fleeing German population. To illustrate, in 2015, Polish and international media were momentarily captivated by reports of a train supposedly hidden inside a mountain near the city of Wałbrzych, a former mining center which, pre-war, was called Waldenburg. The train reputedly contained gold and looted artworks, perhaps even the famed Amber Room, stolen by the Nazis from St. Petersburg and itself a veritable epitome of wartime trove. Ultimately, a frenzy of excavations yielded no result. Kaiser, who relates this anecdote, visits Wałbrzych because he is interested in a stupefying, if relatively little-known secret Nazi project called Riese (Giant), which the Third Reich undertook toward the end of the war. Riese is an uncompleted underground complex of enormous maze-like tunnels and chambers inside some mountains near Wałbrzych. It was built by Jewish slave laborers, inmates of the Gross-Rosen camps, most of whom died from extreme exertion combined with inhumane treatment and harsh conditions. The exact purpose of the project remains unknown. Parts of the Riese complex are now accessible to guided tours and it is at least somewhat likely that other parts remain undiscovered. Unsurprisingly, the Riese complex is of great interest to treasure hunters. The legend of a train filled with gold, hidden inside a mountain, relies in no small part on the existence of this maze of underground tunnels.

Kaiser meets the treasure hunters through a Polish nonfiction writer Joanna Lamparska, who has published extensively on alleged wartime troves, and who mentions Kaiser in her recent book, reciprocating his mention of her (Lamparska 70). Through this connection Kaiser learns that virtually the only primary source on the Riese complex is a part-diary, part-memoir written by one Abraham Kajzer, a survivor of Gross Rosen who, as an inmate, kept

a secret diary on scraps of cement paper which he hid in latrines. This other Kajzer lost his family in Auschwitz before he was transferred to Gross Rosen, and then from one Gross Rosen camp to another. He eventually managed to escape and found refuge when a young German woman hid him in the cellar of her family's farmhouse. After the war, Kajzer recovered his notes from the now defunct camps and, in 1947, presented them to Adam Ostoja, a writer and publisher in Łódź. The notes were translated from Yiddish into Polish, and the diary/memoir was published only in 1962 as *Za drutami śmierci* (Behind the Wires of Death), with a preface by Ostoja. The reason for the delay of some fifteen years is unknown. In those intervening years, Kajzer left Poland for Israel, where he rejoined his sister and remarried, and where a Hebrew version of his book appeared as early as in 1952 as *Bein Hamitzarim* (Dire Straits). This edition garnered little attention, however. By contrast, the Polish version has been reissued, given a new introduction, and has had multiple reprints, becoming a must-read for anyone interested in the Riese complex. It is currently available at several Riese museum shops. Like the Riese complex itself, whose mysterious purpose and impressive scale may inspire awe before recalling the Jewish slave laborers who constructed it, Kajzer's diary is apparently examined by treasure hunters for its incidental geographic and technical detail rather than because it gives testimony to the Holocaust. As Kaiser notes, the Hebrew edition was a noble but insignificant book, while the Polish one proved significant but ignoble (Kaiser 2021b: 212). Its publication history and diverse reception in Israel and Poland function in *Plunder* as a token symbol for the very question Kaiser is raising about the problematic territory in Holocaust writing between the merely crass and the overly sentimental.

Confronted with a piece of life writing by another man named Kaiser/Kajzer (in Polish, these names are homophones), Kaiser begins to investigate Kajzer's past and, to his great surprise, learns that Abraham Kajzer was his grandfather's first cousin. His family's seeming ignorance about a close relative who survived the war is itself an enigma which Kaiser leaves unexplored, suggesting that *Plunder* is built around deliberate and accidental omissions as much as around revelations. Moreover, once the treasure hunters learn that Kaiser is related to the man who wrote the book which they revere, they hail him as Kajzer's grandson, a misunderstanding which Kaiser tries but fails to rectify. Kaiser is thus misrecognized, however involuntarily, as a direct descendant of a man whom the treasure hunters celebrate as a hero, albeit for the wrong reason—one of the mistakes that "put into relief and reinforce the distance between you and whatever or whoever it is you think you are connecting with." As the discovery of Kajzer's diary puts Kaiser in touch with his newly found Israeli

relatives and with the children of the German woman who had safeguarded Kajzer as a fugitive and who may have been his lover, Kaiser eventually learns more about Kajzer than he ever does about his grandfather. At one point, as he is watching archival 8 mm footage of his grandfather's family trying to act natural in front of the camera, he thinks that the essence of being a family may lie in pretending to be one. His search thus leads to disenchantment rather than epiphany, but also to discoveries different from the ones he had expected.

To claim his inheritance Kaiser must legally assert that his relatives, who co-owned the house in Sosnowiec, are deceased. Claims to this effect are filed with two different courts, in the cities where they had lived before the war. One of the judges immediately rules that Kaiser's relatives have died, even though the exact circumstances of their deaths are unknown, as is of course typical of Holocaust victims. The other judge is more inquisitive and more obstinate, and she rules against the claimant. Kaiser and the Killer appeal her decision, but they lose again, prompting a suspicion of anti-Semitic intent which Kaiser recognizes as ingrained in his family's attitude toward Poles. He hires another lawyer who explains that the Killer had made a technical mistake in her original filing and thus triggered the wrong legal procedure; one judge generously overlooked her error, but another did not, so the latter claim must be filed anew. *Plunder* thus ends without the property being reclaimed. Kaiser remarks that, in the meantime, the Polish judicial system has come under duress from the right-wing regime, as has also Polish historians' right to investigate the Holocaust.

In the memoir's closing scene, Kaiser is involved in another man's treasure hunt, as he and his American acquaintance attempt to recover some golden eggs which the man's father-in-law allegedly hid in an attic many decades earlier. The scene of their search ends in suspense, although Kaiser hints that if the treasure should be missing, it may have been retrieved by another person. The lack of a resolution to this final treasure hunt supplies a fitting end to a narrative which deliberately underscores the economic aspects of Holocaust remembrance, and which withholds the satisfaction of an ultimate revelation.

To read *Plunder* only as critique of the "3G" memoir would be too narrow, however. By focusing on property, Kaiser gives material substance to trauma, and he does so on multiple levels. His family is affected by a rift between its close-knit members, as illustrated by a fight over money between his father and his uncle. Such familial rifts may feel like open wounds, especially to a child whose idyllic perspective is suddenly disrupted. Another rift apparently occurred, for reasons unbeknownst to us and perhaps to Kaiser himself, between his grandfather and his grandfather's first cousin. Although both men have died, the aftermath of their estrangement is made manifest when Kaiser

unexpectedly learns of the latter man's existence. It reverberates in unwitting mistakes, as when the treasure hunters confuse the two relatives by wrongly referring to Kaiser as Kajzer's grandson.

The aftermath of historical trauma persists also in the present condition of Poland, as described by Kaiser, especially in its self-conflicted relationship to Polish Jews, their history, and the symbolic and material heritage they left behind. The word "plunder" in the memoir's title may suggest the looting, repossession, and appropriation of Jewish property by non-Jewish Poles in the aftermath of the Holocaust and wartime upheaval. And while Kaiser's suspicion that a ruling against him is rooted in anti-Semitism is dispersed, contradictory outcomes of exactly parallel legal proceedings point to an underlying ambivalence toward Jewish genocide victims, the circumstances of their deaths, and their descendants' outstanding property claims.[3]

While the Nazi treasure hunters are mostly amateurs enjoying outdoor adventure, a visit to the home of the most successful among them reveals that his quest is not just financially motivated, but an obsession. An impressive collection of Nazi memorabilia suggests to Kaiser that the man is acting out a desire for revenge, implying some unfinished emotional business with respect to World War Two—an aftermath of historical trauma materially in evidence in Lower Silesia, which changed hands at the end of the war. Interlacing layers of historical trauma include the fate of Jewish inmates laboring in the Gross Rosen camps, the subsequent flight of the German population, and the newly arrived Poles resettled from territories lost to the Soviet Union. The entire region is an open wound, something that the abandoned Riese complex embodies and represents.

The aftermath of historical trauma thus extends beyond Holocaust survivors and their descendants, without excluding them. The town of Sosnowiec, where Kaiser's relatives' house is located and where the memoir's closing scene takes place, is situated at a geographical point at which the three parts into which Poland had been split prior to 1918 physically met; the city's very location is therefore a marker of historical trauma. The plight of the Jews of Sosnowiec, palpably manifested by their forcibly abandoned and abruptly hidden property, such as the house Kaiser is trying to reclaim, and the golden eggs sought by another man, functions in a palimpsestic relation to other instances of historical violence. If

3 This ambivalence was confirmed several months after *Plunder* was published, when Poland adopted a law limiting the filing of long-standing property claims. This development, criticized by descendants of Holocaust victims and by others, is readable as an extratextual coda to Kaiser's memoir both because it speaks to this ambivalence and because it reinforces the sense of irresolution inherent in his narrative.

the staple "3G" memoir, as Kaiser notes, has a diffused relationship with history due to its neglect of geography, *Plunder* offers a corrective by treating places as indelibly marked by the aftermath of specific events, prominently including the Holocaust. Kaiser's "negative" method of avoiding vicarious identifications and false epiphanies is reinforced by an unexpected focus on the interdependency of emotional and economic investments, which are themselves firmly anchored in historically determined places. This focus grounds the memoir in the available material evidence and saves it from sentimentalism.

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| Abstract

TOMASZ BASIUK
Menachem Kaiser's Quest for Family Heirloom and the Aftermath of Historical Trauma

Menachem Kaiser's *Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure* (2021) critiques the generic limitations of the "3G" (third-generation) memoir by pointing to its frequently sentimental tenor and facile epiphanies, perpetuated by the publishing market. *Plunder* focuses instead on material traces of the past and on Kaiser's effort to reclaim property left behind by his relatives in Poland. This approach allows Kaiser to address the aftermath of historical trauma without vicariously identifying with Holocaust victims or survivors.

Keywords: "3G" (third-generation) memoir, aftermath, Holocaust, trauma

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.5

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Industrial Spaces That Won't Go Away

The creation of hearts of darkness, industrial sites where, like in Dante's underworld, "the sun is silent" (Dante 29) was a condition of modernity. These places were cloaked in plumes of smoke, nearly smog, and stamped with both filth and with the perfection of technology. The hearts of darkness were located far from the centers of culture and politics, and encountering them was often an unwelcome surprise (cf. Tomczok 2022). In a somewhat diagnostic and somewhat prognostic passage, Karl Marx writes:

> Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange—of the means of communication and transport—**the annihilation of space by time**—becomes an extraordinary necessity for it. (Marx 1993: 524)

Under capitalism, space was destined to be annihilated and was certainly subject to obliteration as economic data and commodity flows were taking center stage. Nature, too, which provided raw materials for human labor, was to recede into indefinite distance. In the Anthropocene era, this natural space is starting to penetrate the public sphere with increasing force. It was amidst debates about the memory of World War II that German historian Ernst Nolte wrote a controversial article about a past that won't go away (Nolte 1987). We

can borrow this phrase for investigating the presence of space, especially industrial space. Today, the memory of the Holocaust and World War II provides a paradigm for speaking about the difficult problems of the past and present, as well as about contaminated landscapes (cf. Pollack). This paradigm also lends itself to describing not only genocide, but also ecocide, living and dying in environments scarred by the many traumas that come with industrialization.

Much as talking about the past can be difficult, it can also be difficult to turn to one's closest space. Although I have always lived in an industrial area, for years I averted my scholarly gaze from that space: the closed and demolished industrial plants I have walked past or driven past on many occasions. Today, when many of these plants have vanished without a trace, this space is haunted by specters of uncertainty as there might be hidden contamination, or potential damage to the area which is either flooded or collapsing, lifeless or, on the contrary, full of life that thrives in the deserted grounds. These ghostly sites are becoming interesting to researchers as sites of the Anthropocene, places that have been transformed by humans and are teeming with visible and hidden vestiges of the industrial past.

The dream of the annihilation of space and the return of space in the Anthropocene carry a structure akin to the relationship of trauma and shock. The Promethean promises of modernity were headed in a completely different direction: the world was supposed to become safe for humans as they dissociated themselves from perilous nature. The aftermath of this shock is the idea of catastrophe portrayed as a desert: desolation, absence of life and light, smog and dust. This, however, does not have to be the end—neither of history nor of our fantasy. As Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing writes in her book on the world after the end of the world, there are several ways of telling the story of industrialization (Tsing 18). The first one focuses on progress and the conquest of empty spaces by pioneers who transform them into sites of industrial civilization. The second story is a story of destruction—of lost habitats and landscapes. But there is also a third story: that of life in ruins, life in a world blighted by destruction. A hermeneutics of such life is what we need most today: a hermeneutics that will help us relinquish the narrative of the conquest of nature and produce a new idea of it (Williams 84). To do this, writes Raymond Williams, we need to give up the separation of ecology and economics, to show how they are intertwined in multiple ways, to show the covert presence of economics in ecology and ecology in economics.

In the first part of the article, I consider this issue by discussing various theoretical works, most notably Jason W. Moore's concept of the Capitalocene and of historical nature. In the second part, I refer to a variety of cultural texts,

mainly films and photo albums, which show such possible entanglements in which the traumas of the land afflicted by industrialization speak. The second part centers on the space of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin, the region most affected by the changes in space (Tomaszek 62–67). Since the postwar era, diagnoses of the ecological catastrophe in the Coal Basin have called for plans for environmental remediation, which were usually dropped on account of the pressure for rapid industrialization. Only the economic transformation of the last thirty years has limited environmental destruction at the price of economic degradation of many cities, towns and settlements. In the conclusion, I pose a question about the hermeneutics of living in a space impacted by environmental trauma, about ways of dealing with the problems of living in spaces that are at least potentially contaminated.

1. Failed annihilations of space

For much of the past few years, knowledge helped us to turn away from the surrounding space. Categories such as language, discourse, spectacle, and simulation have ensured that we live in a mediated world rather than in a directly experienced world (cf., e.g. Debord). Even critical studies have concentrated on analyzing ideology, speculation and the world of abstract finance, as if oblivious that global capitalism also organizes real spaces and condemns many of them to contamination and degradation. Fredric Jameson stated that "when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good [we get] a more fully human world than the older one, but one in which 'culture' has become a veritable 'second nature'" (Jameson 1991: IX). The second, man-made nature, was to be a human world elevated to the status of a natural certainty, while the human living environment was to remain forever artificial and open to change, which would be determined by political decisions. The world after nature (cf. Horn 51), the world of the end of nature, therefore institutes the reality of human domination, the subjugation of the mysterious powers of nature, which can be replaced by a fully human world, albeit one that brings new dangers. The postmodern belief in mediated access to reality, along with the absence of reality, could quite well illustrate the situation of European and North American industry, which in the last decades of the 20th century began to disappear from traditional industrial districts, leaving behind a void that has defined the livelihood of several generations, doomed to unemployment and social decline (cf. Edensor; Raphael).

The great return of space to debates in the humanities has come with the category of the Anthropocene and the treatment of humans as a geological force (cf. Bińczyk; Chakrabarthy). Discussions revolving around the notion

of the Anthropocene and competing notions such as the Capitalocene, Plantationocene and Chthulucene (Falb; Moore 2021) drove interest in the great circulation of goods, and in global value chains. As places where economy and production meet with nature to extract from it the raw materials necessary for the manufacture of goods and the transformation of energy, mining sites were some of the greatest industrial wounds.

In the mid-19th century, Marx said that capital, unseen and abstract, "appears as an immense collection of commodities" (Marx 1992: 125; cf. Debord). Stockpiles of commodities let us forget the places where they are produced and the long chains of logistics often covering much of the globe. Images of the Anthropocene, and especially images of industrial wounds, remind us of this repressed space (Fair). Certainly the most spectacular images are those of large open-pit mines, which require the removal of massive overburdened earth strata and the creation of extensive wastelands, bereft of vegetation, that resemble lunar landscapes. Another equally spectacular mining method involves mountaintop removal to access the underlying coal deposits. This method, which has been used since the 1970s, has led to the destruction of some 500 mountains in the United States, and has wrecked the Appalachian mountain landscape and poisoned wildlife (Crane). These examples touch on the moment of human encounter with the land. Let us note that today the places where people encounter exploited nature, rather than stockpiles of mediated goods, are traumatic spaces: the encounter with them involves shock, surprise, and embarrassment. These places reveal the environmental price to be paid for the functioning of modern civilization founded on energy consumption.

To explore the concept of industrial wounds, we can go back to Marx's idea of the exchange of matter, namely the metabolic interaction between man and nature occurring through labor, which "is an eternal natural necessity, which mediates the metabolism between man and nature, and therefore human life itself" (Marx 1992: 133). As he adds later, "[man] regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature" (Marx 1992: 283). It is the industrial spaces that witness the effects of this exchange, especially when it takes the form of an industrial civilization that not only processes raw materials, but also transports them to other places. The idea of metabolism, originally taken from the writings of vulgar materialists and the works of Justus von Liebig (cf. Saito 141), the founder of modern fertilizer chemistry, originally applied to the transfer of food from the countryside to the cities, which disrupted the metabolic space and created a metabolic rift. Yet the idea of a metabolic rift can also be applied to the earth, its layers that are ravaged for the extraction of raw materials, ores of various metals, sand, stone, coal, oil or natural gas. The

mining of these resources entails massive dislocations of materials which are moved to sites of further production and consumption and eventually become waste. The metabolism that Marx described in modernity becomes dislocated. There is a great stockpile of commodities in the foreground, but hidden in the background are waste dumps and mining voids, deformations of space from which layers of raw materials have been removed to be transferred elsewhere. Summarizing his thoughts on the metabolic rift, Moore notes:

> That is, because of its metabolic rift, capitalism has been unable to sustain itself as a closed system, in which nutrients are recycled, but rather only as a flow system, requiring ever greater external inputs to survive. As a result, the system is compelled to seek out fresh land beyond its boundaries. Fresh land, however, is worthless without fresh labor. (Moore 2000: 146)

Capitalism does not produce a closed cycle, a circuit that could last indefinitely. In order to exist, it must transcend, and before that it must establish its own boundaries. These are political boundaries, of course, but also the boundaries of the land from which cheap raw materials can be extracted to be shipped to other locations and multiply in value. These raw materials often seem like gifts of nature sourced from land or underground that belong to no one. This is exactly how industrial metabolism begins: with cheap raw materials obtained through cheap labor. According to Marx:

> All those things which labour merely separates from immediate connection with their environment, are objects of labour spontaneously provided by nature, such as fish caught and separated from their natural element, namely water, timber felled in the virgin forest, and ores extracted from their veins. (Marx 1992: 284)

Fish, wood, and ore—from the beginning of the Capitalocene they all had to travel long distances to reach the places where they were used. Provided by nature, raw materials seemed to require no special work but their acquisition required labor that was doubly destructive, both for nature and for the people who were obtaining these gifts of nature. With the overuse of raw materials, space began to undergo changes that were obscured by the circulation of goods, the spectacle of wealth displayed in commercial malls. The concept of the metabolic rift illustrates that the economy is not a closed system that can annihilate space, but that it requires a spatial, environmental complement.

I would like to mention here one of the many theories addressing the issue of the relationship between ecology and economics and looking for the possibility of creating a project of ecosocialism, Jason W. Moore's book *Capitalism in the Web of Life*. Moore transforms Fernand Braudel's idea of an economy-world into an ecology-world: the world of capitalism, according to Moore, never fully forsakes its relationship with the earth, with space, in order to fall into mere economic abstractions.

In the first volume of *Capital*, the most important critical step was the transition from the market of colorful commodities to the factory, where added value is created. However, another step seems just as important in the Anthropocene era. Anna Tsing points out that Marx's preference for the factory meant that the relationship with nature was reduced to raw materials, with the entire process of obtaining those raw materials disappearing altogether. In Marx's time, each of the large factories had to be equipped with its own steam engine, whose presence was signaled by a smokestack with black smoke billowing up from it. This close link between factory work and the steam engine was lost in the twentieth century, when the energy that powered the machines came from remote power plants. As more and more intermediaries were being introduced, the chain linking production to the extraction of raw materials and energy became less and less visible, as did the link to the space in which these raw materials were created, extracted and processed. The Anthropocene forced a shift toward spaces where global value chains begin. This shift is also historical, as it compels us to think about environmental degradation, a process that was taking place far from locations that are familiar from political or intellectual history. A historical view of the *oikos* of the Anthropocene, therefore, prompts us to focus on the spaces of industrialization in recent centuries that were most exploited while being expunged from discourse, language, and culture. For Moore, Potosi which "produced value but did not control it"[1] is such a space (Moore 2003: 17). To produce value but not to control it is a catch-all expression describing the status of many industrial sites, sites of ecological and social degradation where global value chains originated, but where only secondary barbarism remained instead of civilization.

1 Moore writes: "But, unlike Amsterdam or Lisbon, Potosi was a center of neither economic nor political power. It produced value but did not control it."

2. Portrayals of the traumatic space of industrialization and deindustrialization (the case of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin)

The ruined environment of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin has featured as a backdrop in many films. The second of the three stories of *Krzyż Walecznych* (Cross of Valor) (dir. Kazimierz Kutz, 1958) is set in Katowice and Szopienice, and the focal scene, an attempt to kill and eventually banish a dog that had previously served in a concentration camp, takes place on the heaps of the Szopienice zinc smelter. In a black-and-white landscape, we see a rocky land without vegetation, an industrial desert fenced off by a wall from the brick housing buildings of Helgoland,[2] traversed by an overpass that brings coal to the smelter, and further in the background there appear industrial facilities: the Uthemann smelter, a gas tank in Stawiska and a mine in Mysłowice. The ravaged space is the setting for a moral conflict between humans, soldiers seeking revenge against the Germans, and a dog trained to attack prisoners. The inability to decide whether to kill or adopt the dog and the decision to leave it in the space of industrial waste allegorizes the site as a territory of unresolved conflicts, of traumas that are both historical and environmental.

The exact same space returns in Stanisław Jędryka's full-color 1975 film *Koniec wakacji* (The End of Summer Vacation), based on the young adult novel by Janusz Domagalik. The director moved the plot from Czeladź, the writer's hometown, to several Silesian towns: Chorzów Stary, the zinc slag heaps on the border of Bytom, Chorzów and Piekary Śląskie, and Szopienice. The storyline is set amidst numerous heaps and industrial plants, such as the aforementioned gasworks and smelter. These images capture the traumatic space of the ruined land and contaminated air, as well as the artificial bodies of water in which human and inhumane lives are lived (there is a motif of pigeons that someone breeds between the industrial buildings).

Postwar industrialization, which relied on the construction of large industrial plants scattered throughout the country, led to major social changes, but it also brought about environmental degradation (cf. Leńkowa). Back in the 1970s, the press reported on the ecological problems being caused by large industrial plants, which were poisoning the rivers and air, and depleting the forests, soil and monuments (cf. Zieliński). Those who were fully conscious of environmental issues were able to speak out during the first Solidarity era, and at the beginning of the transformation (cf. Delorme). Books from the early

2 An estate of multi-family houses (familoks) of the former Wilhelmina zinc smelter in Katowice.

1990s mentioned the ecological disaster in Cracow (Gumińska), and a Cracow ecologist wrote about the anti-ecological legacy of totalitarianism (Delorme).

It may be difficult today to remember the environmental ills of the early days of the transformation, with air pollution norms being repeatedly violated. The photo album Śląsk*, jakiego nie chcemy oglądać* (Silesia We Don't Want to See) is a perfect reminder of this. The Italian photographer Franco Zecchin collected photographs taken in Upper Silesia in the early 1990s, from 1990 to 1991. He paired photographs of industrial plants and mining damage with pictures of the social and health effects of industrialization, thus outlining an argument linking environmental degradation to social diseases and diseases of civilization, which affected and debilitated both children and adult. A similar portrayal emerges in a film by Swedish filmmaker of Polish descent, Jerzy Śladkowski, *Trójkąt* śmierci (The Triangle of Death), which shows coking plants, coke-chemical plants and smelting mills, as well as a landscape of mine dumps: the most noxious plants that still operated in the Upper Silesian agglomeration at the beginning of the transformation, primarily in the areas of Zabrze, Bytom, Chorzów and Ruda Śląska.

By recalling these images in film and photographs one can address the repressed trauma of living in an environment that had been degraded for many decades (on pre-war degradation, see Marchacz). Today, when most of these factories are no longer in operation, and there is no trace of many of them in the urban space (on deindustrialization see Karpinski), it is perhaps easier to talk about this past, as it is no longer so vexing. But the awareness of living in a post-industrial space also breeds doubt whether this area is safe today, whether the decades-long emissions of hazardous particulates have left traces in the ground, so whether a trusted space is in fact toxic. The ecological trauma of deindustrialization taints space with uncertainty. It is not just the threat of mining damage, sinkholes, flooding or landslides, but also the feeling that there may be harmful elements and their compounds in the soil.

Transformation brought yet another trauma to the industrial districts, one that was more social, and less architectural. Many cities in Upper Silesia lost their factories that often employed several thousand people each. The vast decline of the industrial zones, which until recently had been full of workers, is documented in the paintings of Robert Schneider (cf. Niedoba), a German painter whose highly realistic paintings depict extinguished smelter furnaces, abandoned factory halls and the land of Szopienice with the unmistakable stigma of industrialization. These spaces were bustling with workers for many years—which was captured in painting more than a century ago by Adolph Menzel—but now emptiness prevails as if these spaces were given a brief moment

of respite after years of exploitation. Sometimes this brief respite dragged on for two to three decades, and sometimes it continues to this day. Still, it was the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century that were marked by the greatest large-scale closures, leaving only massive ruins awaiting demolition and, in the meantime, being dismantled by ubiquitous scrap metal collectors. In a photo album on the deindustrialization of Upper Silesia, Wojciech Wilczyk takes note of their presence. In Wilczyk's photographs, the ruins of coking plants and steel mills appear as something monstrous, hidden in the wet gray of autumn, early spring or dirty winter. After more than a decade, however, we know that even this trauma of deindustrialization has passed, and the ruins of the most harmful coke plant have been replaced by warehouses of a well-known supermarket chain. Interestingly, it was this very space that raised concerns among residents, who feared that food products may become contaminated in the space where the coking plant had been located for many years. The space refuses to disappear into the past and casts a shadow over the buildings that are trying to bring it back to economic use and become a site for circulating goods again.

The traumas of industrialization are always complex. They comprise the fear of underdevelopment and economic and civilizational decline that threatens areas without industry. The onset of industrialization is marked by the trauma of a great shift: the large numbers of workers gathered in a new space lead to a host of social problems. The industry has almost always proved to be a wound to the environment: a wound that is often immediately visible, and sometimes shows up only years later. Finally, the phasing out of big industry, or deindustrialization, causes another social trauma: unemployment for workers in large plants, who are denied the chance of finding work in their local area.

3. Conclusion

How to live in a space that suffers from industrial wounds? Some of these wounds are visible, but many of them are contaminations, disguised threats reminiscent of radioactivity (cf. Storm) rather than conspicuous destruction. Today we need a hermeneutics of the world of industrial degradation and post-industrial insecurity, a hermeneutics that institutes a sense of space where every element is an artifact, an outcome of human impact on the environment, something that is potentially contaminated and menacing (on Human impact on the environment, see Wójcik). To me, videos posted on YouTube that search for traces of former industry, signs of a world seemingly gone for good, seem to be an example of such grassroots hermeneutics. I'd like to mention one of many such videos, which documents an expedition to the Brzozowica open-pit

mine in Będzin that operated in the 1950s and 1960s.[3] After the coal seams were mined, the open-pit was filled in and a forest appeared in its place. The author of the video meticulously traces the vestiges of the industrial facility and reminds us that the forest is actually an area transformed by humans.

Life in post-industrial spaces demands a story embedded in the space. Sometimes it is a derelict space, an ecological desert, at other times it is a space of industrial ruins overgrown with wild vegetation, and much less often—a space that has now found new functions. Each of these spaces carries some specter of the past, a specter that lingers dormant and may awaken. The task of the narrative is to reliably tell the tentacular stories of these places, in which both human and non-human perspectives will be given their due place, in which the language of animals, plants, fungi and rocks that happened to be in this place, in this *oikos*, from which the paths of ecology and economics diverged, will be called into play.

Donna Haraway has often stressed that it matters by means of which stories we tell stories (Haraway 35). A dualistic vision of a human being pitted against nature—a subject who has done immense damage and is also supposed to repair it—cannot be the sole model for stories about industrial spaces. As Moore notes, "nature can neither be saved nor destroyed, only transformed" (Moore 2015: 45). We need narratives that are capable of tracking change: that do not try to capture an object, but follow the changes. And this requires the ability to track different languages. Ursula Le Guin claims that geolinguistics will help read the unseen language of the earth, the "volcanic poetry of the rocks" (Le Guin 175). Geolinguistics can play a special role in reading industrial wounds, as can empathy, insight and language supported by historical and natural science. Haraway refers the idea of tentacular thinking to such stories. One example of such tentacular imagery is Mona Tusz's murals that are often located in post-industrial sites. The tentacles entwine together the destroyed Earth, historical objects, people, animals and other creatures, collectively creating an image of the intertwining of various forces that communicate with each other. The post-industrial space in these paintings does not fade away, but neither is it depicted as a lifeless desert. It opens up the prospect of a post-natural hermeneutics of the meanings that successive objects bring with them.

3 The video can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vowSRuBY2y8 (accessed 15 January 2023).

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| Abstract

PAWEŁ TOMCZOK

Industrial Spaces That Won't Go Away

The article takes up the issue of space in the economics and philosophy of capitalism. Based on excerpts from Marx's writings, I reconstruct the idea of annihilation of space and the metabolic rift. Using James Moor's contemporary interpretations of these concepts, the article discusses industrial spaces in the Capitalocene. The perspective of the *oikos*, combining economics and ecology, has allowed me a new perspective on the issues of industrialization and deindustrialization and a reading of different cultural texts that deal with the issue of human impact on the environment. The second part of the article describes examples of degradation of the landscape of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin, portrayed in selected films and photographs. The conclusion asks about the possibility of a hermeneutics of industrial space: the possibility of life after the disaster and the creation of meaning in a tentacular entanglement with beings other than humans.

Keywords: industrialization in cultural texts, deindustrialization in cultural texts, anthropocene, capitalocene

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.6

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The Dybbuk Speaks with the Mouth of the Living: Wartime Trauma and Strategies of Holocaust Remembrance in Hungarian Literature Between 1949 and 1953

> *I would like to… say, without cheap literary jargon, that the Holocaust is the Dybbuk of our history: the historical Dybbuk. Here are the unburied dead, millions of people who were humiliated and exterminated in a "horrific" way; this atrocity has not received closure, neither ritual nor spiritual. The Dybbuk of history leaves no one alone—neither the mourners of the dead…, nor the perpetrators (and we are well aware of the acute torments inflicted by the Erinyes), nor even the completely innocent, even though they did not live in that time or their geographic location, or their social or personal situation could not have been directly affected by those events, and still they know the burden of death that humanity has on its conscience. In fact, the historical Dybbuk of the Holocaust has become the Dybbuk of all humanity, and rightly so.*
>
> Géza Komoróczy, *A pernye beleég bőrünkbe*

1. Deadlock

The question of post-war Hungarian literature dealing with the Holocaust is really a question of how, under strict censorship and stringent cultural policies, authors were able to make their artistic visions a reality. Was there any space for niche writing and where were the lines of social taboos? And, also, did literature shoulder the burden of dealing with recovering from trauma which was not addressed in the public debate?

If we were to review wartime and postwar texts, we would have no difficulty finding passages that suggest the need for a moral reckoning and also talk about the fear of the moment when it happens. In his *Pince-napló* (Basement Diary) (1945), written during the siege of Budapest, Lajos Nagy says:

> I am ashamed that I have something to do with these scoundrels, that I too am a Hungarian and a Christian. What am I going to say when I wind up somewhere abroad after the war? A Hungarian! Will I be able to deny it? But this feeling of shame wells up in me and soon fades away. In the end, I never wanted to have anything to do with these scoundrels. You can't divide people into Hungarians and Jews, into Christians and Mohammedans, into bald and hairy. You have to divide them into stupid and wicked and honest. (Nagy 1976: 30)

Nagy's voice represented Hungarians hiding from the bombs in shelters and basements, aware of what fate had befallen the Jews ("[they] are being transported to a German city called Auschwitz," 15), and also those Hungarians who experienced the war from the safe position of bystanders. A mere act of observation, resulting in a diary entry, can hardly be called engagement (if we consider intellectual activity as something that does not require or expect the participation of others). Sándor Márai expressed a similar view of the ethical burden on Hungarian society in his *Napló* (*Diary*) in 1944:

> Who is responsible for this? What punishment would offset this responsibility?… Ultimate responsibility, however, lies with Horthy and his men, as they are the ones who let this mentality, from which everything sprang with tragic consequences, grow and flourish. But accountability will not change anything, and revenge will not bring anything back. (Márai 2016: 155)

The writer was not yet aware that the greatest problem after the war would not be an overbearing sense of responsibility or a failure to make proper amends for the wrongs done, but institutionalized silence. The difference between Márai and Nagy was key. Although they both pondered on the need for accountability for wrongdoings, they stood at two opposite sides of the argument. The former, although he did not like to boast about it, as he took such acts for granted, had led Jewish girl out of the death march along the Danube (see Földényi 2013: 177). The writer's wife, Ilona Matzner (Lola), was Jewish; his in-laws, despite the family's desperate efforts to free them, perished in Auschwitz. Additionally, the atmosphere of hatred towards the former bourgeoisie (or patriciate, to use a word Márai would use) drove the family to emigrate in 1948. The latter writer also opposed fascism, but became involved in the Communist Party right after the war, and the year Márai left the country, he was awarded the state Kossuth Prize, a clear sign of support from the authorities.

István Bibó also spoke on the issue of reckoning with the past in his book *Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után* (The Jewish Question) (1948). The thinker linked the notion of freedom with social maturity, which he did not discern in his country, and he believed that the freedom of Hungarians was not completely fulfilled, because, as he argued:

> we can speak of adulthood and freedom when we recognize that our deeds—though mainly determined by external factors—are abominable and when we begin to take responsibility for them in order to continue to act with the dignity of a free, responsible human being. (Bibó 2012: 338)

Bibó was convinced that the earlier plight of the Jews at the Danube and many events that had occurred in his homeland were not sufficiently processed and thus could recur. When lessons are not learned from the past, and especially when perpetrators are not punished, when sowers of hatred, agitators and anti-Semitic journalists influencing public opinion do not pay for their actions, it will be difficult to expect society to apologize and recognize to what considerable extent it participated in the Holocaust, for example, by securing transports to Auschwitz with military escorts.

> Deciding who is guilty and accountable does not hinge on proving that the perpetrator did not act out of social or personal motives, but that regardless of all this, they chose to perpetrate despicable deeds out of their own will; if, on the other hand, it is proven that they acted under the pressure of various external factors, they are innocent and do not bear any responsibility. For wickedness or cowardice does not come from some diabolical resolve, but precisely from the fact that we wretchedly, unconsciously and unwittingly do what (and only what) social and personal circumstances compel us to do, what our deep-seated prejudices, distorted and distorting experiences, hollow platitudes and foolish phrases drive us to do. (Bibó 2012: 337–338)

In charting the history of anti-Semitism in Hungary, Bibó not only showed a range of social phenomena that stoked hostility and later public hatred toward Jews (such as the Tiszaeszlár show trial and the era of Horthy's revisionism), but also enumerated behaviors that required urgent response in 1948, when he was writing the essay. He traced the post-war indifference of Hungarians to the Holocaust to learned passivity that had never before been stigmatized and that

had been perpetuated and even strengthened over time (cf. Fritz 2012; Győri 2009; Seewann, Kovács 2006; Karády 1984).

If we look at the first post-war gestures in terms of neglect and inexplicable anti-Semitic zealotry, it becomes clear that the surviving Hungarian Jews found themselves in very difficult circumstances. For one thing, the Communist Party, which had few members at first, wishing to seize power, aspired to create a political program that would draw the "masses," and this forced its members to equate all wartime experiences, which they subsumed under one umbrella term: the wartime past. The more general the term would be, the better, because it is easier to cut off what fits into one word ("the past"). All displays of social difference, such as public demonstration of ethnic identity or the wish to stand out from a centrally homogenized society were answered with violence. After all, social divisions could not uphold the pretenses of a supranational community. When the few Hungarian Jewish survivors returned to their former homes, demanded the return of their property, and wanted to live their lives in accordance with their old habits, this only fueled resentment. As Ágnes Heller argued in her essay *A 'zsidókérdés' megoldhatatlansága* (The Unresolvability of the "Jewish Question") in 2004:

> One became accustomed during those few months that Jewish belongings and apartments that had been seized had now become the property of the [Hungarians]… Perhaps it was because of this "reminder of their existence," but I believe that this was not the only reason why hatred toward Jews was rekindled after the Holocaust. If one of the good old neighbors or schoolmates had been sent to the ghetto with his entire family, deported, and was the only one of the whole family to survive and come back—without the children—this instilled an inevitable sense of guilt in the neighbor, if they had any sort of remorse whatsoever… This neighbor felt that they should have helped… instead of acting as if nothing had happened, as if everything was fine. Humans do not like witnesses to their weaknesses and misdeeds. (Heller 2013: 40–41)

As Heller argued, what was a social trauma in 1945–1947 turned into "neurotic reactions" and triggered "a wave of anti-Semitism" (Heller 2013: 41). First came threatening comments and growing hostility, which turned into anti-Jewish agitations, and, finally, those turned into spontaneous acts of hatred. Pogroms occurred in several towns: Kaposvár, Kunmadaras, Debrecen, as well as in Ózd, Sajószentpéter, Szegvár, Tótkomlós, Miskolc, Kiszombor, and Mátészalka. In Budapest between 1945 and 1948, Jews were regularly accused of abducting

children, of making various food products from their "Christian blood" (which was reminiscent of the blood legends that were alive in nineteenth-century Hungary). These events were a clear indicator of the situation in post-war Hungary: Jews were blamed for the country's ruin, economic and commercial collapse (as they had been for all previous failures, from the nineteenth century onward).

Secondly, as Randolph Braham said, "after 1948, under the Rákosi regime, the Holocaust was basically engulfed by the Orwellian black hole of history. Jewish martyrs were lumped together with other victims" (Braham 2015: 235). The unwritten injunction against dealing with the Jewish question (although these were not the only suppressed topics, as the problem of Red Army rape, for example, was also regarded as taboo) (see Kunt 2019) came as a surprise, since Rákosi was himself Jewish (he was born Mátyás Rosenfeld), so one might have expected him to take at least a neutral stance on the revisiting of Hungary's attitude during World War II. It is worth noting here that the People's Courts and the People's Tribunal began operating right after the war in 1945, and issued tens of thousands of verdicts, with almost four hundred death sentences for war criminals (such as Dőme Sztójay, Béla Imrédy, László Bárdossy, László Endre, and László Baky[1]). However, the executions and their press coverage failed to spearhead a larger-scale reckoning. The removal of information about citizens' backgrounds and religions from official records did not help either. Since no one was asked about their roots, it was easier to hide the actual social diversity (this applied not only to Jews, but also to Swabians or Serbs) and in theory there was no "need" to distinguish between individual experiences and especially between narratives about them.

These narratives were subjected to strict control under József Révai, who from 1948 subordinated all cultural activity to the Marxist–Leninist doctrine, having formulated a socialist cultural ideal that radically rejected the value of European tradition and its continuing influence on literature. Révai held the position of one-man manager of Hungarian cultural life, and thereby made decisions about literature, in effect eradicating anything that did not support the illusion of a homogeneous Soviet art promoting a single legitimate model of artistic life. Of course, these decisions had consequences for literature. Some authors chose to emigrate (also internally), some chose to support the regime's policy of "Soviet art," while others were silenced for many years. The latter were mainly authors of Jewish descent, who were feared because of their alleged bourgeois inclinations, as well as their sympathies for Zionist movements,

1 Politicians and/or military officers who were complicit in the Holocaust of Hungarian Jews and collaborated with the Third Reich.

which were officially banned in Hungary just a few months after the founding of Israel (Braham 1997: 1300).

After 1956, that is, with the advent of the Kádár era, the religious, educational and social life of minorities came under strict government control (Szécsényi, Braham, ed. 2017: 291–329). Even though from the 1960s the subject of the Holocaust and the wartime fate of the Jews returned to prose (for example, in Imre Keszi's *Elysium* [Elysium] or Tibor Cseres' *Hideg Napok* [Cold Days]), this did not mean that Hungarians had made a reckoning with the war, but only that there were now literary representations of the experience of war. One consequence followed from this: since there was no place in the public and political space for the collective pursuit of justice, for redressing the wrongs, or worse, for talking about tragic experiences, people's knowledge of the war and especially of the Holocaust was diminishing, and as the silence grew longer, everything connected with the war congealed into a taboo, which in turn reinforced the sense of trauma (another trauma). Meanwhile, public debate had to be replaced by cherishing personal memory, despite the fear of its consequences.

As Andrea Pető wrote, "the politics of memory under communism forced people not to remember." In her essay on Władysław Pasikowski's *Pokłosie* (Aftermath), she notes the importance of private conversations and of grassroots groups whose members remembered the "true history." She writes about both nations, Polish and Hungarian:

> While silence and oblivion cost many their Jewish identity, in other families and groups of friends the re-telling of past events helped create identity. Among friends, family stories were told at informal social gatherings, which was an important means and requirement for belonging to the group. Personal narrative gave authenticity to historical events: by telling a story, the story became true. This is how the commandment of *nichum aveilim*, to improve the mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of surviving mourners, became tied to the politics of memory. (Pető, accessed 2014)

Naturally, there is the question of the limits of such individual memory, which, as we know from the writings of Maurice Halbwachs, cannot be divorced from the social context. What individuals remember crystallizes through interactions and communication with others, especially when it comes to sharing knowledge of dates and facts. As the sociologist wrote, "[it is only] to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection" (Halbwachs 1992: 38).

Halbwachs refers to collective memory—which is impossible in Hungary—that is "produced" from the accumulation of individual experiences and their shaping by society. Memory relies on a supra-individual pattern of recollection of a specific event, which has been developed in the course of multiple confrontations. "The individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but… the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories." When a narrative about the past is banned or "frozen" (Klüger 2009: 195) in a generation, we can expect the problem to grow into a multigenerational phenomenon. This is what happened in Hungary.

2. Politics of oblivion vs. literature

The problem of silence about the Holocaust can be interpreted using handy metaphors (such as Zerubavel's "elephant" (see Żukowski 2018: 28) or Eliot's "rumination" (see Assmann 2013: 109–110) that also highlight the time that was to come after the end of political or social suppression. The period of the "thaw" (Ruth Klüger's term) laid bare earlier phenomena and their undercurrents, but also revealed some irreversible processes. Hungarian literature of the 1949–1953 era, seen from the hindsight of later decades, appears mainly as state-controlled art, which was ideologically purged of all traces of individualism (also in the matter of interpreting reality and the past) and was a tool of disconcertingly effective indoctrination. As literature is important in strengthening identity and cultural memory (see Erll 2022), it may seem relevant what happens when it is manipulated and what strategies for salvaging knowledge about the past the authors chose.

Despite the constraints and problems that writers had to face, some of them tried to write about the Jewish experience of the war, although it is difficult to compare the artistic opportunities of this generation with authors publishing in the 1960s. Certainly, the authors of books published until 1953 could not freely choose the storyline, but they did not relent in trying to smuggle the taboo subject of the Holocaust into literature. Below is a list of books that came out during this period: József Debreczeni's *Hideg krematorium* (1950), Imre Sarkadi's *Rozi* (1951), Sándor Sasdi's *Magvetők* (1951), Kamjén István's *Emberpiac* (1951), Tamás Aczél's *A szabadság* árnyékában (1952), Ferenc Karinthy's *Budapesti tavasz* (Spring Comes to Budapest) (1953), Róbert Kertész's *Ne felejts!* (1955) and Tibor Cseres' *Here-báró* (1956).

3. Abomination and a hint of humanity (József Debreczeni's *Hideg Crematorium*)

József Debreczeni (1905–1978) is one of the most remarkable authors on the artistic map of the 1950s, not least because he published his concentration camp novel, *Hideg krematorium* (Cold Crematorium) (1950), at the very moment when such books ceased to come out. One can view this publication as the last of the books released right after the war that offered a bold portrayal of the Jewish experience. Debreczeni, however, can hardly be compared to writers of the 1945–1948 transition period. There was no account of the death camp experience among the novels or diaries that were penned right after the end of the war, such as József Darvas' *Város az ingoványon* (1945), Lajos Nagy's *Basement Diary* (1945) or Tibor Déry's *Alvilági játékok* (1946). As István Szeli noted in the afterword to the second edition of the book, Déry, Nagy, and Darvas could only "observe the global battle of formidable forces from a narrow 'basement perspective,' being relatively safe in their hiding places" (Szeli 2015: 88). Meanwhile, Debreczeni described his experience from the vantage point of his personal, tragic destiny. Lajos Szakolcsay devoted his review precisely to this difference between the other texts of the "war series" and *Hideg Crematorium*. He stressed that for the writer the most important goal was the "anti-romantic, essential," "intellectual" and "precise" description of Auschwitz (Szirmai 2015:88).

Although the writer did not provide his novel with a preface or an afterword to aid the reader, we can surmise what role the work played, as Debreczeni did not return to his war memories after the war. When he was deported to the camp, he was 39 and used the genre that was most obvious to him—reportage—to record his experiences. The precision and authenticity that all the book's reviewers appreciated was not so much an elaborate strategy as a professional habit, and therefore likely the only way for the writer to describe his stay in Auschwitz. Debreczeni had worked as a journalist since 1925 and resumed editorial work after the war, when joining the ranks of Hungarian writers in Serbia.

It seems interesting to trace the reception of Debreczeni's novel after its subsequent reissues, namely in 1975 and in 2015. One of the first reviews that appeared in Hungary, right after the writer's prose debut is the most interesting for us here. In 1951, Károly Szirmai wrote in the *Híd* magazine that *Hideg krematórium* depicted the experience of "internment" ("internáltság"), and praised the author's style as "sharply articulated, tough, masculine writing ("férfias írás"), which showed signs of "nobility, restraint," as well as "economy of means." According to the critic, the novel's greatest strengths were its "purely intellectual" treatment of the subject, its "impeccable rhythm, rich linguistic imagination…, and wonderful play of consciousness" (Szirmai 1951: 618).

Szirmai also suggested that Debreczeni's writing mastery would "give pleasure" (sic!) to the reader.

> [He] knows how to stir our interest in even the most heinous, the most horrid, the most oppressive things. Just to mention the multiple descriptions of latrines. He paints a whole series of "de profundis" scenes of the wretched souls walking in the dance of death… in language that is half medical and half poetic. He also charts a rich variety of different shades of misery, suffering and deprivation. (Szirmai 1951: 618)

The critic took special note of the way Debreczeni portrayed the reality of the camp (although he did not use the noun "camp"[2]) and stressed that he "evoked the past faithfully" despite the physical suffering. We should mention here the well-known mechanism of erasing the truth about history after the war. Deliberately and in the spirit of the linguistic practices of the time, Szirmai substituted nouns that directly indicated what experience was being referred to in the book. Also, he used mostly neutral terms, and remembered to couch anything that could cause concern (including moral concern) in uplifting phrases. For example, Szirmai wrote that:

> however realistic these scenes may be, they are not repulsive. One can find a hint of humanity even in their hideousness. His sense of justice is a whip in his hand, but also a firmly clamping brake that keeps his neurotic temper from going to extremes. (Szirmai 1951: 618–619)

As can be seen, the strategy described at the beginning of this article predominates in the cited excerpts from the reviews of Debreczeni's novels: it is best not to talk about the war at all, and if you do, then do so in such a way that the reader of the review does not feel the horror of the Holocaust, as long as they guess that this is what the book is about. The reviews also made no mention of the autobiographical aspects of the novel, did not contemplate the significance of Debreczeni's identity, and did not raise questions about morality.

When compared with the articles that appeared after the second edition of *Hideg krematorium* in 1975, Szirmai's review seems even more bizarre. In 1975, the reviewer was no longer afraid of the word "lager," and chose the camp number, 33031, as the title of the article. This should not surprise us, since

2 Shirmai mentions only once that the novel is about all the camps that make up the "land of Auschwitz" and lists the camps at Eule, Fürstenberg and Dörnhau (Szirmai 1951: 618).

there was a "cultural thaw" in Hungary at the time. The year before, Mária Ember's *Hajtűkanyar* had been published, Imry Kertész's *Fatelessness* had come out almost simultaneously, and a year later, Péter Nádas' *The End of a Family Story* was released.

4. "Hitler does not really speak to me" (István Kamjén's *Emberpiac*)

The discussion of literary representations of the Holocaust, barring Debreczeni's book, boils down to analysis of single sentences from novels that mentioned the war and/or the Jewish experience on the sidelines of other narratives. The two most notable examples of such texts are István Kamjén's *Emberpiac* and Ferenc Karinthy's *Spring Comes to Budapest*. Both works were written in compliance with József Révai's cultural policy. Press reviewers approached them as worthy representatives of the mainstream literary movement, namely, texts that demonstrated the power of the working class and worldview transformation. Curiously, although the plot, themes and language fit perfectly with the trends of the time, the authors also managed to insert themes that, had they been spotlighted by the critics, could have been a starting point for a larger debate. Let us take a closer look at the authors and their novels.

István Kamjén (1907–1976) was involved in political activity throughout his life. Starting in 1932, he was a member of the Hungarian Agricultural Workers' Association (Magyar Földmunkásszövetség); in 1939 he joined the illegal Communist Party; in 1942 he enrolled in the Historical Remembrance Committee (Történelmi Emlékbizottság); and from 1947 to 1949 he was a member of parliament for the National People's Party. His literary works, which seem an obvious corollary of his political activity, revolved around the problems of workers. After arriving in Budapest from Mezőtúr in 1921, Kamjén worked as a *kubikos*, or "digger," a laborer traveling from place to place to do the hardest physical work, usually with small tools and wheelbarrows. Diggers were cheap labor and were employed to pave streets, build flood fortifications, plant crops and do harvesting. The author, like his father (also István Kamjén), was himself a digger for eighteen years, so he was well acquainted with the stark realities of this wandering and dismally paid trade. Diggers worked and lived together (in the Diggers' Hotel), and often suffered from poverty ("we will die of hunger" [Kamjén 1951: 38]). Their customers chose which of them would get a particular job by organizing a "people's exchange," or the "market" referred to in the title. Kamjén recounted these experiences in *Emberpiac* (The People's Market), thus creating what is arguably the only literary portrait of the diggers, as well as illustrating the general situation of the workers and the violent influence of the authorities on their existence. As the author wrote: "The world is divided

into two camps: the oppressors and the oppressed" (Kamjén 1951: 38). Kamjén outlined the history of the *kubikos* over the span of a decade. We meet the novel's protagonists around 1931, when Prime Minister István Bethlen gets dismissed and a time of famine and abandonment of all investments begins in Hungary. The worst sufferers are the diggers, who cannot find work. The storyline concludes with the end of the war, the formation of the Communist Party and the seizure of power by Mátyás Rákosi's supporters. Despite this, the book proclaimed the main slogans of liberation from the shackles of the bourgeois world: first in opposition to rising Hitlerism, and then in the name of the new Soviet order.

Kamjén tells the story of the workers from the point of view of Mihály Szabó, who suffers hunger and unemployment. When the protagonist finally manages to start a family, he is arrested for two years and returns home when his daughter, whom he had not been seen before, is no longer a little child. His wife, Erzsi, dies from untreated illness, having lived in a damp and moldy home, and he starts trying even more desperately than before to keep himself and his child alive. The digger's story ends with Szabó starting a new relationship and proposing to Eszter as the Soviets liberate the country and power falls into the hands of the Communists.

Although one can accuse Kamjén of minor construction errors and language lapses, which make his book formulaic and very generalizing (Molnár 1951: 1173), it is hard to deny his courage in describing the situation of Jews under National Socialism. Szabó is consistent in expressing his indignation against the aggressive anti-Semitic policies and deportations and his opinion on the situation of the Jews is voiced several times in *Emberpiac*. Mostly to juxtapose them with Szabó's views, the novel cites widespread stereotypes and myths about Jews at the time, which originated in the language of the Third Reich ("the Jews are to blame for all this," and "what a beautiful world it would be if there were no Jews (Kamjén 1951: 146). In one of the scenes in which the digger talks to a stranger on a train, the following conversation takes place, after a series of travelers' claims: "Well, Hitler is a genius. He knows how to deal with the world," "Yes, kind sir." And "it will be like that in our country too. We have our Szálasi guys![3] They do their job right!" (Kamjén 1951: 182), Szabó offers an utterly different perspective:

3 Ferenc Szálasi (1897–1946) was the leader of the Arrow Cross (Nilash) party, which ruled Hungary from October 17, 1944 to May 8, 1945. The party was subservient to the anti-Semitic policies of the Third Reich and was responsible for the execution of Jews.

> Look, since the Jews dispersed all over the world, the masters have had no better propaganda than to bring up the Jewish question… There are no Jews in India, or if there are, there are very few of them, and yet the Indians are mercilessly exploited by the British masters. (Kamjén 1951: 183)

And when a fellow passenger calls Indians "a people without culture," with whom "it is impossible to deal otherwise," the protagonist states:

> You cannot look at the world from the point of view of race… You have to see the true situation of society and judge it by the degree of its development… Capitalism has long stopped developing, even a little bit, so it started to obstruct the progress of humanity. (Kamjén 1951: 183)

Leaving aside the fact that most of the books published in 1951 featured slogans promoting the new regime, Kamjén's writing clearly shows that it was possible to talk about the Jews and their war experience in novels. Admittedly, it was difficult to include profound insights into the issue and make accusations against Hungarian society, because even if the writer had such plans, the censors would have instantly picked up on them. However, *Emberpiac* shows us where the line of taboo was and what manner of speaking about the Jews seemed acceptable in 1951.

5. "So that was life?" (Ferenc Karinthy's *Spring Comes to Budapest*)

Ferenc Karinthy's novel, *Budapesti tavasz* (Spring Comes to Budapest) was published in 1953, just as the post-Stalin thaw was starting in Hungary. The first reviews of the book did not surface until 1954, which most likely had to do with the caution of critics. After all, Karinthy's book addressed issues that were difficult to evade with vague descriptions. The main character, Zoltán Pintér, whom we meet as a private-deserter who is making his way to the capital on Christmas Day 1944 to hide in his parents' house, dreams of continuing his university studies, interrupted by the war. Turned away by his father, who fears punishment for harboring a fugitive, he is sent away, along with his companion Bertalan Gazsó, to the Kochs' abandoned apartment. It turns out that the very spacious apartment is now inhabited by engineer Tivadar Turnovszky, his wife and his wife's relative, Jutka. It quickly becomes clear that Turnovszky's seductive, beautiful wife is Jewish, as is the young girl, who does not actually come from Transylvania, as was claimed on the first evening. Zoltán soon falls in love with Jutka (whose real name is Klári) and becomes the confidant of her secrets,

and eventually a messenger, who delivers a package to her parents. The Erdős couple ask him to take one of their children to a safer place. Thus, the young man not only saves a Jewish child, but also witnesses the parents of his beloved being driven out of their home by the Nilash and taken to their deaths. At the end of the novel, when the Turnovszkys decide that the young girl's presence is a threat to their survival, Jutka (Klári) leaves the apartment, and although she runs into Zoltán in custody, he fails to save her, and she is shot at the Danube.

Karinthy portrays the two Jewish female characters in the roles of vestal virgins, charming women who create a homely atmosphere during the siege of the city, who are resourceful, can cook well from leftovers, are caring and look forward to the future with hope. Jutka (Klári) is shown to be dreaming of studying medicine (though she was not admitted to the university because of her background), and the engineer strikes up a tacit understanding with Gazsó, who begins to help her with the most difficult chores. Moreover, one of the two storylines that tie the book's plot together (besides the storyline about the role of the citizens and the nation) is Zoltán's love affair with Jutka (Klári) and his grief over her death. The protagonist, who, in the final scenes of the novel, stands on the roof of an apartment building and revels in the city's liberation, while watching the bombed capital and thinking about the country's future, embodies a role model of a citizen that cannot have appealed to culture experts.

The writer deftly juggled different themes, as he not only openly spoke about the presence of Jews in besieged Budapest and portrayed them as dedicated, helpful, capable people (not only from the perspective of the atrocities they suffered), but also made a harsh judgment on the times of pre-war nationalism ("Where are those whose lips were full of slogans, who strained their voice and beat their breasts from morning to evening?" (Karinthy 1977: 223). On the one hand, he criticized the Germans ("there is nothing left to do but to choose the lesser evil over the greater evil, meaning to stick with the Germans in these hard times" (Karinthy 1977: 16), but he did not regard the arrival of the Soviets as the best scenario for the war's end ("what do the Russians want here…? They will chase the Germans away, all right, but will they want to go back home later." (Karinthy 1977: 157). In the richly woven narrative, one can very easily recognize the recurring themes of race, which, as in Karinthy's work, are evenly distributed. The characters talk about Jews, Germans, as well as their own "Turanian-Mongolian" (Karinthy 1977: 54–55) origins, which removes the disturbing, nationalistic tone from the conversation, and incidentally reveals the author's strategy of balanced judgments, openness to different outlooks, and the decision to include the theme of Jewish experience.

The latter theme is intriguing for two reasons. For one thing, it can be interpreted as a desire to show one's own identity, since the writer's mother, Aranka Böhm, was Jewish, and one can find the character traits of the novel's heroines in her biography: seductive, beautiful, educated and resourceful. Böhm was the wife, lover and favorite of the great Hungarian writers (Endre Ady, Tibor Déry and Frigyes Karinthy). She died in Auschwitz in 1944, and we might think of the tragic fate of Jutka (Klári) as a tribute to her mother. Then again, Karinthy makes several factual errors related to the plight of Budapest's Jews, when he confuses, for example, houses marked with a star (*csillagos házak*) with protected houses (*védett házak*).

So what happened that such an interestingly portrayed Holocaust story did not provoke debate, that the book was considered a good but "a bit sluggish" (Ungvári 1954: 84) example of leaning toward communism? The novels' descriptive language was at fault. Tamás Ungvári, a distinguished historian and author of the monograph *Ahasvérus* és *Shylock. A "zsidókérdés" Magyarországon* (Ahasverus and Shylock: "The Jewish Question" in Hungary) (1999), who was, nevertheless, keenly engaged in the Communist Party during the Communist era, judged the protagonists based on the cultural politics of the time. He judged the educated members of the former elite most harshly:

> [Karinthy] skillfully inserts Miklós Torday-Landgraf, an unprincipled intellectual… into the plot. He also introduces the cowardly, spineless intellectual, engineer Turnovszky, who was still on his feet even after liberation, as he used capitalist connections to his advantage. (Ungvári 1954: 84)

He further faulted Karinthy for underestimating the significance of the liberation by the Soviets and the power of the people in 1945, by which time the seeds of communism were to have germinated, without mentioning a word about the heroines and their relevance in the novel. He only uses the phrases "pacifist-humanist" outlook on the future and "the girl who must die." Unfortunately, the critic does not specify who he means when he writes about "millions and millions of fates" (Ungvári 1954: 84).

It was not until later years, and especially the literature produced after 1956, that the impasse of silence on the Holocaust was broken, although the final turn came only in the 1970s. Before Tibor Cseres set out to chronicle the fate of the Jews and Serbs of Novi Sad in his 1964 novel *Hideg napok* (Cold Days), and thereby illustrated the central mechanism of social and institutional denial, Hungarian literature was concerned with the purported comfort of its readers,

who were supposed to feel no fear of deserved retribution, and who were, on principle, spared from painful confrontations with the facts. As can be seen in the quoted excerpts from the novels and their press reviews, the balancing act between attempts to write about a banned topic and the interpretation of those attempts usually ended in the writers' subtle nuances failing. Strident critics, as later decades would show, would soon change their tone, and manifest an openness and willingness which they had previously rejected to provide honest commentary on history. For many Hungarians, however, who were raised in those times, this would be a belated gesture that would fail to make up for intellectual and social negligence.

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| Abstract

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The Dybbuk Speaks with the Mouth of the Living: Wartime Trauma and Strategies of Holocaust Remembrance in Hungarian Literature Between 1949 and 1953

The article deals with the subject of the Holocaust in Hungarian literature between 1949 and 1953, and in particular with the writing strategies used by the authors to describe a phenomenon that was silenced and removed from public debate. During the post-war period, when the Communists were in power in Hungary, it was forbidden to write about the war and especially about the Holocaust of the Jews; moreover, all literary texts had to be approved by the censors. Despite the strict restrictions, Hungarian writers managed to smuggle the forbidden topic into their novels. In this article, I discuss the prose of József Debreczeni, István Kamjén, and Ferenc Karinthy against the background of social and historical phenomena in Hungary.

Keywords: Hungarian Jews, Holocaust, Hungarian literature, silence

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.7

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In the Space of Cumulative Trauma: Lessons from a Hungarian Trauma-Novel in Vojvodina

In the literature under discussion here, a long silence indicates the power of the deepest trauma, the trauma induced by the fact that for a long time Hungarian literature in Yugoslavia could only say something about an issue by not talking about it. At first, the situation is exacerbated by the fact that speaking out about the anti-Hungarian reprisals of 1944 was subject to a *strong power ban*, and speech could not break down the barriers imposed by political discourse. At best, it communicated itself through the constraints of secrecy.

But it must also be said that this literature, from the point of view of the subject matter, presents the image of literature that is difficult to speak about, even later, during the period of dissolution, i.e. after 1989. It too describes the traumatic experience as an impulse that is impossible to place in a narrative and is therefore constituted rather as a kind of *emphatic absence*.

For years, the literary works are replaced by silence, quietude and non-appearance, until the theme appears in Nándor Burány's novel *Összeroppanás* (Implosion), and later in the prose of Nándor Gion, in veiled allusions, allegorical representations, or in László Végel's reflections developed especially in essays. The risky nature of speech, the past as a secret, the history drowned in silence, "the nature of the collective omission of memory, the mass graves turned into spiritual cryptograms," the images of „history buried under the ground" emerge. While the narratives themselves communicate silence, the

"drama of the long silence," and the "Hungarian silence connected to Bačka" (Végel 2000a: 43).

Nándor Burány's novel *Összeroppanás*, published in book form in 1968,[1] can be interpreted as a trauma novel, looking back at the repressed events from a quarter of a century's perspective, is the first to experiment with a possible language of narrative writing. Its documentarian approach also derives from the fact that it is about breaking the persistent and embarrassing public silence. The stifled and isolated voices of the generations involved, which serve to transmit trauma, are also reflected in the novel: "Only in whispers, behind closed doors, did people dare to talk about it" (Burány 25). The reception also states that the novel contains moments that not only had not been spoken about before but were not allowed to be spoken about. "This 'sensitive' subject is the memory of the reprisals of '44. If I'm not mistaken, Nándor Burány was the first in our literature to write about this in *Összeroppanás*" (Gerold 79).[2]

By comparison in Serbian literature, David Albahari is the author whose entire oeuvre can be examined from the perspective of the concept of trauma. Albahari's literary research frequently recalls Cathy Caruth's related thought and considers trauma as a wound of the soul caused by a deep existential fracture, that occurs in the way the soul experiences time, itself and the whole world. (Ribnikar 615) Besides, Albahari's highly reflected and subtle prose evokes the literary mediation between "knowledge and non-knowledge" on the "catastrophic events" and the genesis of the "traumatic kernel" of our historical existence (these notions: Aradau, Munster 2012).

At the same time, the peculiarity of Nándor Burány's aforementioned novel is that, by asking questions about the identifiability of the time horizon of this rupture, he introduces the concept of *trauma* at an epoch when the present-day, frequent repetition of "trauma" had not yet appeared on the horizon:

> Have dead, peaceful people been shot in the street? – Soldiers were shot at from the school attic. – The corner shopkeeper dug a cellar in the garden, he shoots from there, don't go that way. – They threw a grenade into the twin-windowed house behind the station. Only two orphans survived. – Two old men were taken from the neighbor's house, and the bread was left in the oven. It started here? Is this where the first

1 The novel had already been published in four parts in 1967 in the magazine *Híd*.

2 This study also tells us that when the novel was published in the *Híd*, the party intervened. "It discussed the matter in a closed meeting and […] condemned it as a work that disturbed public opinion" (Gerold 80–81).

> symptoms of the trauma appeared or was it a cold that would only cause rheumatism in old age? The gendarmes and officials came from the motherland. They looked down on you. Their children at school. (Burány 14)

The issues mentioned in this excerpt make it clear that while the novel builds on the embeddedness of trauma in the narration of a life story, the experiencing subject can only represent the possible sources of trauma through an *interrogative* attitude. It seems that the main aim is not to fully explore the traumatic density of events, but rather to find a way out of the heavy grip of memory. It is the opening up of avenues of discourse that provides a very strong impulse for the central character of the novel. But while she is motivated by an indestructible desire to escape from coercion-based events through speech, she is in fact in a state of incessant flight.

The new situation has created a particular complexity. At the historical time of the novel, the central dimension of the experience of social being in the region is shaped by the arrival of the "mainlanders":

> The Hungarians came in, the mainlanders sat down in the offices, the various agents and other vigilantes, suspecting virgin territory and hoping for rich pickings, swarmed into the countryside, they were channeled down. (Burány 110)

By opting for a particular way of integration, namely the exercise of superiority, the Hungarian "newcomers" define the relationship between the periphery and the centre. As we have seen, the relegation to a despised status is closely linked to a series of violent acts that is to the manifestation of superiority. The feeling of being looked down upon reinforces the effect of the aggressive relations known by hearsay as a personal experience of the child. An important factor of identity is violated: *the sense of belonging (indigenousness*), which, as the language suggests, was shared by all the former residents. The voice of the abhorred is spoken through the language of trauma and autobiography.

"Forty-one? Forty-four? Two years, two turns." (Burány 9) The hard experiences of two changes of empire are intertwined here. The experience of the arrival of the Hungarian army, the hangings in the barracks yard: "Jews? Communists?" (Burány 14), the deportation of the settlers, then the arrival of Russian soldiers and partisans, the fleeing gendarmerie, and the fleeing Hungarian administration. And the extensive spread of fear: everyone fears "blind" revenge. The Red Army soldiers break into houses at night, point a gun at the

husband, rape the wife, take the horse, the bedclothes, the watch. Then, to top it all off, there are the post-war atrocities.

The novel draws on the various stages of the characters' self-understanding and processes trauma as a social construct based on lived historical experience. This trauma acts as an invisible force that affects many aspects of life. It shapes the way of life, everyday existence and how the world and human relationships are interpreted. In the novel,

> The traumatic experience is present not only as a literary theme or as a psychological motivation for the plot, but dramatized by the narrative process, recognizable in narrative strategies that are evidence of the functioning of the wounded consciousness and as an imaginative representation that follows the logic of literature. (Ribnikar 615)

The specific temporal delimitation of the truly dangerous and seriously damaging situations is accomplished by the novel through two sequences based on the transformations of empire. Clearly, we are in a space of *cumulative traumas*,[3] although by narrowing the spectrum of the narrative, only two of the three highly traumatic turns appear. Yet the first change of empire, that is, the social memory of Trianon mediated through imagination concerning maps, is closely linked to these events. However, the Serbian military occupation of the area in 1918–1920 and its annexation to the nascent Yugoslav state is not developed. Such connections are not crystallized in the novel because they do not belong to the biographical period of the character. Nor should it be relegated to oblivion, because the grievances of collective identity would become clearer if the assertion of memory were to cover a broader temporal horizon. The first change of imperialism is both the cause and the explanation of subsequent events and behavior. It is here that cartographic semantics enters the story, the redrawing of borders and the profound modification of space that entails the loss of majority status for Hungarians. Just as another Hungarian writer from Vojvodina, János Herceg, in his novel *Módosulások*, depicts the exceptional historical intensity of the region, the traumatic ways in which space is irreversibly lost, some are expelled, others opt to change their living space or emigrate to a more distant place. And some will be tormented for the rest of their lives by a multitude of traumas concerning the choice of space of living.

3 The area in question has also experienced some traumatic events in later years. A remarkable volume on the artistic treatment of the 1999 NATO bombing: Nina Mihaljinac, *Umetnost i politike sećanja: trauma 1999*, Beograd, 2018.

It is in the shadow of the first change of regime that the projected *hopes* of the 1941 turnaround for a return to the former order of power are understood. It is also the time of the multifaceted disappointment of the *Összeroppanás*: "It would have been better if they had not come" (Burány 22), is the message of the 1941 turnaround, to be precise, the Hungarian invasion. The forced exchange of photographs hung on the walls has become a constant theme in the narrative of the turnaround, and the novel makes use of this theme:

> Your old father doesn't last long, he doesn't go to the front, he doesn't have a uniform, but after fortyone he hung a large framed picture on the wall, in the old Yugo this was not allowed—you can see him in the photograph, on horseback, with a swollen moustache, sword drawn, in the uniform of the Hungarian Hussars—and now he's hanging it again. His nerves are imploded. (Burány 28)

The traumatic experience, the collapse, is triggered by the fact that with the change of power, an era, an earlier dimension of ethnic identity has again become unacceptable. The novel *Összeroppanás,* by showing the two changes of power, also makes it clear that the trauma in this region cannot be linked to a single historical date. It cannot be localized in a single inherent violent past event, but rather in a series of *dates and events*, and in the process by which it haunts the survivor later on because of its unassimilated nature—and because it could not have been consciously known to the child at the moment it happened. The narrator of *Összeroppanás* creates, with a long time lag, a horizon that was not given to him when the events took place. What he could not naturally do in an earlier timeline. The survivor's guilt, the survivor's syndrome, is part of the unfolding child's self-understanding, and then also becomes part of his adult emotional world. The subject of trauma is plagued by survivor's guilt, the experience of feeling guilty for surviving a situation or experience that caused death or torture to others. The rhythm of the novel is organized by the incessant return to memory, which evokes a kind of empathic disturbance. There are moments when empathy gives way to vicarious victimhood, i.e. empathy with the victims becomes almost an identity of its own. The stories lived in Mihály Kocsis as if they had happened to him. While the illusions seemed to be disappearing, "the notions of man that he had formed in his childish naivety were crumbling, collapsing" (Burány 96). In addition to childhood traumatization, his adult life has another, now *a direct* source of trauma. The contradictory situation of being that, despite his severe experiences, he spends his adult life as a functionary in the service of a system in which he is disappointed by the reverses he sees. But

the fact is that he has become an accomplice and, increasingly impatient and anxious, he asks himself whether he has simply joined the "winners and the system, in the ranks of those who slaughtered thousands of innocent people for profit?" (Burány 111)

In the novel, after twenty-two years, the sentences of narrative testimony and self-recrimination for childish ignorance are torn:

> It is as if I were now waking up through the night that I had then slept through with the peaceful sleep of children. How could I have known what was happening in the basement of the former hotel and along the riverbank, along the trenches. The people in the area heard the wailing, the painful moans, the shrieking, the gunshots, but later they didn't dare tell anyone. I carried on carrying my uncle's lunch, but for a long time afterwards I knew nothing of that terrible night. (Burány 55)

It was a decidedly brave literary gesture that in this novel, although it communicates silence, the forbidden topics, those that no one dares to talk about, not even the central character himself, are already quite openly stated in 1967. The quote also suggests that the events have had a traumatic effect on someone who was not a direct sufferer. Here it becomes clear that traumatic events can happen to anyone, individually or collectively, and that everyone in this region carries with them the pain of their ancestors, and that these traumas are transgenerational. For a long time, this was little talked about because it was almost taboo, and narratives were not created to talk about it openly. In this novel, too, *the experience of the unspeakable* dominates and is given a prominent place in self-understanding and understanding in general. Burány captures the essence of the wartime moods of childhood, and then the exploration of one's own identity. The feeling of being lost in the world of post-war Vojvodina and the never-ending process of becoming oneself. Part of this is the shifting of perspectives, as the central figure is shocked to see how his worldview, constructed from the "perspective of the peasant-space in the urban periphery," is collapsing.

The coordinates of existence are marked by the inaccessibility of the meanings of *indirect trauma,* a secret that locks up the utterable and ultimately calls human dignity into question.

> But for twenty years. You didn't dare tell any of your friends about that tragic night with your uncle. And yet to speak freely, to tell the truth without fear, is one of the prerequisites for being worthy of the

> name. And you have kept it to yourself, fear has choked you to speak. (Burány 31)

In the text, the dual presence of the desire to remember-narrate and the taboo is discernible. The experiences of trauma are so difficult to grasp that the novel's singular narrative, but also attempts to approach it in the singular second person and from the perspective of the external narrator.

The thematic moments of the novel include the disturbances of war, the experience of post-war atrocities, the sharp clash of political forces and life under constant threat: "Suffering. Horror. Uncertainty" (Burány 53). It is important to emphasize that these are the elements that organize *the central subject* of the novel's poetics is the way trauma works and its incommunicable nature. The manifestations of trauma are sought not merely in the fact of loss, i.e. in human annihilation, but in its non-discursive mode, i.e. in the subversive—culturally inarticulable—constellations of humanity as such. The traces of transgenerational cumulative trauma can be detected at all levels of the narrative. For it identifies as traumatic all forms of weakness and inferiority associated with the changes of empire (contempt, superiority, plunder, deportation, ethnic cleansing, rape, servitude, grain requisition, etc.), where the individual experiences feelings of exposure to violent elements, abandonment, helplessness, hopelessness and inferiority in the face of the forces that are currently in power. There are also many events that are sometimes recorded only as *indirect experiences*, yet are integrated into one's own life story, but are difficult or impossible to talk about.

One of the underlying themes of the novel, the workings of an upside-down world, the atrocities of 1944, the Yugoslavia of Tito—while seeking to build new ideas of community and belonging—is treated as a secret, one of the most closely held and never resolved. So strong are these tendencies that some of the surviving documents have even been destroyed by the home affairs services. The Yugoslav authorities tried to conceal the existence of mass graves at the time of the publication of the novel and even later. The victims were usually buried in cemetery ditches, riverside ditches, and other inaccessible and still unknown places. Many mass graves were subsequently covered up by the authorities by erecting buildings over the sites. In this sense, memory could not legally participate in the construction of post-war identities. The question of how a community can remember if it does not know exactly what has been erased was raised. What could be saved for memory if one of the consequences of the ban was that the massacres committed against Hungarians and the locations of mass graves could only be secretly remembered by potential witnesses or relatives. The novel makes it clear that a silent moral discourse was taking

place within the meaning of the tabooed trauma. For years, strategies of mind manipulation aimed to exclude the Hungarian vision of the dead from memory. When the dead are buried in unknown places, their deaths can remain taboo. The complete prohibition of talking about how and when people died, the exclusion of mourning, the absence of corpses, the unknown location of burial sites or mass graves as depersonalizing places make the *traditional way of remembering through space* impossible. In connection with these events, we should be talking about the *scandal of place*, and of space.

On the other hand, and this is also addressed in the *Összeroppanás*, the existential escape from the *trauma of the Other*, the avoidance, the evasion, is also paralyzing: for a time, the Serbian and anti-Jewish raids that *preceded* the anti-Hungarian reprisals, the so-called "Cold days" in Novi Sad, also shaped the spiral of silence and silencing, with the help of defensive forgetting. The undifferentiated nature of traumatization is vigorously expressed in Végel's *Exterritórium:* "Perhaps they too carry wounds, wounds they have never spoken of before" (Végel 2000b: 47). This sentence conveys that there is a common underlying feeling, a silencing aspect. Elsewhere, it is also stated that in this sense these experiences manifest national relations: "From Slovenia to Macedonia, they are covering up the mass graves… of which the new generations were unaware" (Végel 2000a: 42). Despite all this, the people living here experience the events in different ways, with traumatic dates for some and not for others. In extreme cases, the day that one community counts as a holiday is overshadowed by the day of mourning for another. These issues lack a common narrative, a narrative that would have the same validity in all ethnic communities. Thus, the narrative relationship to the common horizon of remembrance may not coincide. A *paradoxical drama* of the multiplicity of the same is taking place. Therefore, the inadequacy of the concept of trauma to articulate the relation to the common object of memory is raised. Today, it is still an important question how the political sphere of the community deals with these subjects, in which direction the memory of traumatic events influences the thinking of Hungarian and Serbian society. What formations are created by the coefficients of conscious memory, deliberate erasure and accidental forgetting? In any case, the ramifications of the hidden and *forbidden dimensions* of the personal experience of the minority people are instructive, while the narration of the traumas of the majority is facilitated and made visible by a *mechanism of power*. Thus, there is a juxtaposition between the *silenced* and the *over-told*, over-mediated memory structures that are subordinated to the efforts of power. The forms of memory produced by power are the most over- or under-used forms of memory in the existing political order. Ethnic

relations over certain events are still influenced by the constructed nature of memory.

The narrative of the novel *Összeroppanás* should articulate the trauma of the narrator and the trauma of the Hungarians in Vojvodina at the same time. The boundaries between individual and collective trauma are blurred in memory. This novel of trauma does not focus on the direct depiction of events, it does not go into detail, it only zooms in on a single image and observes the inner events. The re-living of trauma is not seen as a way of re-living the wounds, but as a way of reconstructing them: "Again and again you ask yourself: why hurt this memory? Wound, scar, scab. If we touch it, it will bleed again. It is more difficult to heal" (Burány 27). The specificity of this concept is that it is most emphatically concerned with the present as a consequence. Remembrance is guided by aspects that can be interpreted *locally*. The past, which is responsible for the present, is revealed in memory flashes: memory is the residue of some elementary experience, which should be integrated into the existing mental system and transformed into a narrative language. Even many years later, Mihály Kocsis experiences recurring insomnia and paralyzing memories that intrude into his waking state, a feeling of anxiety that is difficult to explain, constant tension and almost irrational fear that overwhelms everyday life. The more expressive emotion, the existential fear, is, moreover, widely present in the prose imbued by geocultural identity. As László Végel writes in an essay, "Your history, the history of fears" (Végel 2003: 8).

The notion of trauma is defined here as the confrontation with some level of a stressful situation, the extent of which is so incomprehensible to the subject that it degrades his or her ability to verbalize the events. Meanwhile, the paradoxical nature of trauma is reflected in its almost compulsive need to be expressed, but its impossibility of verbal communication. The phenomenon of trauma both demands that it be consciously expressed and denies us our usual ways of accessing the event. The theme of the novel is a powerful need for utterance while suggesting that trauma cannot be expressed in referential language, nor through familiar narrative forms. This speaks of the need to understand the inarticulable experience of trauma as events that are difficult to translate into the language of literature. The recognition of the urgency of speaking out is also reflected in other texts in which the mother "described in detail the site of the mass graves in Srbobran, burial place of those who were innocently murdered in the street […] you must speak out, like your mother. At least at the last moment, you must speak out" (2000b: 141).

Returning to *Összeroppanás,* it speaks of the need to understand the elusive experience of trauma as events that are difficult to translate into the language

of literature. From its very first pages, it uses the names of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus to signal its preoccupation with the search for meaning in existence. In the next sentence, he elevates the speaking of truth to the status of the purpose of life, the meaning of existence. "Man carries a truth within himself, it should be grasped, spoken; you almost said that if you could do it, it would be enough in itself as a purpose in life" (Burány 8).

The *co-owner* of the trauma struggles for a long time with the impact of the events, the personal consequences, and the memory of the trauma. In several places, the novel expresses the preoccupation with the *unspeakable* around the *spoken*, the relationship between the unspeakable experience and the desire to speak, the interconnectedness of the two, the role of events in the formation of the self-image. The novel also reckons with the permanence of the elemental power and the threatening memory of events. It situates these moments in the context of an *inexhaustible*, *impermanent* world of feelings: "I may never be able to get away from it" (Burány 54). The need to break through taboo planes, the narrative filling of the void of reality, the telling of the truth, appears in several places in the novel as a way of escape: "If you told the whole truth, you might be saved forever" (Burány 9). No doubt, one should attempt to speak about those things that Mihály Kocsis might be able to express in language at all, for which he might gather the courage:

> How dare he speak? How many times has this question preoccupied him, tormented him! And for how long? Perhaps it has got somewhere. Still afraid, it is true, but more afraid of not knowing, of not being able to say it. (Burány 101–102)

The double vision so characteristic of trauma stories becomes here an important structural figure. In the unstable world of trauma-induced thinking, the need and impossibility of speech at once torment the central figure of the novel. The elements associated with the individual condition of collective trauma are "interconnected" (Burány 92). "The interlocking confused feelings of helplessness, shame, remorse, humiliation have been deposited in the sand, causing constant disturbances in the functioning of the kidneys" (Burány 97).

The final collapse, the bankruptcy, is that in the end, the truth in the novel remains untold. As if to prove that every phenomenon of trauma finally resists representation: "I could not, I dared not speak the truth…" (Burány 135). We know that the novel *Összeroppanás*, however, broke the silence and this story said what Mihály Kocsis was not allowed to say.

Traumatic experiences always tie the subject strongly to space, and consequently, they cannot find a way out within this space. Therefore, an important moment at the end of the novel is the recognition of the need to break out of the geo-cultural space. For the speaker, to place herself outside of traumatic space would mean that she could move away from the relation in which she experiences her being to herself: "I must, it seems, travel away after all. Away. Very far away" (Burány 135). However, it should not go unmentioned that at the beginning of the novel we read that the "awkward wandering" is interiorized to such an extent that distance does not eliminate, or at most weakens, certain spatial structures of existence:

> You flee from city to city, but you should know that you cannot escape, it is everywhere, it accompanies you to Rome, Pest, Belgrade and Split, that is, it is rather inside you, wherever you travel, you take it with you. (Burány 8)

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| Abstract

KORNÉLIA FARAGÓ
In the Space of Cumulative Trauma: Lessons from a Hungarian Trauma-Novel in Vojvodina

In the case of deep trauma, literature is often unable to speak. In the Hungarian literature of Vojvodina, the general silence concerning the changes of empire and the reprisals describes the traumatic experience as an impulse that is impossible to put into a narrative. Nándor Burány's book-length trauma novel, *Összeroppanás* (Implosion), published in 1968, looked back on the events from a quarter of a century later and for the first time thematised the task of processing transgenerational trauma. The novel's distinctive feature is that it introduces the concept of trauma itself by asking questions about the identification of the time of the traumatic rupture. The real subject of his poetics is the way trauma works and its ineffable nature. The double vision so characteristic of trauma stories becomes here an important structural figure. In the moody world of trauma-induced thinking, the necessity and impossibility of speech at once torments the central figure of the novel. The novel is set in a space of cumulative trauma and processes trauma as a social construction based on lived experience. It also makes the point that trauma in this space cannot be located in a single inherent violent past event, but rather in a series of dates and events.

Keywords: geoculture, cumulative trauma field, empyrean shift, transgenerational trauma, trauma novel

| Bio

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.8

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Post-Holocaust Migrations of Empathy: *My Star* by Felicja Raszkin-Nowak

Felicja Raszkin-Nowak is a person known and unknown at the same time.[1] She is known in Białystok which as a result of the Holocaust became her native town. In her modest book, *My Star*, published in 1991, she describes the time she spent in the Białystok ghetto and her life in hiding in one of Podlasie villages (Nowak 1991: 203). Originally written in Polish, the memoirs were translated into English by Andrzej Bursa and published in 1996 in Toronto as *My Star. Memoirs of a Holocaust Survivor* with the introduction by Diana Kuprel and the afterword by Andrzej Szczypiorski (Nowak 1996: 179).

In 1997, the memoirs were translated into Danish and published twice (again with Szczypiorski's afterword), and then in 2001 into German (in a rendition

1 This text, originally titled, *My Star*: *Memoir of a Holocaust Survivor: First-Person Experiences and Comparisons with Others' Experiences* was presented at the 52nd Annual ASEEES (Association for Slavic, East European, & Eurasian Studies) Convention (November 5–8 and 14–15, 2020) in a panel titled: "The Bialystok Ghetto: Testimonies of Rebellion and their Literary and Linguistic Perspectives." *Moja gwiazda* (*My Star*) was published under the names Felicja Nowak and Felicja Raszkin-Nowak. I use the author's double name in the text.

from English), and, finally, in 2011 into Esperanto[2] (Raszkin-Nowak came from the Esperanto speaking family).[3] The book is thus available in a few languages, but it is not, I think, as recognized as it deserves to be (cf. Ruben 31–44; Ławski 195–222).

There are two reasons for this negligence. First, Raszkin-Nowak's perspective on the Holocaust is marked by the emphasis she places on her Polish-Jewish identity.[4] The text is devoid of judgmental tone—there are no accusations or hasty conclusions, and its spiritual message is encapsulated in the epigraph "In memory of Those, who gave me life, and Those who lost it" (Nowak 1991: 1). Second, the Polish publication of the memoirs is far from perfect—amateurish, badly edited and what is even worse, never republished because the author sold her copyrights to a publishing house which does not exist any longer. The book that should be on the reading list in every secondary school in Białystok is still a rarity, even in its imperfect editorial form.[5]

2 F. Raszkin-Nowak, *Min stjerne: erindringer*. Trans. Runa Kildegaard Klukowska. København: Fremad, 1997, 275 pages; *Mein Stern: Erinnerungen einer Holocaust-Überlebenden*. Trans. Anna Kaiser. Gerlingen: Bleicher, 2001, 347 pages; *Mia stelo*. Trans. Tomasz Chmielik. Białystok: Książnica Podlaska im. Łukasza Górnickiego, 2011, 189 pages.

3 Her uncle was Jakub Szapiro (1897–1941), an Esperantist from Bialystok, also well-known outside Poland, who was murdered in Bialystok by the Germans. He wrote several books, including: *La mondmilito kaj Esperanto*, Saratov 1915 (in Russian), (World War and Esperanto); Jakobo Sapiro, *Gvidilo tra Bialystok, la nask-urbo de nia Majstro*, Koln 1923 (Guide to Bialystok, the city of our Master's birth); *Babiladoj de bonhumora Zamenho-fano* (1922, 1924). He is also warmly remembered by Felicja Raszkin-Nowak (2018: 29): "As one of the first, Jakub Szapiro demanded to establish a Zamenhof museum at Zielona Street, where the creator of Esperanto once lived… The flat at 33 Lipowa Street was a meeting place that hosted Esperantists, not only Polish ones." Szapiro was shot by the Germans in Pietrasze together with Felicja Nowak's father, Jakub Raszkin, which was a special trauma for the writer. Jakub Szapiro's wife and son Artur were murdered in the camp.

4 I understand Polish-Jewish identity as the heroine of my text saw it. Her daughter, Beata Ruben, referring to her mother's words, writes: "I would like to start with a quote from a poem by the great poet Julian Tuwim: 'This is my house – four walls of poems/ In my beautiful homeland – Polish.' Felicja Ruszkin-Nowak chose this homeland. And so she remained faithful. As she herself said in an interview for Television Polonia: 'I treat Poland as my homeland, whether someone likes it or not. I speak this language. And I think in this language. And whatever I do in the Polish community and Jewish clubs, I do it with Polish culture in mind, because it is in me'" (Cf. Ruben 31).

5 The work was published by the defunct "Versus" publishing house, and was reissued by the now defunct academic publishing house "Trans Humana."

Apart from her memoirs, Raszkin-Nowak published a small volume of poems, *Stars in Darkness* (Białystok 2003), with the afterword by Professor Teresa Zaniewska. It includes the verses composed during the German occupation and in the years that followed. These days the volume is also hardly available to readers.

Raszkin-Nowak came from the family of Białystok's merchants and manufacturers. Searching for better life opportunities, her parents moved to Warsaw, where she was born in 1924. Almost every year, she would return to Białystok to spend Christmas and vacations, and her grandmother's house became an emotional center of her private world. When the WWII broke out she was fifteen years old. With her parents, she fled from Warsaw to Białystok, where they soon were closed in the ghetto. Out of the whole family, she was the only one to survive—her father was executed by fire squad in Pietrasze; her mother and grandfather died in Treblinka. Raszkin-Nowak, as will be described in detail later, managed to escape from the ghetto and went into hiding. She writes:

> During my two-year stay in the Bialystok Ghetto, I lost my nearest and dearest in successive "actions" of Nazi crimes. All relatives from both my Father's and Mother's sides were deported to death camps. Extremely painful was the loss of my grandmother Maria Szapiro, to whom I was very attached and had been coming from Warsaw since early childhood. The most tragic moment was the separation from my Mother and the impossibility of hiding together. (2018: 22)

Raszkin-Nowak offered her life story from the perspective of a fifty-year-long distance. The events described in the 200-page long book were noted down on impulse. In 1987, she read the article by Tomasz Wiśniewski in Białystok's *Kurier Podlaski*.[6] The article mentions "my war time story in this town, as well as three of my poems" (Nowak 1991: 5). As she later noted, "I was deeply moved that after all those years somebody found my war time accounts. And again I felt the urge to describe my experiences and recall my happy childhood, my family and relatives" (Nowak 1991: 5).

6 T. Wiśniewski published an article about the writer (no. 162) in the now-defunct *Kurier Podlaski* in 1987. He corresponded with Raszkin-Nowak for years, and maintains correspondence with her daughter Beata Ruben. I thank Dr. T. Wiśniewski for this and other information (e.g. about the Esperanto version of the film about the writer). Cf. also: Wiśniewski 30.

The structure of the volume reflects the original design. Raszkin-Nowak depicts the life before the Holocaust ("Childhood," "School," "The Appeal of School Uniform"), the Holocaust time ("The War," "Białystok with the Hammer and Sickle," "The German Białystok," The Humming of Machines," "Enclosed in the Ghetto," "Displacement," "Life with the Death Sentence"), and the life after the ghetto ("A Return to Life," "Political Upheavals," "Epilogue").

Despite a half-century time distance, Raszkin-Nowak's account retains its exceptional vividness and the accuracy with which it reconstructs the topography and culture of the pre-war and war-time Białystok. The simplicity of the text wins over heart with its unusual mode of narration, which can be called "emphatic realism."[7] While representing the horror of the Holocaust, it nevertheless looks for the traces of goodness among the inhuman, which Michał Głowiński called "Obliteration" (of Jewish people) (2001: 13–15; 2005).

After the war, Raszkin-Nowak stayed in Poland and took up a job in Polish Radio. In March 1968, she left the Polish People's Republic, settling down in Copenhagen and freelancing for Radio Free Europe. She worked in various Polish and Jewish organizations as well as in the Royal Danish Library. In the Polish Embassy in Copenhagen she organized meetings dedicated to notable emigrants of Polish and Jewish origin.[8] As remarked by her colleague, Roman Śmigielski:

> Felicja managed to do something almost impossible, namely to partly integrate Poles and Jews. Polish Jews visited Polish clubs to listen her talk, and Polish emigrants, often for the first time in their lives, crossed

7 The category of "empathic realism" appears in relation to nineteenth-century literature, for example in the work of Ewa Paczoska (2018). The researcher argues that: "The novel in the edition of James and Prus could certainly be placed in the formula of 'empathic realism,' i.e. focused on the way the characters feel the world, where the camera's eye is directed at the sphere of impressions, feelings, the relationship between what is hidden and what is manifested" (76). With regard to the world presented in Raszkin-Nowak's work, the point is to emphasize the relationship between the author's subject and the described world. This relationship is based on the category of *mimesis*, but one whose limits are determined by the author's sympathy with all the characters she describes. This has fundamental consequences for the way the world is presented: this type of realism does not emphasize the effects of human actions, but focuses on an attempt to penetrate its deep motivation.

8 See the extensive photo material devoted to the writer in *Żydzi wschodniej Polski*, Series VI 8, 47–50, 399–417; cf. Romanowicz 2018.

> the thresholds of Jewish clubs or Jewish community districts. (qtd in Ruben 41)

Raszkin-Nowak died in 2015 at the age of 90. In Białystok there is a communal garden named after her,[9] and in 2017 she was commemorated in the International Conference "Jews of Eastern Poland" dedicated to Jews of Białystok.[10] The exhibition that accompanied the event was opened by her daughter, Beata Ruben. In 2017, thanks to the support of the Center of Civic Education Poland-Israel her short memoir, *My Białystok Family*, was published in Białystok (Olech, Ruben 40).

Returning to *My Star*, we need to pose the question what makes Raszkin-Nowak's perspective on history emerging from her memoirs so unique. I argue that while in her text we may discover the elements well-known from other Holocaust testimonies, in *My Star* they are presented with exceptional intensity and in a unique arrangement.

The memoirist returns to her war time experiences after half a century. Her recollections fuse two traumas—one originating from the war and the other from the emigration after March 1968. Her view of March is traumatic, but filtered through the awareness that she is leaving behind the devastated and often robbed graves of her fathers in the country. She writes: "The children first gave the impulse to leave. What is left for them? The Polish language, love of the countryside, memories, love of Warsaw, Białystok, friends and a HUGE regret" (Raszkin-Nowak 2018: 30; Ruben 36). The assumed perspective does not mean the estrangement from Polish culture. On the contrary, the link is strengthened. On the one hand, Polish culture is, along with the Jewish one, the context of her growth and maturity. The Polish language is not the chosen one but the sole natural means of expression in words. Raszkin-Nowak does not pass over March 1968 in silence nor does she euphemize it. As she writes:

9 Raszkin-Nowak's Square was opened on November 1, 2019 near Czysta Street. The writer was also commemorated with the film *Garnek pełen złota* (*Pot Full of Gold*), made by Białystok Television and directed by Tomasz Wiśniewski and Paweł Garbnecki (2008; in English and Esperanto) and a radio report: "Felicia Nowak's Białystok"—broadcast by Teresa Kudelska and Jolanta Szczygieł–Rogowska on August 17, 2020.

10 Conference "Żydzi wschodniej Polski. Żydzi białostoccy: od początków do 1939 roku. Kontekst środkowoeuropejski" ("Jews of Eastern Poland. Bialystok Jews: From the Beginnings to 1939. The Central European Context"), Białystok June 12–13, 2017. Patron: Felicja Raszkin-Nowak (1924–2015).

> If anybody tells me that March 1968 has left no mark on their lives, and they are satisfied with their arrival in a foreign country, forgetting about their past experiences and their careers, I will not believe them. The March emigration was a painful thorn that pierced everybody's heart.
>
> For me, Poland is a native country, irrespective of whether people like it or not. I speak the Polish language and I think in it. Whatever I do in Polish and Jewish clubs, I do it with the native culture on my mind. This is inside of me and cannot be eradicated.
>
> As I think, we must still talk about the March 1968 events because the wrongdoing has not been made up for. Even if the Polish Parliament made an official apology, which was a nice symbolic gesture, the problem has not been solved. Therefore it is important to return to it over and over again; and talk about it.
>
> When I was leaving, I did not feel to be an offended Jewish woman but as a deeply hurt Polish citizen. (qtd in Ruben 37)

How does March 1968 shape her view of the Holocaust?[11] Both dramas throw light on each other. Both are the trials of humanity, which some faced up to and some did not. The time distance to events being described in a written form often evokes the desire to interpret them *ex post* and to endow them with a didactic dimension, or to inscribe them into an ideological context, in the sphere of the dichotomy "for" or "against." Raszkin-Nowak avoids both moralizing and overtly didactic tones.[12] The testimony she gives is sufficiently powerful to shock the readers. The representations of the scenes from the Białystok ghetto are deeply moving by their brutal realism, but their horror is filtered through the controlling "I" of the narrator:

> While we were leaving, the horse-drawn carts filled with corpses were passing by. The inert bodies were placed in layers, their dangling limbs hitting the tires. A German soldier was walking in the front, two Jewish policemen with dropped heads lagging behind the cart.

11 It is undoubtedly a separate profiling, not devoid of a feeling of bitterness, but strongly differentiating the participants of March '68 both in terms of political and human behavior.

12 She is far from extreme conclusions, generalizing outlooks. She carries the stigma of the survivor, of the "smeared," to use Irit Amiel's formula, but this does not take away her strength, she is still active in the Polish and Jewish Copenhagen milieu. Cf. Olech 2017.

> I was particularly moved by the sight of an old man sitting among the corpses. Thin, with a pale complexion and long beard, he seemed totally indifferent, looking far ahead, perhaps into the netherworld. (Nowak 1991: 124)

When she writes "I was particularly moved by the sight of an old man…," she becomes a commentator and witness guiding us through the nonhuman world. Yet assuming the perspective of an old person, she recognizes a set of contradictions—the drama of worldviews, the collapse of religion and culture:

> Christ preached about Loving our neighbors, about Kindness and Equality, but what has remained of that teaching? How many people acted in accordance with His instructions? What should we think of all those crimes, unparalleled in history, of the mass extermination and gas chambers, of the plan to eradicate the whole nation? After all the perpetrators were Christians, with the slogan "Gott mit uns" on the belt buckles. (Nowak 1991: 124)

It is worth remembering that similar remarks can easily be found in numerous accounts written either on the spot or after the war. However, what makes Raszkin-Nowak's narrative unique is the emphasis placed on the rescue that is possible thanks to the benevolence of other human beings—she experiences it, in a psychological dimension, in the ghetto, and later, when she finds shelter in a barn owned by local peasants, remaining there for a year. While in the ghetto she seeks solace in the books by Henryk Sienkiewicz, Heinrich Heine, in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* or Gustave Flaubert's *Salambo*. She diligently learns German and studies the writings of the eighteenth- and nineteenth century Polish and German authors.

Two writers are especially important for her during that time. The first one is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe—just before the war she takes part in the school theatre adaptation of *Reynard the Fox*. But her infatuation with Goethe develops further, in an unexpected way. While in hiding, she translates into Polish his *Erlkönig* (1782), the poem about the death of the child assailed by a supernatural being.[13] Completed on May 20, 1944, it is an amateurish rendition, yet informed by a powerful eloquence. Here the death comes silently but

13 As we know, it was also an important work for Bruno Schulz's imagination. It has been written about many times. Cf., e.g. Czabanowska-Wróbel 1994, Fieguth 2015.

in a sinister manner. It is not the fall into abyss, but a form of liberation; the abduction into an unknown world. Thus, the words of the nineteenth-century German writer—the fact that is meaningful in itself—record the death experience of the Jewish teenage girl.

The key scene of *My Star* depicts the moment of escape and parting with mother. This fragment exemplifies the force of Raszkin-Nowak's emphatic realism. It is worth quoting also because one of the central characters is a German soldier:

> Other women gathered around, urging me to flee. They wanted at least one person among them to survive. Although they believed in me, giving a consolation, I still was besieged by doubts. I explained to my mother how serious the risk was. I asked her to accompany me so we could support each other and better watch out for the Germans. She did not agree, constantly repeating that two people stood lower chances of finding a hideout. She was also afraid that her face was not Aryan enough and insisted on me trying to escape first.
>
> "Escape. You must tell everybody about us," she said. "It is your duty." And these were her last words.
>
> She did not hesitate to part with me. The most important thing for her was to let me find a shelter—her presence would lower the chances. She made the supreme sacrifice, disregarding her own plight.
>
> I thought that if I managed to escape, I would help her and others to get out, but if I remained, we would all perish. Taking the risk was the only way out from that hopeless situation. I decided to try.
>
> I did not cry but felt a lump in my throat while saying the last goodbye. Mother tried to smile but her big green eyes were hopelessly sad. I was looking at her before she left. Her slim figure in a black dress was slowly fading away.
>
> This time I sat on the last cart. To my surprise, we were being escorted by the same young man who often asked "where is the one with glasses on?" He was in good humor, making jokes about being at last "alone in the presence of the glasses." I did not share his hilarity. He had no idea about my thoughts neither did he understand the struggle within my heart.
>
> We were sitting next to each other on the edge of the cart. The German was leaning against his machine gun, I—against my bag coved with the tail of my coat. At the front, hunched-up, two men from the ghetto were talking.

> Suddenly, driven to desperation, I asked the soldier to stop making jokes and help me. He did not understand. I told him I wanted to escape. He smiled, asking for the address I was intending to go to. I sensed deception in his words, and told him that I was about to go straight ahead to the countryside.
>
> He stared at me intently.
>
> "I feel sorry for you. I will turn away. Do what you want," he said. (Nowak 1991: 129–130)

In Raszkin-Nowak's account death is omnipotent. The words "perished," "transported," "shot" or "Treblinka" are omnipresent.[14] From the perspective of many years, she writes so as to give testimony of the rescue of herself and of human culture in general. As she keeps reminding her readers, this was possible not only thanks to the behavior of an ordinary peasant but thanks to a certain culture and tradition:

> The most beautiful human deeds do not always require publicity, or special commemoration. Rather, they are informed by modesty and silence. The man who saved his life in the dark time of the German occupation—thus putting in danger the safety of his family—strongly opposed when I wanted to reveal his name. He said he had not done it for fame. I respected the greatness of his heart, but I could not be silent about what he did, because not everybody believed in his unselfishness. I thought that it was my duty to testify not only to the truth about the war atrocities, but also to exceptional human virtue. *My Star*, published in 1991 in Białystok, was the proof of my intent. Apart from the recollections of my whole family murdered by the Germans, I wanted to express my deepest respect for all those who became my new family. (Nowak 2018)

In the barn of "Mr. Piotr," where she spent a year, Felicja wrote one of the most moving poems of that cruel time. Following in the footsteps of Adam Mickiewicz's "Ode to Youth" (the poem she knew by heart), she composed her own version: "Now I was alone. Alone with my despair. The surrounding

14 It can be said, following Sławomir Buryła, that Raszkin-Nowak has exhausted almost the entire list of "Holocaust topos," and yet their use is specific in her prose: it is free of resentment and also does not relent of conventionalization, despite the time distance that separates the author from the described events. Cf. Buryła 2013.

darkness pushed me to turning my thoughts into verse" (Nowak 1991: 162). She refers to the tradition of the eighteenth century, of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, which to a certain degree was shaped by Goethe, and later developed by Mickiewicz and Heine. Mickiewicz's outstanding "Ode" is transformed into a harrowing testimony to the Holocaust. Even if stylistically clumsy, it is certainly informed by genuineness:

> O Youth, strengthen my heart,
> and help in the anguish of bondage
> to harden my soul
> so as to know no fear in suffering.
> O Youth, you are my strength;
> make my thoughts bright
> to distinguish the voice of truth.
> I want to fight for a better life.
> You are my might!
> O Youth, give me strength.
> An eagle is flying high,
> I need to reach out for it,
> And stir the blue sky.
> Give me strength! (Raszkin-Nowak 2003: 10)

When the war was over, Raszkin-Nowak was nineteen years old. Much later, she describes her experience in the text which is marked by symbols and unobtrusive metaphorization but never loses its rational underpinning. The star from the title is a souvenir—a precious six-pointed brooch, the shape of which resembled the Star of David. Originally belonging to her grandmother, it was passed on to Raszkin-Nowak when she was escaping form the ghetto. She wanted to give the brooch to her savior, but he returned the gift telling her something that she remembered for the rest of her life:

> "Take it back, my child, and keep it on you. Me and my wife have realized that in case of sudden danger, it would be very difficult to take it out from the place where it is hidden. This is the only material thing from your home that you possess, and it is essential that you keep it all the time," he said with a matter-of-fact tone in his voice. (Nowak 1991: 147)

From this time on, as she writes, the star "became her shield." But the word has more than one meaning, connoting also "destiny." This predestines one to

see, save, and testify. In the title of Raszkin-Nowak's volume of poetry the stars glow in the darkness—they are the "stars in the darkness," i.e. they symbolize both a saving tradition and those individuals who come to rescue.[15] In this particular case, it refers to the family of peasants living in the vicinity of Białystok. Raszkin-Nowak does not hide her attitude to the outbursts of anti-Semitism in Poland, but she refrains from giving them prominence:

> Regrettably, despite the passing of time and numerous changes that have taken place in Poland, we are still unable to comprehend this fact. The people who saved my life did not wish their names to be revealed, saying that it is important *what* was done and *not* who did it. Though unwillingly, I accept their wishes, understanding that the anonymousness stems not only from modesty, but is caused by other, unspecified reasons. In my memoirs, I would like to offer my tribute to those whose good deeds, attempted in the midst of crimes, deplorable acts and hatred, shine like stars. (Nowak 1991: 201).

After the war, Piotr and his family did not want to have their surnames published for two reasons. Firstly, they were afraid of some of their neighbors. Secondly, (and this is not stated explicitly in *My Star*), after the war, the savior, a member of the Home Army, was arrested and imprisoned. When she started her education in one of the schools in Moscow, Raszkin-Nowak—as she herself underlines her name is meaningful in itself, deriving from the Latin *felix*,[16] "happy"—entreated the Soviet authorities for Piotr's release. However, in the context of the Stalinist epoch the unwillingness to reveal the underground activities and the names of the people who carried them out during the war is all too obvious.

As I have already written, after 1945 Raszkin-Nowak worked as a journalist for Polish Radio. Her experience as an editor, i.e. somebody who knows how to structure the written text, can be seen in *My Star*. Raszkin-Nowak is very economical with words and not afraid of discarding irrelevant materials. Her style is informed by the simplicity of expression, the avoidance of verbosity,

15 The author's erudition makes it possible to look for distant references to the motif of "dark stars" not only in Immanuel Kant's "The starry sky above me and the moral law within me…" from *Critique of Practical Reason* (1781), but even in Tadeusz Miciński's salient and only, dark volume *In the Darkness of Stars* (1902).

16 The name Felicia actually comes from the Latin *felix*—happy, gracious, kind. The masculine version of the name is, of course, Felix.

and the condensation of meanings, signaling that the last is conveyed through the medium of the author-survivor.

Raszkin-Nowak's whole modest oeuvre combines the horrifying and aptly expressed testimony with the strategy of overcoming trauma. The strategy was by no means easy to be achieved. And the process of overcoming trauma was not tantamount to the escape form Jewishness into a Danish identity, or from the Polish identity into the Jewish one. It was an affirmation of both these most important elements—the Polish and the Jewish.[17] Only the woman with such experience as Raszkin-Nowak's (the Holocaust and March 1968) was capable of expressing (without a false note) the message that is emerging from her *In Memory of My Father Murdered by German Soldiers on 12 July 1941*:

> My grandson's bluish eyes
> resemble the azure sky on a summer day;
> his trustful, breezy gaze,
> directed at a peaceful dream.
>
> My Father's bluish eyes
> like flowers from the Polish fields
> were riveted by the sight of heaped corpses
> before He was pierced by a deadly pain.
>
> How to explain it today to a youth,
> who does not belong in here anymore
> that the shots were fired by cruel Germans
> at innocent people?
>
> My grandson named after my grandfather
> understands the depth of my grief,
> admiring at the same time
> the great deed of my rescue.
>
> Human life is a fleeting moment
> in the earth's movement among the stars.
> Eternity is a retention of memory,
> because it stops the time.

17 For Raszkin-Nowak, Danish identity was only of an official, "passport" nature.

Let's silence our hearts,
and soothe the urge to shed tears,
because memory will prove much stronger
than the sign of death (Raszkin-Nowak 2015: 17).

It is in this work that one can see how empathic realism transforms into a specific apology of memory. It is neither a theodicy nor an explanation of the roots of evil, but it turns out to be an attempt to draw conclusions from the author's tragic experiences for the future. Empathic realism does not justify anything, it does not euphemize crime, but it does lead to a perspective in which the past is overcome by the future. This overcoming is achieved only when the bridge stretching between the terrifying past and the happening, vital future is an understanding, deep, intergenerational memory. In other words, it can be called empathic memory.

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| Abstract

ANNA JANICKA

Post-Holocaust Migrations of Empathy: *My Star* by Felicja Raszkin-Nowak

Felicja Raszkin-Nowak still remains a little-known witness of the Holocaust. Born in Warsaw, she found herself in Białystok as a little girl during the war. Miraculously she survived the liquidation of the ghetto and hid on a farm, from where she was liberated. After the war, she worked at Polish Radio, and after March 1968 she

emigrated to Denmark. In 1991, she published her memoirs titled *My Star*, translated into several languages. They are a faithful and shocking portrayal of war and the Holocaust, written with rare mastery. Raszkin-Nowak's writing strategy combines several different perspectives: that of a child and an adult, a Polish woman and a Jew, a girl and a mature woman on the threshold of old age. Raszkin-Nowak uses an innovative storytelling technique that can be called empathetic realism. It enables the author to overcome the internal and external distance between the experience of childhood and the experience of war, the experience of cultural settlement and the experience of emigration, the time of events and the time of reminiscing.

Keywords: Felicja Raszkin-Nowak, memories, Holocaust, empathic realism

| Bio

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.9

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Dead Rescuers: The Commemoration of Poles Who Lost Their Lives Saving Jews During the Second World War

On September 5, 2021, Polish President Andrzej Duda tweeted in English about eight nuns from the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul convent who, according to him, "were doused with gasoline and burned alive" for sheltering Jews in August 1944. Unfortunately, none of the sources provided by presidential staff to the *oko.press* investigative website identified the circumstances of their deaths or confirmed the reason for their execution (Leszczyński). This bloodcurdling account is a conversation-stopper, negating the last two decades of critical historiography on Polish-Jewish relations during the war. The immolation of the nuns cancels out the difference between the fates of Jewish victims of the Holocaust (etymologically, "a burnt offering") and their Polish rescuers. President Duda's rhetorical strategy replaces rigorous historiography with an affective investment. This sacrifice should, it would seem, quash any doubts about the moral choices Poles took as witnesses to the Holocaust. And yet, such an intervention is a sign of a cultural counter-revolution, a populist rereading of Polish history through an ethnonationalist lens (Michlic 2022: 118). In memory studies, this shift has been called a "self-affirmatory memory" (Kobielska), promoting victim status for the Polish nation. Piotr Forecki highlights an agonistic dimension of memory wars, applying the term "backlash" to cultural practices that neutralize the damage caused by revelations about the Jedwabne pogrom (Forecki 2018: 255). An implicit goal of this reworking

of the past is "to put Poles and Jews upon an equal level of victimization" (Hackmann 604).

I wish to trace the consequences of this change, as evidenced in official forms of commemoration and a new regime of political memory after 2015. "Dead rescuers," i.e. Poles murdered for helping Jews, are commemorated by a host of institutions: a government-sponsored research institute, museums, and the Catholic Church. I visited the sites in question between 2017 and 2022, producing photographic documentation. An analysis of their rhetorical and visual strategies makes evident that they express a uniform attitude to the history of rescue. What follows is by no means intended to undermine the actions and sacrifices of rescuers but instead to highlight postwar political efforts to manipulate their decisions. Furthermore, both rescuers and their charges were Polish citizens. Construing the extent of the above-mentioned rhetorical campaign requires a historical detour. Popular culture in the Polish People's Republic introduced a motif of symbolic sacrifice, meaning that an ethnic Pole needed to die so that a Jew could survive (Łysak 549). In *Biały niedźwiedź* (dir. Jerzy Zarzycki, 1959), a Jewish academic, Henryk Fogiel, hides in plain sight, wearing a white bear costume in the mountain resort of Zakopane, donned previously by a Polish resistance fighter, killed by the Nazis. At the end, a Polish woman trying to save Fogiel gets hit by bullets intended for him. Thanks to her sacrifice, he escapes. Truth be told, focusing on the death of a Pole served to condemn "Jewish ingratitude" for having been rescued and featured in anti-semitic propaganda in the late 1960s (Wóycicka 2019: 263).

In the twenty-first century, two high-profile rescuers dominate public discourse about Polish help: Irena Sendlerowa and Jan Karski. The former coordinated a network of rescuers in a clandestine organization called Żegota as well as the smuggling of children (and adults) out of the Warsaw Ghetto. Sendlerowa proves an unlikely candidate for an ethnonationalist hero, as she was motivated by her leftwing political ideals rather than her religiosity (Bikont; Żarnecka). Critical scholarship on Sendlerowa may lack the performative power to reverse the mythologized biography of this helper (Żarnecka 162). Karski, meanwhile, as his myth goes, was trying to reverse the course of the Holocaust by appealing to British and American political leaders to end the extermination of Jews. The one-hundredth anniversary of his birth in 2014 provided an occasion to remind the world about Karski's failed mission. And yet, a critical reinterpretation of sources reveals that his primary goal was not to deliver news about the Holocaust to the Allies, who already knew about the mass murder (Puławski 318–343; Grabowski and Klein 10).

In the Polish language, individuals extending help to Jews during the Second World War are referred to either as "Sprawiedliwi" (similar to "the Righteous Among the Nations"—a term introduced by Yad Vashem in 1963 to honor those whose identity as rescuers has been rigorously confirmed) or "Polacy ratujący Żydów" (this group outnumbers the former cohort, most individuals lack recognition, their motives and conduct may avoid historical scrutiny). The latter phrase is officially translated as "Poles Saving Jews." Herein, I use "rescuers" unless the individuals in question have been awarded the title coined by Yad Vashem. Joanna Michlic further complicates the picture, talking about "dedicated rescuers"—"individuals who went above and beyond the call of duty to save their Jewish charges" (2014: 216). She applies this term to a group of female rescuers who never betrayed those seeking shelter, as opposed to rescuers motivated by greed or who eventually killed their charges. In Poland, the number of rescuers tends to be blown out of proportion, with the highest unsubstantiated estimates close to one million (Podbielska 576). I argue that, after 2015, dead rescuers dominated the official commemoration of rescue,[1] the Holocaust, and Polish-Jewish relations. Such a rhetorical strategy ignores the social context of the Nazi occupation and belittles the fact that dead rescuers frequently perished upon denunciation by fellow Poles. There is a hidden assumption about the purity of their intentions, which is generalized as being the attitude of the Polish nation. This window dressing won governmental support and has three interrelated goals: to combat the "pedagogy of shame"[2] in Poland, to offer a renewed sense of national pride, and to counteract the damage to the image of the country abroad. In picking these goals, the right-wing government is castigating the pre-2015 pro-European establishment for its "politics of regret" (Olick).

1. Micro-history and reclaiming the countryside

A government-sponsored program entitled "Zawołani po imieniu" ("Called by Name") honors dead rescuers. It is run by the Pilecki Institute, a research-commemoration institution established in 2017 to implement historical policy. Initially, the Institute studied the impact of the Nazi and Communist

1 There are earlier examples of this trend. A documentary film *Historia Kowalskich* (dir. Arkadiusz Gołębiewski, Maciej Pawlicki, TVP 2009) dramatizes the execution of Poles who had rescued Jews. The National Bank of Poland honored the Kowalskis, issuing two coins in 2012 emblazoned with "Poles Saving Jews."

2 An umbrella term for critical historiography and political rituals, undermining a heroic self-perception of Polish history.

totalitarianisms on Polish society but, with time, its focus has shifted to the commemoration of rescuers. On its website, the Institute estimates that approximately one thousand Poles were killed for helping Jews under the Nazi occupation, and their stories will be told with their relatives' help. In a promotional video, Magdalena Gawin—director of the Pilecki Institute as of 2021—calls them "unacknowledged heroes," explaining its four actions: "calling out their names in public at the site of their death," "inviting their families to join the ceremony," "soliciting the participation of the local community," and "identifying the names of helpers and their charges." A stone with a commemorative plaque, the first of many, was unveiled in 2019. The project flew under the radar until a railroad worker, Jan Maletka—shot dead for offering water to Jews crammed in a cattle car on the rail spur in Treblinka on August 20, 1942—had a stone unveiled next to a recent installation honoring Jewish victims who passed through the Treblinka train station on their way to the gas chambers of the nearby death camp. The ceremony caused international outrage and Jan Hartman called it an "antisemitic excess," as one can only cherish Maletka's heroism if one also forgets that other Poles lining the tracks to Treblinka hoped to exchange water for Jewish gold and jewelry. Coincidentally, Maletka's memorial stone is visible from the house of Czesław Borowy, who was a key witness in Claude Lanzmann's epochal documentary *Shoah* (1985). To its international audience, Borowy's account of Jewish deportees to Treblinka came to symbolize the callous indifference of Poles. Heretofore, memorialization was carried out in the countryside, mostly in the Podlasie and Lubelskie regions (electoral strongholds of Law and Justice), as evidenced by a map on the website. This choice reflects the trajectory of Holocaust studies in Poland, which shifted attention from big ghettos in cities to the process of extermination in the countryside (Engelking, Grabowski eds.). It also exonerates the countryfolk from accusations of indifference to, or complicity in, the Holocaust, both well-documented in historiography, court files, and oral history.

A permanent exhibition in Warsaw, produced by the Pilecki Institute, divulges a similar intention, applying micro-history to the phenomenon of unsuccessful rescue. On the one hand, it feeds off a post-traumatic sensibility of Holocaust commemoration. On the other, an eye-catching video projection on display there relies on an AI animation of colorized still photographs of rescuers, bringing the dead back to life. This eerie display of digital technology highlights the contradictions of commemorating dead rescuers: they died so that the image of an innocent Poland could live. The "Called by Name" project commemorates rescuers in order to counteract recent historical findings regarding the ubiquity of anti-Jewish violence and to accuse

Fig. 1. A commemorative stone dedicated to Jan Maletka in Treblinka (photo: Tomasz Łysak)

Fig. 2. A window display in the permanent exhibition of "Called by Name," produced by the Pilecki Institute (photo: Tomasz Łysak)

the postwar communist authorities of abandoning the unsung heroes and surviving relatives. In fact, it was local communities who stigmatized these survivors. And yet, official commemoration in the Polish People's Republic highlighted rescuers, frequently as part of its anti-semitic agenda, e.g. in *Naganiacz* (dir. Ewa and Czesław Petelscy, 1963) based on Roman Bratny's short story (Żukowski).

2. The Ulma family and the transnational memory of the Holocaust

The fate of one family from Markowa, near Rzeszów, came to define historical policy relating to rescuers. The Ulmas were killed in 1944, after denunciation by Włodzimierz Leś, an ethnic Pole and a Blue Policeman[3] from Łańcut, together with their Jewish charges. He had previously sheltered the same Jews and knew about their new hiding place. Despite this information being presented front and center at the exhibition, its moral significance is defused (Kobielska 367). Recently, the Ulmas' willingness to risk their life has been extolled as a Catholic virtue, based on which their beatification process was officially initiated in 2003 as part of a larger cohort of "war saints." As a side effect, the Ulmas attracted the attention of pro-life activists as Wiktoria Ulma was eight months pregnant at the time of her execution and started giving birth to her youngest child, who

Fig. 3. The Ulma Museum in Markowa in 2017 (photo: Tomasz Łysak)

3 A member of the Polish Police of the General Government, established in 1939 under German command.

subsequently has been counted as the final victim and become a candidate for beatification (Podbielska 583). The Ulma Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II opened its doors in 2016, while the idea of erecting it was first raised in 2007. Although Markowa is a remote village, the Museum represents a global phenomenon (Wóycicka 267). It has also been taken as a reflection of Europeanization, by stressing "human rights, the rule of law, tolerance, democracy and pluralism" (Wassermann 11).

Mirosław Nizio—a Polish architect whose fame skyrocketed after preparing the architectural blueprint for the Warsaw Rising Museum (2004)—designed the Ulma Museum. Its architecture combines a weathering steel structure—modeled on a traditional gable-roof rural house—with a concrete pavilion. Its blocks cut into a small hill with the roof of the pavilion covered with grass. Inside, a glass installation hosts a replica of the Ulmas' house, originally situated a few hundred meters away. This visually stunning building takes its cues from international developments in commemorative architecture to underscore Poland's attempts to manage its reputation abroad. To this end, the Museum has prohibited English-language tours from being led by guides other than members of its staff.[4] The exhibition features a map of villages in the area where Poles rescued Jews, but rescuers from other ethnic minorities get no mention. In this sense, a map of rescue is a politically charged representation at odds with the GIS-inspired mapping projects of Holocaust rescue in Hungary (Cole, Giordano 64). Rescuers from the Podkarpacie region are also listed on the Museum's website, which provides narratives about the identity of charges, the fate of rescuers and those helped, and recognition of rescuers by Yad Vashem. Piotr Forecki argues that the true goal of this museum is not to pay homage to those executed but "to serve the well-being of the national community and Polish international branding" (Forecki 2016: 643). The Ulmas have thus become paradigmatic rescuers in the new memory regime, useful in upholding a pivotal narrative about Polish innocence (Florczak 166). Shockingly, their family photograph has been used to "correct" a previous critical bias in the permanent exhibition at the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk after its hijacking by Law and Justice,[5] while their official commemoration by Parliament and the beatification process by the Catholic Church combine key right-wing discourses.

4 As seen in Markowa in February 2017.

5 A photograph of Wiktoria Ulma with her six children is placed between a display of artifacts from Jedwabne and a large reproduction of a post-liberation photo of the gate to Birkenau camp.

3. Dead rescuers in the service of ethnonationalistic catholicism

Father Tadeusz Rydzyk created, and still runs, three Catholic media outlets: Radio Maryja, a daily *Nasz Dziennik*, and the television station Trwam, all propagating traditional religiosity and ethnonationalism. Over the last decade, he has built a lavish church on the outskirts of Toruń, a memorial park, and a Saint John Paul II Museum. The church bears the long-winded name—the "Shrine of Our Lady Star of the New Evangelization and Saint John Paul II" and is replete with its ground-level Chapel of Remembrance, meant to "pay tribute to these Poles who risked their lives and the lives of their family members to save Jews during World War II" (Molisak).

Fig. 4. The Chapel of Remembrance in Toruń (photo: Tomasz Łysak)

This chapel commemorates Poles (initially, 1,182 of them) executed for sheltering Jews, carved into a black granite wall behind a white figure of the Virgin Mary. Atop four columns stand figures of gold-plated winged angels, blowing trumpets. The dedication on the wall reads: "Polish martyrs, pray for us." There is a looped audio recording, calling out the names of Polish dead rescuers (and their relations to others if kith and kin perished). A website provides information on the circumstances of their death, gleaned from official archives or gathered by an archive of oral testimonies created for this purpose in the early 2000s. Thus, Father Rydzyk's shift to commemorating "the Holocaust" is hardly a recent change of heart. It is an ethnonationalist politics of memory, diverting attention from critical historiography of the Holocaust in Poland to both retain an image of Poland and Poles as victims of the war as well as deny any complicity in the mass murder of Jews. This goal was stated as early

as 2002.[6] The chapel's website contains a similar manifesto and names the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a co-sponsor of the project. Another state institution, the Institute of National Remembrance, is credited as a forerunner of this project, starting its own "Poles Saving Jews" documentation endeavor in 2006. The list is by no means comprehensive, as new names were added in 2020. There is still ample space to extend it. On two separate visits to the Shrine, I found the chapel devoid of visitors while video materials on the website show that it hosts the official celebration of the National Day of Memory of Poles Saving Jews Under the German Occupation (March 24).[7] The facade of the church is decorated with bas-reliefs representing important events in Polish history (mainly, famous battles). The artwork flanking the entrance to the chapel is devoted to the Second World War, with the dates 1939–1945 prominent on top and three types of oppression of Poles listed: the German occupation (5,770,000 dead), the Volhynia massacre (100,000), and the Soviet occupation (570,000). A rendering of an iconic photograph of a Jewish man in Vinnytsia, Ukraine in 1942—with a pistol pointed at his head by a member of the Einsatzgruppe D killing squad—stands for the German occupation. It puzzles me why this image was chosen, as the site of the massacre was beyond Poland's borders in 1939, and given the absence of any explanation, visitors are bound to assume that the photograph represents the shooting of a Pole. In the same panel, the Soviet occupation is represented by Katyń, the murder of Polish officers by the NKVD, also at point-blank range.

While it is easy to dismiss the National Memory Park in Toruń as a money grab of public funds,[8] it can be seen as a reflection of official commemoration in the mirror of conservative Catholicism. The park comprises four major areas: a central monument in the shape of Poland's borders, made up of double-file glass pillars (illuminated after dark in the colors of the Polish flag), a smaller monument devoted to Ukrainian rescuers of Poles during the Volhynia genocide

6 In a call-in to Radio Maryja, a listener implored others to record testimony about rescues, addressing her plea to "honest people of Jewish descent" and young Poles (Maszkowski 673).

7 This day was established by the Polish Parliament in 2018 on the anniversary of the death of the Ulma Family.

8 Father Rydzyk's Lux Veritatis Foundation received ample funds from the Polish government after 2015. These funds were spent mostly without public scrutiny and the Foundation was sued by Watchdog Polska Citizen Network for failing to reveal how the money had been disbursed (Klauziński).

Fig. 5. The Radio Maryja complex in Toruń: the National Memory Park, the Shrine, and the John Paul II Museum (photo: Tomasz Łysak)

Fig. 6 A graduation tower in the contemplation zone (photo: Tomasz Łysak)

in 1943,[9] an information center on German atrocities in occupied Poland, and last but not least a rest/contemplation zone, complete with two "graduation towers".[10]

Paradoxically, these towers betray the purpose of this endeavor: to increase the well-being of the visitors, both in their understanding of the past and in their respiratory health. Pillars with the names of rescuers engraved on them (in total, 18,457) "protect" the Polish border. These people should not be confused with the Righteous Among the Nations and their names are clearly impossible to count for visitors, creating the impression that rescue was a mass phenomenon during the war. The spatial layout of the monument makes it clear that this commemoration serves to protect Poland against foreign accusations of complicity in the Holocaust and the "deleterious" scholarship of some Polish historians who have undermined national myths about Polish victimhood during the war. Father Rydzyk's media operation is a mouthpiece for this type of historical policy. As a follow-up to the migrant crisis in 2015, when Poland refused to admit any refugees fleeing, predominantly, the war in Syria, Catholic activists from the Solo Dios Basta Foundation called for a Rosary to the Borders prayer. Ostensibly, it was meant to beg the Virgin Mary to save Poland and the world, but some participants avowed that islamophobia informed their prayers, despite public protestations from the organizers. Some participants saw these prayers as a weapon in the struggle against evil, and the rosary (and by extension Poland's borders) as a shield protecting the Polish nation (Zynek-Mahometa 391). "The border was meant to become a symbol, building national pride" (Zynek-Mahometa 399). The goals of this prayer aligned with right-wing populism (Kotwas, Kubik), expressing the official discourse while being publicly funded.

4. Conclusions

Commemorating dead rescuers relies on several strategies. Some of them are borrowed from post-traumatic memorial practices: lists of names, "negative" architectural spaces (influenced by Daniel Libeskind's deconstructive architecture),

9 The Polish Sejm adopted a resolution, reinforcing this interpretation of the violent conflict between Ukrainian nationalists and ethnic Poles in the Kresy region, simultaneously expressing gratitude to Ukrainians who sheltered Poles while refusing to join in the murders (Kobielska 368–369).

10 Such towers ooze a mist saturated with salt and are a staple element in Polish spas. Recently, Polish cities and towns have erected a raft of them as part of municipal beautification.

and prioritizing personal narratives. The Pilecki Institute is more conservative in its choice of commemorative object (a stone with a plaque). The above strategies are complemented by digital commemoration, as websites present the rationale for embarking on these projects, provide access to supplementary modes of remembering (snippets of information about dead rescuers and their charges, audiovisual interviews with surviving witnesses, maps, photographs), and facilitate planning visits to the sites in question. Ernst van Alphen dubs the practice of enumerating names "list mania," underlining its ambiguity. Lists of names return individuality to victims of the Holocaust, but the Nazis' proficiency in listing facilitated this genocide (van Alphen 12). A similar point is raised in a groundbreaking study of lists as a cultural phenomenon (Young 85–108). Therefore, lists are not a morally foolproof mode of commemoration (van Alphen 14). And yet, they should not be perceived as intrinsically evil or put to mischievous use by evil people, hence it is of the utmost importance to unpack the "assumptions and categorizations" they create (Young 107). Yad Vashem pioneered the use of listing names of Holocaust victims, a practice that was vastly accelerated by the adoption of digital databases (van Alphen 11). In Poland, a printed Yad Vashem list is on public display at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, part of the Israeli exhibition in Block 27 (2013). Paradoxically, defending the good name of Poland requires the compiling of lists of dead rescuers, executed for breaking the Nazi prohibition against helping Jews. In this vein, Nazi crimes provide moral validation for Polish historical policy. They also offer ostensible proof of the oft-repeated (and only partially true) claim that Poland was the only country in Nazi-occupied Europe in which rescuers of Jews faced death. These helpers were executed together with their charges, symbolically negating the chasm between the fates of Jewish victims of genocide and the deaths of ethnic Poles. Compiling lists of rescuers implies they are comprehensive, but simultaneously, their referentiality is not limited to the individuals listed. On the contrary, the rhetorics of this commemoration create an impression that those enumerated represent the moral core of the nation. Redirecting focus to the executed helpers has an additional advantage, as it stresses the perils of rescue and explains why so few Jews survived. Conversely, it rules out Jewish agency in surviving the Holocaust and makes Jews seem dependent on the genocidal zeal of the Nazis, their collaborators, and the good nature of the rescuers.

Singling out dead rescuers to represent rescue is advantageous from the point of view of ethnonationalist historical policy. First, it avoids the problem of postwar hostility toward rescuers whenever news of their actions leaked to their neighbors. Some rescuers could hardly escape the fallout, as their attempts

to conceal their kindness were mostly futile. Second, dead rescuers could not compromise their good deeds by choices they would go on to make in the Polish People's Republic. Given the declarative anti-communist agenda of Law and Justice, this choice rules out potential muckraking and prevents the undermining of the moral integrity of rescuers. Third, sacrificing one's life to help others can be found in two discourses: Catholicism and romanticism. As a result, "the moral triumph of the Righteous is undeniable" and future generations of Poles can bask in their glory just as they feel pride in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 (Kowalska-Leder 1077). To paraphrase Maria Janion—an eminent Polish literary scholar—"to Europe but only with our dead [rescuers]" (Janion). Interestingly, Janion made a plea to count Polish Jews among "our dead," a gesture subverted by right-wing historical populism. Commemorating dead rescuers is a commendable endeavor, but in its current form, it manipulates the past to boost national pride and may cause suffering to surviving relatives.

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| Abstract

Tomasz Łysak

Dead Rescuers: the Commemoration of Poles Who Lost Their Lives Saving Jews During the Second World War

After their electoral victory in 2015, the Law and Justice party started a counter-revolution in historical policy, intended to undermine critical historiography on the Holocaust. As a result, "dead rescuers," Poles who lost their lives saving Jews during the Second World War, are commemorated by a host of institutions: a government-sponsored research institute, museums, and the Catholic Church. This commemoration borrows its aesthetics from earlier practices established in Holocaust memory: post-traumatic architecture, lists of victims, and micro-history to boost national pride and defend the good name of Poland abroad. Memory actors receive financial support from the government, becoming a mouthpiece for its reclaiming of the past for ethnonationalist ends.

Keywords: dead rescuers, Righteous Among the Nations, Holocaust memory, historical policy, memorials

| Bio

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.10

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The Vistula, Overgrown Shrubs, and Untended Gardens in the Literature of Postwar, Communist Warsaw

There is no straight line in nature,
It is a human artificial invention.
Let us learn chaos, chaos
By looking at entangled weeds.

(Julian Tuwim, *Spostrzeżenie*)

What is this queue for? For greyness, for greyness, for greyness

(author – Ernest Bryll, 1980, singer – Krystyna Prońko)

Green wild shrubs amidst the greyness of communism—a recurrent motif in the writings of Hłasko and Konwicki, and the greyness portrayed in *Queuers' Psalm* (written by Ernest Bryll, sung by Krystyna Prońko)—penetrate the paltry, hopeless, and bleak reality of communist Poland. It is by the river (the Vistula River), in the overgrown allotments and in the bushes that the real life of social "outcasts," "parasites," and "losers," fugitives from the system, happens. It unfolds on the margins of this artificial reality imposed by those in power. These are sites of amorous trysts, places of refuge from the political and disciplinary regime, and places of unordinary meetings and conversations. However, oftentimes, these places of surprising biological vitality and abhorring putridity of transience rip open painful memory, that of the individual as well as the collective. Perhaps because of the chaotic accumulation of life and death, these patches of unstructured urban greenery—these spaces of neglect—become flickering vantage points from which only life in all its human-inhuman extensiveness and vulnerability overshadowed by Warsaw's wartime traumas can be plainly seen.

From afar, these places naturally spur existential questions during the time of slowdown under communism and allow for a different, more intimate conspiracy, while vividly revealing their biological character and speaking in the timeless language of various crises, in which the political and the ecological have long been intertwined, though not been fully deciphered as part of the

environmental history and memory of Warsaw. The overgrown yet resurgent memory that has accumulated in them echoes through the historic fabric of the city every now and then, and unleashes boundless fears, dirty secrets and longings to this day. Teeming with natural life, these places grow larger in the narratives of characters who are estranged and lost in the reality of communist Poland; they fill the urban space, which has been emptied of meaning, and spring up unsuspectingly in the very center of communist Warsaw. This is how Konwicki, who finds this wild vegetation invading the capital city deeply unsettling, describes the autumn bushes in the vicinity of the Palace of Culture in *Ascension*:

> I leapt into the dense bushes still laden with fleshy leaves and giant juicy berries. I waded through the thick bushes similar to riverside shrubbery. An awakened bird was twittering somewhere. Something darted from under my feet, something like a field mouse. The branches were clutching my wet hair, my hands, my feet in shoes full of water. The smell of ripped bark, of crushed berries, the scent of the sun was invading my lungs, choking my breath. A worm is sleeping on a leaf, insects cloaked in chitinous armor are clambering up the dark stalk, a little spider is dropping down a thread coated with minute dewdrops. Everything is grey all around, as if powdered with autumn dust, while only yesterday it was golden, red, vibrantly green, the color of old glass. (1982: 230–231)

Modern Warsaw still harbors the remnants of unmanaged spaces from the communist era, which stand as a reminder of the ecologically significant role of wild natural "wastelands." In the People's Republic of Poland, there was no aggressive revitalization and urbanized, organized management of green spaces (while today we witness old, healthy trees being cut down, meadows and lush lawns being mowed, leaves and nests being taken away from hedgehogs and small rodents, and exhausting and noisy machinery being used for this groundskeeping work). The article *Life after Revitalization* says that:

> this uncontrolled vegetation (at the time, fortunately, no one wanted to manage it), on the one hand, created the unique aesthetics of Polish cities and towns, while on the other hand, it formed the basis of the unique social life of the communist years. Ecologically speaking, it protected cities and towns from the heat island effect, which today is

> not only felt in Warsaw, Krakow or Poznan, but also in the smallest Polish towns. (2018: 20)

But this was not understood at the time, whereas today overgrown lots are being redefined and recultivated (Rybicka 2021).

I am interested in those fissures in the landscape that emerge from the tangle of rogue, defunct greenery, derelict plots of land and old trees: not because I am looking for the pioneers of protection of wild vegetation in communist times, but because the environmental history of Warsaw cannot be told without us immersing ourselves in the communist reality of war-scarred natural micronarratives. Białoszewski and the researchers following in his footsteps (Siwicka, Zielińska 1993; Korczyńska-Partyka 2019) observed the less obvious dimensions or "clumps" of memory entwined with the overgrowing "wild" and "affective" nature in Warsaw after the war. Politically oppressed, postwar Warsaw is a material landscape, a grim landscape filled with air that is gray from pollution, emblazoned with the gray Palace of Culture (which was originally light-sand colored) and the gray, steel and cold ribbon of the Vistula River.

The river itself—what is a city without a river?—always leads outside the city, even if, like the Vistula, this natural alternative to the Palace of Culture constitutes its topographical center. For male writers, like Miłosz and Konwicki, the river generally was the idealized site of (pre-war) erotic initiations and projections. Later—especially in the summer of 1939 and after the war—it became unnaturally distorted and its hydrotissue merged with the river of corpses and death, as in Baczyński's aquapoetic imagination (cf., e.g. Pukalska 2013; Piotrowiak 2016). It became a river of materialized decay, of which the garbage floating in it has been a constant reminder.

The memory of the clean, living Vistula, the river of carefree youth, is represented by the generation of the summer of 1939 of The Waspish Old Lady in Dorota Masłowska's drama *It's All Right Between Us* (2008). She remembers the Vistula as a robust and vital river, with a current that was "thick, clean, punctuated by sunshine," in which one caught nimble minnows, in which one could swim, and by which one could sunbathe and walk barefoot on the sand (2008: 7–8). The Old Lady's Vistula bears no resemblance to the "slurry" of the contemporary generation of the Little Metal Girl. On the contrary, it projects an opposite, mocking image. Instead of fish, people catch used, "rotten condoms," for fun, which, as if alive, escape and wriggle out of their hands (2008: 8). And although bathing in the littered Vistula is a "timeless pleasure," it is nevertheless used not for relaxation, but to get an exemption from school:

> I also love to swim in the Vistula, it's a timeless pleasure. Whenever I step out of the water, gleefully sputtering with gasoline, I get measles, typhoid fever and cadmium poisoning, and I'm dead, so I get a sick leave and don't have to go to school anymore. (2008: 8)

The memory of the Vistula River on the eve of the war is echoed in the Girl's sarcastic comment about her grandmother, behind whom muskrat root, old condoms, sanitary pads and a soggy plastic bag melancholically trailed behind (Masłowska 2008: 76). Little Metal Girl does not understand the myth of the summer of 1939, the most beautiful summer, because it was the last one before the war. The rift between her grandmother's and her granddaughter's generations is bridged by a remnant of communism: disregard for the natural life of rivers and their historical and material heritage. In the Old Woman's memory, a clean river does not just represent a time of tragically lost carefree life, but also of ecological concerns. The memory of the summer of 1939 has been buried under a swamp of garbage.

The image of the poisoned river, whose origins lie in the dirty industry and agriculture of communist Poland (which Masłowska associates with the toxic cadmium in the water, used in metallurgy, as well as in the production of fertilizers), surfaced in the writings of postwar writers two generations older than Masłowska: Kornel Filipowicz and Tadeusz Konwicki. Shortly after the war, in 1946, Filipowicz writes: "I am sitting by fishless water, silenced by grenades and poisoned by lime and carbol" (1978: 24). The Vistula seems "dead and empty" (1978: 58), fishless, lifeless, and affected by the war in its own riverine way. The urban landscape undergoes another distortion in Konwicki's work. Under the cloak of unbridled, wild nature, he opens sites of memory that still remind us of the subversive semantics of greyness, which, for the first time in the reality of communism, was cleaved into the ecological and political, and which has so far escaped the reading of communist literature due to the focus on the "Stalinocene" (Gajewski 2018: 138–139).

Gray rather than green was the color of communist uniformity, the color of propaganda that equated outstanding individuals with the working collective; the color of communist justice against the colorful, frivolous, anti-social and avaricious reality of capitalism represented by pop culture America. Even Stalin wore gray proudly and was seen in gray clothes. In a song by Russian bard Alexander Vertinsky, he "stands in humble gray, shimmering silver like a poplar tree as he receives his parade" (*World Piero – Alexander Vertinsky* 2021). So it is not the grayness promoted by communist ideology that I am concerned with, but one that has become woven into individual psychogeographies of

writers: the grayness that seeped into dissident minds and took on an ecological meaning for us today.

In literature, the cultural memory of urban, natural wastelands is reminiscent of those places that did not succumb to communization. They became etched into the fabric of the city, penetrated the reality of the regime and formed a new map, chaotic and haphazard, but integrating closer what is outside with what is inside the story. This style of narrative, found in 19th-century geographers and travelers, resembles literary psychogeography (Peraldo, ed. 2016) or psychotopography (Nelson 2001).

Marek Hłasko, who was born in Warsaw, returned to it several times before emigrating from Poland permanently. He published his *First Step in the Clouds* in 1956, while still living in Warsaw's Ochota district. He somberly portrayed the so-called "observers of life," who, he wrote, were impossible to meet in the city's festive, drunken center. One could encounter them "only in the suburbs" (1988: 64). The term "observer" is ironic. It refers to boorish voyeurs, dissatisfied with their own lives, with their "greyness and boredom" (1988: 65), to people who were looking for any sort of entertainment, so they would peep into the lives of others. This short story, with one climactic scene, takes place at dusk one "hot and torturous" day in Warsaw's Marymont. In the 1950s and 1960s, Marymont, before the multi-story blocks of flats were built under Edward Gierek, was not only a neighborhood of the poor, but also an area of more or less feral vegetation. According to one researcher of Warsaw history, it was the first such wild-nature suburb in the city, divided by Potocka Street from the intelligentsia-oriented Żoliborz (Majewski 2012). Hłasko captured the marginalized feel of this working-class neighborhood, the spaces of allotment gardens and wild bushes where one could drink, roam, and where the authorities did not look. However, as a writer of intellectual background, he did not know this neighborhood in a literal sense, or reconstruct its realities, but rather regarded it as an antitopographical metaphor (Karpowicz 2016: 20). Hłasko's Marymont is a psychogeographical text, which serves to convey certain emotions.

In simple and piercing prose, the short story *First Step in the Clouds* creates emotional tension. Three neighbors from Marymont, typical "observers of life," accost a boy and a girl, tucked away in grassy allotments. As it turns out, the couple has hidden themselves to take their "first step in the clouds": which is how they call their first sexual encounter. The scene of the intrusion is disturbing, and ends in a brawl and insults to the girl ("whore" and "slut"). The prying men are unable to restrain their aggression. Hatred towards would-be lovers is revenge for the men's, as it turns out, similarly painful experiences from their youth. There is no refuge in the allotment bushes for this ill-fated attempt at

budding love. Nature in the city offers an uninhabited place, a place of seclusion, but not impermeable and safe enough (in addition, there is unbearable heat) for fragile and immature love to succeed in a rotten, hate-hardened adult setting. Simultaneously, it is also a place outside the panopticon of power and morality, where the most vulnerable thing in adults comes to light: the uncultivated space of love.

Nature and weather in the notes that Konwicki took when walking around the capital reveal a vast psychotopography of Warsaw: a city of decline and permanently concealed disaster. These environmental contexts are not considered even in recent publications on catastrophism and apocalyptic motifs in Konwicki's writings (Zynis 2003). His novels, however, demand revisiting the questions of resilience in a time that degrades human freedom and creativity, but also in a transitional, uncertain time, which is similar to ours in many respects, and which writers such as Konwicki observed with penetrating insight.

When writing about the nocturnal and sombre landscape of Warsaw in Konwicki's work, Zgoła takes note of the changing environmental realities. She tentatively notes that "Konwicki's capital has hostile meteorological conditions" (2017: 130). The cold wind, dust and smog, according to many scholars and researchers of Konwicki's work, underscore the "claustrophobic" atmosphere of the city (Zgoła 2017: 131), the psychotopography of communism, but not one that is intertwined with the history and environmental memory of the city. It is hardly revealing to note that Konwicki describes and reads Warsaw like a map, yet it may be revealing for us to look at how he does this in a new, dissident and mature way. To trace this map, a key to charting the natural undeveloped environment of the city, it is worth looking at three of his novels: *Little Apocalypse*, *Underground River, Underground Birds* and *Ascension*.

In a monograph published in the popular "Czytani dzisiaj" series, Czapliński explores those contexts that attracted successive generations of Konwicki's readers after the fall of communism. These were the political, autobiographical and literary contexts of a world that was always related to the war, i.e. the reality of the post-war period. For example, he makes a reference to the "derelict purgatory" of *Little Apocalypse*, as "this world is in a state of chronic agony, permanent decay, indefinite death" (Czapliński 1994: 151). The context of environmentalism and critical environmental reading would have been fit to develop this commentary and link it to Konwicki's work, but for readers searching for a political identity after 1989, it was not the self-sufficient topic that it is for us today.

Though published in 1979, *Little Apocalypse* was furnished with environmental references. Some explicitly criticize the anti-environmental policies of the communist government, while others require a link to the map of

Warsaw's untended nature, which was slipping out of control and in which dissident ideas found an outlet. As already observed by Zgoła regarding weather phenomena that are "unfriendly" to Konwicki's characters, the protagonist of *Little Apocalypse* wakes up on a cloudy, "hopeless autumn day" (1995: 5). "Outside the window, my city is under a cloud, like old, blackened wallpaper" (1995: 9), he says. This is what communist Poland is like, with "the monotony of life without any hope, it's crumbling historic cities, it's provinces turning to deserts and poisoned rivers" (1995: 46). In the midst of all this, the Vistula "carries burly, muddy, flood waters," and "over the wilting jungle of the zoo, a neon sign lights up and goes out: We have built socialism!" (1995: 47). The unsightly river, however, has the therapeutic power of dismissing intrusive thoughts like the Kupala festival that cleanses one from evil and suffering (1995: 47). The still vibrant, albeit polluted, current of the Vistula helps one escape the absurd reality of communism. And although everything around is getting uglier, the cityscape is becoming overgrown with more and more measly vegetation, the relationship with the river ensconced in this drab landscape is something familiar and real, something that is comforting and can be preserved in cultural memory:

> I was looking toward the Vistula and saw the blackened peaks of the houses in Powiśle, I saw the toxic lagoon of the river, the beaches of Praga and the mangled, jaundiced vegetation of Grochów and Gocławek, a vast fraying meadow that would not capitulate. Dwarfing slowly, it encroached on the crowded city every year. This crippled landscape, ugly yet beautiful, because it was the only one we had left, this somber view, lashed by gale, battered by hail every quarter of an hour, gave me comfort all the same. (Konwicki 1995: 109)

Urban landscaping, with propaganda slogans set up in flowerbeds in honor of the communist regime, was part of building socialism. Konwicki thus peeks into the places of a nature that is disordered, independent and growing in spite of plans to communize people and non-people, and thus opens up another political context. For the system of totalitarian control does not extend to intimate places, and its power over urban space is limited: it is impossible to socialize everything. This is especially clear when wild shrubbery becomes a garden of love, an enclave of life in a landfill of ruins overgrown with weeds:

> Surprisingly lush vegetation entwined these junkyards of concrete, stones of bricks and dunes of weathered lime. The slanting light of the sun was glowing up the profiles of the giant blackish burdock trees,

> gilding the stately ferns, blazing up the wolfberry bushes. Even autumn asters were sneaking into this magic exuberant garden on the trash heap. (Konwicki 1995: 173)

The site of the protagonist's odd meeting with all his ex-girlfriends and lovers—in the allotment gardens—has an aura of secrecy as well. By the evening campfire, this microgarden with microbeds and trees seems like an unreal site on the verge of reality and dream. Behind the scenes of official life, the allotments offer yet another kind of refuge. In the city where citizens are occasionally asked to show their IDs, this is where the communist police do not ever go. From the perspective of small patches of greenery, which are concealed from the regime, even the Palace of Culture no longer looms menacingly over Warsaw, although it can always be seen on the horizon of the urban space (Konwicki 1995: 205–209). Garden allotments, riverside bushes and weeds are the lush natural zone of the conspiratorial map of communist Warsaw.

In *Underground River, Underground Birds* from 1984, nature, vividly silent, returns in memory and intertwines with the life of Konwicki's protagonist. The memory of the borderland river, full of biological life, which lures you into its depths and claims the lives of those who drown, is supplemented by the figure of God hiding in the riverside bushes from the vexing socialist world (1989: 31). Communism has historically encroached on the ahistorical and natural cycle of life and death. Similarly, in the city, when all manifestations of non-socialist order are being eradicated by the new "empire of oil paint" (1989: 39), disaster-stricken and seemingly imperishable, timeless Warsaw dies out like one of the critically endangered biological species. It becomes "a city dead from a new war" (1989: 78). The tragedy has to do with the material memory of the city, in whose tissues previous wars still pulsate, but the artificial red of communism drowns out the blood of those fallen both long ago and recently. This is why the Vistula with its entire basin seems like some "a black hole of our planet… similar to the black holes in the cosmos. An implosion of intellectual and moral matter. Total silence. […] Conjugated death steadfastly ready for the explosion of life" (1989: 158). It is no longer a river of memory, but a vein of deadly history, which evokes helpless anger in this apathetic, cadaverous city of unfinished construction sites.

The Vistula is also the center of *Ascension*'s 1967 psychogeographical map. Written, like the rest of the novel, from a Peripatetic perspective (Konwicki himself also used to stroll in Warsaw along the well-known Nowy Świat—Frascati—Czytelnik route). Here, the protagonist reaches forgotten buildings or desolate places, which again include the overgrown banks of the Vistula River,

allotment gardens and wild thickets. He observes how the landscape of postwar Warsaw has blended with nature to the point where it is difficult to distinguish one from the other: "the green barrels of centuries-old cannons or rather the mossy trunks of trees and decaying planes darkened from old age or fossilized birds" (1982: 6). In this novel, the relationship between life and death is fluid, with death predominating: if the protagonist takes notice of greenery, it is the kind that is dying (1982: 9). Allotment gardens near Okęcie are full of "blackened sunflowers…, worms, rotting apples and spools of Indian summer clinging to dead branches" (1982: 17); they are full of life, of "greedy weeds" (1982: 18), when the dying process is in progress. Alongside an alley reeking of "hot metal and debris" from cars (1982: 29), the allotment gardens, which are overgrown because nobody uses them, are filled with degenerate nature: a "thicket of life" marked by death (1982: 30). Vegetation is Warsaw is overshadowed by hopeless communism, all the more chilling when the Cold War fear of nuclear war lingers in the background. Absurd monstrous planes (1982: 28) stir our imagination like "catfish" and reveal the ambivalent use of technology. "Travel only by airplane," exclaims an urban neon sign (1982: 50). The busy avenue is again filled with "acres" of cars, and another preposterous neon sign lights up on the street: "love flowers" (1982: 32). In such a distorted urban landscape, it is difficult to spot nature that is undistorted by people whether now or in the past.

"We forget more than we build" (1982: 41), writes Konwicki about forgetting, also forgetting about nature, which has given way to the city with its sprawling apartment buildings:

> The forests are dying. First they go bald from the moss, then the grass thins out, exposing the soil that is as powdery as ash, then the trampled bushes die, and finally the trees recede and a barren wasteland invades the land between the sparse trunks, punctuated by gigantic pyramids of concrete anthills. (1982: 56–7)

Under the onslaught of new construction, we no longer remember that forests once "provided shelter for humans fleeing from other humans" (1982: 57), that they were an intrinsic part of the landscape of war. In the new urban landscape, degenerate nature is either unsightly or out of place, devoid of its own past, like the wild ducks the author spotted on the Vistula: "I could not comprehend the presence of these skittish birds in the middle of a city of a million people." (1982: 124)

Konwicki revisits the Vistula a number of times in *Ascension*. He searches in the river for memory, while walking through the city of oblivion. The

echoes of war disturbingly overlay the image of an unpolluted river, the river of childhood, a place of children's games and later of first erotic experiences (1982: 133–135). Couples apparently still take refuge in the Vistula shrubs because "there is something about the river" (1982: 223), but when it floods, it violently brings back memories of the "distant" war and "the cries of desperate crowds" (1982: 134). The Vistula is a river of stratified memory. The voices of the traumatic past mingle with impossible attempts to revive the biological river. Human harm reverberates through the Vistula and aligns with ecological harm: it is impossible to talk about the river without reference to its damaged natural fabric: "Rivers are dying. I mean they lose any semblance of life. They become a dead gutter, a barren sewer, a cloacal ditch pretending to be perpetual motion" (1982: 135). The trees along the Vistula River are also dying (1982: 196). The entire landscape of Warsaw looks gray, as if from beneath the traumatic memory covered by the absurd reality of communism, of which the large concrete housing estates and grotesque slogans of the neon signs remind us every now and then. Here, nature lives by dying; hence so many passages that speak of its rotten and decayed biological tissue. Likewise, memory decays into unremembrance.

Ascension is told from the perspective of a character who is dead, though he does not yet know it. Nature in Warsaw is marked with a similar stigma, on the verge of life and death, as it flows in a city where the abject reality of communist Poland has covered the traces of corpses. Maybe they are now crawling out of the city's decaying, death-soaked soil, where overgrown gardens, weeds and bushes and the river are still a living vehicle for these vestiges. Perhaps, as Konwicki wrote in *Underground River*, "Mourning and silence. Stillness and apathy. A crouching million people. A whole nation in hiding" they crawl out hidden from sight, inconspicuously to the society of a de-realized system (1989: 157).

The protagonists of *Ascension*, the living-dead, thieves and prostitutes navigate a map that is invisible to others. And only another war (even a nuclear war) could change something in this oppressive grayness, since "everyone" is waiting for it (1982: 206). Greenery is no match for the city of the dead, as it is "lifeless" and bursts it from within along with the "slowly dying trees and withering shrubs" (1982: 241). It is as if there cannot be regular soil in this city, there is only the soil contaminated from "the wounds on the body of the city, the lacerations of the warehouse barracks, the ulcers of the vast excavations, the scars of the empty spaces waiting to be built up" (1982: 241). And there is that strange river with "pale" beaches, which can be seen from the thirtieth floor of the Palace of Culture, and the illusory greenery behind it (on the Praga side).

This green no longer symbolizes hope and rebirth. It is the green of dark chaos, the inhuman energy of the city in the process of forgetting, which has nothing in common with the green of nature and chlorophyll. In Konwicki's novels, Warsaw is mostly gray, monotonously gray. And only the memory of youth, which, unlike in Hłasko's works, can be protected and idealized, as the Old Lady in Masłowska does, can disperse this grayness. This is why Konwicki records his youth in the present tense and renders it everlasting, to extract it from history and from other panopticons:

> returning from school, you lie down on the edge of the forest, light your first ever cigarette. Beneath the sky, the same clouds are rushing by over and over again, shedding the white threads of Indian summer. You look for familiar animal shapes or objects in these clouds traveling through the centuries from west to east. (1982: 224)

• • •

On the one hand, the reality of communist Poland seemed to be bleak and hopeless, the intellectual atmosphere was contaminated, and the landscape itself was gray from pollution. We know today how badly nature, air and water were poisoned. Nature, as property of the state, was really nobody's property. It was a wasteland that was supposed to be socially engaged in the human-non-human success of the working people, in the collective struggle against the bourgeoisie; to be incorporated into the communist project of total reform as Stalin wanted. This was only achieved up to a point, with the hyper-industrialization of production and agriculture, although on a much less tragic scale in Poland than in the former USSR. On the other hand, the grayness of the communist landscape, the fumes of factories, and the contamination of water and air was accompanied by a grayness of daily life that echoed the restricted movement of individuals. The endless smoke of cigarettes dissipated into smog, which was not officially present in communist Poland. It was a smoky time, which the Warsaw fog reminds us of today. Smog or fog? I do not check.

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| Abstract

Anna Barcz

The Vistula, Overgrown Shrubs, and Untended Gardens in the Literature of Postwar, Communist Warsaw

The article offers to combine the environmental history and memory of Warsaw on the example of analyses of literary works relating mainly to the post-1939-war and communist periods. These references involve specific places, such as the Vistula River, wastelands and abandoned allotments. In addition to brief exemplifications from Marek Hłasko and Dorota Masłowska, the psychogeographical interpretation of the environmental realities of post-war Warsaw in the People's Republic of Poland was developed in the more detailed analysis of three novels by Tadeusz Konwicki: *A Minor Apocalypse*, *Underground River, Underground Birds* and *Ascension*. It turned out that the traumatic history of the city, which has not been recognized so clearly in the environmental sense, is applicable in the analysis of these novels and by greening the undeveloped wastelands.

Keywords: environmental history of Warsaw, environmental memory of Warsaw, the Vistula, wastelands, Polish People Republic's literature, psychogeography

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.11

Ryszard Kupidura
Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu

Representing the Ukrainian Migration Experience: From a Cultural Monologue Towards Interculturality

I would only like to tell you, dear daughter, that if you decide to move to Poland—beyond the even horizon—we will only be able to imagine how you're doing with the help of stereotypes at our disposal. Absolutely no event will reach us directly.

Jarosław Murawski, Michał Buszewicz
(from the journal of Olena Apczel)

It is worth starting with the observation that from the point of view of the host, the guest loses his or her regional identity with only a reduced national costume, provoking in effect only stereotypical assessments. The homogenizing gaze of the conventional autochthon applies to virtually anyone crossing the border, regardless of the reason for their visit; they can be a tourist as well as an economic migrant. Therefore, when abroad, we are most often perceived in terms of our nationality, with the nuances of our local identity ignored.

The first attempts made by Polish artists to represent the Ukrainian migration experience only confirm this observation. One can list, for example, the documentary *Pani z Ukrainy* (A Woman from Ukraine) by Paweł Łoziński from 2002 or *Ukrainka* (A Ukrainian Woman) by Barbara Kosmowska from 2013. The very titles suggest the intention of creating group portraits of Ukrainian women migrating to Poland. However, both these projects, as seen by the critics, brought rather counterproductive results. Łoziński was accused of succumbing to a number of inequalities, including those related to social status

* This article was written as part of the project "Explorations of European cultural space: Germany, Poland and Ukraine in contemporary literary discourse," with funding from the Polish-German Foundation for Science.

and linguistic competence. As a result, the seemingly pleasant conversation between the director and the heroine of the film did not appear to be a dialogue between equal partners, but rather turned into an objectifying interrogation of a woman (Dabert 2013: 160).

Kosmowska's *Ukrainka* was meant to be, according to the author's intention (*"Ukrajinka" zrujnuje stereotypy pro ukrajinok?* 2013), a contemporary version of Cinderella for adults; however, the glaring abundance of one-dimensional characters and didacticism is more suited to YA literature (Haleta 2013).

It is difficult to tell whether the above attempts—all panned by the critics—to create empathic images of guest workers had any chance of being successful. Are the portraits—however kind—written by the artists/hosts able to fulfill the postulate of weakening the mechanisms of stereotyping, which invariably accompany economic migration? It is doubtful, because a one-sided representation cannot replace authentic dialogue and it always commits the same sins: it says more about the artists and their world than about the newly arrived Other. And it does nothing to prevent a talented high-school student some time later, unconstrained by political correctness, to rap the following words: "Mój ziomo na uro dostał te kluczyki od merca / Na czarno Ukry sprzątały mu penthouse" ("My homie got these keys to his mercedes / Ukranians cleaned his penthouse off the books") (Mata 2019). These two verses, with their disarming honesty and laconic diagnosis of reality, may evoke more anxiety than the two aforementioned titles with their attempts to embellish the uncomfortable reality. Although these verses are still statements uttered within the framework of a cultural monologue.

Pani z Ukrainy and *Ukrainka* were undoubtedly borne from the desire to give voice to subalterns, who were accorded this status as a result of migration mechanisms. At the same time, they revealed a whole range of limitations resulting in restrictions on statements made by the interviewer (*Pani z Ukrainy*) or statements on behalf of someone (*Ukrainka*). In the first case, the heroine of the film in an intimate portrait may, admittedly, complain about her ex-husband, but for understandable reasons she cannot refer unfavorably to the Polish employer, who is also the author of the documentary. In the second case, the Ukrainian protagonist is immediately marked by the migration trauma and from the moment she crosses the border she dreams of returning to Ukraine as soon as possible with her partner. Kosmowska was not able to write this narrative any other way. The text of an indigenous person writing a newcomer's migration success story automatically becomes unreliable and resembles an advertisement from an employment agency. The first literary account of Ukrainian migrants in Poland (*Polak z Ukrainy* by Dima Garbowski and works submitted for the

competition "My first and one hundred and first day in Poland")[1] are a kind of testimony of enthusiasts. This term was used by Ruth Johnston in the 1960s to describe Polish migrants in Australia who were characterized by their "deep sympathy, admiration and enthusiasm for the country of settlement as well as for its inhabitants" (Włodarczak 2005: 5). Writing personal success stories by migrants can of course be part of a cultural mimicry strategy, but it does not have to be this way every time. Lastly, however critical the texts of native authors may be towards the condition of Polish society, they are not able to answer the question of whether the Polish audience is ready to accept a critical, or even an ironic, commentary from a Ukrainian artist. Perhaps they will perceive the image of a spiteful Polish housewife from Kosmowska's novel differently than the model of a stereotypical Polish married couple visiting Lviv, created by the Ukrainian playwright, who claims that "this Lychakiv Cemetery is like connecting with the soul of the nation via Bluetooth" (*Piłka leci na wschodni brzeg* / The Ball Flies to the East Bank 2021).

Today, Ukrainian voices are heard more and more often in Poland, providing an opportunity not only to work through painful traumas from the past, but also, due to the constant presence of Ukrainian co-inhabitants, to develop our ability to recognize mutual cultural codes, which in turn could reduce the potential for generating future traumas within the transformed habitus.

Interestingly, each art form seems to have its own way of producing intercultural texts of culture. Perhaps literature has the longest path, as it is conditioned by the need for writers to master a new language. This is confirmed by the findings of Russell King, John Connell, and Paul White, who in the well-known work *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration* proposed a model according to which a long-term transition takes place from literature written in the language of the old motherland, meant to preserve identity, towards the inclusion of new transcultural authors into the hitherto "nationally homogeneous" literary discourse in the country of settlement (King, Connell, White 1995: xi–xiii). The model proposed by the aforementioned researchers applies mainly to Western Europe and the mid-nineteenth century. However, in its general outline, it is quite universal and remains timely, despite significant civilizational changes. Most likely, therefore, among the several hundred thousand Ukrainian students who have in recent years started their education in Polish schools are those who will soon change the landscape of Polish literature. Meanwhile, the work of Żanna Słoniowska and Walery Butewicz can be read as a prelude to an intercultural breakthrough. In the case of the author of *Dom z witrażem* (The

1 Works submitted to the contest are scheduled to be published in 2023.

House with a Stained Glass Window), Lviv becomes a kind of handicap. Being the writer's place of origin, Lviv not only equips her with linguistic competence, but also, as a discourse, becomes a potential point of contact in communicating with a new (recovered?) audience. *Dom z witrażem*, however, does not fit into the trend of borderland nostalgia, as some readers might have expected, and the author herself talks about her own sense of strangeness in the Polish reality of the early twenty-first century.

> I came to Poland and saw that I'm not Polish. Earlier, I had thought that perhaps I am because of my provenance. When I started living here, I saw that I'm absolutely not Polish, because no one considers me Polish. I had to somehow deal with that and then I started to ask myself the question: who am I? And it turned out that it's a kind of Otherness, all that I left behind and where I grew up and how I was raised. It is a kind of Otherness and it's a topic for a book, that is, what I would like to write about it. This is why I'm very grateful to the Polish language, as I don't think I would start writing in my languages [Ukrainian and Russian]. […] I wanted to tell Polish people about Lviv, among other things. (*Do kogo należy polska literatura* 2017 / Who Does Polish Literature Belong to?)

The aphoristic work of Butewicz, born in 1983 in Czerkasy, proves that a fresh look at the Polish language by authors with a migration background, one that, for example, lacks the automaticity with which we tend to read conventionalized metaphors, can have an invigorating effect. "The Polish language is a very nihilistic language, in the word 'existence' [istnienie] there is a double negation of being: *ist-nie-nie*," writes Butewicz in his *Dziennik uroku zarazy* (Journal of the Plague's Charm), which was awarded the main prize in the literary competition "Dziennik pandemiczny" (Pandemic Journal) (Butewicz 2020: 20). In the jury review, prof. Piotr Müldner-Nieckowski wrote that Butewicz's work brings to Polish literature what Joseph Conrad once gave to English poetics or Vladimir Nabokov to French and American poetics—his own particular tone, his own linguistic wit, new words, certain reconstructions or renovations of phrases (Müldner-Nieckowski 2020).

In view of the aforementioned limitations blocking the development of Polish intercultural literature, which could work through the Ukrainian migration experience, this task is taken over by the visual arts (e.g. Lia and Andrija Dostliev's *Reconstruction of Memory* from 2016 or Stepan Rudik's *Niewidzialni* [The Unseen] from 2018) and, most of all, the theater. The journalistic trend in

contemporary theater, drawing on the emancipatory tradition of actors taking part in the theatrical production, enables Ukrainian voices to be heard and articulated without the help of a Polish intermediary. At the present stage, the mere fact that they are heard is an achievement onto itself, even if it ends there and does not lead to more profound artistic achievements. In a self-referential commentary in the play *Piłka leci na wschodni brzeg* (Ball Flies to the Eastern Shore), Olga Maciupa describes the situation in the following manner:

> How to stage this? There is no action and no conflict. And the characters are not defined, they do not react to each other, but only talk. There is no feeling. It's not art. Viewers won't buy tickets for something like this. These modern dramas of yours are complete nonsense. They simply do not exist—like a toilet in Ikarus. (Maciupa 2021)

Thus, the theater became an opportunity and a channel of communication that easily bypasses the problems inherent in literary dialogue. For example, it efficiently deals with the challenge of presenting *surzhyk* (a specific mixture of Ukrainian and Russian), which, as Katarzyna Kotyńska writes, is a potential tool and means of expression for the writer, and for the translator it is another puzzle that needs to be solved in the translation process (Kotyńska 2021: 119). In *Więzi* (Ties), performed in the Wybrzeże Theater in Gdańsk and directed by Olena Apczel, the actress playing the role of the grandmother addresses the audience with the following words: "Grandma uses Russian words and a Ukrainian way of speaking. In order to convey this confusion, in this performance, Grandma will use Polish words and a Kashubian way of speaking" (Murawski, Buszewicz 2019).

A separate issue is the current trend in Polish theatre of combining artistic and social practices. This includes all theatrical activities that are intended to integrate the migrant community and in which the process of preparing the performance is equivalent in value to the performance itself. Similar practices should be considered from the perspective of sociology or psychology of art, as Elwira Grossman writes in the context of Polish migration to Great Britain after 2004, discussing the activities of Robert Przekwas's Scottish-Polish Gappad theater:

> It is difficult to unequivocally assess the artistic value of the group, but it seems to me that is beside the point, especially when we consider how extremely important role Gappad played in the Polish and emigrant community in Scotland. The members of this community wrote

> a fascinating chapter in transcultural theatre, breaking the social and cultural isolation. By illustrating the emigrational and identity dilemmas, they were able to introduce this topic into a wider public discourse. (Grossman 2016: 73)

Among similar social and artistic initiatives focusing on groups with migration experience, one can mention, for example, the Emigrant Theater in Poznań or the independent artistic platform "TransDramaticum" in Lublin.

Artists working in Polish-Ukrainian theatrical groups have attempted to deconstruct the utopian and simplistic project of searching for the image of a "true Ukrainian woman" (as the examples at the beginning of the text show, it is more often about portraying a Ukrainian woman than a man). In the award-winning play *Lwów nie oddamy* (Lviv, We Won't Give Up – the pun is untranslatable), directed by Katarzyna Szyngiera, the actress Oksana Czerkaszyna asks:

> Will somebody finally explain where the director is? What does it mean to play the role of a real Ukrainian? Did you invite me to play the role of a "real Ukrainian" so as to signal that you are friendly and nice towards me and that you really have no problems and that only politicians are divisive? (Szyngiera et al. 2018)

Any generalizing portraits should probably be considered as attempts to reduce the level of fear associated with the presence of Others. However tendentious, stereotypes create an opportunity to familiarize oneself with the new reality. Sociologist Piotr Sztompka claims that the essence of stereotypes is how they generalize all members of a community, presenting them in an undifferentiated way, regardless of their individual attributes (Matuszczyk 2021: 216). In the case of Polish-Ukrainian contacts, this is related to the perception of all Ukrainians arriving from abroad as potential supporters of Stepan Bandera's policy (the stereotype of a Ukrainian-Banderite) and responsible in one way or another for the Volhynia crime (the stereotype of a Ukrainian-butcher). Added to this is the growing interest in Poland in the topic of mass murders committed on Poles, thanks to the film *Wołyń* (Volhynia) by Wojciech Smarzowski and the annual celebrations commemorating those events, the knowledge about the crime "went beyond the hermetic circles of professional historians and borderland communities and reached a wide audience" (Herrmann 2018: 1). Thus, the Volhynian trauma reached a general social dimension. This changed the situation of Ukrainian migrants in Poland in such a way that each of them became a potential recipient of claims and accusations regarding responsibility

for the crime. Ukrainians were asked about Volhynia in their new workplaces, in public transport, during academic lectures and social meetings. Magdalena Sobień-Górska in the reportage *Ukrainki. Co myślą o Polakach, u których pracują?* (Ukrainian Women. What Do They Think About the Poles They Work for?) asked Ukrainian immigrants if they had heard anything unpleasant about themselves in the context of Volhynia. One replied in the following way:

> Yes, and surprisingly not from a drunk in a bus or a football fan returning from a match, but in college during the 1990s from a respected professor at the University of Warsaw. Suddenly, he asked "Do you love Bandera?". (Sobień-Górska 2020: 211)

Tetiana Oleksiienko in her autobiographical story *Lekcje przetrwania*, submitted to "My first and one-hundred-first day in Poland" contest, wrote the following observation:

> Volhynia became an invisible specter, a gnawing conscience, which devoured me everyday. Regardless of the company I found myself in, sooner or later, when the alcohol became coursing through my veins, someone uttered the word "Volhynia" and my hands began to feel the imagine salty dampness. (Oleksiienko 2023a: 103)

The Polish "wide audience" does not perceive the Volhynia massacre as a local matter (the mass murders took place in Volhynia and parts of Eastern Galicia) and holds all Ukrainians, regardless of their place of origin, collectively responsible. Thus, a resident of Lviv or Donetsk could be considered a supporter of Bandera. Tens of thousands of Polish-Ukrainian talks that took place in the Republic of Poland in recent years, with only a few—like those quoted above—recorded one way or another, have become despite the failure of the ruling and intellectual elites, a bottom-up tool for reworking Polish trauma of Volhynia. Each questioned Ukrainian and every questioned Ukrainian woman talked about their attitude to the Volhynian massacre to the extent that their own experience, knowledge and emotions allowed them. Although one can see the positive effects of this sui generis migration diplomacy (undoubtedly, convivial contact with Ukrainian migrants was one of the factors of the solidarity uprising of Poles after the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022), one should note the high price paid for them by one from the parties. The Polish trauma of Volhynia began to crumble and disintegrate into thousands of private traumas of Ukrainians.

As a refusal to accept the above rules of Polish-Ukrainian communication sound the words of Oksana Czerkaszyna from the aforementioned *Lwów nie oddamy*: "And the first question: are you a Banderite? – Uninteresting! – Question two: is Bandera your hero? – Uninteresting" (Szyngiera et al. 2018).

Later in the play, Czerkaszyna consistently deconstructs the image of a "true Ukrainian woman," making the viewers aware that its exclusive character also results in numerous exclusions in Ukraine itself:

> I'm playing here for you a real Ukrainian, although I'm not treated like a real Ukrainian in Ukraine, because I was born in Charków and I've spoken Russian since I was a child. But I've felt like a Ukrainian until today. For the first time I found out that I'm a Banderite when the war broke out in 2014 and in Russian media there was news that a boy was crucified and then eaten in Ukraine. Those responsible were Banderites… I've worked through this already. As a Ukrainian, I'm ready to talk about the terrorism of OUN-UPA, about Bandera, even if Ukrainians need him psychologically because of the war. And I'm ready to talk about how genocide really was committed by Ukrainians against Polish people in Volhyn. (Szyngiera et al. 2018)

In recent years, in addition to the Polish-Ukrainian dialogue, an interesting multidimensional Ukrainian-Ukrainian dialogue has been taking place in Poland. It mainly concerns the relations between the Ukrainian minority and Ukrainian migrants. These two groups do not constitute a homogeneous community. The Ukrainian minority is mostly descended from people who resettled as part of Operation Vistula carried out by the communist authorities in 1947. During the National Census, 38,797 people declared membership (*Ukraińcy* 2022). Ukrainian migrants, on the other hand, are people who have been coming to Poland since the 1990s most often for economic purposes. Subsequent economic crises, and above all the aggressive policy of Russia, resulted in the intensification of migration movements from Ukraine. Ultimately, on the eve of February 24, 2022, about 1.4 million Ukrainian citizens were said to reside in Poland (Bukowski, Duszczyk, ed. 2022: 24).

Through the decades of living in the post-war reality of the People's Republic of Poland and the first years of the Third Republic of Poland, the Ukrainian minority developed networking strategies in the form of festivals, watras [bonfires], malankas and concerts, which stemmed from the dispersion of people and were aimed at strengthening communal bonds and counteracting assimilation. This group is characterized by their attachment to tradition, places of origin,

memory of displacement, their focus on the Orthodox church and the use of dialects of the Ukrainian language. The members of this group have their own codes with which they define themselves and the models of "Ukrainianness" and patriotism (Trzeszczyńska 2021:73).

Interactions between the Ukrainian minority and migrants from Ukraine became more and more frequent after 1989, resulting in the need to confront the imaginary image of the homeland, which as a result of the many years of isolation took on idealized features, with the real country, which struggled with the negative effects of the post-totalitarian transformation. Oleg Krysztopa's reportage Останні українці (The Last Ukrainians) from 2019 described a number of fears experienced by the Ukrainian minority in Poland. These are fears related not only to the traumatic past (one of the people interviewed, who returned to his native village after 30 years of emigration in Canada, built his house by the forest so that Poles would not hear what is being said in it), but also to being seen as a newcomer from Ukraine, whose many years of dedication to preserving his identity, sometimes even leading to family conflicts, may be considered obsolete. "Just don't be too hard on us," the reporter quotes from one of the first conversations (Krysztopa 2019: 16).

Ołeh Krysztopa is the author of one of the parts of the publishing series Ліхіє дев'яності (The Bad Nineties), in which he describes the first years of political transformation in his native Ivano-Frankivsk. The reportage begins with a scene in which the author's father hides from bandits who are chasing him for debts. At the same time, on the other side of the border, Orest Steć, the hero of The Last Ukrainians, dreams of Ukraine as "a country where the sun shines differently than here in Poland, where there is no crime, where the best people are" (Krysztopa 2019: 151).

The fear of meeting a newcomer from parts of Ukraine that have been up to now inaccessible is related not only to the fear of being judged by him, but also of his own disappointment and the need to verify the myth of Ukrainian "glass houses." Defensive mechanisms can take aggressive forms, sometimes reinforced with a sense of class superiority growing out of an aversion to guest workers. They, in turn, perceive the Ukrainian minority as "satiated," that is, having a Polish passport and not knowing "what it means to feel the uncertainty of tomorrow, to struggle with bureaucracy, to be exposed to harassment at the Office for Foreigners" (Trzeszczyńska 2021:43).

Maciupa in the drama *Piłka leci na wschodni brzeg* (Ball Flies to the Eastern Shore) shows the above conflict in the image of a woman from the borderlands who is hated by petty smugglers, but who also turns out to be of Ukrainian origin. In one of the scenes, this woman addresses the people she is searching for:

> Who are you? Bandits! Smugglers! You only know how to scam. Vodka, cigarettes for 10 zlotys and going to Biedronka to buy washing powder. Do you know at least one Ukrainian song? They pretend to be victims, but I know what it means to be a victim, what it means to conceal my real identity even in the third generation, what it means when your grandmother doesn't accept any one of your boyfriends because they are Polish. And you? Who are you? You don't speak Polish, Russian, you only have a Ukrainian passport. And what is that worth? I have a Polish passport, but I'm a better Ukrainian than all of you put together. You all came here from your wild steppes. Do you go to church? (Maciupa 2021)

The dispute over the essentialist model of a "true Ukrainian" is also taking place among Ukrainians in Poland. In addition to adding to the workforce, migrants also bring with them a cultural memory (Warakomska 2019: 41). The anthropologist Patrycja Trzeszczyńska writes about discussions in which the right to "Ukrainianness" is denied to those whose ancestors served in the Red Army or come from Russian-speaking families. Some representatives of the Ukrainian national minority working in schools with Russian-speaking children treat their classes as a kind of "ground work" helping the children mature into "Ukrainianness" (Trzeszczyńska 2021: 78).

Thus, following Hanna Gosk, nothing is neutral in the migration experience (Gosk 2021: 234). The effort needed to fight for economic well-being is accompanied by the struggle of having to deal with the gazes of natives who, in order to reduce the discomfort caused by the presence of newcomers, want to portray them according to their own criteria and expectations.

For several years, voices of Ukrainian artists have become increasingly distinct in Polish culture, which has an opportunity in the near future to become a space of interculturality, in which the admitted differences between these cultures will cease to generate conflicts and new traumas. Fueled by pseudo-historical accusations, the Russian attack on Ukraine only allows us to realize the significance of this opportunity.

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| Abstract

Ryszard Kupidura

Representing the Ukrainian Migration Experience: From a Cultural Monologue Towards Interculturality

The text is devoted to literary, theatrical and film representations of the Ukrainian migration experience in Poland. The author notes that current artistic strategies, contrary to the intentions of Polish writers/artists, often reinforce stereotyping patterns of reception of the Other and unconsciously postulate an essentialist project of portraying a "real Ukrainian woman/man." On the other hand, Ukrainian voices are increasingly heard in Polish space, which provides an opportunity not only to work through painful traumas from the past, but, due to the constant presence of Ukrainian co-residents, also to develop competences in recognizing mutual cultural codes, which in turn creates an opportunity to avoid generating new traumas in the

future. The author devotes separate attention to the multidimensional Ukrainian-Ukrainian dialogue taking place in recent years in the territory of Poland, in other words, to the relations between the Ukrainian minority and Ukrainian migrants.

Keywords: migration, imagology, trauma, theater, cinema, Polish-Ukrainian relations

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.12

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Stabat Mater: The Impossible Mourning in Teresa Ferenc's Poetry

> *Every God, including the God of the Word, relies on a mother Goddess.*
>
> (Kristeva 1987: 252)

One of the motifs haunting Teresa Ferenc's poetic works is the figure of the Mother of Sorrows, which, according to Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida, becomes a symbol of "impossible" mourning. In my interpretation, this mourning is connected not only with the poet's private experiences,[1] but also with the wide-ranging political and ethical project that characterized the transnational anti-war and anti-military feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Western countries, countries of the former Eastern Bloc, as well as in countries undergoing the process of decolonization. These movements not only addressed the cruelty of waging war on the civilian population, but also exposed the political economy of this phenomenon. War in its most brutal form is an attack on the conditions of reproduction of life, which is why it is one of the most perverted practices of patriarchal-colonial capitalism. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the anti-war protests made use of the maternal figure. This figure was meant to symbolize the reproductive powers of women as a counterbalance to a system that, as Tithi Bhattacharya (2020) claimed, produces death.

1 Teresa Ferenc's poetry is informed by her childhood experiences, specifically with the pacification of Sochy in Zamość County. On June 1, 1943, the nine-year-old Ferenc bore witness to the death of her parents and other residents of the village.

This text addresses the way in which the poetic description of post-war trauma is related to the anti-war feminist policy that emerged as a result of the socio-political changes during the 1960s and 1970s in the People's Republic of Poland, an era officially considered non-feminist. This policy was defined primarily by a battle in the area of social reproduction, where the stakes included improvements in the conditions of social life in the individual, collective and intergenerational dimensions. This period coincided with the explosion of women's writing, which is closely related to the description of war traumas (such as the works of Halina Poświatowska, Anna Świrszczyńska, Ludmiła Marjańska, Anna Kamieńska, Joanna Pollakówna, and Teresa Ferenc). Therefore, it can be argued that writing trauma somehow forces poets to invent a new language, one that is saturated with bodily matter, which in effect leads to the reinvention not only of the traditional concept of sexual difference, but also of the entire social order based on the devaluation of women's reproductive labour.

This shift is visible in Ferenc's work. Although it has so far been read in autobiographical terms and regarded as religious poetry,[2] her work contains the germinating seeds of a new feminist policy of the 1960s and 1970s based on the imperative of radical solidarity with the weakest members od society. In three volumes of poetry—*Wypalona Dolina* (Burnt Valley) (1979), *Pieta* (1981) and *Grzeszny Pacierz* (Sinful Prayer) (1983)—maternal grieving, referring to two motifs, Stabat Mater and pieta, gains a new quality: removed from the narrowly understood family relations and the religious context, it becomes a capacious metaphor, encompassing the entire world of lost social ties. The poet wants to do justice not only to her parents, the inhabitants of Sochy or the war heroes revered in the political and military discourse; rather she wants to acknowledge the silent and unremembered death of civilians—children, women, elderly people—of whom there is no trace in the collective memory.

1. The suffering mother

In the poem titled *Matka Dolorosa* (Mother Dolorosa) we are dealing with a rewriting of the medieval motif of Mother of Sorrows:

> Matka Dolorosa
> na wszystkich progach

2 For a detailed analysis of the reception of her work, see Aleksandra Pawlik-Kopek's book (2019).

rana otwarta
wydarto jej drzwi
ukradziono ogień

rwała włosy
ręce jak drzewa łamała
włosami rękami ogień ratowała
ogień żywy z ziemi
z żył
z krwi darła

teraz rozkłada ręce
na progu woła
s y n u
s p a l o n e plecy
s y n u
spopielały język
s y n u
dziecko z ogniem w ręce
siejesz wojny
gasisz miasta
s y n u
wyrwany ze mnie
dziki płomieniu
(*Matka Dolorosa*, PW, 230)

Mother Dolorosa
an open wound
on all doorsteps
a door was torn from her
fire was stolen from her

she was tearing her hair
she was breaking arms like trees
with her hair hands fire
she was saving
live fire from the earth
from the veins
blood she was tearing

now she spreads her hands
on the doorstep she calls
m y s o n
burned back
m y s o n
ashen tongue
m y s o n
a child with fire in
his hand
you sow wars
you extinguish cities
s o n
torn from me
my wild flame

The mother's lament is not necessarily associated with the loss of her son, but rather with the theft of fire, once associated with the hearth and the cult of the Great Goddess,[3] which in this poem becomes a tool of criminal activity. This theft is associated with the violence stemming from the exploitation of women's labor, which paved the way for patriarchal-military power, private property, and caste society (Lerner 1986: 141–160).

Thus, Ferenc superimposes the story of Sochy on the dethronement of the goddess and the degradation of her reproductive powers. The titular Mother Dolorosa refers us to the old pre-patriarchal traditions and brings to mind one of the many incarnations of the Great Goddess, specifically her darker counterpart, the suffering mother.[4] As Marina Warner writes, the medieval motif of Stabat Mater originates from the pantheon of fertility goddesses who sacrifice some attribute of their own power to the forces of darkness and then mourn it (Warner 2013: 224).

Ferenc's lament of Mother Dolorosa refers not only to myths and images of female deities, but, above all, to the historical period characterized by a specific relationship to the land and reproduction, which accounted for the strength of community life. However, as this work was devalued, so was the entire sacred symbolism associated with the cult of the Goddess, nature and the mother. Luce

3 It does not seem that this poem was a subtle reference to the Promethean myth, as suggested by Pawlik-Kopek (2019: 154).

4 Anna Kohli writes that the tripartite nature of Mary represented in three colors, white, red and black, refers to the tripartite Great Goddess (Kohli 2007: 30).

Irigaray observes this transition in Greek philosophy, to which she devotes an entire book entitled *In the Beginning, She Was* (2013). She emphasizes that language in particular undergoes change, especially in its tendency to homogenize and erase all traces of this goddess-like power:

> In fact, she doubly vanishes. In order to definitively close the logos upon itself, in order for the logos to speak with itself, the traces of a relation with her are said in the neuter.... Instead of saying: the world is born from her, and from my relation with her, the Western philosopher says: there is Being, there are beings, which is, or are, given without anyone who gives. There is, there are, without being born in a way, without any origin. There is, there are, mysteriously there. (Irigaray 2013: 4)

In Ferenc's poem, the theft of fire becomes a symbol of the devaluation and desacralization of women's creative powers, which are now put in the service of reproductive tasks, and women are delegated to the private and domestic spheres according to the new division of labor in patriarchal economies. Poems about the hardships of everyday life are the best way to show this. In the conditions of war, women's work creating and maintaining social life will be reduced to a struggle for survival, as in the poem *Matka wojenna* (Mother of War): "She ran ran ran / washing scraping cooking / potatoes carrots apples" (PW, 239).

It seems that Ferenc introduces goddesses into grief poems not only to euphemize the story of war trauma. In my opinion, this is a strategy aimed at appreciating reproductive work, elevating it to the rank of goddess-like creative powers in opposition to the deadly war machine. Therefore, we can risk the thesis that the goddess-like cycle of eternal birth, pointed out by other researchers (Pietruszewska-Kobiela 2010), is a clear expression of opposition to war damage and resistance to the economy of death that patriarchal-colonial capitalism had embodied in the form of fascist ideology. Therefore, reproductive work is shown here in its pre-capitalist form, i.e. one that refers to a special kind of bond between people and the earth and nature.

Ferenc, therefore, returns to these mythical images of the Goddess, nature and mother. To this end, she also reclaims the figure of the Stabat Mater, i.e. the suffering mother, who, contrary to the dogmas of the Catholic faith, is elevated to the rank of goddess. This deification, consisting in extending the image of the mother to all spheres of life, is in fact a gesture of appreciation for the work that produces life. In this context, the topic of maternal mourning becomes important, which is an expression not only of helplessness and grief after the loss of a son—in accordance with the current narrative in the Catholic

doctrine—but of active opposition to the destructive dimension of patriarchal politics. This is how Warner interprets the Stabat Mater grieving, which refers to the ancient cult of the goddess:

> For she receives the broken body of her son in her arms and gazes upon his features with such avidity not only because she mourns her loss… but also because she is propitiating those same forces of sterility and death that the sacrifice of her son is attempting to appease. He is the blood offering, she the principle of the abiding earth. The tears she sheds are charged with the magic of her precious, incorruptible, undying body and have power to give life and make whole. (Warner 2013: 225)

Julia Kristeva draws attention to this subversive aspect of Mary's mourning in her famous essay *Stabat Mater*, in which she analyzes the moment when motherhood is deprived of its sanctity. It is in the tears of Mary, as Kristeva notes, that the goddess-like element of permanence, generation and bodily bond with the world survived. For they are—next to milk, another attribute of Mater Dolorosa, but successively erased from its Christian representations—"metaphors of non-language, of a 'semiotic' that does not coincide with linguistic communication" (Kristeva 1985: 143). This is where the subversive potential of female mourning comes into play. Kristeva continues, "The Mother and her attributes signifying suffering humanity thus become the symbol of a 'return of the repressed' in monotheism" (Kristeva 1985: 143). Moreover, in the face of the promise of resurrection, Mary's mourning and crying are a kind of scandal—as if she did not want to consent to the divine plan of salvation.

> Since resurrection lies in the offing, and since as the Mother of God she ought to know that it does, nothing justifies Mary's anguish at the foot of the cross unless it is the desire to feel in her own body what it is like for a man to be put to death, a fate spared her by her female role as source of life. (Kristeva 1985: 144)

Thus, *Stabat Mater* becomes one of the figures of female grieving, which, as Nicole Loraux writes, has been a threat to the public sphere and its established order, based on military power and the cult of war, since the Greek times (Loraux 1998).[5] It is literally a symbol of resistance to the forces of darkness and

5 According to Loraux, Greek women were not allowed to mourn publically after losing a son who had been a soldier (Loraux 1998: 25).

death. It evokes the memory of the lost order, which is much like the "open wound" from Ferenc's poem.

2. Poetic heresy

It can be said that Ferenc's entire poetic work, as in the case of Tadeusz Różewicz's poetry,[6] is a great struggle with language, even though the poet writes directly in the *Psalm prowadzona na rzeź* (Psalm Led to Slaughter): "I come not to say anything" (PW 201–202), and in which she adds to *The Bitter Psalm*: "my words are rough / they hurt / they bleed" (PW 235). Giving testimony in the face of the end of the world becomes impossible. However, this impossibility stems from the peculiar experience of losing a mother.

The impossible grieving after a mother cannot cope with the poverty of language; it resists symbolization and risks falling into the state of utter asymbolism that Kristeva warned against: "If I did not agree to lose mother, I could neither imagine nor name her. The psychotic child is acquainted with that drama: such a child, being ignorant of metaphor, is an incompetent translator" (Kristeva 1992: 41). Although it becomes impossible for the daughter to regain her mother, Krystyna Kłosińska explains that she can invent a new language and break symbolic codes (Kłosińska 2010: 435). It is the saturated system of signs, a characteristic of poetic language, that becomes both a creative source and a kind of heresy making it possible to transcend the religion of the word.

Ferenc will perform such a heretical act in the poems referring directly to the pieta motif, in which there is a complete break with the traditional way of depicting Mary's suffering. There is a sequence of reversals here: the first one is the replacement of the son with the daughter, as in the poem *Matka zastrzelona* (Mother Shot), where we are also dealing with a change of roles, as when the daughter addresses the mother as "my birth mother / child" (PW, 206); the second one introduces the image of the crucified Mary, as in the poem *Matka drewniana* (Wooden Mother): "She stood like a tree / heard her son dying / Mother and son bound / in one dying wood" (PW, 209). In one of the conversations, the poet refers to this topic directly. To the question: "Your mother is crucified and redemption comes through her" she replies in the following way: "Because that's how it is" (Ferenc 2009a: 21–22).

6 Krzysztof Kłosiński, when writing about the symbolic fiasco in Różewicz's *Ocalony* (Survivor), draws our attention to the exchange of signs that we find in the poem, which brings about a new reality (Kłosiński 2000: 185).

Maternal mourning thus depicted is based on father-son symbolism,[7] as if Mother Dolorosa's suffering was meant to distract attention from the plan of divine salvation and bring her character closer to human suffering. That is perhaps why in this poem the mother's pain after the loss resembles labor pains. In this case, giving birth becomes giving life to death: "I am still giving birth—those separating / from the knees / Crying can be heard in the place of separation // open like a wound, the space calls out to them" (*Rodzone dzieci* – Children Being Born; Ferenc 1983b: 49). Kristeva recognizes that this pain is an inseparable trace of separation from the mother's body: "One does not bear children in pain, it's pain that one bears: the child is pain's representative and once delivered moves in for good" (Kristeva 1985: 138). This pain of separation becomes a keystone of mourning for Ferenc. It will gain the most moving expression in poems dedicated to a daughter's loss of a mother:

> Tak mało wiem o tobie
> tak krótko cię miałam
> jak słoneczny zając
> ledwo ci się stałam
> […]
> (*Mother With Me*, PW, 210)

> So little do I know about you
> so short was the time I had you
> like a sunny rabbit
> I barely became for you
> […]

Another type of verbal heresy in Ferenc's poetry can be found in how Mary is depicted, specifically her multiformity, which the poet captures not through metonymy, but through diaphora, which multiplies and diversifies the meanings that mourning gains in this poetry in order to maximize it and show it on a macro scale (Szopa 2018: 191–192). The individual experience of loss grows in this poem and spreads to all areas of the surrounding world. As a result, the mother becomes omnipresent in the depicted world, and her numerous repetitions will be processed differently each time: at one point she appears in the

7 Pawlik-Kopek notices that in Ferenc's work God remains the most important of all beings and does not lose his god-like and holy dimension, with the exception of a cycle of poems dedicated to a mother's mourning (Pawlik-Kopek 2019: 115).

form of the Great Goddess and later as the Black Madonna. She also functions as a metaphor for a home; she is present as a broken jug, as the kitchen floor, as trees, specifically as cherry or ash trees. This diaphoric multiplication of meanings that refers to the figure of the mother brings to mind the mythical images of the body of the Great Goddess as the whole world (Brach-Czaina 1997: 30), as in the *Psalm z Marią* (Psalm with Maria):

Mario
ze śladem pępowiny
z piersią pękającą od nadmiaru mleka
z dłonią jak kraina
czułością i troską płynąca
z szyją pochyloną w żywot wieczny
z głową ciążącą od miłości
jak arbuz
ziarna pełna
zaczyń
ciało jak ciasto
rosnące na wszystkie strony
[…]
(PW, 190)

Mary
with a trace of the umbilical cord
with a breast bursting with
a surfeit of milk
with a hand like a land
flowing with
affection and care
with a neck craning towards
eternal life
with a head heavy with
love
like a watermelon
full of seeds
leaven
body like dough
rising in all
directions

This maternal body-world is wrapped in a shroud of seemingly endless grieving, which is impossible to work through. Thus, grieving proceeds here on the basis of an economy different from that designed by Sigmund Freud (2009: 148). It functions outside the mechanism of sublimation and release of the "I" from the object of loss. In Ferenc's poetry, the "I" is still entangled in loss and, thus, in a relationship with the other. Mourning grows indefinitely, crossing all boundaries. In fact, Sochy is here a "little Earth," as we read in *Psalm z mojej ziemi* (Psalm from my Land), "on a tiny cell / tied with an umbilical cord / to the rest of the universe" (PW, 215).

The purpose of the diaphora here is to extend maternal grieving to the entire lost world of social relations and to take Ferenc's poetry beyond the autobiographical context. Not only is the poet's family lost, but the entire village community, and with it not only Sochy, but also—as we read in the motto to *Wypalona dolina* (The Burnt Valley)—"Oradour in France," "Lidice in the Czech Republic," "Mezzinote in Italy." And one could add today—as Bucha in Ukraine and Gaza City in Palestine.

Infinite mourning is like an "open wound" in Ferenc's poetry (*Matka Dolorosa*, PW, 230)—it is a kind of protest against the official policy of memory. It also proves that coming to terms with the death of others is in fact synonymous with forgetting.

3. A mournful protest

Passion poems and psalms are kept in the convention of folk songs by Ferenc, strongly focused around the cult of Mary, which has its origins in pre-Christian goddess beliefs. This context is of considerable importance when it comes to the role played by the figure of Mary in this poetry, who, as Irigaray writes in *The Mystery of Mary*, becomes a figure of radical justice (Irigaray 2021: 92). However, it is not about some form of legalistic or revengeful justice, but about the form of justice that refers to unconditional solidarity with all the victims of patriarchal-capitalist politics (Athanasiou 2017: 69). Therefore, the motif of Stabat Mater used by the poet should not be seen as an apology for traditional motherhood.[8] On the contrary, I think that it gives rise to a wide-ranging ethical and political project, which will oscillate around the politics of grieving, and specifically whose lives—as Judith Butler would say—are grievable and whose lives are unreal, and thus entirely deprived of the status of "living." It is here that

8 Contrary to Aleksandra Pawlik-Kopek (2019: 158), I do not believe that the figure of Stabat Mater created by Ferenc is always represented here in accordance with the Bible and portrayed as subjugated to God.

the potential of infinite grieving is revealed, because "without [it] there is no life, or, rather, there is something living that is other than life," and thus a life unworthy of living, "and ungrieved when lost" (Butler 2011:59).

The weeping mother-goddess stands in this work, above all, on behalf of those whose lives have been deemed unworthy. First of all, it will be the inhabitants of Sochy, and with them all the victims of war crimes, such as the Jewish boy in the poem *Matka karmiąca* (Nursing Mother) (PW, 252). Paradoxically, this way of presenting Mary reveals elements of feminist politics in Ferenc's work—Stabat Mater speaks on behalf of the oppressed here by the fact that she herself experiences pain, a point expressed directly by the poet:

> In my imagination, she [Mother of God] is not associated with any religious image—with the exception of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, I imagine them as flesh-and-bone mothers, women from villages who I knew from childhood, women who I know now. (Ferenc 2009a: 21–22)

The mournful lament is a wound in the collective memory, a kind of breach within a community governed by a specific way of organizing collective memory. The grieving inscribed in this poetry thus acquires a strictly political context—it refers to the question of how the loss of the other violates the boundaries of a given community. The question "Who am I without you?", writes Butler, undermines the integrity of every "I," every identity, and every community. Mary's weeping disturbs this official policy of mourning, organized within the nationalist politics of recognition, which divides lives into those that are grievable and those that are easily exposed to violence. Marian mourning, which is a form of commemorating the most defenseless victims of wars, slaughters and genocides, could be seen as a protest against this destructive policy, the costs of which are usually borne by women, children, the elderly, the sick, those deprived of care and support. And that is why we will not find here the cult of soldiers and war heroes, but a lament after a broken jug, a cherry tree damaged by gunfire, broken rye ears—after some small world, with which the whole world came to an end.

4. Conclusion

Ferenc's infinitive mourning of Mary mounts a clear protest against the destructive power of war and, at the same time, allows the poet to go beyond a simplistic depiction of motherhood, often presented as a force resisting the deadly war machine. This would suggest that a maternal-protective vision of the world with the participation of women would be a remedy for the conflagration of war. Such

a way of perceiving motherhood places women on the side of those who would each time take on themselves the burden of war massacres and bear the costs of the fight for survival. In Ferenc's poetry, on the contrary, it is maternal mourning and the possibility of loss inherent in it that becomes a protest against the machinery of war. The image of a suffering mother breaks completely with the traditional maternal role, understood as a woman's social duty to provide more soldiers or, more generally, labour power to the state or capital. In Niobe's poem, addressed directly to God, we are dealing with such a protest, which is in fact a refusal to perform reproductive labour in conditions of war:

> […]
> Posłuchaj
> jednego nie uczyniłabym po raz drugi
> nie przyniosłabym Ci na świat dziecka
> tej trudnej chwały
>
> Na ziemi posadziłabym Ci gołe drzewa
> gołą ziemię posadziłabym
> bez płaczących kamieni
> Wśród nich podejrzewam
> trzecią
> czwartą Niobe
> (*Niobe*, PW, 262–263)

> Listen
> there is one thing I would not do
> the second time
> I would not have brought you
> a child into the world
> this difficult glory
>
> I would have planted
> bare trees for you
> I would have planted
> bare earth
> Without weeping
> Stones
> I suspect there is
> the third

fourth Niobe
among them

I read the poet's decision to introduce goddess-like themes as a manifestation of the feminist consciousness present in the 1960s and 1970s. This communion with the sacred divinity of the world, with corporeality and nature, so strongly present in Ferenc's early poetry, is associated with a kind of transgression, which in this case takes the form of endless mourning. It is marked by a constant movement of opening, which—like opening wounds—will paradoxically be a process of continuous growth, budding or rebirth from the ashes of a burnt village. This way of representation should be read not only as praise of earth's fertility, nature or femininity, but as a movement going beyond the given material and social conditions. According to Kristeva's maternal philosophy, transgression is the ability to start over. This "duration with new beginnings" (Kristeva 2009: 114), which so strongly marks Ferenc's mournful poetry, is tantamount to opening the imagination and tilting the world towards the future. It is the mother's mourning that plays a special role here—it can become the seed of something new, namely a world free from suffering, harm and injustice.

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| Abstract

KATARZYNA SZOPA

***Stabat Mater*: The Impossible Mourning in Teresa Ferenc's Poetry**

The article discusses the feminist politics of mourning in the poetry of Teresa Ferenc. The main assumption of the text is to highlight the subversive potential

of the medieval motive of *Stabat Mater*. By referring to feminist anthropology, as well as the psychoanalyst theory of Julia Kristeva, I argue that behind the figure of mother's grieving lies not only the poet's opposition to war, but also an ethical imperative of solidarity with others, i.e. nameless victims of any kind injustice provided by patriarchal-capitalist policy.

Keywords: Stabat Mater, mourning, feminism, Great Goddess, women's poetry

| Bio

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.13

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The Scars of Memory: The Biographies of Monument Trees in Central Europe*

Every tree is subject to biological changes, physical processes and external influences. It also undergoes semantic operations related to the practice of naming, representing and evaluating plants. Monument trees[1] are particularly capacious in terms of symbolism and axiology, with their importance stemming not only from their dendrological features, but also from their historical, social and cultural significance.

This article is devoted to trees seen as objects or carriers of memory about collective trauma. I am primarily interested in trees whose names (patronages), narratives about the past, and historical and national roles (along with the physical condition of these plants) represent such issues as political or military conflicts, border changes, mass migrations, expulsions and purges, ideological

* The article is the result of, among others, the cooperation with the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Technical University of Dresden and own research conducted in Lusatia and Saxony in June 2022 as a part of the implementation of the University of Wrocław's grant for the study trip (IDUB 32/2022).

1 Monument trees are defined as trees that are the oldest, the thickest, and the tallest, as well as those that are particularly important historically, socially, or culturally (not necessarily natural monuments in the legal sense) (*Rejestr Polskich Drzew…*, accessed: 2023).

or religious antagonisms, and revisions of collective identities. Working on the "biographies" of several Central European trees, treated here as figures or media of memory, I describe traumatic events and processes as well as their changing interpretations.[2] The figure of memory is represented by a tree appearing in a narrative of the past, which figuratively concretizes this narrative in space and time, as well as in a collective system of views and values (e.g. Chrobry Oak in the Polish story about the meeting between the German emperor and the Polish king by this tree). The mediating function of the monument tree consists in its being used to preserve memories, maintain their circulation in social communication and stimulate the memory (e.g. the monumental spruce near Javornik in the Czech Republic, which, as stated in various tourist guides, "survived both world wars"). This type of biomemory can reinforce and record the official historical policy or it can (re)construct the memory landscape;[3] however, in specific circumstances—which is the thesis of the article—it also functions as an alternative history or counter-history, preserving local and regional (other than national) traditions, inspiring cultural practices or tourism, conceptualizing the relationship between the ideological and civilizational and organic perception of the natural environment.

I understand the titular concept of a scar as a metaphor for traumatic memory (trauma in collective memory). In the biological sense, the definition of a scar suggests a wound suffered in the past, the process of healing, the formation of a visible mark on the surface of the skin as a result of a damaged or removed body part, and the physiological mechanism of compensation for a loss or disorder. If these attributes of a scar were transferred to changes in social memory, as represented by biographies of monumental trees, it would be just as vulnerable to external changes, injuries resulting from acts of physical or cultural violence. Traces of this violence would manifest themselves in social memory as semantic cracks, amputations, anomalies, displacements, dead places, relics (residual), concrescences, outgrowths, and branches in the narrative or image of the past, which over time would be overgrown with new

2 The biography of trees can be considered a narrative, not necessarily literary, in which the plant's past is represented in a biographical convention.

3 Memory landscape is a set of ideas and practices connected to commemorating or recalling, for example, events, works, people, social groups, living entities, and objects in real space, whose meaning and significance are in this way (re)contextualized in relation to the past (Maus 2015: 218). I define biomemory as a set of natural and environmental traces of the past used to construct, store, pass on, and reinterpret social memory (of groups and individuals) in terms of a memory landscape.

meanings and then sealed in temporary interpretations, which are, however, susceptible to successive readings as part of the process of changing the paradigm of memory. With this terminology, I will analyze several dendrological scars of memory that testify to political, cultural or religious violence, which have led to places having been brutally "cleansed" and adapted to new functions, to a dissonance between historical and administrative geography, arbitrary changes in local or regional toponymy, myths, falsifications and misunderstandings present in the general knowledge of history. The metaphor of the scar combines the three basic aspects of biomemory discussed in this article: history, culture and nature, and at the same time emphasizes the mediating function of the organism-monument. A monument tree (or a group of such trees) that has been burned, bombed, mutilated, cut down, forgotten, renamed mediates between a past trauma and its trace (figure) in the current memory, the cultural significance of a place and its natural features, the formal rank of heritage and its real location as part of conservation, economic (forest), administrative, tourist or propaganda practices.

1. Scars and splinters of history

Cuts and markings on the surface of smooth and bright beech bark remain visible for years. The Germanic and Slavic name of this tree is associated with a letter or with writing (Brückner 48). One interesting example of a monument beech in Central Europe is the so-called the Political Beech (Politische Buche) in the Niederwartha (Kleditschgrund) district located on the outskirts of Dresden, which has been under protection since 1951 (Schramm 2019). Carved into the surface of its trunk are twentieth-century political symbols, such as the three arrows of the Iron Front, partially covered by a swastika, the abbreviations KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands), SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands), and FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei), probably added after the reunification of Germany. The Political Beech is located in a secluded, tree-covered area on a steep slope above a stream, which, as it can be assumed, provided opposition activists a safe space to hold discreet meetings during the Nazi period. The history of this tree was outlined as a kind of political biography by Stefan Schramm:

> It was in perfect health during the Third Reich, but it could not emigrate. Its hideout was in the suburbs of Dresden, where it remained undiscovered. The symbol of resistance which it once proudly represented had to give way to the swastika. Then, it lived in East Germany, where it received a party insignia. The last decades until its death were spent

> in the united Germany. This reads like a biography with two differences: its hero was never denazified nor was it a person, but a dignified tree with a unique history. (Schramm 2019)

Fig. 1. The Political Beech in Niederwartha, 2022 (photo: Wojciech Browarny)

The Political Beech is one of nearly 150 natural monuments in Dresden, about half of which are trees. One of them is a tree commemorating the dramatic history of World War II, that is, a pedunculate oak, commonly called Splittereiche, in the impressive, well-maintained and centrally located Großen Garten. The name "splinter oak" recalls the wounds this tree sustained during the Allied bombing of Dresden in February 1945. The Splittereiche represents a key image fostered in Dresden depicting the senseless destruction of the city and the huge number of civilian victims, which in the post-war period shaped a "false" German memory, at least according to the historical policy of the victorious powers and the German Democratic Republic. After the reunification of Germany, this martyrological theme of collective memory permeated the official narrative about the past; this was confirmed in 2017 with a memorial

plaque placed under the tree with a quote from Mark Twain: "Time may heal wounds, but she is a miserable beautician." Thus, the Splittereiche is a place of commemoration of the German victims of World War II, but also an organic medium of post-memory in Dresden. Despite the passage of decades and the reconstruction of the city, the symbolic and emotional scars of traumatic experiences remain, not only reminding us of the victims and the destruction in the twentieth century, but also reaffirming the veracity of the local myth. The "biography" of the tree monument anchors this myth in a specific and imaginary space, as well as in a fixed image of the past.

Fig. 2. Splinter Oak in Dresden, 2022 (photo: Wojciech Browarny)

In eastern Upper Lusatia, in Henryków near Lubań (Lower Silesian Voivodeship), there is a yew, which is about 1,270 years old (*Rejestr Polskich Drzew…*, accessed: 2023). Comparative data analysis confirms that "Henryk" is the oldest tree in Poland and one of the oldest in Central Europe (Dreslerová 2017: 93–96). Theodor Schube described it during his sightseeing and dendrological expeditions at the beginning of the twentieth century, noting

that the trunk bears traces—according to local records—of sword cuts from the Napoleonic Wars. In 1945, the tree was damaged by Soviet artillery, and a branch of the trunk broke off during a storm in 1989. It was not until 1992 that the Henryk Yew obtained the status of a natural monument and was put under protection. During this period, it began to be mentioned more often in Polish tourist studies. In a sense, "Henryk" is also the descendant of the Piast narrative, because in 2017 the Council of Lubań named the tree after the prince of Jawor and Świdnica, and at the same time the tree became an instrument of contemporary ideological undertakings related to the constant commemoration of the Polish past in the "Recovered Territories." That the yew had earlier avoided similar legal and symbolic processes may be due to its peripheral geographic location and its late inclusion in the classification of high-ranking Polish natural monuments.

Fig. 3. The Henryk Yew in Henryków Lubański, 2020 (photo: Wojciech Browarny)

2. The stigma of patronage

The thickest oak in Silesia, measuring about 11 meters in diameter at breast height, was to be found near Zabór in the Zielona Góra district. During the period of the People's Republic of Poland, its patron was changed. Teodor Schube, a distinguished Wrocław-based researcher of trees in the region, was replaced by Emperor Napoleon. A metal plaque commemorating Schube was removed (torn off), but it was found in the 1970s and displayed in May 2021 in the Botanical Garden of the University of Zielona Góra. "Napoleon" died and withered away, most likely as a result of arson.[4] The oldest Silesian Chrobry Oak, over 750 years old in the area of Piotrowice near Przemków, burned down in 2014 (probably also set on fire), and then died. "Chrobry" was granted protection in the 1960s and at the beginning of the century it was described and photographed by Schube. In the German period, the tree was called the Fat Oak (Dicke Eiche), while its post-war name is associated with a story detailing a meeting between Emperor Otto III and the Polish king. A different version of the origin story was created by Jerzy Wilanowski in *Spotkanie z olbrzymem, czyli "Legenda Chrobrego"* (Meeting with the Giant, or "The Legend of the Brave"). There, the Piast myth is the source of royal patronage, though it is set not in the integral context of the ideology or historiosophy of the "Regained Territories," but in the polyphonic "biography" of the tree, telling about the complicated history of the region, the experiences of living beings, the environment and the changing names and meanings of the oak (Wilanowski, accessed 2023). The Wilanowski legend also includes the Napoleonic theme of 1813, but the military episode from the past is no more prominent than the everyday life of people and animals.

There are also monument trees in Silesia that did not receive a Polish dendronym after their inscriptions had been removed, along with plaques from memorial boulders (e.g. the currently nameless beech tree in Szczytnicki Park or the tree at Pawłowicki Pond in Wrocław). In a few cases, in forests and remote areas, German monument trees and the occasional boulders accompanying

4 This natural monument was also virtually absent in the public awareness of the Polish people. Sebastian Pilichowski, a researcher from the Botanical Garden of Zielona Góra, wrote: "Despite identifying as a resident of Zielona Góra, despite all the years of study from preschool to university, nobody has ever organized a trip to the nearby Zabór to show us the thickest Polish oak. All the logistic barriers could have been overcome, that is, we could haven take a bus there and then walked the 2–3 km. Unfortunately, I never saw the Napoleon Oak. I can only admire this majestic tree in photographs and other people's memories" (Pilichowski 2021: 8).

them have been left intact (e.g. the inscription on a commemorative boulder lying under an oak near the settlement in Ryczyn was dedicated to the forester Richard Vollack and received the name Racław).

Fig. 4. The Napoleon Oak, 2023 (photo: Wojciech Browarny)

The Napoleon Oak and the Chrobry Oak probably fell victim to vandalism or irresponsible behavior that consequently led to it burning down. For mainly political reasons, the names of the patrons of these monument trees were officially changed or removed, in effect blurring the memory of the German past of the "Recovered Territories." In the 1960s, that is, during the (re)intensification of anti-German propaganda in the Polish People's Republic, a process of symbolic Polonization was well underway, as a result of which various objects were granted such patrons as Piast kings or other figures related to the Polish national or folk tradition, including, among others, the Napoleonic legend, which was treated as a counter-narrative of the Prussian—and therefore Silesian—collective memory. This "concrescence" of versions of history is still legible in the landscape of memory. A few kilometers from the location of the remains of the fallen "Napoleon" stands the monument tree Black Oak (*Rejestr pomników przyrody…* 2023: 132), next to which there is a historical gravestone with an inscription commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Prussian War of Liberation of 1813. Another oak monument has been preserved in the area of Nowe Miasteczko, named after the French emperor (Siatecki 99).

Ideologically motivated "repolonization" in the post-war period was primarily concerned with trees growing in the main administrative centers of the "Recovered Territories", metonymically representing the return of these territories to the "mother," or particularly impressive dendrological specimens in these areas (Chrobry Oak, Napoleon Oak). The reason why there was so much concern for the preservation of these exceptional trees was connected not so much with their natural value as with their adaptability to symbolic Polonization, making them effective tools for representing the national version of the past. Trees of monumental rank in peripheral areas or those that were deemed unsuitable for ideological purposes were often destroyed or neglected and forgotten (even the Henryk Yew had been neglected for a long period in the People's Republic of Poland). A specific case were Adolf Hitler's Oaks, patronages granted and marked on occasional boulders during the Nazi period, for example, in Gdańsk, Wrocław and Opole.[5] These trees were physically removed (with the exceptions of the oak in Mosina near Witnica) after the annexation of the "Regained Territories," leaving no trace in the place where they once stood.

3. Life and death concrescences

The most historically and dendrologically valuable monument trees were given "life after death." The Napoleon Oak was cloned and its genetic copies were planted inside the perimeter of the mother tree and in the ZU Botanical Garden next to the boulder with the recovered Schube plaque. From the acorns of Chrobry Oak, blessed by Pope John Paul II, sprouted several hundred seedlings, which found numerous commemorative applications.[6] The same happened with dozens of seedlings from Henryk Yew seeds, blessed by Pope Benedict XVI, which were planted mainly near the main tree in Henryków Lubański, but also in remote locations (e.g. at the parish church in Książ Mały in Wrocław).

"Henryk," "Napoleon" and "Chrobry" were copied and reproduced. As reproductions of already dead or dying trees, these young plants, which are their descendants, have now, or will have, the status of a nomadic copy without a concrete, material original. Although seemingly undergoing the process of

5 In April 1933 near the Oppeln Ostbahnof train station an oak was planted with a commemorative boulder with the inscription "Adolf Hitler Eiche 1933." This event was described in the "Oppelner Zeitung" (Janowski 2015).

6 The plaque located at the Chrobry Oak by the Szprotawa Forest Management states that the foresters during their pilgrimage to the Vatican in April of 2004 took with them 2.5 kg of acorns from this oak. After being blessed by Pope John Paul II, they gave rise to around 500 seedlings, from then on called Pope's oaks.

reproduction in the natural environment, these new trees are only organic duplicates of their parent trees; however, as media of memory they are carriers of different meanings, often implemented in other contexts and places. As seeds or seedlings of monumental plants, cleared of their indigenous unique identity (replicated and deterritorialized), which, apart from genes, inherit from their ancestors only the prestige of patronage and origin (from record specimens), they are suitable for various memorial applications. However, their use is actually limited and is part of the Polish modern social contract which posits the following: national and territorial integrity of the state, a centralized administrative structure, the privileged position of the Catholic faith, the depreciating historical role and aspirations of various national, ethnic or religious groups and regional communities in the collective memory. Specific, complete and localized "biographies" of Silesian monument trees—which represent, for example, our knowledge of Prussian history, Protestantism, traditional borders of Central European regions (at the junction of Silesia, Lusatia and Brandenburg, in the area of Zielona Góra)—did not fit into this agreement. "Henryk," "Chrobry" or "Napoleon" were, therefore, forgotten or neglected, destroyed, renamed, reproduced, allowed to deterritorialized or be sacralized, which radically changed their meaning as figures or media of collective memory.

The physical scars on trees are signs of past events, but also contain traces of objects that no longer exist. A chapter of twentieth-century history described more broadly in recent years has been the fate of the "post-German" necropolises, considered inactive during the communist period, and as a result have been devastated and then consistently liquidated. This happened, on the one hand, because of the "de-Germanization" policy in the territories taken over in 1945, but, on the other, because of the traumatic experiences of their new Polish inhabitants, who, like the mother of the poet Tadeusz Różewicz, did not want to "lie among the Germans." Those historical or Jewish necropolises and small forgotten cemeteries that were located in forests, mountains or on the outskirts of small towns survived destruction. Some Catholic and communal cemeteries retained their original function, but most German tombstones were removed. Only in exceptional cases—such as the grave of Carl von Clausewitz (Trzaskowska 146)—were the remains of the deceased exhumed and reinterred elsewhere. Some areas of former German necropolises have for several decades served as parks or as green areas. However, the traces of the defunct cemeteries are clearly visible in the topography of these "polluted landscapes" (Martin Pollack's term): the characteristic unevenness of the ground surface, the kind of dominant vegetation, and the remnants of utility infrastructure, such as fences, paths or water cisterns. After 1989, in many Polish towns in the "Recovered

Territories," these areas were commemorated with monuments or plaques as reminders of their previous function (e.g. Common Remembrance Memorial in Grabiszyński Park in Wrocław).

Trees that retain the scars of destroyed graves or cemetery infrastructures can be treated as biomemory media that commemorate dismantled necropolises. Several such cases were recorded in the capital of Silesia. The evangelical cemetery of St. Bernardine parish on Krakowska Street (the burial site of Karl von Holtei) was physically dismantled and cleared during the communist period, but its trees have been partially preserved. One of the trees has grown into the former fence, a material remnant of the topography of this necropolis. In the General Władysław Anders Park, a fragment of a tombstone has survived, wedged between the trunks of maples growing around a stone slab. The inscription on its surface commemorates the sisters Melania Reiche and Franziska Pohl, née Lachinski (*Nowy cmentarz św.…*, accessed 2023). In Skowroni Park, which once was also a cemetery, there is a tree with a remaining fragment of a metal fence, typical of the small architecture of former German necropolises (*Nowy cmentarz św.…*, accessed 2023). What was supposed to disappear completely and without a trace survived as relics of architecture and sepulchral infrastructure merged with living plant organisms, which, paradoxically, preserved the relationship between culture and nature in the local environment. Cemetery topography, vegetation and tombstones, although their cohabitation is constantly changing along with the life of trees, materially maintain their *status quo ante*, thus reminding us about the previous inhabitants and functions of the city space. If we were to search for a new meaning of indigenousness in the "Regained Territories" in the context of post-humanist and trans-species thought, ideological identification could be replaced by environmental identity. Social groups or individuals could define themselves as autochthonous not in relation to the model image of history or national community, but through the interpretation of their participation in a specific natural and cultural environment in which the changing relationships of biological organisms and inanimate matter open the contemporary experience of space (place) onto both a historical and non-historical perspective.

4. Conclusion

The culture of monument trees is deeply rooted in the modern idea of collective identity and in the legitimization of a group's claim to exclusive ownership of a given territory and to its version of history. At the time when the idea of nationalism was at its peak, but also earlier, hundreds of trees in Central Europe were dedicated to religious reformers, rulers and political leaders

Fig. 5. A fragment of a tombstone in Anders Park in Wrocław, 2023 (photo: Wojciech Browarny)

Fig. 6. A fragment of a fence once surrounding a grave in Skowroni Park in Wrocław, 2023 (photo: Wojciech Browarny)

(Hrušková 2005; Morgenthal 2016), such as the Hussites, Martin Luther, the Piasts, the Hohenzollerns and Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. Oftentimes, they gave their patronage to lindens, and later also to oaks, thereby mediating the complex relations between Slavic and Germanic cultures as well as between Catholicism and Protestantism in the same lands. Numerous monument trees had a similar function in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. One of the many reasons for the Polish practice of dedicating lindens and oaks to the Piast dynasty (not only in the "Regained Territories") had to do with the policy of removing traces of the foreign past, both in national and religious terms. The Henryk Yew, which sprouted well before Poland adopted Christianity, and is, therefore, a remnant from the pre-Piast times, was blessed (by the pope) after it was propagated to commemorate Catholic saints or clergy and figures of national public life. The Silesian Chrobry and Napoleon oaks, which grew in Poland only for a fraction of their "biographies," were subjected to the same biopolitical and symbolic processes. The Political Beech and Splinter Oak told stories that were deemed false. Traces left by events or historical processes on the surface of monumental trees often testify to a different past. These scars are a signature of a counterhistory, a different collective identity, blurred regional or national borders, changed functions of space or devastated natural and cultural heritage, but they are also potentially a figure or a medium of a more inclusive and capacious, living biomemory that is open to change.

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| Abstract

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The Scars of Memory: The Biographies of Monument Trees in Central Europe

The author of the article examines monument trees, representing in history and culture traumatic social experiences. Using examples from Central Europe, he describes specific trees and their close environment (surroundings), looking for traces of dramatic events or processes from the past. On this basis, he reconstructs the biomemory of the region, which stores the "scars" of military conflicts, political violence, expulsions or cultural cleansings. The author argues that biomemory can function as an alternative history or counterhistory, preserve local tradition, inspire social practices, and conceptualize the relationship between the ideological, civilizational and organic perception of the natural environment.

Keywords: monument trees, Central Europe, trauma, biomemory

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.14

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Neglected Trauma: The Lives of Women Dissidents and Émigrés in Daňa Horáková's Memoirs

Research on trauma and memory in literature typically focuses on texts dealing with the Shoah or hardship of World War II and other armed conflicts. However, war is not the only situation that leads to trauma, and the feelings of unendurable danger that produce it can be found in a number of less conspicuous situations. Especially since trauma only arises as a result of the event itself. It often develops gradually, through the accumulation of experiences which the human psyche interprets as life-threatening and which are not adequately treated. In such cases, the initial onset of trauma may even go unnoticed. Moreover, while each case of trauma has its own individual character, certain situations are more challenging for the psyche than others, involving specific patterns of circumstances that represent an increased psychological burden and therefore heightened risk of trauma.

In the following article, I will outline the possible forms of trauma experienced by women in connection to their lives as dissidents and émigrés, specifically with reference to Daňa Horáková's book *O Pavlovi* (About Pavel).

1. The universe of dissent and emigration and *asanace* ("sanitation") campaign

If we talk about (Czechoslovak) dissent, its most striking feature is undoubtedly the diversity of individual fates experienced by dissidents. Some were born into

dissent while others were thrown into it as a result of decisions made by their parents, and still others became dissidents by virtue of their own political, social, or life decisions. Some worked in pursuit of personal and collective freedom, while others, driven by the same goal, maintained a low profile in order to create space for those around them. Jonathan Bolton thus speaks of "worlds of experience" (Bolton 13). Dissidents were united only by the hostile attitude of the regime—the "mark of the enemy," to use Václav Havel's expression (Havel 37). Even here, however, different dissidents were affected to different degrees. Some were socially isolated, while others found themselves targets of various forms of "character assassination." For some, conversely, it provided the very impulse that led them down the path of dissent. In every case, the effect of this "mark of the enemy" was to delineate a certain universe encompassing all of human existence. For people in dissent, there was nothing but dissent: all decisions, relationships, and emotions involved dissent, every part of life was marked by dissent. In Bolton's words, "Dissent was a philosophy, but it was also a common set of situations and experiences closely tied to daily life—experiences that had little to do with politics, theory, or Western reception" (Bolton 13).

The impact of emigration on the lives of those who chose it was similarly universal. For those who left the country without the intention of returning it was like stepping into another universe. As with dissidents, émigrés were motivated by a broad range of factors to leave (and in some cases return), and there was a similarly broad range of ways to emigrate, and numerous factors shaping each émigré's ability to cope with life abroad (knowledge of the language of the destination country, family conditions, education, age, relationship to the adoptive value system, etc.). Estimates of emigration from Czechoslovakia in the years following 1968 are in the range of 200,000 people (Nespor 50). While not all were dissidents, a significant number began as such, and it was in reference to them that an official campaign was organised under the title *Akce Asanace*, or the "Sanitation Campaign." By order of the Ministry of the Interior, the campaign aimed to "bring about the complete dispersion and isolation of the main organisers of Charter 77 from the other signatories, and for these organisers to carry out their emigration from the CSSR" (qtd. in Stehlík et al. 155). While the campaign failed to crush dissent, many opponents of the regime did leave Czechoslovakia, including 280 signatories of the Charter (according to creators of the documentary series *Abeceda komunistických zločinů*).

The Czechoslovak State Security (the STB) was known to resort to brutal coercive measures. In addition to kidnapping and other (sometimes fatal) incidents involving the children of dissidents, these measures included repeat searches of their homes, sometimes lasting for hours, as well as surveillance,

bullying, and humiliation. There were also acts of targeted violence: the well-known assaults on Ivanka Hyblerová, Zdena Tominová, and Vlastimil Třešňák, for example, as well as Zina Freundová, who was brutally attacked in her own apartment. Simply knowing that the StB was capable of this kind of violence compelled many dissidents to leave the country.

2. A woman in dissent, a woman in exile

Until recently, the mainstream narrative on dissent was shaped by its male leaders, often overlooking the critical role played by women. In *Ženy v disentu* (Women in Dissent; 2013), historian Petr Blažek re-examines the activities of Charter 77 with the aim of explaining the relative silence concerning the role of women in the Czechoslovak opposition. In addition to the communist regime's appropriation of the (already established) women's rights movement in Czechoslovakia—with devastating consequences—Blažek draws attention to the conservative views of women's rights that could be found within the opposition itself (Blažek 3). In the same spirit, sociologist Jiřina Šiklová writes on the mutual lack of concern for this issue on the part of both Czech dissidents (and émigrés) and Western feminist movements (Šiklová 42). As with Miroslav Vodrážka's text on Charter 77 (Vodrážka 66), Šiklová recalls that:

> In interviews following the fall of communism, these women [former dissidents] claimed that political pressure from the regime did not allow them to separate the feminist movement from the mainstream story on political engagement on the part of men. (Šiklová 42)

In the same way that women's issues as such were not raised by dissident (and émigré) women, they have long been ignored within the professional scholarly discussion on dissent as well (Šiklová 42).

In 2006, Pavla Frýdlová published *Ženská vydrží víc než člověk* (A Woman Lasts Longer Than a Man), a collection of autobiographical accounts by women émigrés from the period in question, with another collection appearing in 2008 under the title *Ženy mezi dvěma světy* (Women Between Two Worlds). These were followed in 2017 by Marcela Linková and Naďa Straková (eds.) *Bytová revolta: Jak ženy dělaly disent* (Household Revolt: How Women Did Dissent), presenting the biographical testimonies of twenty-one dissidents of different generations. In the final study, Marcela Linková draws on interviews to describe the extreme hardship experienced by women dissidents. In addition to their usual duties and households, further extended by dissident social life, these women worked for the Charter, and also had to cope with the StB (Linková 379).

Moreover, she reminds us that it was the transposition of Charter activities to private homes, flats, and cottages that gave women a chance to become more directly involved in public life (Linková 381). Like Blažek, Linková points to the ambivalent equality of coercive means applied by the StB on male and female opposition figures, and the fact that women like men faced persecution and continuous bullying. While fewer women (with notable exceptions) found themselves imprisoned, coercive practices applied on them by the StB often involved intimate and sexualised violence (Linková 385–387).

However, attempts to better understand the role of women dissidents and how it differed from that of their male counterparts are limited by insufficient sources. Were women dissidents protected or were they simply protective? Did they choose their way of life—the milieu that shaped them, the support they gave to their male partners, the political activities in which they participated, etc.—as an act of conscious self-realisation? Or were they forced into this life by circumstance, and compelled (with more or less aptitude) to cope with it? Were their dissident activities comparable to that of their male counterparts, or were they different in some way: more restricted—or, on the contrary, more extensive?

The available information on dissidents gathered from memoirs and biographical interviews suggests that certain people are more prone to trauma than others, depending on such factors as individual personality, background, and psychological make-up. Several factors, however, seem to be of particular relevance: faith in God, professional ambition and need for self-realisation, and the simple fact of being an émigré all appear to be important variables in the experience of (and reflection on) the long years deprived of freedom, especially in the sense that these aspects naturally brought with them certain value complexes which helped shape the careers of particular women. While the church community in Czechoslovakia offered a support base for practicing Christians (who were also persecuted by the communist regime), émigrés, on the other hand, were often stripped of primary contacts and thus thrown into isolation, mitigated to a greater or lesser extent by contact with the expatriate community in the destination country. The desire for professional self-realisation then increased the degree of frustration for the persecuted, thus counterbalancing the value of one's personal background.

Motherhood played a major role in the lives of women dissidents and émigrés, with regard to both the sense of vulnerability and social life it carried with it. In the case of the latter, motherhood also served as a kind of life anchor, a materialised necessity. Having a child meant building a circle of adults who helped in their upbringing and education; in the case of the émigré, this tended to disrupt the isolation of daily life, and to encourage integration. It is relevant

here to consider the correlation between quality of life and an émigré's attitude towards integration and role in the family. Many (male) Czech intellectuals who refused to integrate in their host countries had a more difficult time coping with exile, and were more prone to alcoholism. Conversely, many families fell apart when the external pressure of living in dissent disappeared (cf. Tominová 351), and they were confronted with a choice between integration and confrontation. Couples who stayed together were also faced with this dilemma, caught between the new future and superseded past. It became necessary, from an ideological/political point of view, to "take a position" rather than assimilating, the émigré felt compelled to confront the values of the suppressed Prague Spring with the local culture of the host country. This is how Ivan Pfaff formulates the task of the intellectual who chose emigration, and for whom the notion of integrating represented a form of "self-mortification" that merely echoed the fate that awaited them in their own country (Pfaff 147). Invariably, the first few years in exile posed a tremendous burden for émigrés, often with devastating consequences:

> Living in a new country requires a lot of energy and time. You have to learn everything all over again—not only to speak and write in a foreign language, but also to orient yourself in a foreign environment, to learn new patterns of behaviour. You have to study again, find a job, integrate into a community that is rather distrustful at first. The first seven years are said to be the hardest for an émigré. I can confirm that. (Hyblerová 204)

Moreover, it was often the women who—for various reasons—took on the role of breadwinner and caretaker in the new country. They were the first to let go, to stop clinging to the past and move on. This is the case, for example, with the émigré Daňa Horáková.

3. Daňa Horáková's memoir *O Pavlovi*

More than a memoir, Horáková's extensive book *O Pavlovi* (About Pavel) approaches the genre of the autobiographical novel. Published by Torst in 2020, *O Pavlovi* won the *Lidové noviny* readers' Book of the Year award the same year. The author herself claims that she struck on the idea for the book while writing what should have been the postscript for an edition of Pavel Juráček's "German" diaries,[1] and finding the piece had grown beyond the appropriate scope and

1 Pavel Juráček made his name as a film director during the Czechoslovak New Wave cinema of the 1960s, with such titles as *Postava k podpírání* (A Character in Need of

form. With the aim of offering her (revisionist) view of years of coexistence (and that of overcoming the helplessness expressed by her life partner), it was apparently not possible to encapsulate her thoughts in a brief postscript. Horáková's book is a testament to the way the human psyche is compelled to tell its story, to shape the image of a lifetime and draw meaning from it: "My intent here is to name that which exists outside of words" (Horáková 13).

The storyline follows the protagonist's acquaintance with Juráček, from their first meeting to the screenwriter's death, with (brief) detours to the past and future to provide context. It is in these digressions and marginal notes, however, that the reader is introduced to the author-narrator. It is here (and in the accompanying photos) that we learn about her prestigious scholarship to the United States, her work for the samizdat series *Expedice*, her friends and lovers, and her career in Germany. From the first of these episodes, the life of the narrator seems to draw directly from that of Horáková herself: she is successful, confident, and free. This opens up a certain space between them, and a tension between the reader's freedom to identify or not to identify with the suffering heroine—and ultimately not to take responsibility for her fate. It is a kind of "compassion from a distance," as the reader remains aware that the heroine is still present somewhere in her liberated form.

The style of the narrative—its ironic distance and subversive undertone, which turns at times to sarcasm (most often aimed at the narrator herself)—plays an important role in the text, which is also characterised by the narrator's propensity for self-reflection and earnest effort to name reality in its subtlest nuances, even at the risk of inviting condemnation from the reader.

The storyline is rather simple: Horáková meets Pavel Juráček in September 1974, marries him in February 1979, and a month later leaves with him for Munich. There he takes full responsibility for the survival (and functioning) of the small family, caring for finances and striving to find the *modus vivendi* of their new life—and his place in it. Slowly, in fits and starts, their relationship falls apart, and Juráček eventually returns to Czechoslovakia while the heroine remains behind in Germany. At this point, the story splits into two distinct narratives, with greater emphasis on the one following Juráček's fateful decline. Eventually, however, the intermittent notes on the protagonist's own existence build into a unified narrative flow, and Horáková's own story once more takes centre stage as she finds success writing for the culture section of the German newspaper *Bild*, pursues a relationship with a younger man, and is appointed

Support; 1963, with co-director Jan Schmidt), *Každý mladý muž* (All Young Men; 1965) and *Případ pro začínajícího kata* (The Case of the Novice Executioner; 1969).

Minister of Culture in Hamburg. In Horáková's own words from the conclusion of the book: "I was never 'Mrs. Juráčková,' yet I did not become a truly original being until I stopped defining myself through him" (470).

4. Trauma of the woman in dissent and in exile

Trauma is by nature constructive, arising secondarily, in both the individual and collective context. According to Jeffrey C. Alexander, it is not the event itself that is traumatic, but its interpretation, that is, the establishment of a narrative (Alexander 97–122). Alexander also brings the process of trauma formation closer to speech act theory when he identifies an initial speaker whose goal is to "transfer the claim of trauma to the public," that is, to convince members of the collective that they have been traumatized by an extraordinary event (Alexander 108). Cathy Caruth also points out the constructive nature of trauma in her explanation of the way post-traumatic stress disorder and recurrent traumatic dreams work (Caruth 124), and not all painful and adverse events cause trauma. The trauma experienced by women in dissent and in exile, like all trauma, is a cultural issue. Here too, however, there are a range of possible outcomes, and a situation that is traumatising for one woman may not be for another.

There are nonetheless certain statements regarding the hardship of life in exile and dissent that indicate that trauma has taken place. Yet to determine the extent of the problem, we need to learn more, and since the essential character of trauma is silence, since trauma itself exists "beyond words," we see that the researcher's path to understanding runs parallel to the victim's process of healing. The first step on this path is the recognition of trauma and its "presentness," which is to say, the designation of trauma as such. In order to talk about trauma as it is experienced by women living under particular conditions (dissent/emigration), and how these traumas translate into the present, it is necessary to admit that such traumas exist. It must be **defined** as trauma on an individual level, incorporated into a common narrative, into a culture of remembering dissent and emigration. A media transformation of trauma must be carried out, changing it from something that exists only in the memory into an act of remembrance, which in turn will strengthen the collective identity.

Alexander Kratochvil describes this process as a post-traumatic narrative, while drawing attention to the need for a political and socio-cultural field for public debate (Kratochvil 31). Here Kratochvil cites Werner Bohleber and his assertions about the necessity of a supportive environment:

> The individual cannot successfully incorporate the traumatic experience into a broader narrative as a purely individual act. In addition

> to an empathic listener, this also requires a social discourse about the historical truth of the traumatic event, and about its denial and rejection. The victims are also witnesses to a special historical reality. (qtd. in Kratochvil 20)

In a narrative formulated by men, moreover, it is problematic that (latent) distrust of gender research still permeates Czech society.

Life in dissent and in exile placed different demands on women than it did on men. In the published statements of women dissidents, trauma is associated with moments of risk involving the safety of the family (including the risk to children and their uncertain future), living under watch of the StB, the need for self-employment (obstacles in professional life), and relationship with the world (denouncement by StB collaborators in circles of close friends) and relativisation of values. Women were affected by humiliations connected with gender: they were forced to strip, for example, and experienced other violations of bodily integrity. Those who were not direct victims of such abuses knew others who were.

The experience of isolation—from friends, from family, and even from oneself—is a cause of trauma that seems to have been universal among émigrés. They lived without (immediate) prospect of returning, without hope of changing the social situation or seeing justice. The journey abroad was an absolute turning point in the lives of entire families (cf. Kabela 49; Diamant). Breaking ties with the place of origin represented a major burden on the psyche in and of itself, leading to a number of related problems, including feelings of guilt, insecurity, disorientation, fear, and anxiety (for some, existential). For some, these symptoms would manifest in recurring nightmares about being trapped back in the homeland, the so-called "émigré's dream." The lack of support complicated the practical operation of the household, as well as domestic partnerships, which took on the function of all other relationships. The story of the past is difficult to remember without a community that reflects it, and this in turn means that one's identity is no longer supported by that story. This is compounded by the lack of contact with others, which further undermined the émigré's self-confidence. Émigrés also lacked support in the process of healing old wounds from persecution and interrogation; far away from the dissident community, the full burden of life in dissent now fell solely on their shoulders.

The authors reflect on this isolation, the lack of support and the severing of ties in exile, bringing (literary) testimony to the consequences of this intervention in the lives of individuals and dissent as a whole—thus establishing a narrative of trauma:

> We speak of the existence of cultural trauma at the moment when members of a collectivity realize that they have been exposed to a shocking event that has left indelible marks on their group consciousness, forever scarred their memory, and fundamentally and irreversibly altered their future identity. (Alexander 97)

5. Literary representations of trauma in the book *O Pavlovi*

The narrator defines herself in pre-emigration times as satisfied and successful: "At the end of 1974, I had a job, I had a 'salon,' I had friends, I had something to think about (patristics, Hypatia), and a few months later, Vašek Havel and I launched our samizdat series *Expedice*" (Horáková 33). Moreover, she has her own apartment on Pařížská Street and the unconditional support of her parents. In the process of emigrating, her life situation changes from the ground up. Indeed, because of Horáková's dissident activities, the regime found it more desirable that she leave Czechoslovakia (cf. Horáková 37), a fact that connects Horáková's personal story with the collective story of Czechoslovak dissent. Like many other émigrés, she was fundamentally affected by the loss of the security and context of dissent in her native country, and it took a long time before she could face the life in exile.

Horáková sets the beginning of her story (and first step into life as an émigré) at the scene of her wedding, which she also describes as her first traumatic experience. In various places throughout the book, Horáková depicts wedding ceremonies as something fundamental, as a focal point of life. It is of particular importance to her mother (Horáková 380), whose wish that the protagonist have a traditional wedding—a **storybook** wedding—is acutely disappointed by the unceremonious, matter-of-fact wedding staged for Horáková by the communist regime (Horáková 41).

This begs the question: given that the wedding was no longer an act of the heroine's will (arranged as it was by the State Security, who persuaded Juráček to marry Horáková with the aim of sending both into exile), at what point did she lose control over her own life? Was it in relation to her husband that she gave it away—or to the regime, the moment she became involved in the dissent as the principal collaborator on *Expedice*? She herself describes the wedding as something unwanted, something that took place without her consent (Horáková 37).

One of the recurring themes in *O Pavlovi* is the poverty in which the protagonist and her new husband find themselves when they first move to Munich, especially in connection to the fact that it is she who swallows her pride and proactively (though tacitly and as a matter of course) struggles to make ends meet by collecting returnable bottles, washing the stairs, rummaging through

the neighbours' discarded clothes and furniture, etc. It is she who copes with the trauma of poverty, with the "fear for survival" (Horáková 76), rising to the occasion with an almost endless aptitude for seeking out and finding the things they so desperately need (Horáková 78).

This awareness of the material inequality of life in exile—and one's gratifying ability to cope with it (on one's own)—can also be found in Markéta Brousková's reflections and anecdotes on life as an émigré, *Nežádoucí svědek* (The Unwanted Witness; Brousková 68). If, on the one hand, Brousková's narrator is styled in a completely different manner than the heroine of *O Pavlovi*, her remarks on the well-being of her German neighbours resonate with the same sarcasm (Brousková 39).

Just as in Brousková's *Nežádoucí svědek*, the narrator of *O Pavlovi* is wounded by the lack of acknowledgment on the part of her male counterpart, a situation that exacerbates her frustration at being everywhere so undervalued. Horáková herself mentions that one of her motivations for writing *O Pavlovi* was her wish to "balance" the impact of Juráček's (highly valued) memoirs among his readership; her narrator likewise is strongly compelled by the desire to "settle accounts." to the point where it becomes the (often unacknowledged) motive for all her actions. She is driven by her hunger for recognition, which grows in equal measure to the propensity of her "tyrant" to dismiss or overlook her contributions. (Hence her frequent commentaries on Juráček's undeserved accolades, her indictment of his admirers for having wrongly condemned her to the role of his caregiver, and her disclosure of the personal injustices directly experienced at Juráček's hand.)

Juxtaposed to this aspect of her account, Horáková also highlights Juráček's alcoholism, and—paradoxically—exalts his work, not as a filmmaker (as others saw him) but as a genius counterpart, almost a twin of Franz Kafka.

Lacking any kind of support, the narrator is not only unable to leave her hurtful relationship with Juráček, but is also forced to integrate her suffering into an understandable, viable framework of meaning (this echoes the typical situation of domestic violence). This accounts for her insistence on Juráček's true genius, her unique ability to appreciate it—to see in Juráček, as no other can, another Kafka. It is for this reason that she finds meaning in his suffering ("fighting for his salvation"), that she devotes herself exclusively to him, justifying this exclusivity on the model of Milena Jesenská's love for Kafka (which he ultimately rebuffed): "Pavel too only ever wanted Dora [Diamant], even if he was ashamed to admit it" (Horáková 213). The aspect of Horáková's coexistence with Juráček that was most painful to her is thus represented by the unborn child. It is a subject that cannot be mentioned, that can only be approached obliquely, yet it is a subject that is ever present, by virtue of its very absence (Horáková 33; 167).

Horáková's narrator thus escapes into the strength of her intellect to protect herself from a hurtful relationship and lack of emotional attachment. After Juráček's departure, she begins her life anew. Yet even in the case of a loving relationship, she points out, she would find it difficult to accede to marriage, or even to the fact that her lived present happiness is love, as she is not able to let go of her suffering with Juráček (466). She is thus compelled, on the last page of the book, to legitimise his behaviour and provide an explanation for it: "Sometimes I ask myself if he hurt me in order to protect me" (469).

It never occurs to her in this context that she could have taken measures to influence her husband's actions. Instead she blames the external context (gender roles within dissent), suspecting that they shaped her relationship with Juráček for the worse, even while she only finds evidence at the level of their personal relationship (a certain "favouritism" towards Juráček).

Sooner or later, under other circumstances, the narrator would have eventually sought help, either from experts or at least close friends. She might have found support in her life as a dissident in a network of contacts, of the kind frequently mentioned by dissidents in interviews. The specific conditions of emigration and isolation, together—crucially—with a set of attitudes and behaviours particular to the social framework imposed by totalitarianism (a tendency to rely only on oneself, to avoid the risk of revealing one's weaknesses), all this contributed to the deepening the gap in which she found herself as female victim of abuse. She set about coping with it in accordance with her personality and the options available to her: consecrating her pain as the art of living, and taking an ironic perspective on the fact of her victimisation, since it was the only way to go on as an intellectual.

The overwhelming personal trauma caused by a destructive relationship is inseparable here from the time and place in which it was experienced. In addition to her own tendencies, the protagonist of *O Pavlovi* is trapped in a situation she only partially masters, in which every decision has political and moral consequences, and is therefore crucial.

6. Shared trauma

Accounts of StB interrogation techniques in the book provide insight into the "veil of silence" associated with untreated trauma. Finding it excessively difficult to talk about those techniques, the narrator invokes them instead (referring specifically to the humiliation of forced nudity) by quoting a letter from Věra Jirousová: "I was very worried about you at that time, especially after your interrogation in Ruzyně, when they used nudity as a proven method to humiliate you" (Horáková 271).

Loss of dignity at a stranger's hand, together with her unfulfilled dream of a loving and respectful family—a dream she has trouble even formulating—deeply undermines the narrator's self-confidence. And while politics has an indirect (albeit significant) effect on private lives, it is used precisely with the aim of violating human dignity and undermining confidence, and one the primary goals of all totalitarian regimes; the violence and forced nudity that is used against women dissidents as a coercive function of interrogation is a universal cause of trauma in cases involving female victims.

A closer reading of Horáková's exceedingly personal story thus reveals a number of traumatic themes that characterise the universal dissident and émigré experience, including (state) intervention in key life events, exposure to the violent methods of State Security, and violation of bodily integrity, compounded by the effective isolation and marginalisation of the dissident/émigré in the face of extreme adversity. These themes may be partly subsumed by the thrall of a love story, or rather by its retelling on the part of a partner or the tabloids. This too is part of the process of coping with trauma, of naming the unnameable. The book as a whole, the very existence of a statement of this kind, is invaluable testimony to the injustice, systemic oppression, and social-structural inequalities that are faced by dissidents and émigrés, and that account for the differences between the male and female experience vis-à-vis these hardships. In order to expand and elaborate the narrative of dissent to accommodate these (sometimes subtle) differences, it is necessary to expand and elaborate a space where similar statements are heard and acknowledged.

7. In conclusion

To cope with trauma, it is first of all necessary to name what has happened, to give due weight to the event, to present it and to give a voice to its victims. Without these steps, recovery is not possible. Forty years under a totalitarian regime have marked Czech society in every way. After more than thirty years of democratic development, we still cannot say that the past has been properly dealt with, that all its latent consequences have been identified and held up to examination. Various topics and events that have played a vital role in shaping Czech Republic today remain trivialised or relativised in the public discourse. Years of legal action against those involved in StB crackdowns under *Akce Asanace* have ended in suspended sentences.

The role of women dissidents and émigrés has not yet been given its proper place in the Czech culture of remembrance. This makes it all the more difficult to work through the lasting traumas they face. Given that what is displaced and unprocessed persists outside of—and yet is integral to—the culture of

remembrance, given therefore that these traumas have a profound influence on the present, shaping Czech society through transgenerational transmission, it would be desirable finally to do so.

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| Abstract

LUCIE ANTOŠÍKOVÁ

Neglected Trauma: The Lives of Women Dissidents and Émigrés in Daňa Horáková's Memoirs

At the end of the 1970s, the Czechoslovak State Security, under the banner of the so-called *ASANACE* ('sanitation') campaign, used brutal means to deport leading dissidents abroad and break up the domestic opposition. As a result, many cultural figures emigrated, among them Daňa Horáková, a philosopher and collaborator of

Václav Havel. Drawing on her memoir and the testimonies of other Czech female dissidents (and émigrés), the text reflects on the difficulties that life in dissent brought to women, as well as the pitfalls in which women were most at risk of becoming traumatized. Among the most risky moments was emigration and the uprootedness associated with it. Against the backdrop of research on emigration and trauma in literature, the present study offers an interpretation of *O Pavlovi* as a testament to the destructive impact of power.

Keywords: dissent, émigré, trauma, exile literature, the lives of women as dissidents and émigrés

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Artykuły recenzyjne

| Review Articles

Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.15

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Różewicz (zre)konstruowany?

Magdalena Grochowska, *Różewicz. Rekonstrukcja. 1*, Dowody na Istnienie, Warszawa 2021

To pierwsza tak obszerna książka o Różewiczu napisana nie przez literaturoznawcę, lecz przez reporterkę. Warto sobie ten fakt na początku uświadomić, by nie oczekiwać od autorki wnikliwych i nowatorskich odczytań twórczości autora *Niepokoju*, ale by podążać podczas lektury biograficznym traktem wyznaczonym kilkoma ważnymi etapami życia pisarza.

Magdalena Grochowska, autorka monumentalnej biografii Jerzego Giedroycia, reportażystka związana przez lata z „Gazetą Wyborczą", w roku stulecia urodzin Tadeusza Różewicza opublikowała książkę *Różewicz. Rekonstrukcja. 1*. Choć bardzo obszerna – z przypisami i bibliografią liczy ponad 500 stron – pozycja ta stanowi jedynie pierwszą cześć szeroko, jak widać, zakrojonego projektu biograficznego o autorze *Kartoteki* (Grochowska 2021). Już na tym etapie pojawia się kłopot z podtytułem – słowo „rekonstrukcja" wydaje się zbędną w swej oczywistości tautologią, wszak każda biografia jest z istoty rzeczy rekonstrukcją kolei życia bohatera. I to rekonstrukcją zawsze niekompletną i wybiórczą. Jak słusznie zauważył Michał Paweł Markowski:

> Jako narracja na temat życia, biografia jest sztuką wykluczeń, wyborów i pominięć. Oczywiste jest, że nie da się niczyjego życia opisać w całości: trzeba wybierać. Ale wedle jakich kryteriów? Nie ma przecież jednego wzorca biografii, nie ma obowiązującego zestawu kryteriów,

> nie wszystkich ciekawi to samo. Co rozstrzyga? Naiwni obserwatorzy życia literackiego powiadają: obiektywność i bezstronność. Ale przecież nawet w najsumienniej poskładanym rejestrze zdarzeń, w najuważniej skompilowanej kronice faktów czyjegoś życia nie da się zobaczyć tego życia ze wszystkich perspektyw (Markowski 2010).

A może podtytuł ma w tym przypadku sugerować oryginalność ujęcia, szczególnie pieczołowitą faktograficzną rzetelność czy drobiazgową wnikliwość dziennikarskiego śledztwa? Lub – jeszcze inaczej – zwracać uwagę na rekonstrukcję (odtwarzanie), a nie konstrukcję (tworzenie), a więc na „prawdę", nie fikcję? Jeszcze raz warto przywołać słowa Markowskiego:

> Dyskusja nad biografią dotyka fundamentalnej kwestii, którą co rusz trzeba przypominać. Chodzi o relację między faktami a fikcją. Powiada się zwykle tak: fakty są, jakie są, istnieją obiektywnie, niezależnie od naszych wyobrażeń o nich, natomiast fikcja nakłada się na nie, wykrzywiając je niemożliwie, przeinaczając, tłamsząc. Takie stanowisko odsuwa fakty i fikcje na bezpieczną odległość i daje zdecydowane pierwszeństwo tym pierwszym. Wszystko, co nie należy do sfery „nagich faktów", jest zmyśleniem, które trzeba temperować. By oczyścić zepsute przez ludzkie fabulacje powietrze, trzeba powrócić do „samych faktów" (Markowski 2010).

Czy jednak oddzielenie tego, co zmyślone od tego, co faktyczne jest w ogóle możliwe? Czy da się przedstawić „nagi fakt", separując go od oddziałujących na niego rozmaitych kontekstów i okoliczności towarzyszących? Czy słowo „rekonstrukcja" w tytule to wyraz autorskiego zobowiązania do podążania za tym, co obiektywne, i odrzucenia wszystkiego, co niebezpiecznie przechyla się w stronę fabulacji? Czy to możliwy do realizacji postulat, czy raczej idealistyczne wskazanie horyzontu, ku któremu trzeba zmierzać, lecz który nigdy nie zostanie osiągnięty?

W pierwszym tomie książki Grochowska śledzi losy swojego bohatera do roku 1957, kiedy umiera matka Różewicza (po lekturze tego tomu nie wiemy, z jakich przyczyn wynika ta cezura), ale autorka traktuje porządek chronologiczny swej opowieści swobodnie. Poszczególne wątki prowadzone są poza tę datę i zarysowane w sposób całościowy, np. opis małżeństwa Różewiczów (rozdział 6) od początku znajomości aż do śmierci poety. W książce znalazł się też, ze względu na wojenno-partyzancką tematykę, obszerny osobny rozdział poświęcony dramatowi *Do piachu*, ukończonemu i wystawionemu w latach siedemdziesiątych,

a połączony ściśle z AK-owską przeszłością poety. Niezależnie zresztą od kwestii, którą się autorka w danym fragmencie zajmuje, z achronologiczną swobodą naświetla ją przy użyciu opinii, wyznań, cytatów z Różewicza z różnych okresów jego długiego życia, uzupełniając to informacjami czerpanymi z relacji jego bliskich, które zebrała w okresie pisania książki, czyli w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku. W efekcie trudno się niekiedy zorientować w tej meandrującej w czasie opowieści i określić, jakie jest temporalne odniesienie poszczególnych uwag. Dotyczy to zwłaszcza rozdziału ostatniego, opisującego niemal 20-letni okres gliwicki w życiu Różewiczów. Przywoływany w nim Krzysztof Siwczyk stwierdza, że pisarz, mieszkając w Gliwicach, cierpiał na brak „popularności" w Polsce, czyli, jak to zapewne trzeba odczytywać, uznania w kręgach literackich. Stwierdzenie to nabiera innego sensu w zależności od tego, czy odnieść je do pierwszej czy do drugiej połowy lat pięćdziesiątych, czy może jednak do lat sześćdziesiątych. Z drugiej strony achronologiczna swoboda, z jaką autorka biografii Różewicza buduje swoją narrację, nadaje jej bohaterowi charakter bytu cokolwiek, by tak rzec, „monolitycznego" i „statycznego". Wrażeniem, jakie czytelnik może wynieść z lektury, jest przekonanie, że bohater Grochowskiej, mimo długiego życia i trwającej dziesięciolecia aktywności literackiej, właściwie nie podlega istotnym zmianom, nie przeżywa żadnych radykalnych przełomów czy znaczących ewolucji, nie zmienia się jego interpretacja czy ocena wydarzeń z przeszłości. Oczywiście, nie ma nic złego w porzucaniu, być może nazbyt sztywnego zdaniem autorki, porządku chronologicznego, jednak traktowanie pochodzących z różnych czasów opinii, poglądów, zestawianie ich na tych samych prawach i zasadach, rodzi wrażenie trwania Różewicza w czasie ze stałością typową raczej dla posągu. Więcej jeszcze – niesie z sobą niebezpieczeństwo zniwelowania i przesłonięcia dynamicznej, a nierzadko i dramatycznej, zmienności poglądów, postaw i wyborów poety. Grochowska pisze wprost, że Różewicz jest dla niej fenomenem trudno uchwytnym i wyrażeniu tej trudności służy, niewątpliwie najtrudniejszy też dla czytelnika, naznaczony patosem i egzaltacją, rozdział pierwszy jej książki („Śledzę jego oczy, ale wciąż nie udaje mi się zajrzeć do środka […]", s. 28; o tymże: „Nie zatrzymam migotania morza", s. 46). Jednocześnie próbuje jednak, przybliżając się do swego bohatera z różnych stron i w różnych czasach, zamazując różnice między nimi, stawiać sobie zadanie, by za wszelką cenę nakreślić jego spójny i całościowy portret, pochwycić specyfikę twórcy, ale i twórczości i wreszcie odpowiedzieć na pytanie: jaka jest „prawda" o Różewiczu? Brzmi to wszystko dziś nie tylko utopijnie (czy może istnieć jedna prawda o jakiejkolwiek osobie? – spytam retorycznie), ale także anachronicznie. Ostatecznie sposobem na poradzenie sobie z tym zadaniem ma być podążanie za faktami, bo tak chyba trzeba rozumieć

nieco metaforyczną deklarację: „Pozostaje mi trzymać się materii, dotykalnej i niepodważalnej" (s. 44). Lecz – czy taka materia całkowicie niepodważalna w ogóle istnieje?

Rozdział pierwszy pozwala już na wstępie określić stosunek Grochowskiej do Różewicza. Jak sama trafnie dookreśliła swoją postawę w jednym z wywiadów udzielonych po ukazaniu się książki, przy pisaniu naturalna była dla niej perspektywa „małego obserwatora" patrzącego na „gigantów"[1]. Ważne jest tu nie tylko fundamentalne przekonanie o randze dorobku pisarskiego bohatera książki, ale – bardziej jeszcze – szczególna atencja, towarzysząca obcowaniu z wielkością, która wyklucza stawianie trudnych pytań (*nb.* tylko raz Grochowska zdobywa się na krytyczny dystans, odnotowując coraz odważniej ujawniany przez Różewicza w ostatnich latach życia mizoginizm, s. 167). Dokonywana przez autorkę „rekonstrukcja" w dużej mierze staje się bezkrytycznym przywołaniem i powtórzeniem utrwalonych powszechnie sposobów przedstawiania postaci pisarza. Przyjmuje niejako *a priori* portret Różewicza z jednej strony jako indywidualisty i nonkonformisty, z drugiej strony, i w naturalnej niejako konsekwencji – autora niedocenianego i krytykowanego, Grochowska sama sobie ogranicza pole działania nazbyt jednorodną wizją swojego bohatera. Oczywiście, Różewicz ją bez wątpienia interesuje, ale w ściśle określonych granicach, których istnienia sama sobie chyba nie uświadamia, a na pewno nie pisze o nich wprost. Jak twierdzi Janet Malcolm, słynna amerykańska biografistka, na którą powołuje się Artur Domosławski w swej książce o Baumanie:

> Nie można pisać w stanie „niezainteresowania". Można pozować na neutralność, obojętność, dystansować się na siłę od przedmiotu swojego zainteresowania, ale wszystko to będą wybiegi retoryczne. Gdyby były naprawdę autentyczne, gdyby pisarz rzeczywiście nie był emocjonalnie zaangażowany w rozwój wypadków, nie warto by mu było się w nie mieszać (cyt. za: Domosławski 2021: 19–20).

Grochowska jest z pewnością autentycznie zaangażowana, ale raczej w umacnianie i retuszowanie funkcjonującego powszechnie obrazu autora *Kartoteki* niźli w jego znaczące zmiany i modyfikacje. Jest w swej postawie adoratorem i wyznawcą, nie obrazoburcą i krytykiem. I dlatego też pewne kwestie zostają przez nią wydobyte i podkreślone (np. stosunek do matki i do żony), inne zaś przesłonięte i ukryte (np. akces do socrealizmu).

1 Zob. https://tinyurl.com/4j5rsha4; stwierdzenie pada w kontekście spotkania Różewicza z Miłoszem w Paryżu w 1957 roku, stąd liczba mnoga „gigantów".

W książce Grochowskiej, choć opowiada o człowieku, który całe życie poświęcił i podporządkował twórczości literackiej, proces twórczy obecny jest w specyficzny sposób. Nie oczekuję, oczywiście, od biografistki Różewicza jakichś nowych i oryginalnych interpretacji poszczególnych utworów, ale pokazania związku biografii z twórczością, a ściślej: opisania decyzji przesądzających o jej kierunku i charakterze, decyzji będących przecież dla Różewicza zasadniczymi wydarzeniami w jego życiu. Autorka co prawda często przywołuje utwory poety, ale obdarza je zasadniczo jedną funkcją – stanowią one swoiste dopełnienie życia, komentują bądź puentują egzystencję autora *Niepokoju*. Przytoczę jeden reprezentatywny przykład. Grochowska tak pisze o dniu narodzin Tadeusza:

> Była niedziela 9 października. Na placu strażackim kończyła się zabawa połączona z loterią fantową. Zbierano pieniądze na sztandar piechoty. Stefania wracała z wieczornych modlitw różańcowych w kościele, gdy poczuła bóle. Dwie godziny później Tadeusz był na świecie. […]
>
> Dali mu imię Kościuszki, którego portret wisiał w pokoju. Naczelnik w krakusce z piórkiem, z dłonią na szabli, na buraczkowym tle. […]
>
> Miasto przygotowywało się w podnieceniu do wizyty Józefa Piłsudskiego, Naczelnika Państwa, zapowiadanej na następny poniedziałek.
>
> Ponad pół wieku później poeta napisał:
>
> przez narodziny
> okrwawiony ślepy
> krzycząc
> wpadłeś
> w tańczący krąg życia
>
> W kredowe koło, pułapkę istnienia, z której jedynym wyjściem
> jest śmierć (s. 103–104).

Twórczość jest zatem traktowana przez Grochowską, w sposób nazbyt prosty i dosłowny, autobiograficznie i achronologicznie. I sam Różewicz, i znawcy jego dzieł nieraz zwracali uwagę na istotną rolę planu biograficznego w kolejnych utworach poety. Nie znaczy to jednak, że można na tych samych zasadach przywoływać zdarzenia życiowe i fragmenty tekstów poetyckich, prozatorskich, dramatycznych. Różewicz (jak każdy twórca) nie jest po prostu podmiotem lirycznym swoich wierszy ani bohaterem przywoływanych opowiadań czy utworów scenicznych. Jakieś relacje między nimi zachodzą

(w powyżej przytoczonym fragmencie co najmniej nieoczywiste), ale trzeba narzędzi bardziej precyzyjnych i spojrzenia bardziej zniuansowanego, aby te relacje przekonująco i wnikliwie opisać. W przeciwnym razie dochodzi nie tylko do nazbyt łatwych utożsamień, ale także do istotnych nadużyć. Można nawet odnieść wrażenie, że bardziej chodzi o retoryczno-emocjonalną aurę wiersza, dodającą dramatyzmu prowadzonej narracji, niż o jego związki z biografią poety.

Znamienny pod tym względem jest także sposób, w jaki Grochowska traktuje autobiograficzny tekst *Drewniany karabin*, w którym Różewicz wraca pod koniec życia do czasów okupacji, gdy przechodził konspiracyjne szkolenie wojskowe i gdy pracował w radomszczańskim urzędzie mieszkaniowym – Wohnungsamcie. Dla recepcji *Drewnianego karabinu* najważniejszy wątek to decyzja bohatera, aby pracę w urzędzie porzucić i uciec z miasta, gdy „ruda", Polka z centrali telefonicznej urzędu, zaczyna rozpowiadać o niepewnym pochodzeniu jego matki czy babki. Postaci i sytuacje związane z pracą w Wohnungsamcie już się zresztą w utworach Różewicza pojawiły wcześniej, w opowiadaniu *Wyrok* (1946), co Grochowska odnotowuje, nie zauważa jednak, że w *Wyroku* brak motywu zagrożenia związanego z pochodzeniem.

Drewniany karabin to późny utwór Różewicza, ukazał się w 2002 roku. I jednocześnie to tekst szczególny, problematyczny i kłopotliwy – chętnie czytany jako autobiograficzna relacja o bezpośrednim zagrożeniu rodziny pisarza Zagładą. Grochowska podąża tutaj tropem różewiczologów: *Drewniany karabin* stanowi dla niej jeden z najważniejszych tekstów opisujących sytuację bohatera jej książki w czasie okupacji, jest też jak najdalsza od próby dystansowania się od tego tekstu jako prostej relacji autobiograficznej. A przecież jego chronologiczne realia nie dają się uzgodnić z faktografią biograficzną, którą podaje w swej monografii *Walka o oddech* Tadeusz Drewnowski (autorytatywny w tym względzie również dla Grochowskiej, bo pisał swoją monografię pozostając w bezpośrednim kontakcie z Różewiczem i mając dostęp do jego prywatnego archiwum), nie dają się też uzgodnić z dokumentami wydobytymi z archiwów (zob. s. 198). Grochowska przytacza także opowieść bratanka Tadeusza, wedle której to Stanisław (a nie jak w opowiadaniu – Tadeusz), najmłodszy z braci Różewiczów, przyniósł z urzędu niejasne ostrzeżenie przed zagrożeniem – co przypomina sytuację z *Drewnianego karabinu*. Czyżby Tadeusz „pożyczył" dla swojego „wspomnienia" zdarzenie z biografii brata? Wypada żałować, że autorce zabrakło w tym momencie reporterskiej dociekliwości, mogłaby przecież próbować zapytać bliskich pisarza o ich wiedzę na temat sytuacji opisanej w utworze.

Największymi atutami książki są te fragmenty, w których Grochowska wykorzystuje swoje umiejętności i doświadczenie. Jej świetny reporterski warsztat

przynosi ciekawe efekty i cenne ustalenia. Dzieje się tak zwłaszcza w przypadku rekonstrukcji dziejów rodziców Tadeusza; tu oczywiście szczególnie intrygująca i zagadkowa jest historia jego matki, która jako dwunastoletnia dziewczynka uciekła od żydowskich rodziców i znalazła dom na plebanii katolickiego księdza. Podobnie rzecz wygląda we fragmencie poświęconym AK-owskiej przeszłości i dezercji Różewicza z partyzantki. Rekonstruowanie „materii" faktów dokonuje się tu nie tylko na podstawie dokumentów, lapidarnych i nielicznych, ale także rozmów ze świadkami czy wrażeń z „wizji lokalnej". Zdobyte w ten sposób informacje i obserwacje są zestawiane ze sobą i na tym zestawieniu właściwie trzeba poprzestać, bo faktografia jest niezaprzeczalnie fragmentaryczna i hipotetyczna. Ale efekty tych zabiegów rekonstrukcyjnych są imponujące.

Tym bardziej można żałować, że takiej reporterskiej dociekliwości zabrakło w przypadku innego tajemniczego motywu w biografii Różewicza – postaci młodej Żydówki, Róży z Radomska, która pojawia się w opowiadaniu *Tablica* (1947, przedruk w tomie *Opadły liście z drzew*, 1955), w poemacie *Równina* (1954), a po latach powraca w *Nożyku profesora* (2001, tu jako pasażerka fantasmagorycznego pociągu, jadąca z Teresina do Treblinki). W różewiczologii można spotkać się z traktowaniem tej postaci jako retorycznej figury ofiar Zagłady czy wręcz autobiograficznej maski[2]. Jednak są przesłanki, aby podejrzewać, że chodzi tu o motyw autobiograficzny, o *Pierwszą miłość* – taki tytuł nosił pierwodruk opowiadania z 1947 roku, opatrzony podtytułem „fragment" („Światło" 1947, nr 2); jednoznacznie erotyczną więź bohatera z Różą sugeruje natomiast wspomnienie o niej w *Równinie*. Szczególnie interesujący jest w tym kontekście, pojawiający się we wczesnych wierszach Różewicza, motyw nienazwanej z imienia zmarłej ukochanej (widoczny zwłaszcza, jeżeli pozostawić na boku słynną *Różę* z *Niepokoju*, w której zmarłą opłakuje ojciec), powracający w trzech utworach z *Czerwonej rękawiczki*: *Gniazdo opuszczone*, *Krzywda*, *Ze złotej korony* – w których pojawia się rozpacz po stracie „pozbawiająca zmysłów" (*Ze złotej korony*). O swej „pierwszej miłości", datowanej na rok 1940/1941, Różewicz wspomina też, enigmatycznie, w jednym z późnych wywiadów z 2005 roku (*Wbrew sobie*, 2011). Szkoda, że autorka *Różewicza* tego tropu nie podejmuje, bo być może jej odkrycie byłoby, tak jak przypadku matki poety, niezmiernie cenne.

Temat Zagłady, również jako kwestia potencjalnego zagrożenia dla Różewicza i jego najbliższych, jest w jej książce wyraźnie obecny. Co więcej, motyw

2 „Młoda kobieta o imieniu Róża, bohaterka *Tablicy* i wielu innych utworów Różewicza, reprezentowała i konkretyzowała w jego pisarstwie masowe, anonimowe lub półanonimowe, żydowskie ofiary Zagłady, a także pseudonimizowała nieoczywisty żydowski składnik jego identyfikacji jednostkowej i rodzinnej" (Browarny 2021: XXIII).

stygmatyzacji czy niebezpieczeństwa związanego z żydowskim pochodzeniem Stefanii Różewicz został w książce Grochowskiej mocno zaakcentowany, nie tylko w odniesieniu do czasów okupacji – jedno z jej najbardziej poruszających odkryć archiwalnych dotyczy kart, na których w Muzeum Literatury gromadzono wycinki o wielkich pisarzach: w 1968 roku ktoś przy nazwisku Różewicz dorysował gwiazdę Dawida (s. 209).

Zadanie jednoznacznego uporządkowania faktów nie zawsze jest proste, czasami staje się niewykonalne, ale czytając książkę Grochowskiej odnosi się wrażenie, że autorka zbyt łatwo rezygnuje z prób „rekonstrukcyjnego" zapanowania nad nimi oraz nad wielością świadectw i relacji. Jeżeli w trakcie lektury *Różewicza* poczucie chaosu się nie narzuca, to dzieje się tak wyłącznie dzięki sprawności pióra autorki, która oprowadza nas np. po współczesnym Osjakowie, Radomsku czy Gliwicach i epicko opisuje to, co widzi, poruszając się po tych przestrzeniach dzisiaj, po kilkudziesięciu latach od czasu, gdy przebywał tam jej bohater. O przeszłości pisze, stosując czas teraźniejszy, ożywia to, co minione, i zanurza w wiecznym teraz, w którym mieszczą się także przyszłe wydarzenia:

> Drewniany dom [w Radomsku – K.P.], który wynajmują Różewiczowie, patrzy na błotnistą ulicę, pola, pastwiska, stodoły, glinianki, ogródki i akacjowy gaj. To pogranicze miasta i wsi. Żyje się tu życiem wiejsko-miejskim, między lasem, dokąd chodzi się na grzyby, a gwarną ulicą Krakowską i rynkiem – placem 3 Maja – gdzie bije serce miasteczka. Krakowska w połowie lat trzydziestych dostanie imię Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej. W rynku Historia odegra swój spektakl. Tu spadną pierwsze bomby.
>
> Jeszcze nic się nie stało. Wyślizgany próg i nieszczelne drzwi prowadzą gościnnie z podwórka wprost do kuchni Różewiczów. Stoi tam czerwona szafka. W szufladzie mieszczą się koszary dla żołnierzy zrobionych ze szklanych i porcelanowych korków do lemoniady i piwa. Bracia zbierają je na śmietniku przy wytwórni wody sodowej (s. 106–107).

Tej opowieści bliżej do powieściowej narracji z wszechwiedzącym narratorem niż do reporterskiej relacji. Mocne splecenie rozległego planu historii z detalicznym opisem ludzkiego mikroświata, jakby zatrzymanym w kadrze, sprawia, że zanurzamy się w tamtą rzeczywistość, w sugestywnie oddane wglądy miejsc i rzeczy, przenosząc się niepostrzeżenie do świata, który przecież dawno przestał istnieć. To duża zaleta pisarskiego warsztatu Grochowskiej, która świetnie łączy reporterską rekonstrukcję z epicką opowieścią.

W planie problemowym z kolei Grochowska ulega presji tradycyjnego dychotomicznego ujęcia: „życie i twórczość". Koncentrując się na tym pierwszym, najwyraźniej uznaje, że „życie" można od aktywności twórczej odseparować (a jeśli łączyć to, jak pisałam powyżej, na zasadzie nazbyt dosłownego autobiograficznego komentarza). W efekcie czytelnikowi niezorientowanemu w ewolucji twórczości Różewicza i rozwoju jego kariery literackiej książka Grochowskiej nie dostarcza podstawowej wiedzy na ten temat. Te mankamenty widać w pełni w rozdziale 9 (s. 267–331) poświęconym powojennym początkom twórczości Różewicza. Grochowska właściwie nie wyjaśnia tu, dlaczego jego dwa pierwsze tomy poetyckie, *Niepokój* i *Czerwona rękawiczka*, były nazywane „rewolucyjnymi", samo to określenie pojawia się zresztą mimochodem w zupełnie innym kontekście i rozdziale (s. 141). Może zakłada uprzednią wiedzę czytelnika na ten temat? Powojenne wejście Różewicza na scenę literacką autorka prezentuje zgodnie z utrwalonym już w szkole przekonaniem o pojawieniu się na niej młodego człowieka, dla którego twórczość to przede wszystkim narzędzie zapisu doświadczenia Ocalonego z wojennej katastrofy i związanej z tym traumy, i który tylko niejako niechcący i przy okazji dokonuje owej „rewolucji" literackiej.

A przecież dla Różewicza wejście na scenę literacką to nie była jedynie kwestia dania świadectwa wojennemu doświadczeniu, to także realizacja jeszcze przedwojennego, młodzieńczego marzenia, aby zostać poetą, tak jak poetą był jego podziwiany starszy brat Janusz. Tadeusz również chciał być poetą, i to poetą nietuzinkowym, „nowatorem i rewolucjonistą", jak pisał w manifeście ogłoszonym w kwietniu 1945 roku. Poszukiwanie oryginalności w wierszach z lat 1945–1947 dotyczy sposobu prezentacji tematu wojny, co dokumentuje zbierający te wiersze tom *Niepokój*. Znaleźć w nim można, obok słynnego *Ocalonego*, także na przykład *Walkę*, w której młody autor wprost wskazuje na swoje marzenie dotyczące literackiej „sławy słodkiej jak oko sarny" i deklaruje aktywną postawę wobec rzeczywistości, uzasadniając ją zresztą etycznie jako realizację moralnego zobowiązania wobec tych, którzy zginęli.

Kolejna sprawa, po której Grochowska się prześlizguje, a która jest niezmiernie ważna, to sposób przyswojenia przez Różewicza doświadczenia wojennego w jego granicznym wariancie. Chodzi o znajomość relacji lagrowych i potraktowanie zapisanego w nich ekstremalnego doświadczenia jako elementu własnej biografii, a następnie wykorzystanie w twórczości poetyckiej wstrząsającego efektu, jaki te relacje, zwłaszcza przemawiające nagą grozą faktografii, ze sobą przyniosły. Różewicz jednocześnie ten gest autokreacji maskuje, ukrywając, że doświadczenie wojenne, które przekazuje w swoich utworach, wbrew sugestiom autobiografizmu, ma nierzadko charakter lekturowy, intertekstualny. Niezwykle znacząca jest tu lektura opublikowanej

na początku 1946 roku relacji Rudolfa Redera z obozu zagłady w Bełżcu, która, jak odkrył Arkadiusz Morawiec, została niemal dosłownie przywołana w znanych wierszach „oświęcimskich", *Warkoczyku* i *Rzezi chłopców*, ale która wcześniej została przyswojona w *Ocalonym* (prwdr. kwiecień 1946) i zapewne w znaczącym stopniu zainspirowała młodego autora do autocharakterystyki i autoprezentacji jako poety o „wyobraźni kamiennej".

Co ciekawe, na znaczenie tużpowojennych lektur wskazuje sam Różewicz, jednocześnie zacierając i myląc trop, np. w *Nowej szkole filozoficznej* napisanej w 1956 roku. Jest to tekst, którego bohater, skrajnie wyalienowany i mizantropiczny, uderzająco przypomina postaci z utworów Camusa i Sartre'a – gdy uwzględnić moment powstania, tekst Różewicza potraktować można jako efektowny dowód na rodzącą się w okresie Października modę na „czarną" literaturę w stylu francuskich egzystencjalistów. Natomiast wydarzeniem, które niejako od środka podważa autobiograficzną wiarygodność *Nowej szkoły…* jest właśnie wzmianka o lekturze bohatera: czyta on i cytuje autobiograficzne zapiski komendanta Oświęcimia Rudolfa Hössa, co jest jaskrawym anachronizmem. Höss spisał swoją autobiografię w czasie pobytu w polskim więzieniu (1946–1947); nikt nie mógł jej oczywiście czytać tuż po wojnie, a Różewicz zapewne poznał ją, pisząc *Nową szkołę filozoficzną* w 1956 roku, wtedy ukazało się bowiem pierwsze książkowe wydanie polskiego przekładu. Te meandrujące wpływy i nawiązania, jeśli już Grochowska dostrzega (a tak jest w przypadku relacji Redera), to pisze o nich w taki sposób, że niknie gdzieś ich cała niejednoznaczność, nieoczywistość, a nawet kłopotliwość. W efekcie zatarta zostaje sfera najbardziej skomplikowanych, niedających się łatwo wytłumaczyć wymiarem autobiograficznym, strategii stosowanych przez Różewicza.

Innym znaczącym wydarzeniem w historii wyborów pisarsko-życiowych poety pozostaje jego stosunek do powojennej rzeczywistości politycznej i socrealizmu, poświadczony licznymi publikacjami. Warto przypomnieć, że w latach 1950–1955 opublikował on pięć tomów poetyckich, a także *Wybór wierszy*, reporterskie *Kartki z Węgier*, tom opowiadań *Opadły liście z drzew* i zbiór utworów satyrycznych *Uśmiechy*. Zwłaszcza w poezji i reportażach trudno znaleźć postawę zdystansowaną i krytyczną wobec „demokracji ludowej". Nie chodzi mi tu o jakąkolwiek potrzebę rozliczania Różewicza z socrealistycznego epizodu, ale o to, że Grochowska, aby za wszelką cenę wskazać dystans pisarza do powojennej rzeczywistości, zdobywa się nawet wyjątkowo na próbę reinterpretacji konkretnych utworów (*Rachunek*, *Wielkie czerwone usta*, s. 315–316). Zabiegi te trudno jednak uznać za przekonujące. Nie jest też przypadkiem, że właśnie fragmenty poświęcone stosunkowi do powojennej rzeczywistości i do socrealizmu mogą budzić podejrzenie o tendencyjne operowanie faktami

i znaczące przemilczenia, przesłaniające w efekcie kontrowersyjne i (być może) dramatyczne wybory światopoglądowe i artystyczne poety.

Ciekawy i jednocześnie kłopotliwy jest dla czytelnika przykład nonkonformizmu artystycznego Różewicza: Grochowska daje obszerny, kilkustronicowy opis Wystawy Sztuki Nowoczesnej otwartej w Krakowie w grudniu 1948, gdzie ekspozycji dzieł awangardowych plastyków – ostatniej przez „natarciem socrealizmu" (s. 302) – towarzyszyła recytacja wierszy Różewicza. Jednak, o czym Grochowska już nie wspomina, w tymże grudniu 1948 roku Różewicz właśnie pisał, albo już napisał, poemat *Gwiazda proletariatu*, utwór niewątpliwie socrealistyczny, propagandowo-tendencyjny, poświęcony generałowi Karolowi Świerczewskiemu. Poemat ten został opublikowany na początku 1949 roku („Echo Tygodnia", nr 1), jeszcze przed szczecińskim zjazdem literatów, na którym zadekretowano obowiązywanie w polskiej literaturze doktryny realizmu socjalistycznego. Dokonuje więc autorka znaczącego wyboru – pisze o wierszach, które były „przeciw", pomija zaś całkowicie wiele tekstów realizujących socrealistyczne schematy i zaangażowanych ideologicznie. Znaczące jest również przemilczenie najbardziej bodaj znanego socrealistycznego utworu bohatera jej książki. Grochowska co prawda odnotowuje, że w wierszu Różewicza pojawił się Stalin, ale tytuł tego utworu podaje tylko w przypisie, bez jakiegokolwiek komentarza (s. 326 – s. 467, przypis 257). Najwyraźniej ten okres w życiu i twórczości autora *Czasu, który idzie* jest dla biografistki co najmniej niewygodny i kłopotliwy. Zamiast ujawnić jego złożoność i trudności związane z jego przedstawieniem, stosuje metodę uników i przemilczeń. W rezultacie ten szczególnie dramatyczny i trudny czas w życiu Różewicza zostaje po prostu pominięty. A przecież dla samego poety, z niechęcią wracającego później do tamtych lat, jego akces do socrealizmu stanowił niemały problem, skoro bohater *Kartoteki* z poczuciem winy wyznaje: „klaskałem", co można uznać za ślad krytycznej autorefleksji.

Warto jeszcze na koniec odnotować w wielowątkowym ostatnim rozdziale zatarcie rangi wydarzeń, które w życiu Różewicza miały miejsce w połowie lat pięćdziesiątych. To wtedy przeredagowuje on, czy, by użyć określenia Andrzeja Skrendy, „przepisuje", swoją tużpowojenną prozę (w tomie *Opady liście z drzew*, 1955), „przepisuje" wczesną poezję (przy okazji i na użytek *Wierszy zebranych*, których tytuł *nb.* jest mylący, bo zostały one właśnie przebrane i przeredagowane), „przepisuje" nawet swoją biografię (w *Nowej szkole filozoficznej). Dz*iałania te umożliwiły narodziny Różewicza, który zdobywa wtedy powszechne uznanie swoim obrazem doświadczenia wojennego i zostaje przy okazji *Wierszy zebranych* nazwany (przez Ludwika Flaszena) „najmłodszym klasykiem". U Grochowskiej wyraźniej jednak wybrzmiewa frustracja twórcy niedocenianego i jego narzekania na środowiskowy ostracyzm, co bez wątpienia zgodne

jest z perspektywą widzenia przez Różewicza własnej pozycji. A, jak wiadomo, poeci rzadko bywają w swych sądach i ocenach realistyczni i sprawiedliwi. Szkoda, że Grochowska nie przekracza tej autorskiej perspektywy, choćby poprzez jej konfrontację z ówczesnymi publikacjami literaturoznawców i krytyków.

„Biografia jest gatunkiem moralnym, nie dlatego, że przestrzega moralnych reguł, lecz dlatego, że pozwala nam lepiej zrozumieć innych ludzi. A przez to samych siebie" – stwierdził Markowski (2010). Czy tak się dzieje w przypadku książki Grochowskiej o autorze *Czerwonej rękawiczki*? Stosowana przez nią metoda unikania trudnych kwestii prowadzi w rezultacie do stworzenia portretu nazbyt uładzonego i jednostronnego, przeznaczonego bardziej do podziwiania niż do namysłu i prób zrozumienia. Zrządzeniem przypadku znacząca staje się w tym względzie okładka książki – powagę dominującej czerni przełamuje tu biel tytułu i czerwień wijących się róż. Te ostatnie pojawiają się chyba przez skojarzenie z nazwiskiem, ale nie wydają się rozwiązaniem dobrym estetycznie ani trafionym konceptem. Pół żartem, pół serio można tu przywołać stwierdzenie Różewicza, przez Grochowską zresztą przytoczone, że zdecydowanie bardziej niż z różami utożsamiał się z trawą (s. 97). Bez względu jednak na roślinne konotacje, warto zauważyć, że swoista spiżowość tej okładki niepokojąco przystaje do portretu Różewicza nakreślonego w pierwszym tomie jego biografii.

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| **Abstract**

KRYSTYNA PIETRYCH
Różewicz (Re)constructed?

The text is a review of *Różewicz. Rekonstrukcja. I* (*Różewicz. Reconstruction. I*) – the first volume of the biography of Tadeusz Różewicz by Magdalena Grochowska, which is also the initial part of a wide-ranging biographical project. In the first volume of the book, Grochowska follows the life of Różewicz until 1957, when his mother dies, treating the chronological order freely; individual threads are continued beyond this date and outlined in a comprehensive manner. The reader gains the false belief that Różewicz, despite his long life and decades of literary work, is not subject to significant changes, does not experience any radical breakthroughs or significant evolutions, and his assessment of past events remains unchanged. Grochowska's "reconstruction" largely becomes an uncritical recall and repetition of established ways of viewing Różewicz. She creates a portrait of him as an individualist and nonconformist on the one hand, and as an underestimated and criticised author on the other. Grochowska treats Różewicz's literary work autobiographically and chronologically, in an excessively simple and literal way. The greatest advantage of the book are the fragments in which the author uses her excellent technique, combining journalistic reconstruction with an epic story, which results in interesting effects and valuable findings. Her method of avoiding difficult issues ultimately leads to the creation of a too tidy and one-sided portrait of Różewicz, one intended more for admiration than reflection or for attempting to understand him.

Keywords: Tadeusz Różewicz, biography, poetry, reconstruction

| **Biogram**

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.16

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Ecologizing Memory

Anna Barcz, *Environmental Cultures in Soviet East Europe: Literature, History and Memory*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020

Anna Barcz, the author of the pioneering and widely commented monograph *Ecological Realism: From Ecocriticism to Zoocriticism in Polish Literature* (cf. Jarzyna 2018), is one of the Polish humanists who have been making a contribution to non-anthropocentric studies, and who continue to explore uncharted (or poorly recognized) non-anthropocentric research areas. In her latest work, *Environmental Cultures in Soviet East Europe: Literature, History and Memory*, published in 2020, Barcz tests and explores concepts used in memory studies in order to investigate the environmental memory of Europe under Soviet rule, which, as she demonstrates, cannot be restricted to political, national or linguistic boundaries. As a consequence, the author decides to broaden her research and turn to East-Central European literature, which, she says, not only best resonates with the issues at hand, but also helps to conceptualize philosophical questions in an original way, especially when complex and unique research methods are used. Barcz's study also reveals how far a non-anthropocentric reading can modify the traditional mode of interpretation, with issues of artistic mastery pushed aside.

Barcz's English-language book can be placed, at least tentatively, in the Polish humanities, with which her work shares a variety of themes. Therefore, we could juxtapose it with Aleksandra Ubertowska's literary studies monograph, *Historie biotyczne. Pomiędzy estetyką a geotraumą* (Biotic Histories: Between Aesthetics and Geotrauma, 2020), as well as with memory studies

and environmental history (represented, for example, by Małgorzata Praczyk), and especially studies on the natural consequences of the Holocaust and other genocides, or place it in the context of philosophical and cultural reflection on the Anthropocene (by Ewa Bińczyk and Andrzej Marzec, for example). Nevertheless, as Barcz's work brings to mind this dense network of references we can conclude that she properly defines her field of research and her research methods, and manages the dependencies and tensions between local literary sources and trans-local theories, as she writes for a reader whose competence in one or the other area may not be commensurate.

Referring to the title of the publishing series, Environmental Cultures, Barcz examines how the new attempt to relate environmental studies to the construct of Central and Eastern Europe can affect the ideas about this region by either changing its identity, nullifying it, or making it more coherent, or richer. She begins these revisionary discussions with the important caveat that separating Central Europe and Eastern Europe is unwarranted within an environmental perspective. Drawing on previous research, Barcz stresses that the practices of Soviet violence against nature have already been largely recognized, but are usually portrayed from a Western perspective of superiority that fails to acknowledge the parallels between the ways in which the environment was exploited on both sides of the Iron Curtain, as well as conservation efforts in the USSR, or, finally, the peculiarities of the ecological cultures functioning (and being transformed) there. She argues that it is possible to rewrite the environmental history of the region, accounting for elusive nuances, while (to some extent) avoiding oppositions between East and West, which are tainted by political animosities and cultural prejudices. Most importantly, however, as she relies on the language of literature as a vehicle of memory and shapes her interpretation accordingly, nature itself, though wronged, is not victimized, or reduced to the role of a victim of oppression, and regains its autonomy, subjectivity, while people (sometimes) regain the relationships they have lost with it. As a result, the author also significantly reconfigures the field of memory studies, as she advocates a fusion of environmental and cultural approaches.

The book consists of five parts, each divided into several chapters. With the exception of the first part on theory and methods, the next four are arranged in chronological and thematic order, marked by those events and processes in the history of the Soviet Union and its satellite states that were key to the multistage ecocide carried out in Central and Eastern Europe. Specifically, Barcz focuses on the impact modernization and industrialization have had on the environment: from the collectivization of rural areas (including subsequent stages of this project) through the intensification of mining and the catastrophic Chernobyl

nuclear reactor accident, to contemporary dilemmas arising from the status and protection of nature in spaces where genocides have occurred and/or which are considered cultural heritage. Each of the four parts opens with a historical introduction which outlines the framework of collective memory, collective imagination, maps out the key issues and provides a backdrop for often subversive readings of official anthroponormative literary narratives. Significantly, Barcz discusses works that are not only representative of the subject matter, but also complement each other, and thus she preempts the possible accusation that her choice of examples has been arbitrary. She tends not to choose obvious texts, that is, socially or politically engaged, interventionist literature, with a clear message, but she does not select well-known works either. She is an advocate of a reading that is attentive to subtle signals from nature, which are not necessarily straightforward; she seems to be interested in testimonies of environmental memory jotted down incidentally, which prove that environmental memory is integral to cultural memory. Implicitly, the author also shows that it is necessary to revise the historical-literary framework that imposes permissible limits of interpretation on literary texts. Such encroachment on existing interpretations, moreover, is an insightful lesson on how to read the world in a different way, a practice that places Barcz's book within a project of broader revaluation that goes beyond the formula of academic revision.

Nevertheless, the variety of works that Barcz discusses, and sometimes only alludes to, that represent many national cultures and languages, and were written over almost a century, as well as juxtaposing them in an English-language work, may raise doubts. This is especially true since the author frequently claims to be interested in the language itself: in various instances of the pollution of language (for example, by propaganda newspeak), as well as in evidence of the resilience of language. Barcz's interpretive practice, however, overrules these objections, since her approach does not imply a philological focus on the minutest, potentially untranslatable detail, but rather involves studying larger linguistic structures, usually imagery that is preserved in translation. On the other hand, it is difficult to overestimate the original (and, as it seems, overarching) intention to search in literature for languages that are mimetic of the violence inflicted on nature and humans, to show their interdependence, and to describe the diverse, fairly indescribable strategies of representing ecocide and the ways in which it is experienced. All these mediating concepts prove that literary studies in this area are indispensable. Moreover, these concepts are often reflected in the author's style and argument structure.

Boundaries (or rather, their obliteration, and even nullification) may be considered one of the key words, a leitmotif that emerges as a theme at almost

all levels of this project. This is clear in the first part of the book, where the author defines the conditions of her inquiry, indicates her methodological inspirations, refers to the changes taking place within the disciplines that she traverses, which legitimize the daring links she makes. First, the author accurately describes the constantly expanding field of history as a discipline that is beginning to recognize the historical nature of the differences between humans and other species, and wants to deal with these differences, so its discourse must treat political boundaries more flexibly. Barcz goes on to point out the need for interference between history and literature. She makes the argument (which appears in the works of progressive historians) that a new, non-hierarchical narrative about the past requires the use of artistic tools to understand and represent the position of non-human actors outside the anthropocentric order. Simultaneously, literature is proving to be an increasingly important source of knowledge about the past (though not necessarily the facts), it stimulates the imagination, exposes generally overlooked protagonists (natural agents), and their perspectives—which are usually underestimated or unacknowledged—which change the understanding of history, also environmental history, and do not make the recognition of wrongs and harms dependent on human interests. Finally, considering these correlations, the author shows that it is crucial for her reevaluations to simultaneously expand the imaginarium of cultural memory by including environmental memory, still being discovered and theorized. This also contributes to reconstructing and reinforcing the stories/messages about non-anthropocentric agency, the defiance of non-human beings, as well as the fading and recovery of relations with such beings. In effect, what emerges from Barcz's discussion is the avant-garde idea that memory should be ecologized mainly through literary texts, which of course involves filling in the gaps, searching for and introducing non-human witnesses, both material and imagined, but also results from treating the very matter of memory as an environment that can become polluted, colonized, needs care and attention to balanced relations, or in a word: counteracting anthropogenic environmental impact.

It is significant that Barcz does not privilege any of the ecocritical categories, and thus does not impose any on the narrative she describes, but uses them as needed. However, her argument captures the logic of the Anthropocene, as it encompasses broken or severed ties between species as well as various other examples of human interference in nature and its effects, which are getting more and more out of our control. Consequently, the last part of the book discusses cases of ecosystems functioning, as it were, after humans. Essentially, the reflection on the Anthropocene recurs throughout the monograph, thus shaping the researcher's imagination and affording access to overlooked layers of meaning

in the texts. What is remarkable, however, and rare in humanistic thought on the subject, is that Barcz uses the concept in such a way as to instrumentalize it for Soviet realities. As a result, the chapters of her book are arranged into an overview of Anthropocene narratives, which represents their inherent problems, themes and poetics. In order to convey the scale of the phenomenon, the author coined the apt term "Stalinocene" (Barcz 2020: 40), complementary to the Capitalocene, which helps her describe the fate of the Soviet Bloc villages and agricultural cultures undergoing collectivization.

The scholar describes the plight of the exploited land and the abjectly exhausted people confronting the new order that was imposed on them in the early years of this process, especially with the requirement to introduce industrial breeding, by looking at Andrei Platonov's *The Foundation Pit*. She highlights the desperation of the peasants who were ready to kill their animals in order not to have to give them away. On this occasion, the author notes that animal-centered history of this period has still not been properly studied. Barcz also symmetrically turns to a novel of the twilight of collectivization (and communism), László Krasznahorkai's *Satan's Tango*, in an effort to gain insight into the rural community of the time, a community that had been by then severely exploited, mired in crisis, neglecting its farms, and subject to an equally ravaged nature, which, as the researcher notes, nevertheless takes over the narrative and perhaps seeks liberation and the removal of invasive human factors. These analyses rely on the romantic myth of peaceful, preindustrial rural life, life in harmony with nature, almost without conflict. By referring to this myth, the author proposes a broad understanding of the practices of resistance to collectivization, found both in texts that depict the destruction of the rural world, and in works (she devotes a separate chapter to them) that try to maintain its independence, and reclaim the voices of people and animals. The problem, however, is that Barcz does not nuance the significance and role in the collective imagination of this myth, which in essence masks class conflict, is oppressive to peasant culture, reduces its members (including non-humans) to a stereotypical image, so even when treated instrumentally, it demands suspicion. Thus, though some of the examples are apt (like the poetry of Nikolai Zabolotsky), one is puzzled by the choice of Julia Hartwig's works, which have little to do with the literature of the rural trend, as an example of texts that salvage the autonomy of so-called farm animals; as these poems, which are important in many respects, either idealize or ignore the living conditions of the protagonist-cows. Meanwhile, Barcz may have considered the work of Tadeusz Nowak, who has knowledge of rural realities and mythicizes them in a critical way, adds more complexity to the situation of animals in the countryside, repeatedly exposes the special

bond with them, which also arises from the common supra-species position of victims of systemic exploitation (dating back, of course, to the pre-collectivization period), while not avoiding realistic images of violence that farmers inflict on them. It seems, therefore, that an intersectional approach, essentially close to the author's research method, might not have fundamentally changed her conclusions, but would nevertheless have allowed her, especially in light of the so-called "people's history" (Adam Leszczyński's term), to better portray the complexity of the problem, and to avoid the risk of falsifying memory, not only environmental memory (Leszczynski 2020; Pobłocki 2021). After all, the tired residents—human and non-human—of the collectivized villages, as the literary scholar calls them, had already been exploited before.

One of the cornerstones of Barcz's narrative—which makes it as much a book about the past as it is about the present—is that it recognizes the "long duration" of Soviet violence against nature as an unfinished story, despite the collapse of the USSR. This, in particular, is apparent as destructive practices continue, and environmental risk is less likely to be noticed and consequently assessed as severe in public discourse and collective imagination. These issues are particularly important when it comes to mining, a phenomenon which is deeply embedded in Polish culture and tradition. Using (and expanding) the tools of risk studies, Barcz proposes to take the approach of deheroizing mining literature, which, she argues, occupies a unique place among Anthropocene narratives, as it thematizes the activity of human interference with the geological layer, and makes the Anthropocene more real. It is notable that Barcz focuses on literary studies that at least relativize, if not undermine, the human position. She discusses Szczepan Twardoch's *Drach*, a work of fiction where the "hyper-objective" voice of the depleted, traumatized (Silesian) land, otherwise difficult to concretize and conceptualize, materializes in the titular character: a mythical, chthonic monster.

In Filip Springer's *Miedzianka*, in turn, an analogous subjectifying voice, only that amplified by Barcz, comes from a collapsing mountain perforated by mine shafts used for copper and uranium mining. These perforations correspond to gaps in the official story; by focusing on them, the researcher nullifies this essentially anthropocentric piece of reportage. As a rule, amplifying the voice of nature, animals, and redistributing the narrative voice in a non-anthropocentric way is one of the most important tools of Barcz's research. Here, the author uses it to access the layers of environmental memory as a more reliable source of knowledge about the past (including the human past) than cultural records, which are entangled politically and ideologically. Trying to imitate and simultaneously criticize the hardships of extracting valuable deposits, the researcher

shows that anthropocenic narratives generally do not unfold on the surface, on the thematic plane, but that these meanings and contents rather extend stratigraphically through the entire text. In this—the central—part of the book, the author makes bold revisions when she advocates that it is necessary to sharpen previous ecocritical postulates, and when, considering the effects of profound interference with nature, she looks into the future, and turns her attention to what will come after the Anthropocene, thus radicalizing the formula of environmental history, and lending a historiosophical angle to her considerations.

Through literary testimonies and interpretive reevaluations, Barcz's monograph vividly reveals the paradoxes of the Soviet attitude to nature: the almost total subjugation of nature leads to people being increasingly entangled in it, and to the discovery of interdependences and weaknesses. This narrative, marked by subtle drama, culminates in a section on the multidimensional experience of the environmental disaster caused by the Chernobyl nuclear power plant reactor failure, which is viewed as a synecdoche: of life in the Anthropocene today, of the threat of global contamination caused by the actions of the USSR a little earlier, as well as a synecdoche of other similar accidents that have not been revealed to the public, and ultimately to the collective memory. Barcz is interested in articulating non-human trauma, grappling with an event that poses an epistemological challenge in non-discursive narratives, which, she shows, predate Timothy Morton's diagnoses of hyperobjects and the search for new, post-nuclear, conceptions of nature. The researcher first bind the experience of language as an ecosystem to this search; as described in Christa Wolf's short story, titled *Störfall* (*Accident*). As she analyzes this prose, Barcz notes that language relating to nature, in particular, has been affected by this fission, this contamination; in effect, the contaminated imagination has lost access to the vision of nature that was shaped by poetic descriptions. Simultaneously, when extracting the ecocentric register of Svetlana Alexievich's polyphonic narrative in the *Chernobyl Prayer*, Barcz probes access to environmental witnesses and victims of the disaster, and discovers their place in the memory of an event that, while it formed new interspecies communities of the traumatized, it also maintained fixed anthroponormative divisions between the rescued and the eliminated. Barcz is also careful to ask whether nature regenerated in a depopulated radioactive zone relativizes the assessment of the power plant accident, which, in turn, creates a new arena for thinking about differences in cultural and environmental memory, and reduces the human perspective in an unprecedented way, even within ecocritical discourse.

The last part of the book is particularly noteworthy, as it first offers a bold and much-needed polemic against Martin Pollack's concepts of "contaminated

landscapes" and Claude Lanzmann's "non sites of memory"—especially in the interpretation of Roma Sendyka. In both of these narratives, nature in genocidal sites has sometimes been accused of being complicit in the crime or considered an obstacle to the cultural commemoration of these events, and has consequently been unfairly portrayed as an enemy (to varying degrees) of the victims and their descendants. The researcher convincingly identifies the anthropocentric abuses inherent in these approaches and generally widespread in memory studies, which result in the violence inflicted on nature being questioned or disparaged on the one hand, and its active participation in remembrance being overlooked, on the other.

Unlike the previous analysis which focused on individual texts, the next two interpretive chapters of this part, in which Barcz elaborates on her proposal to recover the materiality of nature, are a mosaic narrative built around a constellation of works, assigned to specific places and integrated with original methods of reading, as if situated in those places. First, the author discusses poems about the Katyń massacre, in which the forest is shown as a witness and a fellow mourner. This type of imagery has so far been interpreted figuratively, but Barcz suggests treating it literally. Under this approach, it turns out that the authors of these works, perhaps unconsciously, captured the multidimensional dispositions of nature, which—transformed, in part, by being mixed with human remains—remembers the murdered and helps their descendants process the trauma. This is where the researcher finds justification for her idea of "greening" the discourse on sites of memory, by appreciating their own material account of violence. She also demonstrates that, in the long run, this strategy can provide arguments for protecting similarly affected landscapes from any interference. Barcz returns to this issue in the closing chapter on the Białowieża Forest. She diagnoses the problem of the broken relationship between real space and the images about it that operate in cultural memory, whose status does not prevent the almost predatory exploitation of the forest. Hence the author's innovative proposal to look at the unique forest ecosystem as a palimpsest that is partially formed by human history and telling that history, and thus forcefully integrated into the anthroponormative (often also nationalistic) order, yet still maintaining autonomy. Barcz argues that literature can become a vehicle for such a reading, which nevertheless requires some knowledge of the natural world. She points to works (the writings of Simona Kossak are surprisingly absent from this list) that access scraps of environmental memory, and bring out the complexity of the forest past, scarred by traces of violence, but still able to sustain the (uncontaminated?) myth of primordial, elemental nature. It seems, moreover—and this is my addition—that this myth does not necessarily belong only to the realm

of cultural imagery, but is also actively shaped and communicated by nature itself. Be that as it may, what emerges from the last chapter is a project—so far perhaps never formulated—of particular ecocritical comparativism, possibly with a broader reach in line with the assumptions of "rescue history" (Domańska 2014: 12–26), which stems from the belief that studies of the past from alternative methodological perspectives are crucial for attempts to design the future.

I am providing commentary on Barcz's book, reconstructing its structure and the discussions in its individual sections, not so much out of a reviewer's duty, but mainly out of a conviction that it is worth tracing the spectrum of ideas and interpretations that the author proposes, and appreciating the fact that she outlines the crux of the broad phenomenon of environmental memory, while making sure not only that her theoretical approach is clear, but most importantly that she respects the particularities of literary sources and ecological cultures, while experimenting with them to expand the field of (her own) empathy for natural and human traumas. This is a great asset of the work: the value of analysis after analysis, of partial diagnoses cannot be reduced to examples subordinated to an overarching concept. Perhaps this is all the more reason why the book's lack of an ending, of an attempt to summarize the problems and to draw conclusions, leaves the reader somewhat underwhelmed. The book's closing statement on the persistence of the pastoral myth re-romanticizing nature, which, incidentally, recurs as a point of reference throughout the work, merits additional comments. Knowing Barcz's talent, one would be interested to see how she theorizes this issue, and especially how she situates it in the context of her remarks on Anthropocene narratives and the diagnoses that follow from them; in other words, how this myth relates to the condition and (literary) visions of nature after catastrophe: nature viewed in a planetary perspective, transformed by humankind, but also liberated from it, and recuperating its vitality. The tensions between reflection on the human impact on the environment and recognition of the new autonomy of nature largely organizes the arguments throughout the work, so it calls for a meta-commentary. They are, in fact, a measure of how original the author's standpoint is and of her imagination suggesting the possibility of overruling the perspective of anthropocentric catastrophism; they also prove Barcz's scholarly drive, philosophical and literary insight and ecocritical sensitivity.

Concluding these remarks, let me make a somewhat less substantive comment (responding, in a sense, to similar discreet gestures by the author). Barcz's monograph, written and published before Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, and before the refugee crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border, now gains a new dimension, inviting reflection on how nature is once again

entangled in political and ideological conflict. It is directly used against people, who are transported into the wilderness, put in mortal danger when abandoned in swampy areas, with adverse natural conditions made complicit in their fate. Unique ecosystems and animals are also becoming victims of war once again, but for the first time this practice is not being ignored in public discourse, and they are being rescued on a large scale. Finally, the anthropocenic experience of the environmental threat (again, coming from Russia), against which national borders will not protect us, is intensifying. My point is that the practice of thinking about environmental cultures, as postulated by Barcz, seems to be a salvaging activity, at least in terms of the imagination, both collective and individual, and prevents us from lapsing into hasty divisions, not least anthroponormative ones. But most importantly, this book makes us realize that the unprecedented events we are currently witnessing will have a direct impact on nature and will leave an imprint on environmental memory, which, perhaps, will be more closely integrated with cultural memory.

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| Abstract

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Ecologizing Memory

This review is a discussion of Anna Barcz's monograph *Environmental Cultures in Soviet East Europe: Literature, History and Memory* (Bloomsbury 2020).

Keywords: ecocriticism, memory studies, Central and Eastern European literature, Anthropocene

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.17

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Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu

Transgression and Tenderness. Olga Tokarczuk in Comparative Perspective

***Olga Tokarczuk. Comparative Perspectives*. Eds. Lidia Wiśniewska and Jakub Lipski. New York–London: Routledge, 2023**

Olga Tokarczuk's literary discourse has for years coincided with the comparative technique implied in her poetics, which the author herself compared to a constellation (Tokarczuk 2019: 22). Following a number of articles that appeared in various Polish journals and the only collective monograph *Światy Olgi Tokarczuk: studia i szkice* (Worlds of Olga Tokarczuk: Studies and Drafts, 2013), which had been the main source of knowledge about the Nobel Prize winner's prose for years, Katarzyna Kantner's book *Jak działać za pomocą słów? Proza Olgi Tokarczuk jako dyskurs krytyczny* (How to Act with Words? Olga Tokarczuk's Prose as Critical Discourse, 2019) has been so far an only comprehensive, authorial approach to Tokarczuk's writing. This approach was known, however, only in Poland. Consequently, the newest proposal by editors Lidia Wiśniewska and Jakub Lipski—*Olga Tokarczuk. Comparative Perspectives*—published by Routledge in 2023, shines significantly against this discursive backdrop as the first wide-ranging attempt to illuminate works of the Polish writer in a broad international scope.

Nevertheless, this hardly means that the bibliography on Tokarczuk abroad, however dispersed, has so far been scant or begun just after the Nobel Prize in 2019. Her book *House of Day, House of Night*, published twice in English, earned the author a nomination for the International Dublin Literary Award in 2004. *Primeval and Other Times* (2010) was also translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones,

therefore increasing interest in Polish writer of Western academia. This focus was however initially bound by the notion of magical realism (cf. Wampuszyc 2014)—the kind of writing label, from which Tokarczuk would rather distance herself (Tokarczuk 2020: 136). As an author with literary panache, transcending established patterns, she became known through *Flights*, published in English in 2017 and translated by Jennifer Croft, for which she received the Man Booker International Prize (2018), making history as the first Polish writer honored with that award. Only a year later she got the Nobel Prize, which caused the discourse around her to expand rapidly: much-awaited next translations of Tokarczuk's works, especially *The Books of Jacob* (trans. Jennifer Croft, 2022), have been critically acclaimed (cf. Charles 2022); her earlier novels have attracted the new academic interests (e.g. Mortensen 2021), in particular *Flights* were considered as an important contribution to metaphysical and philosophical discussions (Bendrat 2020; La Torre Lagares 2020). Since her famous Nobel lecture, the number of articles tapping, explaining and developing the concept of "tenderness" in literature has increased (Jarzynska 2023; Michna 2023; Muskat-Tabakowska 2020; Werner 2023) and Tokarczuk herself, accentuating leftist views, has gained prominence in social and political debate, facing criticism from the nationalizing zeal in the right-wing politics in Poland (on this subject, cf. Kolodziejczyk 2022).

The multi-perspective approaches to Tokarczuk's prose, ranging from psychoanalysis, language and narrative analysis, feminism, historicism, and the sociology of literature, which characterize, for example, the issue of *The Polish Review* (vol. 66, no. 2, 2021) entirely dedicated to the Nobel laureate and edited by Joanna Trzeciak Huss, demonstrates that the need to integrate Tokarczuk's discourse lies in a lack of a concrete methodological approach to her writing. The book *Olga Tokarczuk. Comparative Perspectives* marks a specific interpretive path already in the title; comparative literature becomes a way to unite Tokarczuk's diverse writing and divisive interpretations of her works but not to overshadow the individual authorial concepts that underlie, after all, every anthology. Therefore, presented book corresponds to some extent with Tokarczuk's call in her famous Nobel speech, for writing with attention to "multi-dimensionally" yet "in a way that activates a sense of the whole" (Tokarczuk 2019: 22).

1. Mapping comparative perspective

One might, however, conclude that the need to seek "wholeness" is abandoned by the editor, Lidia Wiśniewska, already in the first sentences of the introduction, when she writes:

> This book does not claim to be a comprehensive presentation of Olga Tokarczuk's oeuvre from a comparative perspective, though it can signal some avenues worth pursuing, and thus place Tokarczuk's writing in a broader context. (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 1)

And yet, the impression of wholeness or unity, both in Tokarczuk's understanding and realized in the anthology, refers to a sense of connectivity between the various perspectives: the ones that author adopts in her fiction and the ones that are constituted by different researchers. What unites the diverse outlooks, in both cases, is the methodology. For Tokarczuk's artistic work, methodology of writing also could be seen as an epistemological tool, a way to perceive the world and a certain philosophy of existence and art. In the case of a literary study, there is always a need for a methodology rooted in a tradition of literary theory, definite but at the same time not so hermetic that it limits the possibilities of interpretation. When both of these principles are upheld—and the book *Olga Tokarczuk. Comparative Perspectives* seems to do just that—it may turn out that not only does methodology help to understand fiction, but that fiction contributes to methodological concepts, in this case, to comparative literature. It seems that this kind of interaction lies in the premise of the editors of the latest anthology, and this should be considered as its greatest value.

Wiśniewska notes in the first paragraph of the book that the presented method is to be used with focus on aspects hitherto marginalized in different comparative undertakings (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 1). While she does not explicitly clarify what these "other discussions" are, the summary of the articles outlined by her in the introduction function as a guidepost for the reader, informing him/her that the analyses constituting the anthology treat comparative literature in a broader sense than it was stated, for example, at one time, by the French school.[1] Wiśniewska reveals the foundations of her theoretical thinking through the definition of the American comparatist Henry H.H. Remak, to

1 I am referring to the school represented by scholars such as Paul van Tieghem, Marius-François Guyard, Jean-Marie Carré, which would be doctrine and limit the scope of literary studies **only to literature**, not to other areas of art. Henry H.H. Remak explains the differences between the French and American schools in his article *Comparative Literature. Its Definition and Function* which constitutes the definitional basis for the editors of the anthology. Remak recapitulates, not without irony, the French school with the words: "The student and teacher [in France] of literature who venture beyond national frontiers already assume extra burden. The French seem to fear that taking on, in addition, the systematic study of the relationship between literature and any other area of human endeavor invites the accusation of charlatanism and would,

whom she alludes to in the introduction (Wiśniewska, Lipski: 5), but who also underlies theory of her other book *Między bogiem a naturą. Komparatystyka jako filozofia kultury* (Between God and Nature. Comparative Literature as a Philosophy of Culture) (cf. Wiśniewska 2009: 12–14). Remak defines comparative literature as:

> the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country and the study of relationship between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts…, philosophy, history, the social sciences…, the sciences, religion, etc., on the other. (Remak 1961: 3)

It seems that Wiśniewska and Lipski want to cross the boundaries of the most evident comparisons confined only to literary texts. Therefore, the second section of the anthology presents the connections between literature and visual art, myths, with an important emphasis on philosophical foundations. However, the twist in the methodological orientation, which is definitely marked by the central article of Magdalena Rabizo-Birek, is appropriately built up in the first part of the anthology, which represents more typical comparative approach. The starting points are set by articles of Rafał Pokrywka and Michał Moch, which juxtapose Tokarczuk's writing with her contemporaries in other literatures: with German author Daniel Kehlman and Serbian—Milorad Pavić's, respectively. However, the authors of the analyses do not double their interpretive method. Pokrywka uses Pierre Bourdieu's sociologies of literature and shows how Tokarczuk's and Kehlman's positions in the literary field have similarly evolved: from beginnings with their disappointing debuts that "did not meet the expectations of the field" to strongly set individual positions that enabled them to inspire further literary conjuncture and, by defining themselves beyond the divisions of low and high, mainstream and avant-garde, even "change the literary field itself" (Wiśniewska, Lipski: 25–26). Moch, on the other hand, focuses on comparing two specific works: Tokarczuk's *The Books of Jacob* and Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars* as books that similarly adopt the conventions of the lexicon and combine religious-historical fact with fiction, negotiating a place for minorities in dominant cultures.

In the third article of the anthology, Marek Stanisz's *Integrating Narratives: The Art of Storytelling According to Isaac Bashevis Singer and Olga Tokarczuk*,

> at any rate, be detrimental to the acceptance of comparative literature as a respectable and respected academic domain" (cf. Remak 1961: 7).

the reader still follows the same methodological orientation, for Tokarczuk is compared to another writer and Nobel laureate, Isaac Bashevish Singer. And that's where the similarities end, for here a comparative reading illuminates the Nobel laureate's prose differently from the previous two cases. Not only because the reference to Singer draws a connection within a single nation (Singer is, after all, a Polish author writing in Yiddish) and different times (Singer is, after all, a modernist writer), which would, according to some scholars, place the analysis within the studies on influence or national literature rather than comparative literature (cf. Remak 1961: 10–11), but because comparative reading is for Stanisz a method that steps outside the fictional boundaries and takes into account the authors' shared experience. Stanisz focuses not on literature, but on metaliterary texts, on the way in which Tokarczuk and Singer theorize their writing. Their authorial method is, according to Stanisz, based on

> the fundamental experience of lack, loss, and absence. In the case of these writers, this experience is not only one of the most important psychological sources of creativity, but also determines their thinking about literature and their specific artistic decisions. (Wiśniewska, Lipski: 51)

By hinting not only to the literary connections, but also to the psychological and biographical aspects, one outlines a certain community of authors' creative thinking and indicates that comparative literature does not have to discard the personal context. This approach is interestingly developed in the following article, which functions as a landmark for readers of the anthology. Magdalena Rabizo-Birek—an expert on the prose of Olga Tokarczuk, the editor of the previously mentioned anthology *Światy Olgi Tokarczuk*—in her text *Found Souls: Olga Tokarczuk Meets Joanna Concejo* points to the unusual use of comparative perspective as a method of signifying the collaboration of the two authors within a single work of art. The article is devoted to the picturebook *Zgubiona dusza* (*The Lost Soul*) and highlights how two spheres: text and image, but also two sensibilities and biographies of the authors, Olga Tokarczuk and Joanna Concejo, intermingle and inspire each other. It appears that in the center of the comparative analysis lies the personal relationship between the authors, outlined on a biographical level, reaching back to the distant threads of their childhood, which become an origin of the bizarre in their mutual artistic expression. "A sense of lack"—which was brought out by Stanisz as a basis for literary activity of Tokarczuk and Singer—here takes on the dimension of the uncanny, the spiritual, the enigmatic impression that can actually be "sensed." Rabizo-Birek shows that this is not a characteristic typical

only to Tokarczuk's writing but also to Concejo's art, in which she manages "to present a ghostly trace of someone's presence, a feeling of abandonment and the lack of something or someone" (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 72).

It is worth mentioning that bizarreness in Stanisz's and Rabizo-Birek's viewpoints could also refer to the Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's category of latency,[2] especially since it also stands for the mood grounded in the post-World War II period. It is not however apparent in the presented texts. Nonetheless, what is evident, is that the anthology tries to place the heterogeneous oeuvre of Tokarczuk within the framework of comparative literature supported by the latest methods of literary studies (sociology of literature, new phenomenology, autobiographical and affective studies). Sometimes these threads are only mentioned or hinted, sometimes indicated directly—as in the case of Rabizo-Birek, who, by placing the focus on the picturebook, contributes to the discussion on the importance of the iconic turn in contemporary humanities (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 72–75).

Expanding the traditional scope of comparative literature provides an interesting take on Tokarczuk's method of writing and could also respond, in a way, to the initial negative critique in Poland, that still casts a shadow over the reception of her works. It is worth mentioning that in the 1990s, Tokarczuk was strongly criticized for creating the literature for masses: Krzysztof Uniłowski, calling her writing a manifestation of "proza środka" ("middlebrow prose"), accused the author of aesthetic conformism and using the reservoir of modernist poetics in a facile way, just so that the reader of the post-socialist bourgeoisie could be assured, with the little intellectual effort, that he/she was reading and understanding high literature (cf. Uniłowski 2005: 180–190). These threads are reflected in some of the later analyses, not only Polish but also English-language ones, such as the article included in the recently published anthology *Polish Literature as World Literature* (2023), written by Marta Koronkiewicz and Paweł Kaczmarski. The authors write:

> Tokarczuk's idea of an *accessible* modernism, of reconciling the modernist legacy with the imperative of instant readerly gratification—as described by Uniłowski in his account of *proza środka*—lays the foundation for a general aura of secrecy, mysteriousness, and

2 *Latency* for Gumbrecht is the hidden, unacknowledged and unspoken trauma (especially for postwar generation) but understood as a form of "environment, a general mood," not "repression," whose presence is undeniable and can always be felt. Cf. Gumbrecht 2013: 23.

> metaphysical enigma that has over time become the signature mood of Tokarczuk's work. This aura, when projected back onto the author's own culture and language, results in something that may only be described as a mysticism of Polishness. (Koronkiewicz, Kaczmarski 2023: 186)

Koronkiewicz and Kaczmarski see the notorious "aura" of Tokarczuk's work in an attempt to create a form of depiction for Polish national identity. It is slightly disappointing that *Olga Tokarczuk. Comparative Perspectives* does not directly refer to the famous charges of Uniłowski like is done by Koronkiewicz and Kaczmarski or, earlier mentioned, Kantner (cf. Kantner 2019: 9–12),[3] but it does not mean that the anthology avoids outlining a perspective on that issue. It seems that the complementary pattern of the aforementioned articles provides a way to understand mysticism, the presence of things mysterious and extraordinary in Tokarczuk's work, not only intertwined with Polishness. This is an expression of an autobiographical gesture which underlines her writing method. This links Tokarczuk with other artists across different spheres of literature, art and time and outlines the space of similarities afforded by a comparativist perspective that saves the author from accusations of artificial aestheticization. The anthology paradoxically lifts Tokarczuk from her peculiar pedestal to the benefit of her prose and shows her as a writer genuinely sensitive to subtle shades of experience, as well as marginalized forms: not only short stories and essays, which are often treated more purely than poetry or the novel, but also, as analyzed by Rabizo-Birek, the picturebook—which, both as a form of literature for children and as a graphic-textual form is treated on the margins of literature and taken out of the focus of the critical eye of many scholars.

2. Between transgression and tenderness

"Seeing, after all, means knowing"—Ewa Górecka invokes this phrase from the *Flights* in the conclusion of her article *Heterotopia in the Prose of Olga Tokarczuk* and continues to keep the reader behind the eye of camera as delineated by Rabizo-Birek and pointed at the significance of the visual aspect of literature (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2021: 106). The observation becomes both a cognitive and a creative tool which Tokarczuk uses for depiction of the *Wunderkammer*. In Górecka's comparative perspective cabinets of literary texts correspond with

3 Although it is important to remember that in the first article by Pokrywka, he refers to Tokarczuk's difficult beginnings, but mostly connects it with her choice for specific genre, focusing on her changing position in the Polish literary field (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 17–20).

the *cabinets de curiosités* immortalized in Danish and Flemish art. This is the moment when aesthetics conflates with epistemology: cabinets of curiosities recognized in pre-Enlightenment art, seized by Tokarczuk, become a representation of post-Enlightenment knowledge of the world: with its temporal nonlinearity and the coincidence of events expressed in the juxtaposition of many objects that each can represent "the presence of multiple spaces within a single *spatium*" (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 106).

The human body, stretched between the realms of aesthetics and science, is another medium of an epistemological cognition. Its components, again, are at the same time singular but inseparable—united body parts function as a whole, an organism. But the reader has been already familiar with this aporetic quality of reflection and representation. The "mechanical cosmos of organs" (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 103) becomes the focus of description in Tokarczuk's *Flights* and is a readjustment of a constellation writing method. And here the reader (of both Tokarczuk's work and the anthology) reaches a point in which he or she is at risk of getting lost in a vicious circle of meanings, ectypal images and cognitive tautology. Górecka, following Tokarczuk, tries to find a guidance in Michel Foucault's heterotopias—the actual places (in contrast to utopias) that are in some way inconvenient and inconsistent. This interpretative method brings us safely from the hazy philosophical heights down to earth, onto the material space, which another dimension, although unusual and strange, is always grounded in the tangible cultural, social and institutional contexts. Thus, the article contributes to the concept of "bizarreness" in Tokarczuk's writing: what underlies the bizarre is not only the personal, as the previous text have shown us, but also the public—especially when the former cabinets of curiosities "still exist as such or within the institutions into which they have been transformed" (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 97). The comparative link between the novel and the art shows how, through a subversive dialogue, Tokarczuk exposes the ways in which knowledge is produced and distributed.

It is the transformations of the narrations about the world that are the main topic of the closing article in the anthology. In her text Lidia Wiśniewska presents the way, in which Tokarczuk incorporates culturally rooted myths in order to complement them with a new perspective. Tokarczuk does not so much "re-write" the story of the goddess Inana, as she skips certain parts of it in her book *Anna In w grobowcach świata* (Anna In in the Tombs of the World). That's how she accentuates the feminist aspect and re-establishes "Inana's journey into her sister's world as an autonomous fact" (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 113). The method of the creative dialogue with an intertextual reference is constituted on the one hand by omitting (un-writing) the part of the narrative, and on the

other hand by writing additional threads. At the beginning of the anthology Michał Moch referred to the latter as "the method of conjecture," that is, the literary method of filling in places absent from historical documents, such as depictions of a daily life or the perspective of women's experience (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 37). One might connect it with Roman Ingarden's phenomenology and its "places of indeterminacy" that needs to be filled by reader in the process of concretization. For Tokarczuk, however, the subversive transposition of the narrative is combined with a strategy of creation rather than reception.

Once the reader of the anthology reaches the end of the volume, it becomes evident to him/her that the attempt of the book is to grasp Tokarczuk *modus scribendi*. Different comparative outlooks of her methods of writing create the inner orientation bridging all the articles together. And yet, if one were to define what this method exactly is, one would gaze rather confused into a starred sky full of distinct perspectives but unfortunately without a clear and operative conclusion. It seems that this effect is driven by the Tokarczuk's ability to expand metapoetic terminology: she refers to a conjuncture, constellation, ex-centric position of the author, transgression, and finally—the tender narrator. This is how she defines the latter:

> [tender narrator] is a point of view, a perspective from where everything can be seen. Seeing everything means recognizing the ultimate fact that all things that exist are mutually connected into a single whole, even if the connections between them are not yet known to us. Seeing everything also means a completely different kind of responsibility for the world, because it becomes obvious that every gesture "here" is connected to a gesture "there," that a decision taken in one part of the world will have an effect in another part of it, and that differentiating between "mine" and "yours" starts to be debatable. (Tokarczuk 2019: 21)

In accordance with this definition, Górecka outlined the vision of a collector in her article. A collector is someone who does not create heterotopias, but resides in and out them, who juxtaposes objects but does not judge them, who does not conquer their space but rather kindly let them express themselves. Tenderness thus becomes another epistemic category, along with the ability to observe and the medium of the body. But the question arises: aren't there too many of mutually intertwined methods of cognition? Even more so as the anthology presents additional concepts, such as for example "transgressive realism" (p. 4), cognitive "algorithms" (p. 145), anatomical imaginary connected with the *cabinet de curiosites* (pp. 95–11). All of the aforementioned approaches

attempt to capture Tokarczuk's writing method in a similarly universal way, by connecting it with the cognitive need to understand the principles of the world. They combine different perspectives into a whole, reflecting worlds that are often antinomic to each other—but contiguous, like two sides of a coin. It is of course an appropriate strategy but as long as the reader is far from going round in the interpretative circles.

All the more strongly stand out proposals that focus on subjectivity, authorship and experience; after all, it is "Olga Tokarczuk" herself that constitutes the first part of the book's title. A perspective focused on a personal involvement in collaborating on a single work of art—as shown in Rabizo-Birek's article, and a perspective that reveals a method that reaches back to a community of personal experience—as shown in Stanisz's article, sheds a very interesting light on the author and her oeuvre. And it complements the concept of the tender narrator, taking him out of the embrace of abstraction towards (suggested, after all, in the name itself)—the affect. This reflection is hinted at the beginning of the anthology, when Pokrywka emphasizes that in the tender narrator the most important thing is "the art of compassion and sharing feelings" (Wiśniewska, Lipski 2023: 24). It seems that the tender narrator is a subjectivity rather than just a literary instance. It engages in dialogue with different narratives and treats these relations with an understanding rather than irony. It is a kind of ambivalent ontology of the subject, which stands between the literary abstraction and the author that have his/her own experiences and established social role. Ryszard Nycz calls such an ambivalent ontology "a sylleptic subject" ("podmiot sylleptyczny") (Nycz 1994: 8–9), while Kantner spoke of "paratopias" of identity, in which someone oscillates between "in" and "out" positions (Kantner 2019: 17).

Despite all the concerns, there should be no doubt, that the anthology constitutes so far the first and successful comparative attempt to shed a light on Tokarczuk's writing. Treating comparative literature outside its traditional boundaries is an orientation marked by Wiśniewska at the beginning of the anthology. It is worth noting that Wiśniewska adjusted the same approach in her earlier book *Między bogiem a naturą* (Between God and Nature). It is there where she explains the importance of incorporating interdisciplinarity into the basic premise of comparative literature:

> Passing over these lines of as much division as connectivity, it reveals both the differences and the similarities between them, through the similarities bringing out unity, while through the differences bringing out separateness, and consequently the fluctuating semi-existence of both. In this sense, interdisciplinarity situates itself—on the principle of

> mirror complementarity—"on the other side"…, but not "outside" the comparison of literatures with each other. (Wiśniewska 2009: 13–14)

It can be concluded that the methodological concept establishing comparative literature as a transgressive approach is essentially authorial. Undoubtedly, however, in the anthology the theory does not outbalance the literature. On the contrary, Tokarczuk's prose and herself as an author undertaking metareflection turn out to complement the assumed methodology. As we read in the definition above, in the assumption of comparative literature lies the idea of wholeness but achieved by separate outlooks and this concept overlaps with the definition of the tender narrator. With this configuration, Tokarczuk's prose illuminates the theory with categories that go beyond the text or context, but are also related to the body, experience and affect. Perhaps even tenderness.

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| **Abstract**

The article is a review of the recently published by Routledge anthology *Olga Tokarczuk. Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Lidia Wiśniewska and Jakub Lipski. As the first monograph on Tokarczuk written in English, supported by a concrete methodological proposal, it finds a significant place in the international discourse of the author. In the Polish literary discourse, which has been divided, it also opens new interpretative paths. The authors of the anthology, passing the boundaries of traditional comparative literature, highlight the epistemological aspect of Tokarczuk's work, the way of understanding the "bizarness," as well as the sources of her aesthetics. It turns out that the social dimension of Tokarczuk's prose, also gains a personal character, and the tender narrator, moving along the comparative path, has a chance to break out of abstraction towards subjectivity.

Keywords: Olga Tokarczuk, comparative literature, tender narrator

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Porównania 2 (34), 2023
DOI: 10.14746/por.2023.2.18

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E.T.A. Hoffmann w Warszawie. Nowa książka Petera Lachmanna

Peter Lachmann, *„Ich bin ein Spieler, der das Letzte auf eine Hoffnung wagt. E.T.A. Hoffmann in Warschau 1804–1807*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2021

Co wiadomo o polskim okresie życia Ernsta Theodora Amadeusa Hoffmanna, wybitnego niemieckiego romantyka, wszechstronnie utalentowanego artysty – pisarza, muzyka i malarza, a przy tym znakomitego prawnika? Czy i w jaki sposób lata spędzone w Poznaniu (1800–1802), Płocku (1802–1804) i Warszawie (1804–1807) wpłynęły na jego twórczość?

Związki artysty z Polską są od dawna przedmiotem zainteresowania, przede wszystkim – co zrozumiałe – polskich badaczy[1]. Poznański okres

1 Nie odnoszę się tu do publikacji zagranicznych, ponieważ omówienie tylko najważniejszych opracowań przekroczyłoby ramy niniejszego artykułu. Przedmiotem moich rozważań nie jest też literacka recepcja utworów Hoffmana ani literatura przedmiotu dotycząca jego muzycznego dorobku. Polskie motywy w pisarstwie Hoffmanna były badane głównie przez polskich autorów. Nie zostały one uwzględnione w prezentacji problematyki jego biografii i twórczości opublikowanej na (poza tym) znakomicie przygotowanym „E.T.A. Hoffmann Portal", afiliowanym przy Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, https://etahoffmann.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ [dostęp: 2.07.2023]. Znajdują się tam m.in. opracowania na temat angielskich, francuskich i hiszpańskich wpływów literackich, przy czym autorzy poszczególnych artykułów zwracają uwagę na brak znajomości języków angielskiego i hiszpańskiego u Hoffmanna oraz korzystanie przez niego z przekładów. Język polski natomiast artysta, urodzony w Królewcu (Königsberg), żyjący przez wiele lat w polskich miastach i ożeniony z Polką, znał. Brak artykułu na temat polskich motywów

został szczegółowo scharakteryzowany przez germanistki z Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza – Edytę Połczyńską i Ewę Płomińską-Krawiec (Połczyńska, Płomińska-Krawiec 2004), pisał o nim także Kornel Michałowski (Michałowski 1994). O pobycie Hoffmanna w Płocku powstało sporo artykułów o charakterze historycznoliterackim, jak i przyczynkarskim. Ich wykaz znajduje się w pierwszej, i jak dotąd jedynej, monografii życia i twórczości Hoffmanna wydanej w języku polskim, autorstwa Marka Jaroszewskiego (Jaroszewski 2006: 13). Praca gdańskiego badacza skupia się na przedstawieniu twórczości literackiej niemieckiego romantyka i zawiera jedynie zwięzłą rekonstrukcję jego pobytu na ziemiach polskich (Jaroszewski 2006: 11–15). Także o warszawskich latach Hoffmanna napisano już wiele artykułów, zwłaszcza o charakterze faktograficznym, ale i literackich opracowań tego zagadnienia, spośród których warto przypomnieć obszerny szkic Juliusza W. Gomulickiego *E.T.A. Hoffmann w Warszawie* (1973)[2]. Powstało też już niemało artykułów naukowych, będących próbą całościowego ujęcia jego związków z Polską (np. Jaroszewski 1995; Papiór 1996; Papiór 1999) lub interpretacji polskich motywów w jego twórczości (np. Koziełek 1990; Połczyńska 1991; Pośpiechowa 1993; Dubicki 1997).

Warszawskiemu etapowi życia wybitnego artysty poświęcona została opublikowana niedawno w języku niemieckim obszerna książka Petera Lachmanna, niemiecko-polskiego poety, eseisty, tłumacza i reżysera, pt. *„Ich bin ein Spieler, der das Letzte auf eine Hoffnung wagt". E.T.A. Hoffmann in Warschau 1804–1807* („Jestem graczem, którego ostatnią stawką jest nadzieja". E.T.A. Hoffmann w Warszawie 1804–1807, Lachmann 2021). Jest to publikacja, którą można uznać za zwieńczenie wieloletnich zainteresowań autora osobą i dorobkiem niemieckiego romantyka. Fascynacja twórcy drugim artystą zaowocowała kilkoma spektaklami teatralnymi, utworami i publikacjami. Za pierwsze zbliżenia do tematu uznać należy tryptyk teatralny zrealizowany w autorskim Videoteatrze „Poza" w Warszawie: *E.T.A. Hoffmann w Płocku*, *E.T.A. Hoffmann:*

i inspiracji na poświęconym mu portalu może świadczyć albo o ich nieobecności w jego dziełach, albo o braku opracowań badawczych tego zagadnienia w języku niemieckim. Pierwszy powód należy wykluczyć, biorąc pod uwagę choćby opowiadanie *Das Gelübde* (Ślub), którego protagonistami są polscy patrioci doby powstania kościuszkowskiego, i liczne polskie motywy innych jego utworów.

2 Praca Gomulickiego pojawiła się na fali zainteresowania tematem związków Hoffmanna z Polską. W latach sześćdziesiątych i siedemdziesiątych XX wieku powstało sporo tekstów inspirowanych jego osobą i dziełami, m.in.: Vogler 1964; Brandys 1968; Krzywobłocka 1970. Część z nich miała zapewne charakter rocznicowy, związany z dwusetleciem urodzin Hoffmanna. Także omawiana tu książka Lachmanna wpisuje się w rocznicę – dwusetlecia śmierci niemieckiego artysty.

z Płocka do Warszawy, *Hommage à Hoffmann* (2004–2006)[3], oraz sztukę *Opowieści pani Hoffmannowej* (2004). Ponadto przygotowane zostały jeszcze dwa przedstawienia: *Warszawo, gdzie Twój genius loci?* (2008) oraz *Sny o mieście W.* (2013)[4]. W zbliżonym czasie pojawiły się kolejne opracowania: wydane w języku niemieckim artykuł (Lachmann 2005) i książka (Lachmann 2011), będąca antologią „śląskich" tekstów niemieckiego romantyka (tzn. związanych ze Śląskiem tematycznie lub tam powstałych – podczas pobytu w Głogowie [Glogau], w uzdrowisku w Cieplicach [Warmbrunn], Jeleniej Górze [Hirschberg] i górskich wędrówek w wyższych partiach Karkonoszy [Riesengebirge]), zestawionych przez Lachmanna i uzupełnionych o obszerne komentarze oraz ilustracje (grafiki komputerowe): *DurchFlug. E.T.A. Hoffmann in Schlesien. Ein Lesebuch von Peter Lachmann* (Przelot. E.T.A. Hoffmann na Śląsku. Czytanka autorstwa Petera Lachmanna).

Bohater książki Lachmanna to człowiek pełen sprzeczności, o którym można powiedzieć, że prowadził podwójne życie: był urzędnikiem państwa pruskiego, wspinającym się na kolejne szczeble kariery (asesor sądowy, radca sądowy, a później sędzia Sądu Najwyższego Prus), ale też człowiekiem żyjącym sztuką, twórcą pierwszej opery romantycznej pt. *Ondyna*, dyrektorem muzycznym teatru w Bambergu, ulubionym pisarzem Berlina, a wreszcie autorem, który wywarł ogromny wpływ na rozwój literatury grozy i fantastyki. Za dnia urzędnik, nocą artysta – tego rodzaju dwoistość towarzyszyła mu przez całe życie, w czym można upatrywać jednej z przyczyn predylekcji do motywu sobowtóra w jego twórczości literackiej. Najważniejsze lata swego artystycznego rozwoju spędził w miastach podzielonej Polski (Papiór 1999: 87). Dzieciństwo i młodość przeżył w Królewcu (Königsberg), gdzie miał kontakt z Polakami (np. drem Stefanem Wannowskim – nauczycielem greki i łaciny, Krystianem Wilhelmem Podbielskim – kompozytorem, organistą i nauczycielem muzyki,

3 Premiera spektaklu *E.T.A. Hoffmann w Płocku* odbyła się w Płocku 23 lutego 2004 roku; *E.T.A. Hoffmann: z Płocka do Warszawy* – premiera 10 maja 2004 roku w Muzeum Historycznym m.st. Warszawy; *Hommage à Hoffmann* – premiera 22 października 2005 roku w Łazienkach Królewskich. W rolę Hoffmanna wcielili się Wiesław Komasa i Adam Woronowicz.

4 *Warszawo, gdzie Twój genius loci?* – premiera w grudniu 2008, Pałac Szustra; *Sny o mieście W.* – premiera 20 maja 2013 roku, Pałac Szustra (w rolach Hoffmanna – Adam Woronowicz, Misi Hoffmannowej – Jolanta Lothe). We wszystkich wymienionych sztukach – jak można przeczytać na stronie wydawnictwa Deutsches Kulturforum – Lachmann „bada pokrewieństwo między Hoffmannowskim modelem sobowtóra a własną metodą pozwalającą aktorowi działać jako byt wielopodmiotowy", https://tinyurl.com/yc52d26y [dostęp: 12.07.23].

Matuszewskim – nauczycielem rysunków). Po ukończeniu studiów prawniczych na tamtejszym uniwersytecie (do jego wykładowców należał filozof Immanuel Kant), rozpoczął pracę w sądzie w Głogowie (1796–1798). Następnie przeprowadził się do Berlina, gdzie stworzył swój pierwszy utwór muzyczny – śpiewogrę pt. *Die Maske* (Maska, 1799). W 1801 roku został przeniesiony do Poznania, który po drugim rozbiorze (1793) znalazł się w granicach Prus, i podjął pracę asesora sądowego. Tu spotkał swą przyszłą żonę Mariannę Teklę Michalinę Rorer, zwaną Misią, z którą ożenił się 26 lipca 1801 roku[5]. Tu także stworzył kolejne utwory muzyczne: *Kantate zur Feier des neuen Jahrhunderts* (Kantata na uroczystość nowego stulecia) oraz muzykę do śpiewogry Goethego pt. *Scherz, List und Rache* (Żart, podstęp i zemsta). Lata 1802–1804 młodzi małżonkowie spędzili w Płocku, dokąd Hoffmann został karnie przeniesiony z powodu rysunkowych karykatur ważnych przedstawicieli pruskiej kadry wojskowo-urzędniczej Poznania. W 1804 roku udało mu się uzyskać przeniesienie do Warszawy, w której symbolicznie narodził się na nowo, gdy pod wpływem Mozarta zmienił swoje imię z Wilhelma na Amadeusza. W tym mieście urodziło się jego jedyne dziecko, córeczka Cecylka, która otrzymała imię na cześć patronki muzyki. Lata spędzone w pruskiej wtedy Warszawie należały do niezwykle udanych. Hoffmann rozwinął działalność artystyczną, głównie muzyczną, zdobył tu uznanie jako twórca. W 1804 roku stworzył muzykę do śpiewogry Clemensa Brentano pt. *Die lustigen Musikanten* (Weseli muzykanci), a w 1805 roku została wykonana i opublikowana jego *Sonata fortepianowa A-dur*[6]. W tymże roku został

5 Datę ślubu i nazwisko żony poety podaję za: Jaroszewski 2006: 12–13. Spotykane są dwie wersje jej nazwiska i oboczności w pisowni: Rorer/Rohrer lub Trzcińska/Trzinski. Za rozstrzygający należy uznać fragment listu Hoffmanna do Hippla z 1803 roku, w którym artysta wymienia rodowe nazwisko żony: „Maria Tekla Michalina, eine geborene Rohrer, oder vielmehr Trz(c)inska – Polin von geburt" („Maria Tekla Michalina, urodzona Rohrer albo raczej Trz(c)inska – rodowita Polka"; Hoffmann 1969: 167). To bodaj jedyne miejsce, w którym pojawia się nazwisko „Trzcińska". W innych, w tym w metryce chrztu, figuruje nazwisko „Rorer". Co do imienia, pod którym najczęściej występuje, należy powiedzieć, że „Misia" to popularne zdrobnienie imienia Michalina, a nie Maria bądź Marianna, jak podaje Jaroszewski (2006: 12–13). Z kolei Jan Papiór pisze, że polska żona poety nazywała się Trzcińska, była córką sekretarza miasta Poznania, a nazwisko „Rohrer" przejęła od spokrewnionej rodziny niemieckiej, u której wychowywała się po śmierci ojca. Nazwisko niemieckie jest tłumaczeniem polskiego, zrozumiałym dla ówczesnego niemieckiego otoczenia Michaliny (Papiór 1999: 84).

6 W zbiorze Józefa Elsnera pt. *Wybór pięknych dzieł muzycznych i pieśni polskich* (Warszawa 1805). Igor Bełza wnioskuje z tego, że Elsner nie uważał Hoffmanna za obcego polskiej kulturze (Bełza 1973: 39).

współzałożycielem Towarzystwa Muzycznego, w którym Józef Elsner próbował zebrać całe – niemieckie i polskie – warszawskie środowisko muzyczne. Zdaniem Igora Bełzy przyszły nauczyciel Fryderyka Chopina wywarł duży wpływ na muzyczne ukształtowanie Hoffmanna (Bełza 1973: 38).

Hoffmann był niezwykle barwną osobowością, której natura rozsadzała wymagany *modus vivendi* pruskiego urzędnika. Był wszechstronnie utalentowany, o czym świadczą jego dokonania pisarskie, muzyczne, teatralne i malarskie, a także sukcesy odnoszone w pracy zawodowej prawnika. Był też człowiekiem ceniącym niezależność, a przy tym obdarzonym dużym temperamentem, wikłającym się w skandale natury towarzyskiej i politycznej. Nie brakowało w jego życiu przejawów lekkomyślności, a jednocześnie potrafił wiele ryzykować, stając w obronie niezawisłości sędziowskiej i przeciwstawiając się manipulacjom władz (np. w 1819 roku podczas próby wykorzystania sędziów w walce z opozycją polityczną, z tzw. demagogami, co opisał w swej satyrze politycznej pt. *Mistrz Pchła*).

Książka Lachmanna składa się z 30 niezbyt obszernych rozdziałów (całość liczy 383 strony). Zaraz na wstępie jej autor zastrzega, że nie jest literaturoznawcą, tylko „uzależnionym od literatury artystą, który na swój własny wideoteatralny sposób i w licznych tekstach, jak np. *Opowieści pani Hoffmannowej*, zainspirował się i wiele zyskał od E.T.A. Hoffmanna" (Lachmann 2021: 7)[7]. Nie powinien więc zaskakiwać pojawiający się w niej styl eseistyczny. Niezależnie od tego zostały tu uwzględnione najważniejsze ustalenia istniejącej literatury przedmiotu. Autor przywołał kluczowe tematy badawcze i pojęcia, by przybliżyć i zweryfikować aktualny stan wiedzy na temat warszawskich lat artysty. Podzielił się też osobistą refleksją o tym, że twórczość Hoffmanna poznał dokładniej dopiero, gdy zamieszkał w Warszawie, co przyczyniło się do zintensyfikowania jego własnej działalności artystycznej. Swą książkę nazywa Lachmann wynikiem owej „spóźnionej znajomości" (Lachmann 2021: 7). Celem opracowania było zmniejszenie luki, jaką w badaniach nad Hoffmannem stanowią jego warszawskie lata. Autor jest jednak świadom trudności, jakie wiążą się z podjętym tematem: w inicjalnym rozdziale pt. *Vexierbild. Methodischer Exkurs* (Łamigłówka. Ekskurs metodyczny) zauważa, że „Hoffmann w Warszawie" to pojęcie, którego nie da się już w pełni zrekonstruować, podobnie jak układanego z puzzli obrazu, w którym brakuje wielu elementów.

To w Warszawie, zdaniem Lachmanna, Hoffmann zetknął się z nowym prądem literackim, jakim był niemiecki romantyzm, który następnie wzbogacił o zapoczątkowany przez siebie wyrazisty nurt. Za istotną cechę jego twórczości autor książki uważa wewnętrzne korespondencje i autocytaty, słowem

7 Tłumaczenie cytatów z języka niemieckiego – jeśli nie podano inaczej – K.Ć.

intertekstualne nawiązania do własnych dzieł, oraz wariantywność wybranych motywów. Te właściwości jego utworów skłaniają biografa do postawienia tezy, że autor komponował swe teksty literackie na podobieństwo dzieł muzycznych, a jako przykład podaje fragment pierwszego listu Hoffmanna z Warszawy (z 11–14 maja 1804 roku), w którym do swego przyjaciela Theodora Gottlieba von Hippla pisał o Parku Łazienkowskim następująco: „święty gaj obejmuje mnie swym cieniem! Byłem w Łazienkach!" (Lachmann 2021: 8). Po latach autorskie *alter ego* wspomina Park Łazienkowski w *Braciach Serapiońskich*[8], gdzie ponownie pojawia się porównanie Pałacu na Wodzie do sunącego po wodzie łabędzia. Inne warszawskie motywy można znaleźć w najważniejszych utworach literackich artysty – *Historii o Dziadku do orzechów i Królu Myszy* oraz *Złotym garnku*, a także w opowieści wchodzącej w skład *Braci Serapiońskich* dotyczącej rzekomych praktyk czarnoksięskich króla Stanisława Augusta Poniatowskiego (Jaroszewski 1995: 94).

Po przybyciu do Warszawy Hoffmann zamieszkał w kamienicy pod Samsonem, której opis został zamieszczony w owym pierwszym liście wysłanym z Warszawy do Hippla. Kolejny, po ulicy Freta, warszawski adres twórcy znajdował się przy Krakowskim Przedmieściu. Mieszkał też – pod koniec pobytu w tym mieście (styczeń–czerwiec 1807 roku) – w Pałacu Mniszchów przy ul. Senatorskiej, gdzie znalazło siedzibę warszawskie Towarzystwo Muzyczne. Jego pomieszczenia artysta ozdobił freskami o tematyce fantastycznej (maj–czerwiec 1806 roku). Zostały one zniszczone około 20 lat po jego wyjeździe. Ich wygląd zachował się jedynie w opisie sporządzonym przez jego przyjaciela z warszawskich lat, Juliusza Eduarda Hitziga (Lachmann 2021: 20, por. Hitzig 1986), późniejszego autora jego pierwszej biografii.

Warszawa czasów Hoffmanna była miastem ogromnych kontrastów, przybyszom z zagranicy rzucały się w oczy wspaniałe budynki na tle popadających w ruinę domostw. Zaskakujące wrażenie wywoływał ponadto fakt, że ta duża, bogata i gęsto zaludniona aglomeracja pojawiała się nagle na środku mazowieckiej równiny (Lachmann 2021: 13). Autor przytacza opis ówczesnego położenia i wyglądu stolicy z książki Marcelego Handelsmana pt. *Warszawa w roku 1806–1807* (Handelsman 1911: 7), sporządzony przez napoleońskiego oficera

8 Jaroszewski zwrócił uwagę na nieprawidłowe tłumaczenie tego tytułu: „W polskiej (okrojonej) edycji popełniono ewidentny błąd, tłumacząc niemiecki tytuł jako *Bracia Serafińscy*. Zwrócił na to uwagę w swojej recenzji A. Lam" (Jaroszewski 2006: 20). Można to wyjaśnić zasadami niemieckiej pisowni: oryginalny tytuł to *Die Serapions-Brüder*, czyli *Bracia Serapińscy*. Gdyby brzmiał on *Die Seraphions-Brüder*, wówczas trafne byłoby tłumaczenie *Bracia Serafińscy*.

Fantina des Odoards'a. Kontrast bogactwa i nędzy, typowy dla całej ówczesnej Polski, tu występuje ze zdwojoną siłą. Z przywołanych deskrypcji autor książki wywodzi następujące porównania: miasto – fatamorgana, miasto – złudzenie (Lachmann 2021: 14). W dociekaniach na temat Warszawy pierwszych lat XIX wieku Lachmann sięga też po świadectwa innych podróżników. Joachim Christoph Friedrich Schulz, autor publikacji *Reise eines Liefländers von Riga nach Warschau* (1795–1796), porównuje stolicę Polski do Rzymu (w którym znajduje się 345 kościołów i 164 pałace, podczas gdy w Warszawie 95 kościołów i pałaców) oraz do Berlina (który z kolei ustępuje jej pod względem liczby powozów, szczególnie w czasie zjazdów sejmu lub podczas sezonu towarzyskiego). W czasach pruskiego panowania Warszawa utraciła status stolicy i spadła do rangi miasta prowincjonalnego, tracąc stopniowo blask i rozmach stołecznej siedziby. Zmniejszyła się też liczba ludności – z ponad 100 000 do 68 000 w 1805 roku (Lachmann 2021: 15), a opuszczone przez właścicieli pałace popadały w ruinę (Kosim 1980: 78).

W jaśniejszych barwach przedstawia Warszawę tego czasu Papiór, który zauważa, że była nie tylko drugim co do wielkości ośrodkiem ówczesnych Prus, ale też miastem wielokulturowym, pełnym artystów i intelektualistów, z którymi kontakt pozwolił rozwinąć się talentom Hoffmanna (Papiór 1999: 88). W ten sposób zapamiętał miasto cytowany przez badacza Hitzig (Papiór 1999: 89, por. Hitzig 1823: 286). Także Hoffmann w jednym z listów zwrócił uwagę na niezwykłą żywotność tego miasta i witalność jego mieszkańców: „Pytasz jak mi się powodzi w Warszawie, drogi przyjacielu? Kolorowy świat! Zbyt hałaśliwy, zbyt szalony, zbyt dziko wszystko wymieszane" (Hoffmann 1924: 203f, cyt. za: Papiór 1999: 90). Potrzebny do tworzenia spokój pisarz odnajdywał w ulubionym Parku Łazienkowskim, Wilanowie lub Ogrodzie Saskim.

Niezwykle interesująco przedstawił Lachmann kontrowersyjną sprawę nadawania przez Hoffmanna, w ramach obowiązków służbowych, warszawskim Żydom nazwisk, które miały ośmieszający charakter. Przeprowadził własne śledztwo, omówił liczne, naukowe i literackie, opracowania tej kwestii i – m.in. z uwagi na jej popularność – określił ją początkowo mianem „warszawskiej miejskiej legendy" (Lachmann 2021: 37–53), której jednak – w świetle naukowych opracowań, np. książki Mariana Fuksa (Fuks 1992) – nie da się zaprzeczyć. Podobnie jak temu, że Hoffmann jako pruski urzędnik uczestniczył w polityce germanizacji (choć jako autor opowiadania *Ślub* wykazał się jednocześnie dużym zrozumieniem i uznaniem dla polskich dążeń wolnościowych). Nadawanie nazwisk ludności żydowskiej miało miejsce wówczas nie tylko w zaborze pruskim, lecz także austriackim i wszędzie występowały przy tym nadużycia (Lachmann 2021: 43, por. Hensel 2004: 171). Lachmann wysuwa

przypuszczenie, że Hoffmann dawał upust swej fantazji nazewniczej, widocznej także w jego utworach literackich, których bohaterów często obdarzał wymyślnymi nazwiskami znaczącymi, czego przykładem jest „kwartet warzywny" postaci w noweli *Königsbraut* (Królewska narzeczona): Pan Kapustowicz z Polski, Herr von Schwarzrettich (niem. czarna rzodkiew) z Pomorza, Signor di Broccoli (wł. brokuły) z Italii i Monsieur de Roccambolle (franc. rokambuł) z Francji. Problem antysemityzmu nie dotyczył jednak tylko Hoffmanna, lecz był zjawiskiem szerszym, spotykanym także u innych niemieckich romantyków, np. Clemensa Brentano (Vordermayer 1999), cechującym niemieckie życie umysłowe XIX wieku (Sterling 1969) w stopniu uzasadniającym traktowanie go jako kodu kulturowego (Volkov 1995).

Warto tu dodać, że o tym, jak dalekosiężne konsekwencje ma ta sprawa, świadczy sytuacja, jaka miała miejsce w Muzeum Żydowskim w Berlinie, zaprojektowanym przez znakomitego architekta Daniela Libeskinda (otwartym w 2001 roku). Twórca, zainspirowany utworami literackimi związanego przez wiele lat z Berlinem Hoffmanna (w tym ogrodem opisanym w opowiadaniu *Złoty garnek* oraz mechanicznym ogrodem Olimpii z noweli *Piaskun*), którego miejscem pracy był należący do Muzeum historyczny budynek sądu (Kollegienhaus, 1735), zaprojektował przy nowej siedzibie muzeum *E. T. A.-Hoffmann-Garten* (Ogród E.T.A. Hoffmanna). Pod wpływem oskarżeń o antysemityzm, mający się manifestować m.in. w opowiadaniu *Die Brautwahl* (Wybór narzeczonej), w którym znajduje się krytyczny opis cech charakteru przedstawicieli narodu żydowskiego, wycofano patronat romantycznego artysty, a ogród nosi obecnie miano *Garten des Exils* (Ogród emigracji). Pamięć o Hoffmannie stała się „miejscem pustym" zarówno starego, jak i nowego budynku (Posener 2016). W rzekomy antysemityzm autora *Dziadka do orzechów* każe jednak wątpić m.in. serdeczna przyjaźń Hoffmanna z pochodzącym z rodziny żydowskiej Juliusem Eduardem Hitzigiem, co podkreślają zarówno Lachmann w swej książce, jak i Alan Posener w przywołanym wyżej artykule.

Z biograficznej narracji wyłania się tyleż barwnie nakreślona fascynująca postać jej bohatera, co sylwetka autora, którego przemyślenia, sposób odczuwania i doświadczania Warszawy emanują z kart książki. Na jego widzenie współczesnej polskiej metropolii duży wpływ wywarła wiedza o jej trudnej historii. W opowieści Lachmanna przeplatają się w efekcie dwa tętna czasu: przeszłość, tj. okres warszawskich lat Hoffmanna (1804–1807), i teraźniejszość, tj. czas życia autora książki. Miejscem relacjonowanych zdarzeń z biografii niemieckiego romantyka jest Warszawa początku XIX wieku, ale i współczesna stolica Polski, postrzegana (często krytycznym okiem) przez Lachmanna. Te dwa czasy i dwa miasta nakładają się na siebie, a może odbijają się

w sobie, bo o efekt podwójności, ale też ulotności czy zjawiskowości zapewne chodziło.

Autor szczegółowo nakreślił konteksty historyczny, topograficzny i kulturowy pobytu Hoffmanna w stolicy. Nie sposób tu omówić choćby najciekawszych poruszanych w jego książce zagadnień. Istotne jest to, że nie tylko aktualizuje ona wiedzę o warszawskich latach Hoffmanna i rekonstruuje informacje na temat Warszawy jego czasów, ale jest też najpełniejszym opracowaniem tematu. Zawiera ona odwołania zarówno do klasycznego, jak i najnowszego stanu badań. Zamyka ją rozpisane na miesiące kalendarium pobytu Hoffmanna w Warszawie oraz obszerna bibliografia – polska i obca.

Związki jednego z najwybitniejszych twórców światowej literatury ze stolicą Polski warte są ze wszech miar nie tylko wszechstronnego badania w oparciu o aktualną wiedzę, ale też rozpropagowania. Także dlatego, że dowodzą one europejskich związków kulturowych, dwukierunkowych wpływów, w których uczestniczyły polska kultura i sztuka. Jaroszewski w obydwu cytowanych tu opracowaniach zauważał, że o ile istnieje w języku polskim już sporo historycznych, biograficznych i filologicznych prac na temat „E.T.A. Hoffmann a Polska", o tyle należy podkreślić brak opracowań na temat całokształtu jego dorobku literackiego (Jaroszewski 2006: 8) oraz jego miejsca w polskiej kulturze (Jaroszewski 1995: 96). Wydanie omawianej książki Lachmanna w języku polskim mogłoby przyczynić się do wypełnienia tej luki.

Lachmann wydaje się szczególnie predestynowany do podjęcia tematu niemiecko-polskich związków literackich z uwagi na swoją dwujęzyczność, kulturową biwalencję, biografię człowieka pogranicza i zajmowaną od lat pozycję pośrednika między dwiema kulturami[9]. O tym, że wnosi istotne wartości do obydwu świadczy m.in. fakt, że jego działania na rzecz spopularyzowania dzieł Hoffmanna w Polsce i w Niemczech zostały docenione przez E.T.A. Hoffmann-Gesellschaft w Bambergu prestiżowym wyróżnieniem[10].

9 Życie i twórczość Lachmanna dopiero w ostatnich latach stały się przedmiotem kilku prac badawczych. W pierwszej kolejności wymienić należy monografię Przemysława Chojnowskiego pt. *Liminalność i bycie „pomiędzy" w twórczości Petera (Piotra) Lachmanna. Studium literacko-kulturowe* (Chojnowski 2020); następnie rozdział z książki piszącej te słowa: *Laboratorium wspomnień. Piotr Lachmann – „Wywołane z pamięci"* (Ćwiklak 2013).

10 Medal stowarzyszenia został przyznany 14 kwietnia 2019 roku, w dowód „uznania, zachęty i wdzięczności dla Petera Lachmanna, aby publicznie uhonorować jego zasługi". Jego okolicznościowe przemówienie ukazało się w „Roczniku E.T.A. Hoffmanna" (2019, t. 27); https://tinyurl.com/mtty897d [dostęp: 10.05.23].

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| Abstract

KORNELIA ĆWIKLAK
E.T.A. Hoffmann in Warsaw. The New Book by Peter Lachmann

The article entitled *E.T.A. Hoffman in Warsaw. The New Book by Peter Lachmann* provides an overview of the book by the Polish-German poet, writer and translator devoted to E.T.A. Hoffmann's stay in Warsaw. The book's author outlines a broad historical, topographical and cultural context—especially literary and musical—of the Warsaw period in the life of the outstanding German Romantic (1804–1807). Lachmann combines a critical review of the existing state of research with an essayistic style, not free from autobiographical narrative related to his own experience of Warsaw, where he has been living for thirty years. Translating the reviewed book into Polish would help fill the gap in knowledge about the Warsaw years of E.T.A. Hoffmann.

Keywords: the life and work of E.T.A. Hoffmann, Polish motifs in the works by E.T.A. Hoffmann, E.T.A. Hoffmann's stay in Warsaw, Polish study of Hoffmann

| Biogram

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