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MATERIALIST CRITICISM: NEW APPROACHES

Baron/ Bryja/ Kaczmarski/ Kałuża/ Koronkiewicz/ Krzykawski/
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Materialist Criticism: New Approaches

This issue of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* is an indirect result of some of the discussions that took place during the three-part conference *Nowe/stare. Materializm w literaturze, sztuce, krytyce* (*New/Old. Materialism in Literature, Art and Criticism*) in Wrocław, Kraków and Łódź in 2018. The main goal of all three sessions was to arrange a space for a productive confrontation between the proponents of various conceptions of „materialism" in contemporary criticism, particularly those explicitly inter-ested in the so-called „new materialisms" (Dolphijn & van de Tuin 2012; Coole & Frost 2010,) and those ascribing to a more openly Marxist tradition. (To a certain extent, we aimed to emphasise and collectively analyse, in very practical terms, the methodological tension described recently by Terry Eagleton [2016] and Slavoj Zizek [2014].) The focus was on literary criticism, art criticism and cul-tural criticism; but, presentations given during the conference touched on a variety of fields, subjects and media.

Among the issues we wanted to discuss were both certain methodological developments—such as the relationship between materialism and everyday life studies, sociology of objects/things, or con-temporary psychoanalysis—as well as the ostensibly more abstract, yet somewhat more practical issues of „doing criticism" in a way that responds to the material reality of the world around us, from the climate crisis to increasingly common precariousness to automation and the invention of new post-human/hybrid subjectivities.

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What became clear almost immediately, was that there was no clarity,at least when it came to the existence (or a lack thereof) of „camps" or „factions" amongst those of us interested in the ongoing materialist renewal within contemporary criticism. Whereas most of the conference participants—and, consequently, most of the authors published in this issue of *Praktyka Teoretyczna*—saw the „new materialisms" as an important point of reference, they varied wildly not only in their overall evaluation of the movement, but also when it came to the possibility of applying certain philosophi-cal developments to the more precise issues of literary and cultural criticism. In other words, we debated both the theoretical and the practical implications of „new materialisms" to criticism—or a lack thereof—and this broad scope of debate is clearly reflected in the resulting issue of *Praktyka Teoretyczna*.

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Among the most hotly debated issues was that of textuality and textualism, understood both as the-oretical/philosophical categories rooted in post-structuralist thought and French Theory, and as more practical issues to do with the everyday activities of a critic. The question of whether certain modes of criticism that appreciate and emphasise the textuality of the work of art/literature are in-compatible with an explicit focus on the materiality of such work, is raised in two very different ways by Joanna Orska and Krzysztof Uniłowski. Whereas Orska offers a deep dive into the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, rediscovering them as advocates of a certain notion or vision of textuality and literariness, Uniłowski reaches out into SF and contemporary game studies in order to point out certain practical and theoretical limits of a „materialist" approach to fiction.

Michał Krzykawski is also interested in the limits of new materialism(s), albeit from a more method-ological and institutional perspective. Drawing on the work of Bernard Stiegler, Krzykawski offers some fundamental critique of the global structure and power relations within academia, philosophy and criticism, in relation to new materialisms as a movement or tendency within contemporary thought. His article focuses on the issues of technology and cybernetics, their (relatively) recent yet underappreciated influence on theory and criticism, and the changes they seem to necessitate in the context of our notion of knowledge.

On the other side of the spectrum, in a way, lies the article by Marta Baron. Here, the author offers a close, methodical reading of select writings associated with the Futurist movement, emphasising the issues of procreation, reproduction and the creation of life. By embedding these issues in a broader biopolitical contexts (including Roberto Espo-

sito's dialectic of immunisation and communisation), Baron sketches out a possibility of a materialist reading that transcends and subverts the traditional „vitalist" framework.

Articles by Anna Kałuża and Marta Koronkiewicz each offer a vision of a materialist poetics rooted in the work of specific authors, writers and poets. Kałuża draws parallels between the poems of Ad-am Kaczanowski, the photographic work of Andrzej Tobis and the „active poetry" of Ewa Partum, in order to showcase the various aspects of what she dubs the „neo-materialist" aesthetics in con-temporary Polish poetry and culture. Koronkiewicz, on the other hand, shows how a careful (re) reading of a certain tradition in Polish poetry—one that connects Adam Ważyk and Andrzej Sosnowski—may serve to deepen our understanding of the relationship between materialism and the literary form, and broaden the debate associated with the „new formalist" movement in literary history.

The latter is also among the primary objects of interest in Katarzyna Trzeciak's piece. Tracing back the development of a „post-critical tendency" in the contemporary humanities, Trzeciak seeks to escape the dichotomy of the „suspicious", „unmasking" criticism and the criticism based on straight-forward "affirmation,"by establishing a new model of criticism and knowledge, one that is both material and contextual in its approach.

Finally, Paweł Kaczmarski seeks to prove that materialism in literary criticism is not only compatible with the so-called „strong" intentionalism of Walter Benn Michaels and the „nonsite school"; the latter, Kaczmarski argues, is the only credible foundation for any „materialist" approach to text.

It is the editors' hope that, taken as a whole, this issue of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* offers not so much a definitive answer to what it means to engage in materialist criticism today, or even a coherent narra-tive on the recent developments in materialist criticism, but rather, a collection of voices that further expand the debate on the issues currently shaping this dynamic and hotly contested field.

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Materialist Criticism: New Approaches

KRZYSZTOF UNIŁOWSKI
Translated by: JAKOB ZIGURAS
Translation viewed by: PAWEŁ KACZMARSKI

Textualism, Materialism, Immersion, Interpretation

A note from the editors

Krzysztof Uniłowski passed away earlier this December. For the last twenty years, he has been crucial to Polish literary studies. Writing on a broad range of topics – from reviews of contemporary Polish novels to essays on the idea of modernity, from class-oriented analyses of sci-fi books and TV shows to comments on the politics and ethics of literary criticism – he developed an impressive and highly unique critical perspective, or indeed: a unique language of criticism, one that has managed and will undoubtedly still manage to inspire countless critics of all generations. Throughout his work, Uniłowski drew heavily on historical materialism, constantly balancing his instinctive focus on the political – and, specifically, on class – with his equally instinctive conviction as to the irreplaceability of literary form. While we might not have agreed on every single issue – as is always the case on the Left – we in "Praktyka Teoretyczna" are proud to have called him not just an inspiration, but a comrade.

Uniłowski passed away while putting finishing touches to the essay we're presenting below. Unfortunately, he never managed to send us the finished abstract/summary for this article, so it falls to us to try and summarise its main theses.

The issues raised in this erudite and formally complex piece include such fundamental questions as: in what sense do the fictional worlds resemble the non-fictional one, and how do we inhabit them? What's the relationship between immersion and interpretation? What real-life figures can help us imagine or visualise our intimate yet inherently social relationship with the fictional (are we guests, dwellers, passersby...)? Uniłowski looks for answers in contemporary Marxist criticism (Eagleton, Jameson, Berardi), sci-fi and fantasy writing (Lem, Sapkowski, Martin), as well as modern continental philosophy (Gadamer, Heidegger) and – in the last part of the essay – contemporary game studies.

We're happy to be able to present Uniłowski's piece in two versions, the original Polish as well as its English translation (by Jakob Ziguras). In order to preserve the unmistakable flow of Uniłowski's thought in English, small changes were introduced – with the author's full approval – in the English version. We trust that our Polish-speaking readers will find the comparison of the two versions interesting and instructive, as they seem to give a unique insight into Uniłowski's writing process.

Keywords: textualism, materialism, immersion, interpretation, utopia

Around 2000, many attempts were made to revise the textual paradigm that had dominated the humanities since the 1970s. These efforts have had (and have) an important political profile. Referring to the great criticism of postmodernism carried out by, among others, Fredric Jameson (1991) or Terry Eagleton (Eagleton 1996), it was eagerly emphasized that postmodern textualism belongs to the rules of late capitalist, neoliberal economics.[1] Hence, the attempts to recover all that was lost in the postmodern circulation of signs: the body (also the social body), sexuality, sensual experience, etc. The generational aspect also seems to be important here. New theoretical projects aroused particular interest among young scholars in the humanities, wishing to stand apart from the generation of their postmodern "fathers".

I provide some reflections on such concepts as new materialism or immersion. Their popularity shows the ambition to go beyond the limits of textualism, but one can doubt whether all these efforts allow us to achieve the intended goal. Finally, the body, the social body, sexuality, sensual experience—all this is subject to interpretation, which leads us back to textuality.

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The death of the author was supposed to serve the interpretative freedom of the reader. It placed him, however, against an impenetrable textual machinery, whose "sense-producing work" realised itself as if beyond every economy and teleology. The new understanding of the text constituted—at least in intention—a form of negation of the capitalist system. It marked out a sphere of production not subject to the categories of profit or, more broadly, of exchange value. For this reason, one should value the emancipatory and utopian potential of this conception; yet, on the other hand, the text as a process in which "languages circulate" unceasingly (Barthes 1977:164), may, equally well, be treated as an automaton, constituting an aesthetic representation of capitalism and semiocapitalism.

In relation to such a text, we find ourselves in a position similar to that of the protagonists of Stanisław Lem's *Eden*, who, having penetrated a foreign planet, come across something that seems to be a massive factory. One of them describes it thus:

The death of the author was supposed to serve the interpretative freedom of the reader. It placed him, however, against an impenetrable textual machinery, whose "sense-producing work" realised itself as if beyond every economy and teleology. The new understanding of the text constituted—at least in intention—a form of negation of the capitalist system.

1 The book by Bartosz Kuźniarz (2011) should be mentioned here from the Polish humanities literature.

> The Doctor smiled. "These things are drawn in here" – he pointed to the snout, which just then happened to open. "Now it's warming up inside, see? And now they're melting, fusing, being carried to the top in portions, where they're treated. Then, still red-hot, they drop to the bottom, underground – there must be another level there – and something else happens to them, and they come back up, by the same well, pale but still glowing. They journey up to the ceiling, fall into this" – he indicated the funnel – "and from there go into the trough, then the snout, melt, and so on and so on, forming, melting, forming" (Lem 1990: 50).

The very description of the thing in question as a "factory" is offered — how could it be otherwise—by the Engineer ("Well, we're home at last — this is a factory, an automated factory!" — Lem 1990: 46) and, in accordance with the principle of the Adamic name, is consistently exploited by the protagonists in their attempts to describe and cognitively master the object. Nevertheless, Lem's third-person narrative also introduces a few other tropes, transforming the object into a space —relating it now to a forest ("they wandered through the pulsing forest of this unusual factory" – Lem 1990: 47), now to an underground labyrinth ("the labyrinth on tubes" – Lem 1990: 49)—and, above all, it makes use of descriptions that animate the "factory" and ascribe to it the characteristics of a massive monster, a leviathan, in the bowels of which the astronaut-researchers have found themselves. If the Engineer's first identification domesticated this space ("we're home"), now—in accordance with the progress of the protagonist's journey—the space undergoes a de-realisation, being transformed, according to the logic of a nightmare, into a symbolic zone of danger and trial (a fairy-tale forest), metaphysical and existential riddle (a mythical labyrinth) and eschatological passage (the biblical Leviathan). The oneiric character of this fragment of the story is underlined by the fluid border between third-person narration and the protagonists' own speech; for instance, metaphorical descriptions pass from the text of the story into the independent speech of the characters. As an example, the "snout" appears first on the part of the narrator, and is next referred to with the pronoun "it" by the Doctor. We have, thus, an uncommon situation, where the narrator's descriptions qualify the seemingly independent speech of the characters. At the same time, the discourse implied by the original identification and the first name ("factory"), loses credibility and is now used as a mere quotation, thus underlining its own conventional character.

The metaphoricity and oneiric lability of the space sets into motion a process of cognitive dispossession of the protagonists; while the unen-

ding and impalpable circulation—the product is transformed seamlessly into waste, and this in turn into raw material— appears to be marked by madness. Production directed at itself, deprived of an external goal or sense, turns out to be a production of a sort that does not manufacture anything apart from the production of production itself. But, at the same time, the mechanism of repetition that propels the circulation, is based as much on self-presentation as on doubling — in consequence of which we're faced with production multiplying itself without end, obsessed with itself. The unreal space of absolute otherness, which there is no way to describe adequately, seems to come to life, to acquire monstrous characteristics, consuming the unfortunate researchers. The danger stems from the fact that the protagonists do not now stand face to face with the unknown, but rather are caught in the trap of language itself. However, if the "factory" discovered by them is a form of madness, then this must be their own madness, or at least the madness of the Doctor (from this perspective, his strange smile would be a symptom of the madness of the protagonist himself). ',Have you gone mad?' whispered the Engineer. On his forehead were large drops of sweat" (Lem 1990: 51). Except that both the whisper (not a shout) and the "large drops of sweat" suggest that he also suspects himself of participation in this madness.

In just this sense, the scene in the putative factory—from the story by Stanisław Lem—would constitute a critique of modernity; whereas the threat of madness would pertain precisely to the modern subject, who discovers that he has been dispossessed of his own language. However, another reading is possible, which would see the same scene transformed into a prefiguration of the late-capitalist simulation of desire. Referring to Deleuze and Guattari, Manfred Geier suggested that the "factory" functions in Lem's novel like a schizophrenic desiring machine, being a source not only of cognitive confusion, but also of . . . pleasure:

> All of this together, necessarily maintained in the shoddy order of a master concept: the "factory", (. . .) "functions" as a *game*, as a process of linguistic production, which may be — and desires to be — read without subordination to the laws of an in-advance-agreed-upon and socially -determined significativeness (Geier 1989: 118-119, my italics).

Nevertheless, such a change of perspective would demand one thing, namely: the abandonment of the question of meaning and the inclusion of oneself into this "game," going as far as the self-destruction of the subject in an ecstasy of "linguistic production." Of course, the pleasure

The scene in the putative factory—from the story by Stanisław Lem—would constitute a critique of modernity; whereas the threat of madness would pertain precisely to the modern subject, who discovers that he has been dispossessed of his own language.

flowing from this would demand a certain price. This time, however, the subject would be subject to being dispossessed not of language, but of matter, to being transfigured from a bodily being into a being purely communicative. The promise, which the textual automaton makes to us, has to do not only with *plaisir du texte*, but also — *être sauvée par texte*.

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Not long after the year 2000, in feminist theory, there arose the need to oppose oneself to the textualism that had, until recently, been influential. As Katarzyna Szopa explains, "the stranglehold of postmodernist constructivism, 'backfired' after such events as terrorist attacks, cataclysms, the development of late capitalism, wars, the degradation of the environment etc." (Szopa 2018: 99) Yet if we move beyond declarations, it will turn out that the shift away from textualism is not an easy matter, and the transition to the new materialism is founded upon a chain of substitutions. Szopa, the author of a monograph on Luce Irigaray, emphatically underlines that, already in the 1980's, there arose, with regard to this issue, a certain misunderstanding—as a result of which, Irigaray's pre-"new materialist" position was occasionally criticized, at the time, as being a hidden essentialism. On the other hand, it seems that feminist materialism itself, despite everything, remained in a certain relation with essentialism:

> According to [Alison] Stone, such an understanding—of biology, essence and matter as self-forming substances, taking an active part in the production of meaning—is *fundamentally an essentialist standpoint.* This is because it assumes that matter possesses a pre-discursive or pre-cultural essence, which is active, causative and dynamically changing, as well as tending to the expression of its specificity at the level of form and cultural activity. *Contemporary scholars of feminism described this position by the term "new materialism"* (Szopa 2018: 91, italics mine).

Nevertheless, already in the next sentence, Szopa states unambiguously: "Materialism, in Irigaray's work, is a perspective that is erroneously identified with essentialism" (Szopa 2018: 91). Thus, perhaps Alison Stone simply repeats the old mistake; though one could also express this more carefully, by assuming that all she did was recapitulate some of the existing accusations (Stone 2006; cf. Szopa 2018: 18). In any case,

Katarzyna Szopa calls, as her next witness, Naomi Schor, according to whom the "pre-discursive exteriority" in Irigaray's work is not bound up with an absolutization of the idea of the biological body, but rather indicates a particular referential sphere, one that's of concern to the experimental sciences. Nevertheless, the quote below shows emphatically that the experimental sciences function here as an instance of authority founded upon an immediate act of faith. We read:

> And that is her [Irigaray's — K.U.] reliance on the universe of science, notably physics (but also chemistry to the extent that the borders between them cannot always be clearly drawn) which enjoys a strange and largely unexamined privilege in Irigaray's conceptual universe (Schor 1994: 53).

So, if the scientific domain constitutes a privileged (originary) plane of reference for the practice of re-semanticisation, in Irigaray's philosophy, of the female body—or, specifically, of its generative parts, above all the "two lips" as well as the placenta—then it is clear that her "materialist" approach could be reduced to a merely discursive operation, as it consists solely in an invocation of a particular "scientific" language, the choice of which remains arbitrary and thus beyond any rational justification. As a result, the very privileging of science is seen by Schor as a spectacle of the uncanny, because precisely the category of the "uncanny" is evoked by the description of it as "strange" as well as "largely unexamined". Thus, the reference to science clarifies nothing, but rather to the contrary— additionally "obscures" Irigaray's arguments.

It follows from this that the gender difference does not at all have a pre-established character; to the contrary—it is established precisely through the sense-producing process; while its alleged "irreducibility" constitutes, in essence, a proposal—the assumed "finished product" that's presupposed by the entire operation. The joke lies in the fact that this "finished product" remains a *regulative idea* which, in the course of discursive practice, is invoked and mediated exclusively in a series of figurations following upon one another.

III

Franco Berardi's book *The Uprising* operates within a rhetoric of messianism, introduced here, no doubt, under the influence of Giorgio Agamben. Berardi expresses praise for a poetry that is fluidly transformed into a "coming European insurrection" (Berardi 2012: 68). Thus, poetry,

uprising and insurrection constitute, here, a series of synonyms — not so much a passage as a series of repeated representations that reflects a series of advents, rapidly following upon one another. In this way, the predicted parousia appears as a Derridean deferral and a Barthesian "deferred action", in the context of which "the *infinity* of the signifier refers not to some idea of the ineffable (the unnameable signified) but to that *of a playing* (...)" (Barthes 1977: 158).

Berardi's project assumes that poetry enlivens equally both language and the body. The parallelism and convertibility of these formulations suggests that it is a matter of the embodiment of language, the making of it into a (bodily) organ or, equally, an instrument, an "extension," a medium of human expression. This is possible because, as one of Berardi's Polish commentators explains, "poetry assumes the presence of the voice, and thus also of the body indispensable in the process of expressing oneself" (Kłosiński 2017a: 123). Nevertheless, the passage from voice to body is made here a bit too quickly, showing signs of wishful thinking. And if Berardi states that "poetry is a singular vibration of the voice. This vibration can create resonances, and resonances may produce common space" (Berardi 2012: 147), he, at the same time, redirects attention from the source of the vibration (the voice) to the acoustic system. Let us remember, then, that resonance results not only in communication, but also in the strengthening, filtering or distortion of the vibration. In turn, the introduction into the acoustic system of electronic converters opened the way to the complete disembodiment of the voice ("For it was voice and only voice, and there was nothing else beyond!"—to quote the poem *Dziewczyna* [Girl] by the Polish poet, Bolesław Leśmian, writing on the brink of the age of radio). Later we even discovered that writing and text are already, in their own way, an augmentation of the voice ("Turn on your receiver"—this time, a quote from the rock band Nazareth)—one which subjects the voice to mechanisation, ultimately causing it to lose itself in a labyrinth of its own echoes and transformations.

When Michał Kłosiński employs the term "utopian alternative" to describe Berardi's project, and dismisses his demands as "banal," one can distinctly hear, in this dismissal, a note of disenchantment. A "utopian alternative"—that is, it seems, an alternative that is unreal, apparent, fictional, impossible to bring into reality . . . All this is true; nevertheless, Berardi's project should be treated not as a philosophical or theoretical statement, but—as a poetic one. Thus, the point is not that the Italian author has not come to grips with the problems towering above him, and has not presented a credible method for bringing to life the double

miracle of the embodiment of language and of the recovery of speech. In essence, what appears as "utopian" here is not so much the specific alternative, as the materialism itself; one might say—*materialismo che viene* (the sequence of mediations remains after all "unendingly" open). The one thing I'm not certain about is whether materialism, as the object of eschatological desire, is truly an alternative to the capitalist "liquefaction of the world", or rather its necessary and complimentary part...

IV

Since materialism would be the utopia of our time, then all that would realistically remain for us is the textual game, unending and unlimited by anything, game as far as the eye can see. Yet, who would be the subject, the lord of this game? Already years ago, an interesting answer to this question was offered by Hans-Georg Gadamer. According to Gadamer, every game is bound up with "movement as such" (Gadamer 1989: 103) Game as movement would, of course, be a trembling; yet, in contrast to Berardi's vibration, it would not imply or point toward any mover, any source external to itself. This shift would assert "the primacy of the game over the players engaged in it" (Gadamer 1989: 106). The philosopher writes further:

Since materialism would be the utopia of our time, then all that would realistically remain for us is the textual game, unending and unlimited by anything, game as far as the eye can see. Yet, who would be the subject, the lord of this game?

> The attraction of a game, the fascination it exerts, consists precisely in the fact that the game masters the players. Even in the case of games in which one tries to perform tasks that one has set oneself, there is a risk that they will not "work", "succeed", or "succeed again", which is the attraction of the game. Whoever "tries" is in fact the one who is tried. The real subject of the ame... is not the player but instead the game itself (Gadamer 1989: 106).

Cersei Lannister, a character in the series of fantasy novels by George R. R. Martin, grasps this problem in what is, for this particular character, a strikingly aphoristic way: "When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground" (Martin 2011: 471). The protagonist addresses these words to Ned Stark, the (apparently) most formidable of her political rivals. Thanks to a well-thought out narrative focusing on the part of the author, the sympathy of readers of the first volume in the series is fixed on Ned; hence, his fall — though obliquely predicted by Cersei — may also be experienced by the reader with shock and disbelief. Only once imprisoned in the dungeon does Ned recognise that it has fallen to him to play the role of the fool. Indeed,

throughout the whole game, this particular protagonist overestimated his powers and influence, being in essence a figurehead, moving along paths laid out for him and, finally, acquiring only such knowledge as would prove fatal to himself. And so we may well come to the conclusion that the greatest mistake Ned Stark made was that he entered the titular game at all. This does not mean, however, that the protagonist was doomed to fail. On the contrary, he could have avoided the catastrophe, or at least postponed it, either by going over to the side of the Lannisters, or by accepting the proposition made to him by Renly and pre-empting Cersei's actions. Ned acted otherwise, however; from the very beginning he engaged in the contest in such a way that his honour not suffer from it. In other words, he assumed and consistently maintained the attitude of someone who has been forced to play the game, who is not completely committed to it and participates in it only in order to gain the privilege of withdrawing himself from the game. Meanwhile, as Gadamer wrote:

> Play fulfils its purpose only if the player loses himself in play. Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play. Someone who doesn't take the game seriously is a spoilsport (Gadamer 1989: 102).

Obviously, Gadamer distinguished between the simulated world of the game and the world of our existence, superordinate to the former. Yet if Cersei were right—and the "game of thrones" were to constitute a total game, a game without borders, in which one really "wins or dies"—then, in that case, our sympathetic "spoilsport" would be driven not by any home-sickness for a familial idyll in distant Winterfell (all of this would be only his own, "private," game) but by the death drive, augmented by a complex connected with the older brother Brandon, whom Ned had to, as it were, replace in the role of lord, husband and father. In the simulacral space of a total game—for instance, the "game of thrones"—only he who "completely submits to the game" intensifies within himself the will of life.

V

I reserve the term "total game" (or "game without borders") for a contest that would no longer require apportioning to oneself a space distinct from what Gadamer calls "a world determined by the seriousness of

purposes" (Gadamer 1989: 102). It does not require this space, since, in this particular instance, the game would turn out to be congruent with the world. If, however—as Krzysztof M. Maj argues—it is precisely thanks to immersion that "the game ceases to be a ludic contest, *since it becomes reality*" (Maj 2015: 377), then the case of the total game would demand—no more and no less—ideal immersion. Of course, in the real world such an ideal immersion does not occur. Maj recognises this, and so he speaks of a reduction of distance between the "world-recipient" (the reader, watcher, player) and the world of the story (*storyworld*), rather than a total dissolution of this distance. Thus, irrespective of the extent of the reduction, and irrespective of how much the initial value of the distance might decrease, we can safely assume that even in a far-reaching immersion, this value would, nevertheless, always remain positive, never quite reaching zero.

Maj presents immersion as "a new poetics of reception" (Maj 2015: 368) or, at least, a "style of reception" (Maj 2015: 389). But, though the status of this phenomenon seems to be strictly related to the rising role of new electronic media as vehicles of culture, it does not seem that immersion would constitute an essentially new, and formerly unknown, manner of seeing. In the dissertation *The Text as World and Game*, Katarzyna Prejzner was inclined to accept "immersion" (in Polish, this term was written here with a double "m") as a sort of "perspective on textuality, within which it is possible to interpret the text as a world" (Prejzner 2009: 39). The traces of an immersive mode of reception would be all the social rituals, games and forms of play that extend our experience of being in the fictional or virtual world we are entering always from the outside. Thus, immersion must be distinguished from all Romantic and Modernist efforts to transfer literature into, or repeat it in, "the real world." It is based on a movement leading in a completely opposite direction. Thus, we do not assume the role of a literary protagonist, who appears in the "real" world; on the contrary, we are arrivals "from here" who undertake the labour of exploring "another world." For this reason, the patron saints of immersion cannot be Don Quixote, Gustav or Lady Bovary. This role could, however, be filled by Dante Alighieri, Alice or perhaps captain John Carter, the hero of E. R. Burroughs' *A Princess of Mars* . . .

The problem of distance, raised by Krzysztof M. Maj, is crucial equally in this regard that it draws attention to the ambiguous relation that arises between immersion and interpretation. For the dependence between these two categories displays itself in a relation of inverse proportion: the fuller the immersion, the narrower the interpretative hori-

zon. And though Katarzyna Prejzner mentions the "interpretation of the text as a world," it seems that it is a matter here rather of the very experience of the text as a world, but at the cost of a simultaneous overlooking of its textuality, which both authors, Prejzner and Maj, underline, independently of one another.

Michał Kłosiński approaches the matter differently. Outlining his project of a hermeneutics of video games (Kłosiński 2018), this scholar reaches for the concept of "emmersion," proposed by Piotr Kubiński. What is essential, the distancing and alienating *emmersive* factor would be, or at least could be, introduced intentionally, in order to upset the illusion of access to the world of the story, and in order to demonstrate its poetic organisation (Kubiński 2014; 2016). In consequence, it is precisely thanks to *emmersion* that a video game would fulfil the demands laid down by Gadamer for the work of art, which is a particular type of game insofar as it is intentionally open to being supplemented on the part of the recipient:

> All presentation is potentially a representation for someone. That this possibility is intended is the characteristic feature of art as play. The closed world of play lets down one of its walls, as it were. A religious rite and a play in a theatre obviously do not represent in the same sense as a child playing. Their being is not exhausted by the fact that they present themselves, for at the same time they point beyond themselves to the audience which participates by watching. Play here is no longer the mere self-presentation of an ordered movement, nor mere representation in which the child playing is totally absorbed, but it is 'representing for someone.' The directedness proper to all representation comes to the fore here and is constitutive of the being of art (Gadamer 1989: 108).

If Piotr Kubiński outlined the dynamic of immersion and *emmersion*, then Michał Kłosiński did something different—the relation of dependence between both "forces" was grasped by him as a dialectical play, which requires an observer. This is an essential thing from a hermeneutical point of view,[2] since it makes possible the transition (or, to phrase it more carefully—the transitioning) from the game to the form of art. There remains, however, another issue: namely, that art itself is understood here rather traditionally, as a work or a product. From such a perspective, a hermeneutics of video games, based on the dialectic between

2 The methodological context for the project of a "hermeneutics of video games," sketched in the work of Michał Kłosiński, are the conceptions of Hans-Georg Gadamer, and especially of Paul Ricoeur. This author does not refer to a "radical hermeneutics," under the sign of Gianni Vattimo or John D. Caputo.

immersion and *emmersion*, would be a movement anti-Barthesian "in spirit"; it would be a shift from text to work.

Postscript

In an article from 2015, Maj made use of the formulation: to "*imaginatively (emotionally, viscerally) inhabit a world* [of a story — K. U.]" (Maj 2015: 381), borrowed from David Harman, inventor of the term *storyworld*, in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (Herman, Jahn & Ryan 2008). Recently, in Maj's doctoral dissertation (Maj 2018), the metaphor of "inhabiting" was replaced by "dwelling" or even "coming-to-dwell"! What is essential is that, at the end of his dissertation, Krzysztof M. Maj made reference — following Michał Kłosiński's article "Making a dwelling of virtual worlds" (Kłosiński 2017b) — to "the experience of worldliness in Heidegger" (Maj 2018: 282). Nevertheless, still more important seems to be the grammatical change, as a result of which "dwelling in the world" was replaced by "making a dwelling of the world". This is because "making a dwelling of" gained, thereby, a relational character, while the world ceased to function independently of its "dwellers"; it no longer looked like a vacant building (ready to be occupied), but became a world because, and only because, someone made a dwelling of it. Further, the process described ceased to be a pure work of imagination, gaining, by contrast, an existential-ontic dimension. Yet all of this came at the cost of silence, on the part of the author of this dissertation, with regard to the issue that—in the fragment of *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* cited by him—Martin Heidegger recalls the "old bridge in Heidelberg," but not the bridge leading to, say, the Hundred Acre Wood. Let us listen to the philosopher:

> If all of us now think, from where we are right here, of the old bridge in Heidelberg, this thinking toward that location is not a mere experience inside the persons present here; rather, it belongs to the nature of our thinking of that bridge that *in itself* thinking gets through, persists through, the distance to that location. From this spot right here, we are there at the bridge – we are by no means at some representational content in our consciousness (Heidegger 2001: 154).

Heidegger had in mind a place that had earlier revealed itself directly within the horizon of our experience, and was not "replanted" there from the world of the story. Nevertheless, according to Maj, this difference is completely negligible: "Instead of the metaphysical truth about

reality what appears is the truth about world-feeling, about being in the world and about dwelling; this latter truth transgresses beyond the artificial limits [demarcations? — K. U.] between factual reality and one that is fictional, fantastic or virtual—an opposition legitimated by the modernist inheritance of metaphysical imperrealism" (Maj 2018: 282). However, there is no certainty that the problem may be reduced to "imperrealistic" prejudices. A story does not necessarily demand that we equate it with "factual reality." Its purpose is rather to make us re-think our reality from a perspective provided to us by "world-feeling," which is akin to the experience of "being transported" (in the words of Richard J. Gerrig) into the world of the narrative. Let us recall the title of Tolkien's story: *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again*! It is not a matter, then, of "making a dwelling in virtual worlds". It is a matter of returning from "long journeys"—while letting them alter our very selves.

We remember, of course, that for Martin Heidegger a place is an open structure: "We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because *we are dwellers*" (Heidegger 2001: 146). True, to dwell means among other things *to rest*; at least, in the view of the Heidelberg philosopher, place and path do not stand in any sort of an opposition, since the latter constitutes an extension of the former. Thus, it is no accident that the construction provided as an illustration is a bridge: "The bridge *gathers* to itself in *its own* way earth and sky, divinities and mortals" (Heidegger 2001: 151). This is important, because a bridge does not here indicate passage alone; it is also the sort of place where we gather, a way-station. For this reason, Maj next references the oikology of Tadeusz Sławek and his co-authors (Sławek et al. 2013), which describes a house as an open place, a point of departure, "from which we can depart to the world and to which we can return from that world."[3] Thus, a house is not opposed to the world; on the contrary—it constitutes a portal or also a gateway; while a journey into the world allows us to look at a house from a different perspective. The lesson that's being told here is that the positions of "the house" or "the world" are transitional; while figures from a fictional or virtual world can receive us "at their place" or "at home." And this, according to Maj, is precisely the moral of an animated parabasis uploaded to YouTube, a sort of an addendum to the series of games about the witcher, Geralt. At a certain point in this film, during a feast with friends, the central figure of this fictional universe turns to face the viewer directly. Maj writes:

3 K. M. Maj, op. cit., p. 288.

> The longing of the player for the world of the game, finds its mirror reflection in the longing of the figures making a dwelling in that world—a longing, however, not so much for the player, as for a co-inhabitant, a companion during a long journey. [. . .] World-feeling is not, then, only an act of concretisation; it is not only a manifestation of a culture of participation and it is not only a product of a xeno-encyclopedic competence. It is, above all, a manifestation of a readiness to make a home out of a fictional habitat, to which one will return and which one will miss (Maj 2018: 299).

Yet, it seems that the series of breakups and returns constitutes a somewhat too sentimental interpretation of the existential allegories offered by Heidegger and Sławek. In his essay "Making a Dwelling in Virtual Worlds," Michał Kłosiński strived, in contrast, to remain faithful to the Heideggerian category of care (of course, this is so only to the extent that we agree that all care with regard to virtual worlds is something more than a game, more than just a *pretence* of care). Meanwhile, let us note that "making a dwelling" suggests the somewhat provisional, casual, transient character of this activity. Since, to the extent that we live always in some specific, distinguished place, at a specific address (even if this place remains—as Heidegger would say —in motion, and the address itself has a processual character), to that extent we can make a dwelling here and there: now here, now there, a little here and a little there . . . But, also from an oikological perspective, one should not necessarily tend towards a situation in which the "fictional habitat" becomes, for us, a symbolic home. Since, if it were this for anyone, it would be a "home" exclusively for the fictional characters, whereas we ourselves only make a dwelling of it, for a certain time, or from time to time.

It is also worth remembering that the animated parabasis to the series of computer games about Geralt, mentioned by Maj, is not the first supplement (or expansion?) to the "Witcher" universe. Let us recall that, in 1992, Andrzej Sapkowski wrote the story "Something Ends, Something Begins," which did not belong—but nevertheless referred—to the main series of the Witcher novels, and described the wedding of the witcher Geralt and the sorceress Yennefer. The story, published at first in the fanzine *Czerwony Karzeł* (Red Dwarf), became, some years later, the title work in a book gathering scattered texts by the author, a decided majority of which had nothing to do with the Witcher "saga".

This work by Sapkowski cannot, of course, be treated as an epithalamium, and yet it was written—as the author informs us in the introduction—as a wedding present, a present for a couple, moreover one

with a strong connection to the Polish fantasy fandom. True, in the story itself we do not find any devices that would intentionally disturb the illusion of autonomy of the fictional world; yet, it is necessary to note that the story's plot is focused not so much on the protagonists' wedding, as on the wedding guests, whose arrival may have been a certain surprise for Geralt and Yennefer; since "the list of guests—which was not very long—was composed by the engaged couple, while the inviting itself was to be done by Jaskier. It soon became apparent that the troubadour had lost the list, and this even before he had managed to read it. Ashamed, he did not admit to this and chose the easy way out—he invited anyone he could" (Sapkowski 2001: 173). Of course, the majority of the wedding guests are characters from the Witcher series, Geralt's companions; but there are also minor figures, with a history of only episodic appearances. The last to arrive at the Rozrog castle is the belated wedding-guest, the highwayman Vissing, known as Pow-Wow. "Geralt and Yennefer had already known Pow-Wow for a long time. Neither of them, however, had thought of inviting him. This was evidently Jaskier's job" (Sapkowski 2001: 199) Can we assume that Pow-Wow —absent from the pages of the novels—is a figure, an avatar, a symbolic and at the same time comic representation of the readers looking into the world invented by Sapkowski? Indeed, the author fulfilled the expectations of fans counting on a happy ending to the protagonists' wanderings. One way or another, Vissing was received by the newlyweds with full courtesy:

> "Greetings, Vissing," said the sorceress with a smile. "It is nice that you remembered about us. Make yourself at home."
>
> The highwayman bowed genteelly (...).
>
> "Many years of joy and a pile of kids," he announced thunderously, "This is what I wish you, my dears. A hundred years of good fortune, what am I saying, two-hundred, for fuck's sake, two hundred. Ah, how happy I am, Geralt, and you, lady Yennefer. I always believed that you would get married; although you always argued and snapped at each other like these, if you will permit me to say, dogs. Ah, for fuck's sake, what am I saying . . .
>
> "Greetings, Vissing, greetings," said the Witcher, pouring wine into the largest goblet standing nearby. "Drink to our health. Whence do you come? There was a rumour spread about that you were sitting in a dungeon."
>
> "I got out," Pow-Wow drank in one gulp and sighed deeply. "I got out, after paying that, how do you say it . . . Fuck! . . . bail (Sapkowski 2001: 199).

The character's vulgar language is the smallest problem, though it does betray that Vissing, arriving at the wedding feast, has found him-

self completely out of his element. Though he tries very hard, he is unable to behave appropriately. Yet, what is most important is the fact that Vissing has arrived uninvited and that, in general, he should not be here. He should remain beyond the stage of the fictional world, he should be "sitting in a dungeon", from which he got out after paying that, well . . . bail. This interference of discourses, typical for Sapkowski, serves not only a comical effect, but also indicates the heteronomic nature of the world he created, which reveals itself as a patchwork, sewn together from various elements (one might say: each one from a different story). For this reason, there is no way to agree, without reservations, with the idea that we "make a dwelling in virtual worlds." One should, rather, speak about the fact that we only stay in them as guests, remembering at the same time the ambivalent meaning of the figure of the guest.

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KRZYSZTOF UNIŁOWSKI (1967–2019) – literary critic and professor of literary studies, he taught at the University of Silesia in Katowice. He wrote extensively on subjects such as the politics of literary form, history of modern literature and art, and the relationship between literary modernism and science fiction. He published nine books and received the prestigious Kazimierz Wyka Award in 2010.

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KRZYSZTOF UNIŁOWSKI

Tekstualizm, materializm, imersja, interpretacja

Nota od redakcji

Krzysztof Uniłowski zmarł na początku grudnia. Przez ostatnie dwadzieścia lat był wśrod kluczowych figur polskiego literaturoznawstwa. Pisząc na bardzo zróżnicowane tematy - od recenzji współczesnych polskich powieści po eseje o ideach nowoczesności, od klasowo podbudowanych analiz fantastyki i seriali telewizyjnych po komentarze dotyczące polityczności i etosu krytyki literackiej - Uniłowski rozwinął imponującą i wyjątkową krytyczną perspektywę, a wręcz szczególny język krytyki, który zainspirował - i bez wątpienia nadal będzie inspirować - krytyków wszystkich pokoleń. W swojej pracy Uniłowski czerpał chętnie z materializmu historycznego, stale balansując swoje intuicyjne skupienie na tym, co polityczne (w szczególności na kategorii klasy) z równie intuicyjnym przekonaniem co do niezastępowalności formy literackiej. Chociaż nie zawsze się z nim zgadzaliśmy - co jest na lewicy normą, jeśli nie tradycją - to jako redaktorzy i redaktorki „Praktyki Teoretycznej" cieszymy się, mogąc nazwać go nie tylko punktem odniesienia, ale towarzyszem.

Uniłowski zmarł w trakcie końcowych prac nad esejem, który prezentujemy poniżej. Niestety, nie zdążył przesłać

nam gotowego abstraktu/streszczenia, musimy więc sami podjąć próbę podsumowania jego głównych punktów. Kwestie podniesione w tym erudycyjnym i formalnie złożonym artykule dotyczą spraw zasadniczych: w jakim sensie fikcyjne światy przypominają świat niefikcyjny, i w jaki sposób owe światy zamieszkujemy? Jak wygląda relacja między imersją i interpretacją? Jakie figury mogą pomóc nam w wyobrażeniu sobie - zwizualizowaniu - naszej intymnej, lecz przecież nieuchronnie społecznej relacji z tym, co fikcyjne (czy jesteśmy gośćmi, mieszkańcami, przechodniami...)? Uniłowski szuka odpowiedzi we współczesnej krytyce marksistowskiej (Eagleton, Jameson, Berardi), w pisarstwie sci-fi i fantasy (Lem, Sapkowski, Martin), a także w nowoczesnej filozofii kontynentalnej (Gadamer, Heidegger) oraz - w ostatniej części eseju - we współczesnych badaniach gier.

Cieszymy się, mogąc przedstawić artykuł Uniłowskiego w dwóch wersjach - w polskim oryginale oraz w angielskim tłumaczeniu (autorstwa Jakoba Zigurasa). Po to, by zachować trudny do pomylenia *flow* myśli Uniłowskiego w języku angielskim, do tekstu wprowadzono na etapie tłumaczenia - przy pełnej współpracy autora - drobne zmiany. Mamy nadzieję, że dla naszych polskojęzycznych czytelniczek i czytelników porównanie obu wersji okaże się ciekawe i pożyteczne - wydaje sie bowiem oferować szczególny wgląd w warsztat pisarski Uniłowskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: tekstualizm, materializm, imersja, interpretacja, utopia

Około roku 2000 podjęto wiele prób rewizji tekstualnego paradygmatu, dominującego w humanistyce od lat 70. Owe wysiłki miały – i nadal mają - istotny polityczny rys. Odnosząc się do wielkich krytyków postmodernizmu, jak Fredric Jameson (1991, przekład: 2011) czy Terry Eagleton (1996), chętnie podkreślano związek postmodernistycznego tekstualizmu z zasadami późnokapitalistycznej, neoliberalnej ekonomii (Por. Kuźniarz 2011). Stąd próby odzyskania tego, co było stracone w późnonowoczesnej cyrkulacji znaków: ciała (również ciała społecznego), seksualności, doświadczenia zmysłowego etc. Istotny zdaje się tu wymiar pokoleniowy: nowe teoretyczne projekty wzbudziły szczególne zainteresowanie wśród młodych humanistów, chcących odróżnić się od pokolenia swoich ponowoczesnych „ojców".

Poniżej oferuję kilka refleksji nad koncepcjami takimi jak nowy materializm i immersja. Ich popularność świadczy o ambicjach przekroczenia ograniczeń tekstualizmu - można jednak mieć wątpliwości, czy ów cel zostaje ostatecznie osiągnięty. Ostatecznie ciało, ciało społeczne, seksualność, doświadczenie zmysłowe są wszystkie poddane interpretacji, która zwraca nas z powrotem ku tekstualności.

|

Śmierć autora miała służyć interpretacyjnej wolności czytelnika. Postawiła go jednak wobec nieprzeniknionej tekstowej maszynerii, której „sensoproduktywna praca" dokonywała się jakby poza wszelką ekonomią i teleologią. Nowe rozumienie tekstu stanowiło – przynajmniej w zamierzeniu – formę negacji kapitalistycznego systemu. Wyznaczało sferę produkcji niepodległą kategorii zysku czy, szerzej, wartości wymiennej. Z tego też powodu wypada docenić emancypacyjny i utopijny potencjał koncepcji, z drugiej wszakże strony tekst jako proces, w którym „języki krążą bez ustanku" (Barthes 1998, 194), równie dobrze może być traktowany jako *automaton*, stanowiący estetyczną reprezentację kapitalizmu i semiokapitalizmu.

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Wobec takiego tekstu znajdujemy się w pozycji podobnej do bohaterów *Edenu* Stanisława Lema, którzy penetrując obcą planetę natrafili na coś, co wydało im się ogromną fabryką. Jak opisuje jeden z nich:

> Więc to jest tak – powiedział z dziwnym uśmiechem Doktor – te rzeczy wciągane są tam – pokazał rozwierającą się właśnie paszczę ryja – o, teraz ona rozgrzeje się w środku, widzicie? – teraz wszystkie się stopią – wymieszają – pojadą na górę porcjami, tam się zaczyna ich obróbka, kiedy są jeszcze trochę wiśniowe od gorąca, lecą na dół, pod ziemię, tam musi być jeszcze jedna kondygnacja,

> i znów coś im się tam robi, wracają taką studnią tutaj całkiem blade, ale jeszcze świecące, robią wycieczkę pod sam dach, wpadają do tego bochna – wskazał ślimacznicę – potem do „składu gotowej produkcji", z niego jadą na powrót do ryja, roztapiają się w nim, i tak w kółko – bez końca – formują się, kształtują, roztapiają, formują się[1].

Samo określenie „fabryka" pochodzi od – jakże by inaczej – Inżyniera („No, nareszcie jesteśmy w domu – to fabryka, automatyczna fabryka!", E 46) i zgodnie z zasadą Adamowego miana jest konsekwentnie wyzyskiwane przez bohaterów do próby opisu i poznawczego zapanowania nad obiektem. Wszelako opowieść trzecioosobowego narratora wprowadza też kilka innych tropów, przemieniających obiekt w przestrzeń i odnoszących go już to do lasu („krążyli po drgającym lesie niezwykłej fabryki", E 47), już to do podziemnego labiryntu (doktor „zagłębił się w labiryncie", E 49), a przede wszystkim – korzysta z określeń ożywiających i przydających „fabryce" cechy ogromnego monstrum, lewiatana, w którego trzewiach znaleźli się astronauci-badacze. O ile pierwsze rozpoznanie Inżyniera udomawiało tę przestrzeń („jesteśmy w domu"), o tyle w miarę postępów wędrówki bohaterów ulega ona odrealnieniu, przeobrażając się – podług logiki sennego koszmaru – w symboliczną strefę niebezpieczeństwa i próby (baśniowy las), metafizycznej i egzystencjalnej zagadki (mityczny labirynt), eschatologicznego przejścia (biblijny lewiatan). Oniryczny charakter tego fragmentu opowieści podkreśla płynna granica między trzecioosobową narracją a wypowiedziami bohaterów. Metaforyczne bowiem określenia przechodzą niejako z tekstu opowieści do niezależnej mowy postaci. Gwoli przykładu, to najpierw w partii opowiadacza występuje figura „paszczy ryja", do której następnie odnosi się zaimek „ona" w kwestii Doktora. Mamy więc niezwykłą sytuację, w ramach której wyzyskane przez narratora określenia warunkują pozornie niezależną mowę postaci. Jednocześnie dyskurs implikowany przez pierwotne rozpoznanie i pierwsze miano („fabryka") traci na wiarygodności i zaczyna być używany na prawach wyrażenia cudzysłowowego, a więc z podkreśleniem jego umownego charakteru. Stąd w relacji Doktora określenie „skład gotowej produkcji" zostało ujęte w cudzysłów.

Metaforyczność i labilność onirycznej przestrzeni uruchamia proces poznawczego wywłaszczenia bohaterów, niekończąca się zaś i niepojęta cyrkulacja, w ramach której produkt płynnie przechodzi w odpad, a ten z kolei w surowiec, zdaje się naznaczona szaleństwem. Produkcja nakie-

1 S. Lem, *Eden*, Kraków-Wrocław 1984, s. 50. Kolejnych przytoczenia oznaczam w tekście głównym symbolem „E" i numerem strony.

rowana na samą siebie, wyzbyta zewnętrznego celu i sensu, okazuje się produkowaniem jako takim, które nie wytwarza niczego oprócz samej tylko *produkcji produkcji*. Ale jednocześnie napędzający cyrkulację mechanizm powtórzenia służy tyleż autoprezentacji, co podwojeniu – skutkiem czego mamy sprawę z produkcją multiplikującą się bez końca, nawiedzoną przez samą siebie. Odrealniona przestrzeń absolutnej obcości, której nie sposób określić adekwatnie, zdaje się ożywać, nabiera cech monstrualnych, pochłaniając niefortunnych badaczy. Niebezpieczeństwo polega na tym, że bohaterowie nie stają już wobec nieznanego, lecz są *zatrzaśnięci w pułapce języka*. Jeżeli bowiem odkryta przez nich „fabryka" jest szaleństwem, to musi to być ich własne szaleństwo, a przynajmniej szaleństwo Doktora (w takiej perspektywie dziwny uśmiech byłby symptomem obłędu samego bohatera). „Zwariowałeś? – szeptem powiedział Inżynier. Na czoło wystąpiły mu grube krople potu" (E 51). Tyle że zarówno szept (nie okrzyk), jak i „grube krople potu" sugerują, iż także on podejrzewa siebie o udział w tym obłędzie.

W takim właśnie sensie scena w domniemanej fabryce z powieści Stanisława Lema byłaby *krytyką nowoczesności*, groźba zaś szaleństwa dotyczyłaby nowoczesnego właśnie podmiotu, który odkrywa, że został wywłaszczonego z własnego języka. Możliwa jest wszakże inna lektura, w ramach której ta sama scena przeobrażałaby się w prefigurację późnokapitalistycznej symulacji pragnienia. Odwołując się do Deleuze'a i Guattariego, niemiecki literaturoznawca Manfred Geier podnosił, że w powieści Lema „fabryka" działa na podobieństwo *schizofrenicznej maszyny pragnienia*, będąc źródłem nie tylko poznawczej konfuzji, stawiającej bohaterów na granicy obłędu, lecz także… *rozkoszy*:

> Wszystko to razem, z konieczności utrzymywane w kiepskich ryzach pojęcia nadrzędnego: „fabryka", (…) „funkcjonuje" jako gra, jako produkcja językowa, która może i pragnie być odczytywana bez podlegania prawom uprzednio ustalonej i społecznie zdeterminowanej znaczeniowości. (Geier 1989, 118-119; podkr. K.U.).

Wszelako taka zmiana perspektywy wymagałoby jednego, mianowicie – porzucenia pytania o znaczenie i włączenia się w ową „grę", aż po samozatracenie się podmiotu w ekstazie „produkcji językowej". Oczywiście, płynąca stąd rozkosz wymagała pewnej ceny. Tym razem jednak podmiot ulegałby wywłaszczeniu nie z języka, lecz z materii, przeobrażając się z bytu cielesnego w byt czysto komunikacyjny. Obietnica, jaką składa nam tekstowy *automaton*, dotyczy nie tylko *plaisir du texte*, lecz także – *être sauvée par texte*.

Scena w domniemanej fabryce z powieści Stanisława Lema byłaby krytyką nowoczesności, groźba zaś szaleństwa dotyczyłaby nowoczesnego właśnie podmiotu, który odkrywa, że został wywłaszczonego z własnego języka.

II

Niedługo po roku 2000 w obrębie teorii feministycznych dojrzała potrzeba przeciwstawienia się wpływowemu do niedawna tekstualizmowi. Jak tłumaczy Katarzyna Szopa, „zachłyśnięcie postmodernistycznym konstruktywizmem »odbiło się czkawką« po takich wydarzeniach, jak ataki terrorystyczne, kataklizmy, rozwój późnego, zaawansowanego kapitalizmu, wojny, degradacja środowiska etc." (Szopa 2018, 99). Jeśli jednak wyjdziemy poza sferę programowych deklaracji, to okaże się, że rozstanie z tekstualizmem (jego przezwyciężenie?), nie jest sprawą łatwą, przejście zaś na stronę nowego materializmu zasadza się na mechanizmie łańcucha substytucji. Polska monografistka Luce Irigaray dobitnie podkreśla, że jeszcze w latach osiemdziesiątych XX wieku w tej kwestii doszło do pewnego nieporozumienia, skutkiem którego pre-nowomaterialistyczne nastawienie francuskiej filozofki bywało wówczas krytykowane jako ukryty esencjalizm. Z drugiej jednak strony okazuje się, że feministyczny materializm mimo wszystko pozostaje w pewnym związku z esencjalizmem. Posłuchajmy:

> Zdaniem [Alison] Stone, takie ujmowanie biologii, esencji i materii jako samokształtujących się substancji, biorących aktywny udział w produkcji znaczeń, *jest w istocie stanowiskiem esencjalistycznym*. Zakłada bowiem, że materia posiada przeddyskursywną czy przedkulturową esencję, która jest aktywna, sprawcza i dynamicznie zmienna oraz dąży do wyrażenia swojej specyfiki na poziomie form i działań kulturowych. *Współczesne badaczki feminizmu stanowisko to określiły mianem „nowego materializmu"* (Szopa 2018, 91; podkr. K.U.).

Wszelako już w kolejnym zdaniu Katarzyna Szopa powiada jednoznacznie: „Materializm w myśli Irigaray jest perspektywą, którą *mylnie* utożsamiano z esencjalizmem" (Szopa 2018, 91; podkr. K.U.). Być może zatem w książce z roku 2006 Alison Stone powiela stary błąd, choć można by też wyrazić się ostrożniej stwierdzając, że niegdysiejsze zastrzeżenia zostały przez nią jedynie zrekapitulowane (Por. Stone 2006; Szopa 2018, 18). W każdym razie na kolejnego świadka Katarzyna Szopa przywołała Naomi Schor, zdaniem której „przeddyskursywne zewnętrze" u Irigaray nie wiąże się z absolutyzacją idei biologicznego ciała, lecz oznacza wskazywanie tej sfery referencyjnej, do której się odnoszą nauki eksperymentalne. Wszelako przytoczony niżej cytat z Schor pokazuje dobitnie, że nauki eksperymentalne funkcjonują tu na zasadach autorytetu ugruntowanego za sprawą bezpośredniego aktu wiary. Czytamy:

> Chodzi mianowicie o jej [francuskiej filozofki – dop. K.U.] *wiarę* w uniwersum nauki, a konkretnie fizyki (ale również chemii …), która *cieszy się dziwnym i jak*

dotąd niezgłębionym przywilejem w konceptualnym uniwersum Irigaray (Schor 1994, 53; cyt. za Szopa 2018, 91).

Jeśli więc uniwersum nauki stanowi uprzywilejowaną (źródłową) płaszczyznę odniesienia dla praktyki resemantyzacji w filozofii Irigaray kobiecego ciała – a właściwie jego części rodnych, przede wszystkim „dwóch warg" oraz łożyska – to widać wyraźnie, że domniemany materializm stanowi tu wyłącznie opcję dyskursywną i oznacza przywoływanie określonego, „naukowego" języka, przy czym ów wybór nie pozwala się racjonalnie uzasadnić, jako że ma charakter arbitralny. W rezultacie uprzywilejowanie nauki samo w sobie przedstawia się Naomi Schor jako spektakl niesamowitego, bo właśnie kategorię niesamowitości ewokują określenia „dziwny" oraz „(jak dotąd) niezgłębiony". Odwołania do nauki niczego więc nie wyjaśniają, lecz przeciwnie – dodatkowo „zaciemniają" wywody Irigaray.

Wynika stąd, że różnica płciowa nie ma wcale charakteru przedustawnego, lecz przeciwnie – jest właśnie ustanawiana w ramach sensoproduktywnego procesu, domniemana zaś jej „nieredukowalność" stanowi w gruncie rzeczy postulat, zakładany „gotowy produkt" całej operacji. Dowcip w tym, że ów „gotowy produkt" pozostaje *ideą regulatywną*, która w toku dyskursywnej praktyki jest wyłącznie przywoływana i zapośredniczana w serii następujących po sobie figuracji.

III

Ogłoszona w roku 2011 książka Franco Berardiego *La sollevazione. Collasso europeo e prospettive del movimento* (znana w Polsce najlepiej pod tytułem późniejszej o rok wersji anglojęzycznej – *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*) operuje retoryką mesjańską, podjętą zapewne pod wpływem lektury prac Giorgia Agambena. Berardi bowiem głosi pochwałę „poezji, która nadchodzi" (*poesia che viene*) i która płynnie, dzięki użyciu epifory, przeobraża się w „insurekcję, które nadchodzi" (*insurrezione che viene*). Poezja, powstanie, insurekcja są tu zatem synonimicznym szeregiem, nie tyle pasażem, ile serią kolejnych reprezentacji kolejno następujących po sobie kolejnych przyjść (*altera adventa*). W ten sposób zapowiadana paruzja okazuje się Derridiańskim opóźnieniem i Barthes'owską „grą na zwłokę", w ramach której „nieskończoność *signifiant* nie odsyła do jakiejś niewyrażalnej idei (nienazywalnego *signifié*), lecz do idei gry (…)" (Barthes 1998, 190).

Projekt Berardiego zakłada, że poezja ożywi zarówno język (*La poesia rivitalizza il linguaggio*), jak i ciało (*rivitalizza il corpo*). Paralelność i wymienność tych formuł sugeruje, że chodzi o ucieleśnienie języka,

uczynienie zeń (cielesnego) organu, jak również – instrumentu, „przedłużenia", medium ludzkiej ekspresji. Jest to możliwe, ponieważ – jak wykłada jeden z polskich komentatorów Berardiego – „poezja zakłada obecność głosu, a zatem i ciała niezbędnego w procesie wypowiadania się" (Kłosiński 2017a, 123). Wszelako tym razem przejście od głosu do ciała dokonywa się zbyt szybko, na sposób życzeniowy. I jeśli Berardi powiada, że „poezja jest wyjątkową wibracją głosu. Ta wibracja może rezonować, a rezonans może tworzyć wspólną przestrzeń"(Berardi 2012, 147; cyt. za Kłosiński 2017a, 123-124), to jednocześnie przekierowuje uwagę ze źródła drgań (głos) na układ akustyczny. Pamiętajmy zaś, że w wyniku rezonansu dochodzi nie tylko do przekazania, lecz także do wzmocnienia, filtrowania lub zniekształcenia drgań. Wprowadzenie z kolei do układu akustycznego przetworników elektronicznych otwiera drogę do całkowitego odcieleśnienia głosu („Bo to był głos i tylko – głos, i nic nie było, oprócz głosu!"[2] – ogłaszał poeta na progu epoki radia). Nieco później odkryliśmy, że już samo pismo i tekst są swego rodzaju wzmocnieniem głosu („Turn on your receiver" – tym razem to zespół rockowy Nazareth[3]), za którego sprawą głos ulega mechanizacji, zatracając się w labiryncie własnych odbić i przetworzeń (Por. Derrida 1987).

Kiedy Michał Kłosiński określa projekt Berardiego mianem „utopijnej alternatywy", a jego postulaty ocenia jako „banalne", to w takiej kwalifikacji pobrzmiewa wyraźnie nuta rozczarowania. „Alternatywa utopijna" to, jak się zdaje, tyle co alternatywa nieprawdziwa, pozorna, fikcyjna, niemożliwa do realizacji… Wszystko to prawda, niemniej projekt Berardiego warto potraktować nie jako wypowiedź filozoficzną czy teoretyczną, lecz… poetycką. Nie chodzi więc o to, że włoski autor nie podołał piętrzącym się przed nim problemom i nie przedstawił metody, za sprawą której mógłby się dokonać podwójny cud ucieleśnienia języka i odzyskania (dla nas) mowy. W istocie utopijna wydaje się tu nie tyle alternatywa, ile sam materializm, rzec można – *materialismo che viene* (ciąg zapośredniczeń pozostaje wszak „nieskończenie" otwarty). Nie wiem tylko, czy materializm jako przedmiot eschatologicznego pożądania jest alternatywą, czy też dopełnieniem kapitalistycznego procesu „upłynnienia świata"…

2 B. Leśmian: *Dziewczyna*. W: Tegoż: *Poezje wybrane*. Oprac. J. Trznadel. Wrocław 1983, s.

3 Utwór *Turn on Your Receiver* zespołu Nazareth pochodzi z płyty długogrającej *Loud 'N' Proud* (wymowny tytuł!) wydanej w listopadzie 1973 roku przez wytwórnię Mooncrest (nr katalogowy CREST 4).

IV

Skoro materializm byłby utopią naszego czasu, to w takim razie realnie pozostawałaby nam wyłącznie tekstualna gra, nieskończona i niczym nieograniczona, *gra jak okiem sięgnąć*. Kto byłby jednak podmiotem, panem tej gry? Już przed laty interesującej odpowiedź na to pytanie udzielił Hans-Georg Gadamer. Zdaniem filozofa wszelka gra jest związana z „procesem ruchu jako takim" (Gadamer 1993, 123). Gra jako ruch byłaby oczywiście drganiem, lecz w odróżnieniu od wibracji Berardiego, nie wskazywałaby na żadnego poruszyciela, na żadne zewnętrzne względem siebie źródło. Stąd właśnie wynikałby „prymat gry wobec prowadzących ją graczy" (Gadamer 1993, 125). Gadamer pisze dalej:

> Urok gry, fascynacja, jaką ona wywołuje, polega właśnie na tym, że gra staje się panem grających. Nawet w przypadku gier, w których chodzi o wypełnienie postawionych przez siebie zadań, źródłem uroku gry jest ryzyko, czy dana rzecz „przejdzie", „uda się", czy się „znowu uda". Ten, kto tak próbuje, jest w istocie wypróbowywanym. Właściwym podmiotem gry (…) nie jest gracz, lecz sama gra. (Gadamer 1993, 125)

Cersei Lannister, bohaterka cyklu powieści *fantasy* George'a R.R. Martina, ujmuje problem w zastanawiająco – jak na tę postać – aforystyczny sposób: „W grze o tron zwycięża się albo umiera. Nie ma ziemi niczyjej" (Martin 2011, 510). Swoją kwestię bohaterka kieruje do Neda Starka, najpoważniejszego (na pozór) ze swoich politycznych rywali. Za sprawą przemyślanej fokalizacji sympatia czytelników pierwszego tomu cyklu towarzyszy przede wszystkim drugiemu z pary bohaterów, toteż upadek Neda – choć pośrednio zapowiedziany przez Cersei – również przez odbiorcę może zostać przyjęty z zaskoczeniem i niedowierzaniem. Dopiero uwięziony w lochu, Ned rozpoznaje, że przypadła mu do odegrania rola głupca (Zob. Martin 2001, 652). W rzeczy samej, od początku do końca swojego udziału w rozgrywce bohater przeszacowywał swoje siły i możliwości, będąc w istocie figurantem, postępującym w ślad za podsuwanymi mu tropami i ostatecznie – docierającym wyłącznie do takiej wiedzy, która okazała się zgubna w pierwszej kolejności dla niego samego. Jeśli się zastanowić, dojdziemy do wniosku, że największym błędem Neda Starka było to, że w ogóle przystąpił do tytułowej gry. Nie znaczy to jednak, że bohater był skazany na katastrofę. Przeciwnie, mógł jej uniknąć, a przynajmniej odroczyć, już to przechodząc na stronę Lannisterów, już to przyjmując propozycję Renly'ego i uprzedzając poczynania Cersei. Ned postąpił inaczej, od samego bowiem początku pro-

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wadził rozgrywkę w taki sposób, by nie ucierpiał na tym jego honor. Innymi słowy, przyjął i konsekwentnie trzymał się postawy kogoś, kto do gry został przymuszony, kto nie jest w nią w pełni zaangażowany i uczestniczy w niej jedynie po to, by zyskać przywilej wycofania się z gry. Tymczasem – jak pisał Gadamer –

> Udział w grze tylko wtedy wypełnia swój cel, gdy grający całkowicie oddaje się grze. Fakt, że gra jest w pełni grą, nie wynika z zewnętrznego odniesienia do powagi, lecz tylko z powagi podczas gry. Kto nie traktuje gry poważnie, ten ją psuje. (Gadamer 1993, 122)

Gadamer, rzecz jasna, rozróżnia między symulowanym światem gry a nadrzędnym względem niego światem naszej egzystencji. Jeśli jednak Cersei miała rację, a „gra o tron" stanowiłaby grę totalną, grę bez granic, w której *naprawdę* „zwycięża się lub umiera", to w takim razie Nedem Starkiem, naszym sympatycznym „psują", powodowała nie żadna tęsknota za rodzinną idyllą w odległym Winterfell (wszystko to było jedynie jego własną, „prywatną" grą), lecz… popęd śmierci, wzmocniony kompleksem starszego brata, Brandona, którego Ned musiał niejako zastąpić w roli lorda, męża i ojca. W symulakrycznej przestrzeni gry totalnej, na przykład „gry o tron", tylko ten, kto „całkowicie oddaje się grze", wzmaga w sobie wolę życia.

V

Miano gry totalnej (lub gry bez granic) rezerwuję dla takiej rozgrywki, która nie wymagałaby już wydzielenia dla siebie przestrzeni z – jak to nazywa Gadamer – „świata określonego przez powagę celów" (Gadamer 1993, 122). Nie wymaga, albowiem w takim przypadku gra okazywałaby się równoważna światu. Jeśli zaś – jak twierdzi Krzysztof M. Maj – właśnie za sprawą imersji „gra przestaje być ludyczną rozrywką, bowiem *staje się rzeczywistością*" (Maj 2015, 377), to przypadek gry totalnej wymagałby – ni mniej, ni więcej – *idealnej* imersji. Oczywiście, w świecie realnym taka idealna imersja nie występuje, dlatego też Maj za kluczowy aspekt omawianego przez siebie procesu uznaje samą *redukcję* dystansu „światoodbiorcy" (czytelnika, widza, gracza) wobec świata opowieści (*storyworld*), nie mówi natomiast w żadnym razie o zniesieniu tegoż dystansu. Bez względu zatem na skalę redukcji i bez względu na to, jak bardzo zmniejszyłaby się wyjściowa wartość dystansu, możemy powiedzieć, że nawet w przypadku takiej imersji, za sprawą której war-

tość ta istotnie zbliżyłaby się do zera, to jednak zawsze pozostawałaby wartością dodatnią, nigdy nie osiągając stopnia zero.

Maj przedstawia imersję jako „nową poetykę odbioru" lub przynajmniej „styl odbioru". Ale choć ranga zjawiska wydaje się ściśle związana z rosnącą rolą nowych mediów elektronicznych jako nośnika naszej kultury, to nie wydaje się, by imersja stanowiła istotnie nowy, wcześniej nieznany, sposób percepcji. W rozprawie *Tekst jako świat i gra* Katarzyna Prejzner skłaniała się do uznania „immersji" (termin był tu zapisywany z podwojonym – uwaga: wibracja! – „em") jako takiej „perspektywy postrzegania tekstualności, w której możliwa jest interpretacja tekstu jako świata" (Prejzner 2009, 39). Swego rodzaju śladem odbioru typu i(m)mersywnego byłyby wszystkie przypadki dawania na mszę za duszę Podbipięty, jakie miały miejsce grubo przed wynalezieniem mediów elektronicznych. Chodzi o wszelkie możliwe rytuały, gry i zabawy, przedłużające doświadczenie obcowania ze światem dostępnym nam wyłącznie za pośrednictwem tekstu, a więc usytuowanym prymarnie poza horyzontem osobistego doświadczenia (w tym także – marzenia). Imersję trzeba więc odróżnić od wszelkich romantycznych i modernistycznych wysiłków przeniesienia i powtórzenia literatury w „prawdziwym świecie". Zajmujące nas zjawisko zasadza się bowiem na ruchu wiodącym w całkowicie przeciwnym kierunku. Nie występujemy zatem jako bohater literacki, który pojawia się w „normalnym" świecie, lecz – na odwrót – jesteśmy przybyszami „stąd", którzy podejmują trud eksploracji „innego świata". Dlatego patronami imersji nie mogą być Don Kichot, Gustaw ani pani Bovary. W takiej roli mogliby wystąpić natomiast Dante Alighieri, Alicja lub choćby kapitan John Carter, bohater *Księżniczki Marsa* E.T. Burroughsa…

Podniesiony przez Krzysztofa M. Maja problem dystansu jest istotny również z tego względu, że zwraca uwagę na dwuznaczny związek, jaki zachodzi między imersją a interpretacją. Zależność bowiem między tymi dwiema kategoriami wykłada się w stosunku *odwrotnie proporcjonalnym*: im pełniejsza imersja, tym węższy horyzont interpretacyjny. I choć Katarzyna Prejzner wspomina o „interpretacji tekstu jako świata", to wydaje się, że chodzi tu raczej o samo *doświadczanie* tekstu jako świata, ale za cenę jednoczesnego pominięcia jego tekstualności, co – niezależnie od siebie – podkreśla oboje autorów.

Inaczej sprawę przedstawia Michał Kłosiński. Zarysowując swój projekt hermeneutyki gier wideo (Zob. Kłosiński 2018), badacz sięgnął po zaproponowane przez Piotra Kubińskiego pojęcie *emersji*, funkcjonujące na zasadzie siły reakcji, odwrotności imersji. Co istotne, dystansujące i wyobcowujące czynniki emersyjne byłyby lub przynajmniej

mogłyby być wprowadzone celowo, dla zaburzenia iluzji dostępu do świata opowieści i dla zademonstrowania jego poetyckiej organizacji (Zob. Kubiński 2014; 2016). W konsekwencji to właśnie dzięki emersji gra wideo spełniałaby wymagania postawione przez Gadamera dziełu sztuki jako o tyle szczególnej odmianie gry, że intencjonalnie otwartej na dopełnienie ze strony odbiorcy:

> Wszelkie prezentowanie jest z samej swej istoty prezentowaniem komuś. O tym, że o to właśnie chodzi, przekonuje nas swoistość charakteru gry, jaka przysługuje sztuce. W zamkniętej przestrzeni świata gry jedna ściana jakby się zapadła. Sztuka kulturowa i widowisko nie prezentują oczywiście w takim samym sensie, jak prezentuje dziecko. Nie pogrążają się w swej prezentacji, lecz wskazują zarazem poza siebie na tych, którzy przypatrując się biorą w niej udział. Gra nie jest tu już sama tylko samoprezentacją pewnego uporządkowanego ruchu, w które popada bawiące się dziecko, lecz jest „prezentująca dla"… To specyficzne dla każdego prezentowania wskazanie wychodzi tu niejako na pierwszy plan i konstytuuje byt sztuki (Gadamer 1993, 127).

Jeśli Piotr Kubiński zarysował dynamikę imersji i emersji, to Michał Kłosiński inaczej – zależność między obiema „siłami" została przez niego ujęta jako dialektyczna gra, która domaga się swojego obserwatora. Rzecz to istotna z hermeneutycznego punktu widzenia[4], bowiem umożliwia ona przejście (ostrożniej – przechodzenie) od gry do formy sztuki. Inną jednak sprawą jest to, że chodzi o sztukę rozumianą dość tradycyjnie, a więc jako dzieło i jako *wytwór*. Z takiego punktu widzenia oparta na dialektyce imersji i emersji hermeneutyka gier wideo byłaby ruchem „z ducha" anty-Barthes'owskim, byłaby *ruchem od tekstu do dzieła.*

Postscriptum

W artykule z roku 2015 Krzysztof M. Maj posłużył się formułą „*wyobrażeniowego* (emocjonalnego, wewnętrznego) *zamieszkania w świecie* [opowieści – dop. K.U.]" (2015, 381), zapożyczoną od Davida Harmana, autora hasła *storyworld* w *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*[5].

4 Kontekstem metodologicznym dla zarysowanego w pracy Michała Kłosińskiego projektu „hermeneutyki gier wideo" są koncepcje Hansa-Georga Gadamera, a zwłaszcza Paula Ricoeura. Autor nie odwołuje się do „hermeneutyki radykalnej" spod znaku Gianniego Vattima czy Johna D. Caputo.

5 W oryginale: "imaginatively (emotionally, viscerally) inhabit a world" (*Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Red. D. Herman, M. Jahn, M.-L.

Ostatnio, w rozprawie doktorskiej Maja, metafora „zamieszkania" powróciła, ale tym razem w formie urobionej od czasownika niedokonanego (Maj 2018). Zatem zamieszkiwanie, a nie zamieszkanie! Co istotne, Krzysztof M. Maj – za Michałem Kłosińskim jako autorem szkicu *Zamieszkując wirtualne światy* (Kłosiński 2017b)[6] – nawiązał na zakończenie swojej rozprawy do „doświadczenia światowości u Heideggera" (Maj 2018, 282). Wszelako jeszcze ważniejsza wydaje się zmiana rekcji, skutkiem której „zamieszkanie w świecie" ustąpiło miejsca „zamieszkiwaniu świata". W ramach bowiem składni dopełniaczowej „zamieszkiwanie" nabrało charakteru relacyjnego, świat zaś przestał funkcjonować niezależnie od swoich „mieszkańców", nie zakrawał już na pustostan (do zasiedlenia), lecz stawał się światem dlatego i tylko dlatego, że ktoś go właśnie zamieszkiwał. Dalej, opisywany proces przestał mieć charakter czysto wyobrażeniowy, zyskując za to wymiar egzystencjalno-ontyczny. Wszystko to jednak za cenę przemilczenia przez autora rozprawy tej kwestii, że w cytowanym przez niego fragmencie *Budować, mieszkać, myśleć* Martin Heidegger wspominał o „starym moście w Heidelbergu", nie zaś o moście prowadzącym do – dajmy na to – Stumilowego Lasu. Posłuchajmy filozofa:

> Jeżeli teraz – my wszyscy tutaj – pomyślimy z tego miejsca o starym moście w Heidelbergu, to owo wmyślenie się w tamto miejsce nie będzie samym tylko przeżyciem zachodzącym w obecnych tu osobach, lecz raczej do istoty naszego myślenia o wspomnianym moście należy to, że owo myślenie w *sobie pokonuje* oddalenie od tego miejsca. Jesteśmy z perspektywy tutejszego miejsca przy moście tam, a nie przy jakiejś treści przedstawienia w naszej świadomości. (Heidegger 2002, 138)

Heidegger miał na uwadze takie miejsce, które wcześniej zjawiło się bezpośrednio w horyzoncie naszego doświadczenia, nie zostało zaś „zaimplementowane" ze świata opowieści. Wszelako wedle Maja ta różnica jest całkowicie pomijalna: „Zamiast metafizycznej prawdy o rzeczywistości pojawia się prawda o światoodczuciu, bycia w świecie i zamieszkiwania – która wykracza poza sztuczne ograniczenia [rozgraniczenia? – dop. K.U.] między rzeczywistością faktyczną a fikcyjną, fantastyczną czy wirtualną, legitymizowane modernistycznym dziedzictwem metafizycznego imperrealizmu" (Maj 2018, 282). Nie ma jednak pewności,

Ryan. London – New York 2008, s. 570).

6 Zob. M. Kłosiński: *Zamieszkując wirtualne światy*. „Śląskie Studia Polonistyczne" 2017, nr 1 (9). Szkic został przedrukowany w cytowanej wyżej książce *Hermeneutyka gier wideo*.

że problem sprowadza się wyłącznie do rzędu „imperrealistycznych" przesądów. Opowieść niekoniecznie wymaga od nas zrównania jej z „rzeczywistością faktyczną". Służy raczej temu, abyśmy przemyśleli nasz świat z perspektywy, jakiej dostarcza nam „światoodczucie", pokrewne doświadczeniu „przeniesienia" (*being transported* u Richarda J. Gerriga) do świata narracji. Przypomnijmy tytuł powieści Tolkiena: *Hobbit, czyli tam i z powrotem*! Nie chodzi więc o to, by „zamieszkiwać wirtualne światy". Chodzi o to, aby wrócić „z dalekich wypraw" – odmienionym.

Pamiętamy oczywiście, że dla Martina Heideggera miejsce jest to konstrukcja otwarta: „Nie dlatego mieszkamy, że wybudowaliśmy, lecz budujemy i wybudowaliśmy, o ile mieszkamy, tzn. jesteśmy *jako zamieszkujący*" (Heidegger 2002, 130-131; podkr. oryg.). Co prawda, mieszkać znaczy między innymi spoczywać, niemniej w ujęciu filozofa z Heidelbergu miejsce nie wchodzi z drogą w żadną kolizję, bowiem ta druga stanowi przedłużenie pierwszego. Nieprzypadkowo więc wzorcową budowlą okazuje się właśnie *most*: „Most skupia na swój sposób przy sobie ziemię i niebo, istoty boskie i śmiertelnych" (Heidegger 2002, 135). To ważne, bo most nie oznacza tutaj samego tylko *przejścia*. Jest bowiem także takim miejscem, w którym się schodzimy, *przystankiem*[7]. Dlatego Krzysztof M. Maj w dalszej kolejności przywołuje oikologię Tadeusza Sławka i jego współpracowników (Zob. Sławek, Kunce, Kadłubek 2013), w ramach której sam dom jest opisywany jako miejsce otwarcia, punkt wyjścia, „z którego możemy wyruszyć do świata i do którego możemy z owego świata powrócić" (Maj 2018, 288). Dom zatem nie przeciwstawia się światu, przeciwnie – stanowi portal czy też wrota, a wyprawa w świat pozwala spojrzeć na dom z innej perspektywy. Płynąca stąd nauka podpowiada, że pozycje „domu" i „świata" są przechodnie, postaci zaś ze świata fikcyjnego czy wirtualnego mogą nas przyjąć „u siebie", „w domu". I taki właśnie morał Maj wyprowadza z zamieszczonej na platformie YouTube animowanej parabazy do serii gier o wiedźminie Geralcie. W pewnym momencie tego filmu, podczas biesiady z przyjaciółmi, centralna postać uniwersum zwraca się bezpośrednio w *stronę widza*. Pisze Maj:

7 Heidegger pisze dalej: „Skupienie wyrażano dawnym słowem języka niemieckiego jako *thing*" (2002, 135). Germańskiemu *thing*, rozumianemu również jako instytucja społeczno-polityczna, odpowiada najściślej prasłowiański **větjb.* Związek wszelkiej gromady (wspólnoty komunikacyjnej) z drogą (i komunikacją) stanie się uchwytny, gdy zauważymy, że „wiec" to słowo spokrewnione z czasownikiem „wieść kogoś lub coś". Dalsze konotacje nasuwają inne słowa należące do tej samej rodziny wyrazów: „wieść" (tym razem w znaczeniu 'nowina'), „wieszcz", „opowieść", „powieść", „wiedza".

> Tęsknota gracza za światem gry znajduje tu lustrzane odzwierciedlenie w tęsknocie zamieszkujących ten świat postaci – tęsknocie jednak nie tyle za graczem, ile współmieszkańcem, towarzyszem długiej podróży. (…) Światoodczucie nie jest więc tylko aktem konkretyzacji, nie jest tylko przejawem kultury uczestnictwa i nie jest tylko wypadkową kompetencji ksenoencyklopedycznej. Jest przede wszystkim przejawem gotowości na uczynienie z fikcyjnego habitatu domu, do którego będzie się wracać i za którym będzie się tęsknić (2018, 299).

Wydaje się jednak, że sugerowana tu seria rozstań i powrotów stanowi nazbyt sentymentalną interpretację egzystencjalnych alegorii Heideggera i Sławka. W szkicu *Zamieszkując wirtualne światy* Michał Kłosiński usiłował na odmianę dochować wierności Heideggerowskiej kategorii troski, oczywiście, o ile tylko się zgodzimy, że wszelka troska o wirtualne światy jest czymś więcej niż grą, udawaniem troski. Tymczasem odnotujmy, że „zamieszkiwanie" sugeruje również cokolwiek prowizoryczny, przygodny, tymczasowy charakter tej czynności. O ile bowiem mieszkamy zawsze w jakimś szczególnym, wyróżnionym miejscu, pod konkretnym adresem (nawet jeśli to miejsce pozostaje – u Heideggera – w ruchu, adres zaś ma charakter procesualny), o tyle zamieszkiwać możemy tu i tam, to tu, to tam, trochę tu i trochę tam… Ale też z perspektywy oikologicznej niekoniecznie należy dążyć do tego, by „fikcyjny habitat" przemienił się (dla nas) w symboliczny dom. Jeśli bowiem dla kogokolwiek, to byłby on „domem" wyłącznie dla fikcyjnych postaci, My sami zaś w nim jedynie… zamieszkujemy. Przez jakiś czas albo od czasu do czasu.

Warto też wspomnieć, że przywołana przez Maja animowana parabaza do serii gier komputerowych o Geralcie nie jest pierwszym suplementem do wiedźmińskiego uniwersum (jego rozszerzeniem?). Przypomnijmy: w roku 1992 Andrzej Sapkowski napisał opowiadanie *Coś się kończy, coś się zaczyna,* nienależące, lecz przecież nawiązujące do zasadniczego cyklu i traktujące o ślubie wiedźmina Geralta z czarodziejką Yennefer. Opowiadanie, ogłoszone zrazu w fanzinie „Czerwony Karzeł", po latach zostało utworem tytułowym w książce zbierającej rozproszone teksty pisarza, w zdecydowanej większości niemające nic wspólnego z „sagą" o Geralcie. Utworu Sapkowskiego nie można oczywiście traktować jako epitalamium, został on jednak napisany – o czym we wstępie informuje autor – jako ślubny dar, prezent dla pary, skądinąd związanej z fantastycznym fandomem. W samym wprawdzie opowiadaniu nie znajdziemy chwytów zakłócających iluzję autonomii fikcyjnego świata, trzeba jednak zauważyć, że akcja utworu koncentruje się nie tyle na ślubie bohaterów, ile na gościach weselnych, których przybycie dla Geralta i Yennefer mogło

być pewnym zaskoczeniem, albowiem „listę gości – niezbyt długą – narzeczeni ułożyli wspólnie, a zapraszaniem miał zająć się Jaskier. Wkrótce wyszło na jaw, że trubadur listę zgubił, i to zanim jeszcze zdążył ją przeczytać. Zawstydzony, nie przyznał się i poszedł na łatwiznę – zaprosił kogo tylko się dało" (Sapkowski 2001, 173). Oczywiście, weselni goście to w większości persony z cyklu Sapkowskiego, towarzysze wiedźmina, ale też postaci z dalszego planu, pojawiające się epizodycznie. Jako ostatni do zamku Rozrog (czy skojarzenie tej nazwy z Sienkiewiczowskimi Rozłogami będzie interpretacyjnym nadużyciem?) przybył spóźniony weselnik, rozbójnik Vissing, zwany Łup-Cup. „Geralt i Yennefer znali Łup-Cupa jeszcze z dawnych czasów. Żadne z nich nie pomyślało jednak o tym, by go zaprosić. Była to ewidentnie robota Jaskra" (Sapkowski 2001, 195). Czy możemy przyjąć, że nieobecny na kartach „sagi" Łup-Cup jest figurą, awatarem, symboliczną, a zarazem komiczną reprezentacją czytelników zaglądających w wymyślony przez Sapkowskiego świat? Wszak w opowiadaniu autor zrealizował oczekiwania fanów, liczących na szczęśliwe zakończenie perypetii bohaterów. Tak czy owak, Vissing został przez nowożeńców przyjęty z pełną kurtuazją. Posłuchajmy:

> – Witaj, Vissing – rzekła z uśmiechem czarodziejka. – To miło, żeś o nas pamiętał. Rozgość się.
>
> Rozbójnik ukłonił się dystyngowanie (…).
>
> – Wiele lat radości i kupę dzieci – oznajmił gromko. – Tego wam życzę, kochani. Sto lat w szczęściu, co ja gadam, dwieście, kurwa, dwieście! Ach, jakem rad, Geralt i wy, pani Yennefer. Zawszem wierzył, że się pobierzecie, chociażeście się zawsze kłócili i żarli jak te, nie przymierzając, psy. Ach, kurwa, co ja gadam…
>
> – Witaj, witaj Vissing – powiedział wiedźmin, nalewając wina w największy puchar, jak stał w okolicy – Wypij nasze zdrowie. Skąd przybywasz? Rozeszła się wieść, że siedzisz w lochu.
>
> – Wyszedłem – Łup-Cup wypił duszkiem, westchnął głęboko – Wyszedłem za tą, jak jej tam, kurwa, kaucją. (Sapkowski 2001, 195)

Niewyparzony język bohatera to najmniejszy problem, choć zdradza on, że Vissing, przybywszy na wesele, znalazł się w sytuacji kogoś zupełnie nie na swoim miejscu. Choć bardzo się stara, nie umie stosownie się zachować. Najważniejsze jednak, że Vissing przybył nieproszony i że w ogóle nie powinno go tu być. Powinien znajdować się poza sceną fikcyjnego świata, powinien „siedzieć w lochu", skąd jednak właśnie wyszedł za tą, no… kaucją. Typowe dla Sapkowskiego zderzanie dyskursów służy nie tylko efektom komicznym, ale także wskazuje na hete-

ronomiczny charakter wykreowanego świata, który jawi się jako patchwork, zszyty z rozmaitych elementów (rzec można: każdy z innej bajki). Dlatego nie sposób zgodzić się bez zastrzeżeń z tym, że „zamieszkujemy wirtualne światy". Należałoby mówić raczej o tym, że w nich wyłącznie *gościmy*, pamiętając zarazem o niejednoznacznej wymowie figury gościa. Tak czy owak, pora na toast: łup cup, panie i panowie „światoodbiorcy" – czytelniczki, widzowie i gracze – łup cup!

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KRZYSZTOF UNIŁOWSKI (1967–2019) – krytyk i badacz literatury, związany z Uniwersytetem Śląskim. Wśród jego zainteresowań badawczych były polityka formy literackiej, współczesna polska poezja i krytyka, historia nowoczesnej literatury i sztuki oraz relacja między literacką nowoczesnością a literaturą fantastyczną. Opublikował dziewięć książek, w 2010 roku otrzymał Nagrodę im. Kazimierza Wyki.

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The Materiality of *Poiesis*

This article attempts to explain the reason behind a secondary division within the Spinozian immanence principle - a principle that occurs, or is construed, within what could be seen (after Deleuze) as the level of practice, and that remains crucial to the so-called posthumanist turn. Posthumanism seems to ascribe an important role to claims and theses that are oriented towards the abolishment of all dichotomies that rupture the existing substance (dichotomies such as form--matter, but also internal-external, subject-object, soul-body, reflection-truth/experience). Interestingly, embracing such a performative perspective - one in which philosophy or theory is something that is „performed" - is only possible when the division between the „immanence of practice" and the „poststructuralist" ideas of literariness or textuality is maintained and emphasised. The reason for this is that the latter has been strongly associated with the centrality of the human being, their language and their intellectual creations (see e.g. Braidotti, Barad). But, as I would like to point out, referring to Deleuze and Guattari themselves, this allegedly poststructuralist framework has been successfully transcended by poststructuralists themselves. Nonetheless, this did not lead them to exclude the art of language - including literature which, seen here as a type of social practice, was among the chief interests of these French philosophers.

Keywords: materialism, poiesis, avant-garde art, philosophy and art, Deleuze and Guattari, percepts, affects, performativity

Taken as a whole, the Spinozian problematic of the various manifestations of the "production-reproduction" of reality understood as life—biologically, but also, after all, within social categories and in relation to matters of political philosophy—is the point of departure for post-humanist projects (Janik 2018, 150). In these theoretical perspectives, a fundamental role is played by theses aiming to abolish every kind of dichotomy tearing apart the existing substance (form/matter, but also interiority/exteriority, subject/object, souls/bodies and the mirroring of truth/experience; see e.g., Haraway 2003, 6-7; Braidotti 2013, 37-38, 56-57; Barad 2007, 42 and 2003, 803-804; Markiewicz 2017)[1]. The object of my reflections remains the following question: in what manner does there come about a certain sort of derivative division of the Spinozian principle of immanence—occurring, or even being constructed upon, the "*common plane of immanence* on which all bodies, all minds, and all individuals are situated" (Deleuze 1988, 122), understood in Deleuzian terms.

1 In this instance, I have referred, above all to New Materialism; however, what is at bottom essential for this sketch is the manner in which posthumanist perspectives are applied to literary studies research, especially that which is bound up with the concept of affectivity (Zaleski 2015, Dauksza 2015 and 2017, Glosowitz 2018). Gestures in the direction of an immanence understood in Spinozian terms are often made without invoking the name of the philosopher, simply in the spirit of the interdisciplinarity which constitutes the foundation of the cultural turn in Polish literary studies. Such gestures are made, finally, in relations to the posthumanist turn; they are bound up (though of course not in every instance) with an anti-formalistic tendency—deriving from a desire for separation from poststructuralism and, above all, from an interest in textuality alone—as well as with having a general problem with literature understood within the categories of autonomy. The words of two introductions to an edited volume, including Polish theoreticians and anthropologists of literature—*Nowa humanistyka: Zajmowanie pozycji, negocjowanie autonomii*—seem emblematic of this tendency. The editors of this volume treat the concept of autonomy—in this case, the autonomy of literature or literary studies—as an essential inheritance of a discipline in fact transgressing its own boundaries—a phenomenon which is, in fact, impossible clearly to problematise, from today's point of view, and one with which it is difficult to come to grips. One can only come to terms with it in the context of a performatively understood weak theory, rather than one which orders research (Nycz 2017, 28 and 38–39; Czapliński 2017, 12–13). Such an approach brings about its own sort of "displacement" of the puzzle of autonomy, beyond a scholarly discourse bound up with aesthetics, as a question less essential, less interesting and associated with a subject that arbitrarily determines the field of its own power, is modern, and rationalises its world in a scientific manner. It is supposed simply to be eliminated as a meaningful concept together with the transgression of the boundaries of the discipline. I must emphasise here that it is not my intention to present a critique of posthumanist perspectives, but only to attempt to introduce corrections to the theses connected to this turn.

The philosophical principle of immanence can be treated, in general, as a point of transgressions proposed within the frame of posthumanism. In Gilles Deleuze's book *Spinoza: The Practical Philosophy*, what remains particularly essential for the author is the way in which the "plane of immanence" comes to be related to itself "geometrically" as a diagram, and as a "life" practice at the same time:

> This plane of immanence or consistency is a plan, but not in the sense of a mental design, a project, a program; it is a plan in the geometric sense: a section, an intersection, a diagram. Thus, to be in the middle of Spinoza is to be on this modal plane, or rather to install oneself on this plane –which implies a mode of living, a way of life. What is this plane and how does one construct it? For at the same it is fully a plane of immanence, and yet it has to be constructed if one is to live in a Spinozist manner" (Deleuze 1988, 122-123)

An important element of Spinozian immanence remains, I repeat, a practical "installing of oneself on a modal plane," which can also be expressed as "a way of life" (Deleuze 1988, 122). It can be understood as well, as one would like to say, as "performing" this plane, which immediately brings it about that one can't understand it only as a "mental performance," or as a defined representation. It remains, at the same moment, both what describes our location and that which is produced by us. Thus, there is no world beyond us all (bodies, souls, individuals)—which does not mean that one cannot think about the rules or the poetics of our creation. These rules (of composition) are also not excluded from the Deleuzian world; rather, they are worked over by this world, removed from concepts bound up with the categories of ready-made representations and of projects to be realised.

The adoption of such a—performatively understood and practical—perspective of the theory or philosophy, what is interesting, in many of the perspectives found within the posthumanist turn becomes possible only thanks to a qualification of the separability of "the immanence of practice" from the literariness dominant in the context of the poststructuralist turn, or, as one would rather say, the textuality and semiotic structures ordering a socially understood space, ment as its dominant aspect. For, this is a sphere associated with traditionally placing the human being at the centre of its interest, as well as human language and its intellectual products (Barad 2007, 42; Braidotti 2013, 29-30).

The structuralist understanding of language was, in fact, transcended—as a certain type of modern, absolutising organisation of the space of experience—by virtually all of the poststructuralists, including Deleuze

The structuralist understanding of language was, in fact, transcended—as a certain type of modern, absolutising organisation of the space of experience—by virtually all of the poststructuralists, including Deleuze and Guattari, who remain an important point of reference for the proponents of the so-called posthumanist turn.

and Guattari, who remain an important point of reference for the proponents of the so-called posthumanist turn. This, however, didn't necessarily imply the exclusion of art—especially avant-garde art (including avant-garde literature)—which was still seen as a unique type of social practice, and thus a fundamental object of interest to those French philosophers. The status ascribed to this practice was, however, very ambiguous; thus, a tendency emerged to underline not only the political nature of every text, but also its performativity—which was seen, by the same token, as taking a place in the real world (Derrida 1981, 68-69; Barthes 1998; Burzyńska 2013, 272).

At the very beginning of her interesting book *Politics Beyond Form: The Ontological Conditions of the Political Philosophy* (2012), Joanna Bednarek draws a precise (both historically and theoretically) line between the debates on postmodernism and poststructuralism. She consigns to oblivion the former—as a procedure critical to modernity, based on a Fukuyama-esque thesis of "the end of history" and a series of propositions (primarily philosophical, but also aesthetic and social) such as relativism, the demand for pluralisation of values, narratives and ways of living, but also the tendency to exclude some ontological issues—the ones that make a real ethical or political difference—from the domain of social practice. In Bednarek's book, postmodernism (though I admit that an attempt to defend this, not very successful, category derived from cultural studies makes little sense) is relegated—together with "textuality" or, one might say, "literariness" (which after all seem to belong to poststructuralist disourse)—to a space which is not treated very favourably by contemporary Polish political philosophers. This is the space of an elitist, intellectual play, occasionally revealing its socially harmful or, let us say after Deleuze and Guattari, Oedipal—if not openly fascist—side. Interestingly, the whole series of strictly "literary" topics commented on by the poststructuralists themselves—topics which are here read through the lens of the Polish reinterpretation of postmodernism and postructuralism—are, in effect, placed on the "dark" side of the force: one that is non-emancipatory, noncritical, one that supports the economic determinant of the capitalist oppression (which neutralizes any possibility of emancipation) and that supports the now completely exhausted discussion about the expiration of modernity and its great narratives (which includes those offered by Lyotard, Bauman, Rorty, Baudrilliard; Bednarek 2012, 18). And so, though the author herself admits that one should see the great poststructuralists—Lacan, Barthes and Derrida—as poststructuralism's "main representatives," their theories remain distinguished from a positively understood, let us say interven-

tionist, poststructuralism, since unlike the authors associated with this positive paradigm (Agamben, Žižek, or Hardt and Negri), they do not seem to possess a "political theory". Ultimately, Bednarek does not decide in what role Derrida, for instance—especially problematic, in this context, on account of his repeated and strongly political theses—is to not-appear in her work. She only notes: "'Political' poststructuralism is different from 'textualist' poststructuralism, which till now has remained at the centre of the attention of various researchers, especially in Poland" (Bednarek 2012, 21).

This way, issues that are after all essential for very many poststructuralist philosophers (indeed, not excluding Foucault, Deleuze, or Agamben)—and are bound up precisely with language and "belles-lettres" as a particular model of social practice—are, ultimately, separated from allegedly more important political issues. Meanwhile, textuality, understood in a poststructuralist manner, is not only, and is not so much, subject to various structural-generative procedures, but also sets into motion—predominately as one of the driving functions of the proliferation of textual meanings—cognitive and ontological questions. The structures, processes of semiosis and textuality located within the order of philosophical discourse, beyond the boundary excluding the questions bound up with them, become a new "form": an untruth with regard to truth, falsely mirroring the world of matter-idea. In the majority of posthumanistic gestures—even if we take into consideration, let's say, those constituting a strong current in Polish research on affectivity, immediately bound up with literary phenomena —there arises a similar, crypto-dialectical, schema of theoretical activity, revealing an unchangingly real, true difference, which is accepted as an axiom.

Issues potentially tied to "literariness," designating an important current of reflection in the field of the Polish humanities in the 1990s, are treated by Bednarek as categories central to postmodernism. Textuality, understood as a free play of signs, a pluralism of narratives, or a linguistic and social constructivism, was to signify the pre-eminence of deconstruction, recognised as a paradigmatic example of "French Theory." The consequence of this was the non-discernment of the political specificity of the perspectives of Lacan, Deleuze, or Foucault (Bednarek 2012, 18). I agree with Bednarek's claim concerning generalisations and distortions caused by the reception of French thought in the pragmatism-influenced space of American universities, from which it was also transplanted onto the terrain of Polish theory. This issue has been discussed on several occasions (Domańska and Loba 2010, Burzyńska 2013, Szopa 2017, Orska 2018). The non-discernment of the political

character of poststructuralist theory constitutes, as Bednarek accurately notes, the fundamental deficiency of this reception. What stays interesting, however, is the way in which Polish (re)interpreters of political philosophy tend to throw the baby out with the bathwater when trying to separate themselves from the postmodernist perspective. "Literariness" or "textuality" are only allowed as long as the text has a distinctly political, "truth-declaring" message. Attempts at reflection upon the literary, as well as upon the text itself, are abandoned—textuality itself being apparently worthy of attention solely among older, white, heterosexual (and meat-eating) gentlemen.

I write all this, in order to draw attention to the potential found in certain observations on art (and literature in particular) made by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Since the protagonists of this article (perhaps the strongest precursors both of the posthumanist turn and of new materialism), with full conviction related themselves to the avant-garde (and neo-avant-garde)—Gilles Deleuze was, as is known, the author not only of a few books about experimental literature, but also of a treatise on cinema—their conceptions are especially well-suited to being the object of my reflection. These authors perceive art and literature (above all precisely in their semiosis, integrated in their work with a broadly understood machinistic production of the real) as an essential manifestation of collective reality. As such, comments on art and literature accompany here various social diagnoses; this happens in both volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*: in *Anti-Oedipus* (to which I want to draw particular attention; Deleuze and Guattari 1983), as well as in *A Thousand Plateaus (*Deleuze and Guattari 1987), the latter of which, in Poland, has been described by the publisher as "philosophical poetry." Both of these books are, in many places, explicitly dedicated to language: structures, semiosis, grammar, logic, but also precisely the art of language, first on account of the authors' indebtedness to Lacan, secondly, on account of a certain cultural context, namely, the strength of the artistic and literary avant-garde, circa 1968. Out of necessity, I will refer to this matter only very briefly.

Within the frame of their post-Kantian project, in the essay *What is philosophy?* (Deleuze and Guattari 1994), art (also in its textuality and as literature) functions alongside philosophy—whose concepts are considered events—as a collection of percepts and affects, forces of perception and passion, joined together (as both created and self-establishing) into compositions (ibid., 65–66). Percepts and affects, alongside philosophical concepts and scientific functions (and partial observers) constitute an element of theory (experience), which is at the same time the

production of the real. Art, as a practice co-creating them in a manner proper to itself, comes to be distinguished, by the authors, as that which "preserves" impressions: "Art preserves, and it's the only thing in the world that is preserved" (ibid., 163).[2] Thus, art is meant to preserve "the blocks of present sensations" (ibid., 167), which, according to Deleuze and Guattari, do not memorialise so much what has passed away as, rather, constitute a distinctive contemporised practice: "A monument does not commemorate or celebrate something that happened but it confides to the ear of the future the persistent sensations that embody the event: the constantly renewed suffering of men and women, their reacted protestations, their constantly resumed struggle" (ibid., 176-177). As is known, also from some of the more political observations made by Deleuze and Guattari, this can have negative consequences as well, helping to maintain the status quo, on account of the similarly de-territorialising nature of capitalism (Herer 2006, 15); however, it is also the only way of escaping beyond despotic, automated modes of production. Art, in *Anti-Oedipus*, is one of the desiring-machines; in *What is philosophy?* it becomes one of the three levels on which the production of the real takes place.

The assumption of the essential importance of art, in its role as a desiring-machine, constitutes, on various levels, an essential element of Deleuze's and Guattari's work.[3] Deleuze's *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*

The assumption of the essential importance of art, in its role as a desiring-machine, constitutes, on various levels, an essential element of Deleuze's and Guattari's work.

2 In the book *Proust and Signs* (1964), earlier in relation to the project of Difference and Repetition (1968), and also in relation to the conception of Spinozism, Deleuze grasps the question of art even more radically, saying, in relation to this that "Only the signs of art are immaterial" (Deleuze 1999, 39). He underlines this, from one side, in a Kantian manner, as an element of pure composition, thanks to which the artistic signs capture experiences, above all consolidating themselves. At the same time, it constitutes in the book an exposition for the later statement about artistic signs, whose sense is an "essence" or a "quality of a world," and which, being non-material artistic signs, "no longer have anything opaque about them" (Deleuze 1999, 49 i 50). Of course, an essence, which art unveils, is difference alone. Yet, one can say that Deleuze's theses, in his book on Proust, remain "pre-Spinozian"; there is visible a dichotomisation accompanying the distinguishing of particular series of signs in *In Search of Lost Time* (of the world, of love, of the senses, of art). Especially the statement about the non-sensible character of signs, which are supposed to carry in themselves the very essence of art, independently of their own material carrier, seems to contradict the Spinozian conception of reality, which finds no issue in presenting that which is sensual as conceptual and at the same time that which is conceptual as material. From the perspective of *A Thousand Plateaus*, in relation to language, semiosis (and also art), the only notions that can still be mobilised are these of matter and function.

3 Literary critics appeal to Deleuzean conceptions; however they do so in

(1981) was written more or less in the same period as *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). In relation to the immediate frame of the theses of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* most engaged in a social critique, *Spinoza* can be read equally, above all, as a justification of the emancipatory perspective offered by its authors, who propose the deregulation of the automatized activity of social machines through the practice of "becoming--minoritarian" (Bednarek 2012, 316-318).[4] In the American reinterpretation—contrived by, among others, the critics tied to third--wave feminist theory, in the writings of Haraway, Braidotti and Barad, for whom Deleuze and Guattari were especially important—their concepts were invoked also, above all, on account of their emancipatory, political potential. Meanwhile, working out a Spinozian idea of so called "common notions" (about these more later), Deleuze more than once, and non-metaphorically, referred precisely to the question of the artistic composition of those concepts in the practice of Spinoza, writing, among other things: "The musical composition comes into play throughout the *Ethics*, constituting it as the one and same Individual whose relations of speed and slowness do not cease to vary, successively and simultaneously" (Deleuze 1988, 127). Later still, he noted: "Writers, poets, musicians, filmmakers—painters too, even chance readers—may find that they are Spinozian; indeed such a thing is more likely for them than for professional philosophers. It's a matter of one's practical conception of the »plane« [of immanence—J.O.]" (Ibid., 129).

It seems that current, political reckonings with postmodernism in

a somewhat different way, than the one I attempt to emphasise in my essay. Monika Glosowitz writes about *Affective Machineries* in reference to Deleuzean concept of affects, as understood by, among others, Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, Sara Ahmed and Brian Massumi (Glosowitz 2019). Glosowitz, examining the operations of "affective machinery" in relation to new poetry written by women, and giving her reflections a feminist and political leaning, introduces into her thought the concept of "representation", involving traditional elements of *mimesis*, in order to explore their affective dimension. Agnieszka Dauksza proceeds somewhat differently, in the book *Affective Modernism* (Dauksza 2017); she emphasises the necessity of an interpretation of emotions – including the expectations of writers regarding the impact of their work on readers – as a broader context of the communicative scenario, shaping equally the artist and the work, and setting into motion the artist's interactions with the entirety of the reality conditioning that interaction.

4 Joanna Bednarek describes at some length the issues with the translation of the French term "devenir-minoritaire" in Deleuze's and Guattari's *Milles Plateaux* (Bednarek 2012, 316). Here I use the translation proposed by Brian Massumi, from the English version of the book (*A Thousand Plateaus*, transl. B. Massumi. London-Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1987).

Poland bring it about that poststructuralist conceptions—indebted to philosophy, within the sphere of revolutionarily understood artistic practices (especially literary ones)—are somewhat reduced, in relation to the element which constitutes a value fundamental to them—namely, their poetics. After Agamben, we could associate it with *poiesis*—functioning equally in accord with holistic, Romantic conceptions, as a certain compositional-dynamic dimension of a mutually produced human reality, inseparable from philosophy or science, but also as decisive for the possibility of a performative reinterpretation of their functioning--production, which can manifest immediately in the poetic form of *A Thousand Plateaus* or *Anti-Oedipus*. It is difficult to imagine the work of Deleuze— the author of, among others, books about Kafka and Proust—without numerous references, quotes both hidden and overt, referring to modern French, world, and most often avant-garde, literature. Yet this natural environment of his multi-disciplinary thought, seems problematic within the posthumanist perspective; which, as it seems, first marginalises the entirety of the literary perspective, only to allow it to return by the right of exception—the way the repressed is always doomed to return. The materiality of the poetic work—for avant--garde writers something completely obvious—and possible thanks Deleuze and Guattari's non-dualistic conception of the production of that which is real, remains a weak option.[5] One must always justify it;

5 In her book, *The Posthuman*, Rosi Braidotti, rejecting the humanistic conception of the Vitruvian man, motivating intellectual, masculine orderings of the world also still in the post-structuralist perspective, and so right up to the post--humanist turn, before she moves to an exposition of the Spinozian theory makes a gesture, which one should recognise as, at the least, modernistically characterised. Namely, she invokes the author (George Eliot) of her "favourite sentence in English literature"—deriving from *Middle March*—which sentence is meant to document, above all, the affective aspect of Spinoza's monist revolution; while, the problem that we, nevertheless, have in this place the very fact of a quotation from literature, undoubtedly constituting, as it were, a relic of the "Vitruvian epoch," remains implicitly inessential. Having a poetic character, and being literary in its very nature, the surface of the text becomes in this way a new fetishism—an impossible to comment upon opacity within the framework of a monistically understood order of life-creation. Instead, Braidotti qualifies her interpretation with an emotional element, splendidly amenable to founding a new, humanistic mythology. Thus, she describes her favourite sentence poetically, as "(…) a roar which lies on the other side of the urbane, civilized veneer that allows for bound identities and efficient social interaction is the Spinozist indicator of the raw cosmic energy that underscores the making of civilizations, societies and their subjects." (Braidotti 2013, 55). Karen Barad, on the other hand, in the introduction to *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, undertakes a polemic with the

since, to the literary text—written down on paper, recognised as a reality unambiguously intellectual and being subject to hierarchical ordering by a cognitive *ratio*—its own kind of Oedipality is simply ascribed at the very beginning of new-materialist reckonings. Meanwhile, as I think, the conception of the French, politically-oriented poststructuralists demands not only a new conception of materiality, but also a new conception of textuality, and a new conception of the literary. The multi-series of interruptions and "drainings," produced by desiring machines, (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 5), do not, meanwhile, only arrange themselves in compositions, but are also *produced* through a social process (as in Romantic *poiesis*). Just as they, themselves, independently of circumstances, preserve themselves (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 163). Unfortunately, we are most clearly unable to grant to art itself—and its specificity, concealed within the concept of autonomy—which in contemporary, "weak" theories turns out to be a new taboo—the status of a material reality. Meanwhile, according to the authors of *Anti*-Oedipus, everything (hence also art, literature, poetry) is a production of the real.

The "work" of the desiring machine of (literary) art, in a series of interruptions and drainings producing and reproducing the process of its own production of the real, is inherently artistic, not only because it preserves itself.

The "work" of the desiring machine of (literary) art, in a series of interruptions and drainings producing and reproducing the process of its own production of the real, is inherently artistic, not only because it

position of Katherine Hayes, with a proposition deriving from the sketch *Constrained Constructivism: Locating Scientific Inquiry in the Theatre of Representation* (a text published in the edited volume *Realism and Representation: Essays on Realism in Relation to Science, Literature and Culture* [ed. G Levine, 1993]). She first draws critical attention to the fact that Hayes's "theatre of representation" derives from a narcissistic conception of language, as something deprived of any rooting in things, and given over to a free play of meanings. Next, on the other hand—making use of the thesis of the author of *Constrained Criticism*, concerning the limitation of discourse by real boundaries established for it by the real world, in which it has meaning—she turns, enviously, towards literary studies or philosophical reflections, in which it is possible to pose ontological questions. But, for this purpose is needed—a modernist and Kantian in spirit—conception of language as a vehicle of ordering and change. Thus, opposing the lack of philosophical sensititivity in the research of the hard sciences, Barad, in effect, invokes the help of the worn-out concept of "discourse" and its "textures—unable to simply do without metaphor: "It is crucial that we understand the technologies by which nature and culture interact. Does nature provide some template that get filled in by culture in ways that are compatible with local discourses? Or do specific discourses provide the lenses through which we view the layering of culture or nature? Does the full »texture« of nature get through, or is it partially obliterated or distorted in the process? Is reality an amorphous blob that is structured by human discourses and interactions? Or does it have some complicated, irregular shape that is differently sampled by varying frameworks that happen to »fit« in local regions like coincident segments of interlocking puzzle pieces?" (Barad 2007, 42).

preserves itself. The weave of the premises on which philosophy and art (as well as science) are based, which is laid out in the book *What is philosophy?*, is so strong and so strongly penetrates the whole of the serial-nomadic philosophy of Deleuze, that those elements are, in fact, difficult to distinguish (though their premises form separate "lines" or "currents," which meet only contingently). For example, the statement that philosophical concepts, as well as artistic percepts and affects, intersect, that "the concept as such can be concept of the affect, just as the affect can be affect of the concept" (Deleuze/Guattari 1994, 66),[6] suggests that it is a matter rather of the activity of these phenomena and of the manner in which they come to be received and introduced into the production of experience, not only of a strictly understood difference between them. One may presume that the work of every desiring machine can be determined as an issue, which acquires in reflection a more artistic or a more philosophical/political character, depending on the point of view, the object and the needs of that reflection. As I said, according to Deleuze and Guattari, art is the one thing which preserves itself; such a preservation does not, however, achieve a concrete "expression," understood as an autonomous field of its own interests, which one could treat as an object of philosophical or sociological reflection. The nature of the artistic is not understood here in such terms; rather, to refer again to Spinozian categories, one should attempt to characterise artistic phenomena, difficult as it might be, within the categories of "ways of life" (Deleuze 1988, 122)—as those which always remain embedded within a certain practice (whether conceptual, or real). Reintroducing, for our purposes, the idea of "common notions" derived from *Spinoza*—the notions that determine the affective links between Deleuzean series and weaves—one can say, after the philosopher:

> So it appears that the common notions are practical Ideas, in relation with our power; unlike their order of exposition, which only concerns ideas, their order of formation concerns affects, showing how the mind: "can order its affects and connect them together". The common notions are an Art, the art of the *Ethics* itself: organising good encounters, composing actual relations, forming powers, experimenting (Deleuze 1988, 119).

Art is not among the author's chief interests, either here or in *Anti-Oedipus*, or even in such books as the one about the series of signs in

6 The philosophers point to the figure of Don Juan as an example, which is musical, theatrical, and which becomes a conceptual figure in Kierkegaard.

Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. On the other hand, omitting the artistic element in compositions—which may be contingent, mechanistic, but always, in the end, remain precisely that: compositions—would make it difficult to say anything specific about their life and desire. One of the essential protagonists of *Anti-Oedipus* is, say, Antonin Artaud. References to Artaud (or Proust, Michaux, Céline, Miller, Lawrence and Beckett) never remain solely a pretext; the writers appear on equal rights alongside the occasionally invoked philosophers, authors of psychoanalytical concepts and their patients and, finally, historical figures and fictional characters. On this basis, the figure of Judge Schreber fulfils an uncommonly interesting textual function in *Anti-Oedipus*. Schreber remains, simultaneously, a patient whose case was famously reinterpreted by Freud (as described in *Psychoanalytical Notes*), the author of his own book (on the history of his own neurosis) and, finally, a constantly returning character in *Anti-Oedipus*, where he plays the role of the useful idiot (thus, it is possible to recognise him as a protagonist and at the same time as a hidden mechanism of philosophical discourse). In one case, he is a historical figure, being again an emblem of the desiring maching ("Judge Shreber has sunbeams in his ass" [Deleuze/Guattari 1983, 2]), which is broken, and at the same time exemplary for the Oedipal order, as also a perfect example of a schizophrenic. Later, in turn, as a character in the text of Deleuze and Guattari, he may stand in for Freud (who also becomes, in the meantime, a character in their text) in a manner proper to an avant-garde artist (Deleuze/Guattari 1983, 36). Judge Schreber remains, in this way, at the same time a protagonist and the hidden mechanism of the production of philosophical discourse—as it would be proper to add by means of the properly poetical:

> One can easily imagine Schreber answering Freud: "Yes, I quite agree, naturally the talking birds are young girls, and the superior God is my daddy and the inferior God my brother." But little by little he will surreptitiously "reimpregnate" the series of young girls with all talking birds, his father with the superior God, and his brother with the inferior God, all of them divine forms that become complicated, or rather "desimplified," as they break through the simplistic terms and functions of the Oedipal triangle. As Artaud put it:
>
> *I don't believe in father*
> *in mother,*
> *got no*
> *papamummy.*
> (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 14)

Judge Schreber is the arche-argument in the case put forward against Freudian Oedipalism in all its shapes; he functions, *de facto*, as a figure that is fictional, literary, invented and inherently ironic. On the other hand, he necessarily enjoys the same rights as, for instance, Freud, Melanie Klein or Lacan, also referenced in the book. Similarly unclear is the function of the writers referenced in the course of the argument: their works are not mere examples of particular ideas; they do not simply illustrate philosophical theses. The points made by Deleuze and Guattari (following Artaud's statements or the books of Proust, the protagonists of the philosophers' lecture) are incarnated as arguments in the activity of social machinism, while all the time remaining as effects or momentary crystallisations of authorial reinterpretation of their authors' texts; a reinterpretation that grafts itself onto the original works, just as Deleuzeo-Guattarian production grafts itself onto products. Artaud or Proust, like Freud or Lacan and ultimately also like John Brown or George Jackson, are the co-creators of *Anti-Oedipus*, together with Deleuze and Guattari, as elements of machinery, subjects playing together in series of interruptions and "drainings." They are, as one might conceive this in a still different way, "matrices" of composition, which we can contemplate for a moment; they decide, simultaneously, on the manner and sense of rhizomatic production, but also on its sensual preservation.

It's also to fiction and literature that the authors constantly look for help against the automated principle of the Oedipal social rite. Avant-garde art is, therefore, located in a schizophrenic order, a domain of wandering at the margins of capitalist society. One can see this well at the moment when Deleuze and Guattari, laying out the principles of schizoanalysis, use the picture of two poles, the segregative and the nomadic—thus revealing two rules of the functioning of developing series (interruptions and drainings of *hyle* in the production of the real), corresponding to investments of desire in the communal, social field, as being the object of these investments. The first pole, the fascist-paranoid, overinvests in a sovereign formation, leading to a hierarchical ordering of the field and a privileging of it as the principle of every social form. The second, the schizo-revolutionary, "that follows the *lines of escape* of desire; breaches the wall and causes flows to move; assembles its machines and its groups in fusion in the enclaves or at the periphery—proceeding in an inverse fashion from that of the other pole" (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 277). The authors of *Anti-Oedipus* next write that between both poles of madness are produced the astonishing oscillations of the unconscious: "the way in which an unexpected revolutionary force breaks free in the midst, sometimes even in the midst of the worst

archaisms; inversely the way in which everything turns fascist or envelopes itself in fascism, the way in which it falls back into archaisms" (Ibid.). This way they escape beyond the walls of a simple, Hegelian dialectic of the opposites, which, from their point of view, would remain, at a fundamental level, simply Oedipal. In order to additionally justify their standpoint, they recall the example of the mad Celine, evolving in the end towards a fascistic paranoia, and the schizoid Kerouac, who in the end gives himself over to the separative rule of the American dream. They complete their escape from dialectic by referring directly to the example of Artaud's *Heliogabalus*: "The two poles united by Artaud in the formula: Heliogabalus-the-anarchist, »the image of all human contradictions and of the contradiction *in principle*«. But no passage impairs or suppresses the difference in nature between the two, nomadism and segregation" (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 278). However, art, in its role as a desiring machine, might serially entangle itself—jumping between those poles, leaving behind itself zig-zag traces like a sewing machine (while at the same time tearing the fabric); undoubtedly, one of the aspects of its activity, having to do precisely with its "compositional" potential, though less evident here, is consistently appreciated by the authors through their distinguishing of an insane, escapist and at the same time emancipatory fantasy. Its nature is partly explained by George Jackson, one of the leaders of the Black Panthers: "I may take flight, but all the way I'm fleeing, I'll be looking for the weapon" (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 277). We can find a similar Deleuzean trope in the opening lines of a poem by Andrzej Sosnowski: "My unease has a weapon to hand" (*Cover*). What is surprising is the sudden intersection of these two currents, consolidating an artistic cartography of conceptual events and recognizing, incidentally, the affective power of encounter. They do not act together, like a net suspended in space (or also drawn upon a flat plan); rather, they cooperate like a "gravitational" slingshot, stretching itself in a continuously proliferating infinity. When it becomes a part of this commodity circulation, it is already something different; this does not erase the potential of the compositions the philosophers called "enduring," sustaining always the potential for "grafting."

As is known, the authors of *Anti-Oedipus* write, in the introductory parts of their argument, that desiring machines function such that they damage themselves in the course of their operation; it is precisely the fact that they are damaged, which opens the process of investment in communal social fields, in the macro-perspective of world as production. It is difficult, from this perspective, to say anything not only about the traditionally understood autonomy of the artistic work (or political and philosophical ideas), but, also about the autonomy of the living subject-

-body as a repeated series of interruptions and flows. There where the real, the physical and the biological become real and physical within the categories of quantum physics or biological within the concepts of biopolitics, as happens in the work of Barad or Haraway, it is difficult to stubbornly point at the non-material universality of the text, code or sign as fundamental communicative faults or also faulty ways of mirroring reality . . . When they all become positions situating bodies, souls and individuals on an immanent plane, being simultaneously "ways of life," the accusations leading to a severing of an autotelically understood "texture" of performance from a whole understood in this way seem to be simply devoid of sense. All the more, when that "texture" can be expressed as a weave or also a diagram of various series and interruptions—as a performatively played out, occurring process. From the "anti-Oedipal" perspective of Deleuze and Guattari, a special place has been found for art and for the artist—specifically, the schizoidal breaking down of what is predestined: art often makes use of that property (activity on condition of breaking down and breaking down as a condition of activity, in which production is "grafted onto" the product, being in the end a production of production—J.O.), forming the realest group fantasies, which produce connections at the junction of social production and desiring production and introduce the function of disordering into the process of reproduction of technical machines (see for instance Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 6).

Art, by "differentiating," cuts social outlets leading beyond the Oedipal automaton in "revolutionary" directions, which are always different—as one could say, following upon Deleuze's thought in *Spinoza*—always determined by a different point of cartographic reference, longitude or latitude as co-ordinates of motion. "We call *longitude* of the body the set of relations of speed and slowness, of motion and rest, between particles that compose it from this point of view, that is, between unformed elements. We call *latitude* the set of affects that occupy a body at each moment, that is as intensive states of *anonymous force* (force for existing, capacity for being affected)," wrote Deleuze (Deleuze 1981, 127–128). The Spinozian approach to body would meanwhile regard it as "an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea, (…) a linguistic corpus, social body, collectivity" (Ibid.). Thus, we will be able to see the art of that composition every time as a movement-image or a time-image (in *poiesis*), diverting and ruining the track of the machine of technical production in the direction of communal fantasy, and grafting itself onto products. From such a point of view, art (also literature) would be (philosophically) a concept-event in motion, one having an exceptionally unstable constitution. "The artist is the master of objects; he puts in

front of us shattered, burned, broken down objects, converting them into the regime of desiring-machines; breaking down is part of the very functioning of the desiring-machines; the artist presents the paranoiac machines, miraculating-machines, celibate machines as so many technical machines, so as to cause desiring machines to undermine technical machines" (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 32).

Of course, it is not the philosophers' intention to retain an elitist setting apart of "the artist," following in the tracks of the Romantic tradition. The "interruption of the series," described here as "grafting producing onto the product"—and making it so that the series can never succeed one another in a linear order—constitutes the "compositional" element of all kinds of practice, and doesn't even require indicating where compositions come from or who exactly is their composer. Following upon the treatise *What is Philosophy?*: the exterior of a work of art remains inversely proportional to its interior, as far as the presence of a compositional principle, which commands an affective force of consolidation, is concerned; when we "dissolve" the limit, determined by the very notion of art, we pass to the other side of the mirror and the reality, which we produce, undergoes a reversal—nothing more than this occurs. *Poiesis* in the work and beyond the work would, therefore, remain a composition in various states of concentration; the more composition—as a principle of practice—the greater the intensity of the materiality (that which is available for reception) with which the work distinguishes itself, in contrast to that which produces it, contributing to interruptions in *hyle* and to the arising of series. From such a perspective, *poiesis*, in Deleuzean terms, remains indistinguishable from the Spinozian creative matter—providing at the same time the compositional principle and the material, determining its character and responsible for its dynamism. The composition, consolidation, autonomy (hence specificity) of the artistic principle would, therefore, possess the features of an affective *modi*—not only a reason for, but also a manner of linking and preserving events. It can, however, function as a common notion—if we were to consider only the principle of art as such.[7]

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7 As Deleuze writes, after Spinoza, common notions are not abstract concepts, but only common ones; in Spinoza's work they had to do with bodies and were concepts more biological than mathematical; whereas, their "generality" was meant to be a secondary property. It is precisely from this that there flow premises relating common notions to composition: "(…) a common notion [is] the representation of a composition between two or more bodies, and a unity of this composition. (…) common notions are common to minds—more or less so, since they are common only to minds whose bodies are affected by the composition

For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari can also speak—at the end of *Anti-Oedipus*, and following upon the Lacanian thesis—of the code of the unconscious built from a "chain of signifiers." However, they introduce their own strictly avant-garde, and by nature surrealist, correction, which, it should be said, is essential for the whole picture:

> No chain is homogeneous; all of them resemble, rather, a succession of characters from different alphabets in which an ideogram, a pictogram, a tiny image of an elephant passing by, or a rising sun may suddenly make its appearance. In a chain that mixes together phonemes, morphemes, etc., without combining them, papa's mustache, mama's upraised arm, a ribbon, a little girl, a cop, a shoe suddenly turn up. Each chain captures fragments of other chains from which it "extracts" a surplus value, just as the orchid code "attracts" the figure of a wasp: both phenomena demonstrate the surplus value of a code. It is an entire system of shuntings along certain tracks, and of selections by lot, that bring about partially dependent, aleatory phenomena bearing a close resemblance to a Markov chain. The recordings and transmissions that have come from the internal codes, from the outside world, from one region to another of the organism, all intersect, following the endlessly ramified paths of the great disjunctive synthesis. If this constitutes a system of writing, it is a writing inscribed on the very surface of the Real: a strangely polyvocal kind of writing, never a biunivocalized, linearized one; a transcursive system of writing, never a discursive one; a writing that constitutes the entire domain of the "real inorganization" of the passive syntheses, where we would search in vain for something that might be labelled the Signifier—writing that ceaselessly composes and decomposes the chains into signs that have nothing that impels them to become signifying. The one vocation of the sign is to produce desire, engineering it in every direction (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 39).

Karen Barad, whose theory of reality, in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), would not be possible without *Anti-Oedipus*—in a similar way to Joanna Bednarek, referenced at the beginning—filters out the post-structuralist-textual aspect of Deleuze and Guattari's work, in order to get at its deep, socio-political texture. Her essay included in the Polish

and the unity of the composition in question" (Deleuze 1988, 54). As we know, common notions are formed as a result of affects. Deleuze concludes the entry dedicated to them as follows: "(…) insofar as they apply solely to existing bodies, the common notions have to do with things that can be imagined (indeed, this is why the idea of God is not in itself a common notion […]). They represent compositions of relations. Now, these relations characterise bodies insofar as they combine with and affect one another, each one leaving »images« in the other, the corresponding ideas being imaginations" (Deleuze 1988, 56).

anthology *Subversive Theories*, meant to summarise the basic tenets of her criticism, begins in a manner that is symptomatic for thinkers associated with the turn against poststructuralism:

> Language has been granted too much power. The linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, the interpretative turn, the cultural turn: it seems that at every turn lately every "thing"—even the materiality—is turned to the matter of language or some other form of cultural representation. The ubiquitous puns on "matter" do not, alas, mark the rethinking of the key concepts (materiality and signification) and the relationship between them. Rather, it seems to be symptomatic of the extent to which matters of "fact" (so to speak) have been replaced with the matters of signification (no scare quotes here). Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter (Barad 2003, 801).

Obviously, in her subsequent words, the author of *Posthumanist Performativity* declares that in turning against the dominion of language she only submits to criticism a kind of privileging of only one side of the description-reality opposition, on account, precisely, of the potential for an intellectual ordering of meanings. The conception of a signifying matter in performative activity, a matter whose reality is described primarily in terms borrowed from quantum physics, suggests, however, a duality similar to that of various poststructuralist concepts. In the same way as these concepts earlier—from the point of view of the posthumanist turn—privileged meaning, and also annulled the metaphysical dimension of the question regarding the difference between the meaning and the meant, the original and the derivative, in this way, now, the sphere of the biologically or physically understood "reality of bodies" begins to enjoy a new appreciation; while, the issue of Spinozian composition remains neglected, though being the main and at the same time hidden affective machinery of the theoreticians of New Materialism. Posed in this way, such theses make impossible that which, from the perspective of my sketch was the most important: the posing of the fascinating question concerning the potential materiality of language.

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Tytuł: Materialność *poiesis*
Abstrakt: W tym szkicu podejmuję próbę wyjaśnienia, dlaczego dochodzi do swego rodzaju wtórnego rozdzielenia Spinozjańskiej zasady immanencji – wydarzającej się czy też konstruowanej na po Deleuzjańsku rozumianej płaszczyźnie praktyki – a przyjmowanej jako teza zasadnicza dla zwrotu posthumanistycznego. W koncepcjach tych zasadniczą rolę odgrywają tezy zmierzające do obalenia wszelkiego rodzaju

rozdzierających istniejącą substancję dychotomii (formy-materii, ale i wewnętrzności-zewnętrzności, podmiotu-przedmiotu, duszy-ciała, odbicia-prawdy/doświadczenia). Przyjęcie takiej, performatywnie rozumianej perspektywy „wykonywania" teorii czy filozofii staje się, co ciekawe, możliwe dopiero dzięki zastrzeżeniu rozłączności „immanencji praktyki" z dominującą w ramach zwrotu „poststrukturalistycznego" literackością czy tekstualnością. Ta bowiem sfera kojarzona była jako tradycyjnie umieszczająca w centrum swoich zainteresowań człowieka, jego język i jego wytwory intelektualne (przez np. Braidotti czy Barad). Ta głęboko strukturalistyczna koncepcja została z pozytywnym skutkiem przekroczona – jako pewien typ nowoczesnego, absolutyzującego porządkowania przestrzeni doświadczenia – przez wszystkich właściwie poststrukturalistów, w tym Deleuze'a i Guattariego, którym przede wszystkim poświęcam tej esej. Nie przyczyniło się to jednak do wykluczenia sztuki języka, także literatury, pojmowanej jako rodzaj społecznej praktyki, a co za tym idzie ważnego przedmiotu zainteresowania francuskich filozofów.

Słowa kluczowe: materializm, *poiesis*, sztuka awangardowa, filozofia i sztuka, Deleuze i Guattari, percepty, afekty, performatywność

MICHAŁ KRZYKAWSKI

Why Is New Materialism Not the Answer? Approaching Hyper-Matter, Reinventing the Sense of Critique Beyond 'Theory'

The article offers a new model of materialist philosophical critique (general technocritique or digital critique) as a critical response to new materialism(s). Drawing on the reinterpretation of the legacy of European philosophies and works by Bernard Stiegler, the article strives to elaborate authentically new theoretical account of matter, notably in relation to the techno-logical mode of its organisation. The critique of new materialism(s) is positioned within the unprecedented crisis of the theoretical model of knowledge. What it is possible to discover by the end of the second decade of the 21st century is that humanities scholars have not managed to confront the central issue for their viable future: the whole theoretical and methodological model, which has so far provided fuel for the contemporary humanities and shaped our social class, postcolonial, gender, queer and other sensibilities, is plunging into a deep epistemological crisis, for having lost its efficient and final cause. In a nutshell, the model of "doing theory," is no longer valid, inasmuch as "theory" strangely misrecognized the revolutionary developments in cybernetics, which occurred in the 1950s and radically changed the very nature of knowledge. Therefore, a new *epistēmē* has to be formed in this new digital condition. However, the

formation of this new *epistēmē* requires for us to radically transform what is referred to as "theory" or "critical theory" and to take into account the developments in the sciences and technology (not necessarily in the methodological framework offered by what is defined as STS) in order to lay the foundations under a new critique of political economy in the hyper-material era.

Keywords: entropy, posthumanism, new materialism, technology, inorganic matter, cybernetics, Bernard Stiegler, Yuk, Hui, Gilbert Simondon

> "In the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial." (Valéry 1964, 225, originally published in 1928)

> "The nature of knowledge cannot survive unchanged within this context of general transformation." (Lyotard 1984, 4, originally published in 1979)

> A 'left-wing' thought is what considers in facts that which exceeds them as the laws that they conceal, that they require, and which falls within a function of reason that sets them up as the condition of possibility, *après coup*, of such facts. It is necessary to redress facts with rules of law, so that, indeed, in law and not just in fact, they can *last and intensify the durability of forms of life that emerge therefrom* […] Of course, there is 'right-wing' thought that thinks this way – and it often goes much further than 'left-wing' thought.
>
> To admit this does not mean that right and left will thereby be dissolved into one another. It is, again, a matter of doing justice to the quasi-causal logic of the *pharmakon.* In this pharmacology, what continues to distinguish right and left today is the status of calculation, and this is what keeps me firmly anchored to the side of the latter […].
>
> Nevertheless, calculation here is not what must be rejected or treated pejoratively: it is what, through critique, must be limited by reason. (Stiegler 2019, 202)

The 1980s was not only a decade in which the free-market shift took place in Europe under American-becoming-planetary capitalism and the neoliberal conservative revolution. That the hegemonic power of the market has consumed all areas of social life and significantly transformed life itself into technologically controlled, massively synchronized and ecologically devastating consumption is a well-known fact (yet constantly repressed by many) whose consequences we are facing now. However, free-market ideology has also made quite an impact on how academic knowledge is *processed*—rather than produced—in the epoch of media and how this processed knowledge circulates both in society and research community, henceforth formed/transformed/deformed by media.

In 1983, when discussing changes in the politics of publishing as one of the effects of the dislocation of the university and an increase in

the number of students and professors who came to constitute a kind of a social mass, Michel Foucault pointed out:

> Nowadays entropy sets in at an alarming rate. I could give personal examples. It took fifteen years to convert my book about madness into a slogan: all mad people were confined in the 18th century. But it did not even take 15 months—it only took three weeks—to convert my book on will to knowledge into the slogan "Sexuality has never been repressed." In my own experience, I have seen this entropy accelerate in a detestable way for philosophical thought. But it should be remembered that this means added responsibility for people who write (1990, 45).[1]

Over the past forty years, the alarming rate of entropy, that Foucault denounced in the golden age of television and long before the era of media convergence, has reached a crisis point in the digital age. Doing 'theory' systematically, came down to recombining philosophical concepts, decontextualized, diluted and converted into mere metaphors or slogans. In a nutshell, the phenomenon—described by Foucault in its still inchoate, yet already alarming state—took on a systemic character.

What appears today as "new materialism(s)" (Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012) can be seen as a symptomatic illustration of the phenomenon of generalised entropy. In arguing this, I do not mean particular thinkers who are defined as new materialist by their epigones and the English-American marketing machine of the academic publishing market in the field of the humanities. Criticizing how "new materialism" is explained to me by this machine and, say, discussing Karen Barad's reinterpretation of Niels Bohr's quantum physics, as a scientific basis of her approach to matter (2007[2]) are not the same thing. Rather, my point is

1 I thank Dan Ross for having reminded me of this comment by Foucault.

2 It would be erroneous, however, to take this reinterpretation for granted, that is *uncritically*, and fantasize about the ontological, epistemological or ethical potential of what Barad develops as agential realism. Barad's development of Bohr's practice of quantum physics should be positioned within the ongoing debate in contemporary physics. We need to distinguish between the scientific evidence Barad refers to when elaborating Bohr's account to entanglements and her—extremely problematic—posthumanist attempt to make of them the ontological pivot of what she calls "ethico-onto-epistemology." In this respect, in order to be able even to critically discuss what Barad terms as "intra-action" and to what extent, *if ever*, intra-action can be translatable into social practices and, more generally, applicable to living organisms, it becomes necessary to confront Bohr's interpretation of quantum physics with, on the one hand, Erwin Schrödinger's

that new materialist hype makes this discussion extremely difficult, if not impossible, as it reiterates philosophically biased assumptions and recycles philosophical clichés when it is announced as 'new.'

However, the theoretical entropy which speaks through "new materialist scholarship" (Braidotti, Hlavajova 2018, 277) and the current posthumanist urge, as one of the engines of new materialism(s), goes beyond the field of the humanities. My critique of new materialism(s), as an example of systemic theoretical entropy, is positioned within the unprecedented crisis of the theoretical model of knowledge. This critique aims to show how a new *epistēmē* has to be formed in the digital condition. I argue that the formation of this new *epistēmē* requires a radical transformation of what is referred to as 'theory' or 'critical theory' and a new philosophical account of the developments in the sciences and technology (not necessarily in the methodological framework offered by what is defined as STS) in order to lay the foundations under a new critique of political economy in the hyper-material era.

My argument consists of three parts. In part I, drawing on Stiegler's concept of hyper-matter and on what he develops as digital studies, I will take a stance on the *epistemic* crisis of theoretical knowledge in general. This epistemic crisis has to be approached in the context of "the end of theory" resulting from the advent of massive data, which has heavily affected the theoretical model of the rational sciences (Anderson 2008), rather than in the context of the epoch "after theory" (Eagleton 2004). A new sense of critique needs to be elaborated in order to face this planetary end of theory and give to the latter a new lease of critical life in the algorithmic reality. What I define as new digital critique, or a general technocritique, goes in this direction. In part II, I discus the question of what knowledge is in relation to hyper-matter. Part III is an attempt to reinvent the sense of critique beyond 'theory,' this reinvention being based on a different account of the legacy of European philosophies.

Although my reluctance with regard to new materialism(s) comes from personal academic experiences and a philosophical room of my own, so to speak, my stance on the *epistemic* crisis of theoretical knowledge is largely inspired by the "contributory research" carried out within the Internation/Geneva2020 group founded on the initiative of the

account to the arrangements of atoms in living organisms (1967, 4-5) and, on the other hand, what Alfred Lotka termed the exosomatic evolution of the human species (1945, 188).

French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, in September 2018.[3] As a scholar, not only do I owe to Stiegler a large part of what I can think today, but also I owe to him an acute awareness of the fact that what remains to be *thought, rethought and done* goes beyond any individual thought and inspires a lot of humility and courage—that is a lot of heart too, as the Latin *cor* always already informs us—at the same time. When Georges Bataille admitted that he hated individual thought, he recalled a spoiled brat [*moustique*] insisting: "That's not what I think…'." (1988, 108) What I think does not matter. By contrast, what *we* are discovering today is that thinking is not an individual thing. It never has been—as intelligence, to which thinking is still irreducible. Also, we have to finally *dare to know* and radically rethink what 'the left' actually means today, when this term seems to have significantly lost its historical momentum. Thinking means to have always already chosen the left-hand path, according to the very sense of the Latin *sinistra*. Thus, what remains to be *thought, rethought and done* has to go far beyond typical leftist postures, old theoretical reflexes and strategies of resistance without a future, if philosophy on the one hand, and what we call 'the left' on the other, still have to make sense today.

I. The Hyper-Material Fact and a New Digital Critique

The Malaise of Theory

What it is possible to discover by the end of the second decade of the 21st century is that humanities scholars—at least those who were formed by what is referred to as 'theory,'[4]—have not managed to confront the

3 https://internation.world/.

4 What I mean by this term here refers to the specific uses of French philosophical texts, which gave birth to what is called poststructuralism or French thought (also referred to as French theory) in America. The global academic success of this theory largely stemmed from the decontextualisation and reorganisation of the original concepts developed in French philosophical texts, notably in relation to German philosophy (Kant, Nietzsche, Hegel, Heidegger, Freud and Marx) and critique, as developed by the Frankfurt school and in the wake of Marx's legacy (Cusset 2008). In this respect, what I define as "theory" might also be called "postmodern critical theory" which takes French thinkers, from Lacan to Derrida and Deleuze, for cultural theorists and seeks to apply their decontextualized concepts, simplified and often reduced to mere metaphors, for describing social and cultural phenomena in the globalized world. One of the side-effects of

central issue for their viable future: the whole theoretical and methodological model, which has so far provided fuel for the contemporary humanities and shaped our social class, postcolonial, gender, queer and other sensibilities, is plunging into a deep epistemological crisis, for having lost its efficient and final cause. Make no mistake: I am not saying that this or that theory of this or that philosopher who loosely inspired this or that 'turn' in the Globish humanities has become out-dated. Rather, I argue that the model of "doing theory," is no longer valid, inasmuch as 'theory'—as "an unbounded group of writings about everything under the sun," (Culler 1997, 3)—strangely misrecognized the revolutionary developments in cybernetics, which occurred in the 1950s and radically changed the very nature of knowledge.

European leftist intellectuals—with the exception of a few, like André Gorz and, on a different note, Jean-François Lyotard—did not take account of the techno-logical shift, which was made technically possible at the very beginning of the second half of the 20th century, either. However, not only was this techno-logical shift inchoately producing a shocking change in every aspect of social life, relations between labour and knowledge included, but it also made the world move beneath the feet of left critique. "The social foundation of the principle of division, or class struggle, was blurred to the point of losing all of its radicality," Lyotard pointed out in his famous *Postmodern Condition*, which it becomes necessary to read anew, forty years after its publication: both beyond the diluted debates on the postmodern crisis of master narratives and Lyotard's relation to Marxism. Recalling Ernst Bloch's *Principle of Hope,*

this reorganisation of French philosophy, (mis)recognized as "French thought," is that it was artificially released from its German debt and, as a result, became a caricature of itself that many philosophers still unfortunately identify with relativism, defined as postmodern. That the success of "French thought" belongs to a long bygone era is one thing. That this success still has a heavy impact on the way we, "latecomers of the twenty-first century," (Stiegler 2015, 17) understand what critique actually means is another. The *critical* problem of "new materialist" theories is that they often reiterate philosophical shortcuts stemming from this Franco-American adventure of "theory" or reject them as a straw man to be attacked. Saying so does not mean that 'French theory' is a victim of Americanisation. It is rather to argue that French philosophy has to be rediscovered beyond the phenomenon of 'French theory' (which has no equivalent in France, to the same extent as the famous 'French feminism') and in the context of European philosophies in order to reopen materialist thinking in its irreducible relation to technology. What is at stake here is not at all the question of the sociology of knowledge but, rather, the way we have to reinterpret European philosophies in order to give them a new lease of life and override the weak readings typical of the Anglo-American/French theory.

Lyotard continued: "We cannot conceal the fact that the critical model in the end lost its theoretical standing and was reduced to the status of a 'utopia' or 'hope'." (Lyotard 1984, 13)

This complex transformation in relation to how, where and by whom theoretical knowledge could be produced, translated, edited, commented upon, institutionalized and *mediatized* after WWII, as well as the general misrecognition of the new techno-logical *fact* by post-war intellectuals, is precisely what we—including us, Eastern European scholars formed by this largely atechnological "theory" after 1989—need to understand, belatedly, in order to change our theoretical practices.

What is really at stake here is that "theory"—whose "golden age" (Eagleton 2003, 1) occurred when the neoliberal conservative revolution and the Chicago school of economics were taking over Europe, and when European, namely French, philosophers, (mis)recognized as French poststructuralists, were taking up academic positions at American universities—is incapable of responding to a planetary seismic shift we have all been approaching, in the first two decades of the 21st century, on many levels.

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Of Spirit

The planetary seismic shift we are living through involves a total disorientation, which is either mutating into a panic or producing a systematic denial, of which the global rise of reactionary movements is a dreary consequence. On the final stage of the global economic war under the conservative revolution, what André Gorz described as "economic reason," its "irrational motives of rationalisation" (1989, 1) included, turned into the fall of reasonable life. As a phenomenon occurring within what Augustin Berque, drawing on the concept of *Fūdo* introduced by the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro (2011), describes as "human milieus" (1987), reasonable life is always collective and comes to matter

through what is defined in French as *esprit*: spirit and mind (not to be confused with the computational mind discussed—and quite often fetishized—by analytic philosophers). "*Mind* [*esprit*] is 'weak' – it is nearly always falling." (Valéry 1962, 190)

One of Bernard Stiegler's crucial hypotheses is that "the very possibility of 'culture,' and thus of 'spirit,' relies on technics." (2011, 37) As a result, the question of culture and that of spirit need to be approached as fundamentally material. In a nutshell, the spirit is produced artificially and has no origins: it requires technical prostheses in order to be maintained, which means that the spirit is necessarily collective. The spirit [*esprit*] is weak, as Valéry argues, because it can collapse under its own artificiality. However, with regards to the digital fact, the question of spirit becomes hyper-material. Introduced by Stiegler as a critical response to the concept of the immaterial, notably in relation to the so-called immaterial labour, the concept of hyper-matter primarily stems from an irreducible physical fact: what is not a state of matter simply does not exist. As Stiegler argues in his interview with Vincent Bontemp,

> I call hypermatter a complex of energy and information where it is no longer possible to distinguish its matter from its form — what first appears with quantum mechanics, necessitating the abandonment of what Simondon called the hylemorphic scheme. This is the manner of thinking according to a pairing of concepts, form (*morphê*) and matter (*hylê*), that are thought as opposed to each other. I call hypermaterial a process where information — which is presented as a form — is in reality a sequence of states of matter produced by materials and apparatuses, by techno-logical dispositifs in which the separation of form and matter is also totally devoid of meaning (2008, 112[5]).

What constitutes the hyper-material fact of the digital era stems from this material ambiguity going beyond either the dualism of mind-matter or the monism in which mind and matter are one. If the dualism of mind-matter can be seen as what Bergson described as a false problem or a badly stated question, "so defined because their terms represent badly analysed composites," (Deleuze 1991, 17) monist approaches to matter, that new materialist theories are based upon, cannot say anything about the spirit and the way it is shaped by the organised inorganic matter. In this respect, new materialist theories strangely affirm the same

5 I cite here a fragment of the interview translated and published in Technophilia, "a peripatetic blog of University of the West of England staff and alumni exploring themes within the philosophy of technology." https://technophilia.wordpress.com/2012/01/04/on-immateriality/.

limitations as computational theories of mind (Miłkowski 2013), whereas new materialist accounts of politics are "conceptually arbitrary and voluntarist." (Rekret 2018, 2) In fact, political life is always a question of the spirit.

In short, what is referred to as organised inorganic matter here are technical objects, which are *constitutive* to human beings as defective and irreducibly unfinished 'forms' of organised organic matter (Stiegler 1998, 17). As the Chinese philosopher Yuk Hui points out, "what we are witnessing today is a shift from the *organized inorganic* to the *organizing inorganic*, meaning that machines are no longer simply tools or instruments but rather gigantic organisms in which we live." (2019, 28).

What we are dealing with today is that organised/organising inorganic matter, which constitutes the planetary and more and more self-organised technical system, can destroy the spirit, but it remains the very condition of possibility of what is called spiritual life.

This *crucial shift of and within hyper-matter* constitutes a great and immediately threatening *unthought* of our times. New materialist thinkers seem to overlook this shift to the same extent as leftist political philosophers, such as Jacques Rancière, Chantal Mouffe, Alain Badiou and Étienne Balibar. Taking care of this unthought is possible only when one recognizes the *techni-city of the polis* and, consequently, the way the political (the spiritual) is conditioned by the techno-logical. What we are dealing with today is that organised/organising inorganic matter, which constitutes the planetary and more and more self-organised technical system, can destroy the spirit, but it remains the very condition of possibility of what is called spiritual life. Taking account of this hyper--material fact—which means to *adopt* this fact critically instead of *adapting* to it in the name of the deceitful neoliberal logic of adaptation[6] —is a new start for atypical materialist thinking, on the basis of what Stiegler tentatively defines as "a kind of 'spiritualist' materialism. This 'spiritualist' materialism does not claim that the spirit/mind [*esprit*] is reducible to matter, but that matter is the condition of spirit, in all nuances of the word 'condition'." (Stiegler 2017, 46)

Organised Inorganic Matter and the Immaterial Error

This atypical materialist thinking also goes far beyond either what is defined as "new materialism(s)" or the operaist uses of the Marxist legacy—notably the erroneous idea of so-called immaterial labour, taken from a debatable reinterpretation of Marx's hypothesis of "general intellect." Genealogically speaking, the misunderstanding which surrounds

6 On Stiegler's distinction between adoption and adaptation, see Ars Industrialis' vocabulary: http://arsindustrialis.org/adaptation-adoption

the very notion of the immaterial seems to stem from the narrative about the advent of the so-called "post-industrial society"—a term introduced by Alain Touraine in 1969 and popularized by Daniel Bell a few years later. This commonly accepted narrative can be seen as false or even taken for "a chimera" (Stiegler 2014a, 46) inasmuch as it tacitly presupposes that what industry is all about refers to coal mines and factory chimneys. However, from the perspective of the evolution of technical objects and the systemic submission of technological innovations, originated in the developments in cybernetics, to the logic of free-market economy, the so-called post-industrial society was nothing but a techno-logical metamorphosis in the long process of "the industrialisation of all things." (46) Therefore, the industrialised appearances of hyper-matter (Stiegler 2008, 11-112) should be assessed in the context of the hyper-industrial, rather than post-industrial, age, i.e. with regards to a society in which human activities have mainly become industrial activities: from health and education to our free-time. In this respect the hyper-material fact requires to be approached as a new social fact in the sense of Durkheim. Recall the classical definition: "A social [hence hyper-material, MK] fact is any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint or which is general over the whole of a given society whilst having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations." (1982, 27) Which crudely means that *no political future is possible without the politics of technology*. And this future can come only as hyper-industrial and can only be grounded on a belief that industry, namely cultural industry as described and criticised by Horkheimer and Adorno in 1944 (2002, 94-136), does not have to be a source of regression and industrially programmable stupidity, provided that we elaborate a different approach to critique and understand the very nature of technical objects.

Indeed, the existence of the hyper-material fact is, hence, articulated with and through what Simondon, in 1958, thoroughly described as "the mode of existence of technical objects" (2017) and what Yuk Hui, developing Simondon's analyses in the digital era, refers to as "the existence of digital objects." (2016) However, accounting for this hyper-material fact requires a different approach to matter which, on the one hand, largely exceeds the limits of a sociological inquiry and, on the other hand, cannot be apprehended either in terms of biology or physics. The existence of the hyper-material fact involves a third genre of matter whose organisation is *techno-logical*. "Between the inorganic beings of the physical sciences and the organised beings of biology, there does indeed exist a third genre of 'being': 'inorganic organised beings,' or

technical objects." (Stiegler 1998, 17) That this inorganic matter also has organising properties, that is "an existence of its own," is a hyper--material fact which, on the one hand, constitutes a task for critical thought and, on the other hand, remains the biggest scientific challenge of the digital era.

The development of computational methods requires us to develop a methodical approach to what we rather unthinkingly call "information." Unlike what the physically untenable idea of "the immaterial" might suggest, information is a state of matter. In the hyper-material era, it is produced by what is defined in French as *le matériel*, that is equipment, in the process that Gilbert Simondon, challenging the hylomorphic scheme, described as "the taking-form [*la prise de forme*]." (Simondon 2017a, 47) That this materialisation—from the development of the integrated circuit in the 1950s through its industrialisation to date—takes smaller and smaller forms with faster and faster speed does not mean at all that it becomes immaterial but, rather, invisible (Stiegler 2008, 112). Incidentally, this problem of the invisibility of information, as a digital hyper-matter, also requires us to apprehend anew the problem of speed which—with the evolution of technics, much quicker than the evolution of societies—appears as "older than time […] [and] which remains unthought." (Stiegler 1998, 15)

However—and here is the crux of hyper-matter in relation to knowledge—invisible hyper-material information therefore conditions what Barad calls "knowledge-making practices," (2007, 90) without taking into account the hyper-material fact that they do not belong to "other natural-cultural practices" but, rather, they are largely constructed techno-logically and faced with the question of their own credibility. Indeed, with the implementation of deep learning methods and mathematical modelling (Longo, Montévil 2017; Montévil 2019) to biology, the planetary seismic shift which has been hitting social life hard to the point of killing the mind/spirit and producing *pharmakoi*, is also heavily affecting the theoretical model of *all rational* disciplines: knowledge is, hence, constructed by digital information which is far of being neutral. In this respect, what Lyotard discussed as the problem of the legitimation of knowledge forty years ago, pointing out the "doubt on the part of scientists […] as a major factor in evaluating the present and future status of scientific knowledge [*savoir*]," (1984, 8) is taking an utterly different material character and constitutes a potent social threat for the so-called "knowledge society."

Towards a General Technocritique and a New Organon

Thus, the general theoretical model which is being called into question becomes first of all a *philosophical question*, rather than a problem, as it requires an authentically philosophical response and a profound reinterpretation of the history of philosophy in the context of the relation between *epistēmē* and *technē*. Taking up this immense and immensely fascinating task might open the door to the authentically new humanities and give a new lease of life to critique as a *common scientific approach* to deal with digital information as hyper-matter. Drawing on what Bernard Stiegler develops as digital studies, whose main objective is to carefully think the digital as "contemporary *pharmakon*" in order to discover its curative properties—that is, to make of the digital a vehicle for new forms of knowledge [*savoirs*], rather than a destructive agent of all forms of reasonable life (Stiegler 2014, 15), both on the social and the scientific scale—I call this critique a new digital critique or a general technocritique.

In order to elaborate this critique, one has to overcome the cultural model of humanistic knowledge—in which "culture has constituted itself as a defense system against technics," (Simondon 2017, 15)—and go beyond the model of the cultural critique of technology in the wake of Horkheimer and Adorno, or the model of philosophical critique of technicized modernity, as opposed to the spirit, in the wake of Heidegger, Husserl and Patočka. What we need is a *critical* change of settings: "The understanding of technology is no longer a matter of a cultural critique of technology. Indeed, the traditional exclusion of technology from culture must be brought into question. To resolve this conflict we must employ a new *organon*, or a new series of philosophical propositions." (Hui 2016, 47) Which means that new *conceptual organs* are needed in order to transform what we have meant by critique from Kant on. In fact, what is at stake here is a new system of principles and criteria, that Kant referred to as *organon* when describing how knowledge can be established. That this new *organon* of knowledge can be formed and transformed, constituted and transmitted only by means of inorganic prostheses, i.e. technical objects, is what a new critique has to recognize as its starting point, when redetermining and taking seriously the technical and techno-logical conditions of its possibility[7].

7 Which requires a modified approach to what Kant defined as reason. Since we know "how the mind works," were we to believe Steven Pinker, which is necessarily not a good idea, we have to redefine how the reason works in a deli-

Therefore, the constitution of such a new *organon* has to recognize "the necessity for a culture of technics" (Simondon 2017, 81): the necessity for taking account of the irreducibly pharmacological nature of the technical object; which also means the necessity for reading Simondon through the lenses of Stiegler's pharmacology of technics, in order to be aware of the limits of Simondon's mechanology and to understand the role of technics in what Simondon thoroughly describes as ontogenesis, in his philosophy of individuation (2017a; 2009, 4-16). This critical cross-reading of Simondon and Stiegler strives for the opening of a much more general approach to technics[8] than a too facile excitement about transhumanism, robotics and AI—that is, about a very narrow and ideologically-biased range of what technics means and what the philosophers of technology are particularly fond of. It also lets us escape either technophilia or technophobia when discussing the *techno-logical question*: namely, *the fundamental materialist question of our era*, which requires a new sense of critique and a new understanding of what knowledge-making practice actually means in relation to hyper-matter.

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berately atranscendental way, that is to say think anew the techno-logical nature of the reason, so to speak, and its dependence on artificial prostheses.

8 As to my understanding of the word technics, I take Susanna Lindberg's statement for my own, "The English language makes a difference between technology, technique and tech¬nics, while the French and the German have a single word—*technique* vs. *Technik*—that includes competences, procedures and equipment (*technologie*/*Technologie* being a recent import mainly used to designate the latest technological equipment). As a philosopher, I mean to describe the entire phenomenon included in the French *technique* and German *Technik*, and I refer to it by the English word *technics*." (2010, 27). However, in the wake of this statement, I would add, on the one hand, that technics should be distinguished from technology in the sense of Simondon, whose ambition was to outline technology as a theory of technics or its philosophical *logos* (2017a). On the other hand, with a nod to Stiegler and his seminal triptych *Technics and Time*, I approach technics in an even larger way and argue that technics (*tekhnē*) designates all domains of what is referred to as *savoir* in French and what cannot be reduced either to "skills" or "knowledge." Therefore, as Stiegler suggests, politeness, elegance, rhetoric, philosophy, poetry, dancing, as well as cooking, can be defined as technics, that is particular forms of *savoir* or *savoirs* (not to be confused with what Donna Haraway defines as *knowledges*). "All human action has something to do with *tekhnē*," which means that "delimiting the field of technics" is difficult (Stiegler 1998, 94). In this respect the civilisational challenge is to retrieve the technical dimension of technology and "reopen technodiversity, which is now dominated by the transhumanist imagination of the technological singularity." (Hui 2019, 27)

II. Hyper-matter and the Question of Knowledge

Think We Must. But How? A New *Episteme*

The "fundamental schemas of causality and regulation that constitute an axiomatic of technology, must be taught in a universal fashion, in the same way the foundations of literary culture are taught." (Simondon 2017, 19) Leaving this axiomatic in the hands of "technicians" is as erroneous as the very distinction between culture and technics, which is still the crux of our culture and heavily preconditions our daily scientific practices. It is precisely this fateful epistemological error which makes us theoretically unable to efficiently respond to the planetary seismic shift, whose nature is fundamentally techno-logical, and to invent the future.

However, the invention of the future requires more than a collection of ideas and a critique of "folk politics." (Srnicek, Williams 2015); it requires new concepts and a thorough research work which would make the ideas consistent and apodictic, that is absolutely necessary. This research cannot be conducted only from within philosophy, sociology, political science, political economy, cultural and literary studies—that is, those fields of knowledge which are associated with radical thinking. The new concepts, that we urgently need, have to be forged, on the one hand, on the basis of the findings in quantum physics, mathematics, theoretical biology, neuroscience and AI, and, on the other hand, from within a new technological milieu. The only way to a new political economy—which cannot be either Marxist or anti-Marxist, or "post--Marxist," whatever this "post" would mean—leads through a scientific dialogue and a worldwide commitment of the scientific community. The planetary seismic shift, which is more and more shaking the biosphere-becoming-technosphere, is first of all *epistemic* in the sense of what Foucault referred to as *episteme*: it requires the mobilisation of *all rational disciplines* in order to define a *new episteme*—that is, "the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice." (Foucault 1989, 183)

The real revolution is to be made within what Vladimir Vernadsky, called the *noosphere* (1945, 1-13; Levit 2001, 74-79; Trubetskova 2010, 88-100[9]). When introducing the term "biosphere" (1997) almost one hundred years ago, the founder of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences

9 The term noosphere was also used by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin for whom the noosphere constitutes an "added planetary layer" (2004, 151) and ends by overriding the biosphere.

argued that the noosphere—the sphere of human thought, from the Greek *nous*, commonly referred to as mind or intellect in philosophy after Plato and Aristotle[10]— needs to be understood as a stage in the evolution of the biosphere, insofar as science transforms the "natural" processes in the biosphere. The noosphere, emerged as a result of technonatural processes within the biosphere, since the noetic is always already technological. To make a revolution in/of the noosphere means to "challenge [it] for the sake of a noodiversity as an overcoming of the system" and recognize that "noodiversity also demands technodiversity as its material support." (Hui 2019, 264) Drawing on Jacques Ellul's approach to the *système technicien* (Ellul 1980, Hui 2019, 21), Hui points out that the system to be overcome is mainly the technical system which operates through two tendencies: totalization and specialization. If these tendencies are difficult to seize, it is because technologies which spread with this seemingly contradictory movement are characterized by diversity. In this regard, revolutionary hyper-materialist thinking goes beyond what new materialist scholarship often refers to "natureculture(s)" and focuses on the vital link between technology and biology in order to better explain the technological condition of noetic life and offer a wider account of what is called thinking.

Therefore to make a noetic revolution means to go even far beyond Virginia Woolf's elliptic injunction from 1938: "It falls to us now to go on thinking. […] Think we must." In fact, if there is something which falls to us, it is what Dominique Lecourt—in 1990, when, on the one hand, the scientific interpretation of progress was already dead with the fall of "real socialism" and, on the other hand, the notion of postmodernity was giving rise to debates on interpretation—referred to as the "capacity to rethink thought, hence without excepting scientific thought [from a new world which is already announced, MK]." (2011, 23) However, to *cultivate* this capacity in the digital era means, on the one hand, to acknowledge that "what is called thinking" can no longer fly without the sciences, yet it *still has to go beyond the objective knowledge of the sciences*; thinking has to compose with objective knowledge rather than be opposed to it. On the other hand, this capacity, which also entails the redefinition of the idea of *Bildung*, means to recognize the

10 As long as this noetic revolution is concerned, it is, however, crucial to remember that *nous* cannot be reduced to what we define as intellect after Kant. Literally speaking, *nous* also refers to flair, wit, intelligence and intention. In this regard, the Latin *sensus* might be considered an equivalent of the Greek *nous* (Cassin 2010, xix and 949). Which means that the noetic revolution must be primarily *sensational*, rather than simply intellectual (Stiegler 2011a, 133).

techno-logical, that is hyper-material condition of every form of thinking and knowledge. This redoubled awareness is the only way to avoid "the return of tragedies and immense miseries." (Lecourt 2011, 23)

What Does "To Know" Actually Mean?

What is really at stake, in the disorientating context which is ours, is still the question of knowledge. Recall once again Lyotard:

> Knowledge [*savoir*] in general cannot be reduced to science, nor even to knowing [*connaissance*]. Knowing is the set of statements which, to the exclusion of all other statements, denote or describe objects and may be declared true or false. Science is a subset of learning […]
>
> But what is meant by the term knowledge is not only a set of denotative statements, far from it. It also includes notions of "knowing how to do," "knowing how to live," "how to listen" [savoir-faire, savoir-vivre, savoir-écouter], etc." (1984-18. Translation slightly modified)

The English word "knowledge," as well as the word "mind," are far too general to let us know that knowledge cannot be limited to cognition. Unexposed to translation, monolinguistic, "knowledge" sets an idiomatic cognitive trap for us. Therefore, thinking has to always already be *thinking in translation* [*penser en traduisant*]—that is, *care-fully thinking or thought-fully caring in translation* [*panser en traduisant*][11] for what Derrida described as the idiocy of the idiom (2009, 237). In French, as well as in Spanish and Italian, the distinction between to know [*connaître*] and to know how to do [*savoir*] is concretised[12]. Thus the mental process of acquiring knowledge [*connaissance*] is separated from the

11 "Care-fully thinking/thoughtfully caring" is Dan Ross' skilful translation of Stiegler's concept of *panser* from his latest works (2018a, 201). The French verb panser, which literally means to *heal* or to *dress* (the wound), is pronounced in the same way as *penser* (to think). In Stiegler's *idiom*, *panser* refers to the concept of care he developed earlier (2010). Therefore, Stiegler's question *qu'appelle-t-on panser*? (What is called caring?) (2018) should be read as an update of Heidegger's question *qu'appelle-t-on penser*? (What is called thinking?), with a clear nod to Derrida's *différance*.

12 The same concretisation occurs in the Polish language, where *poznawać* (to acquire knowledge) needs to be distinguished from *umieć* or *potrafić* (to know how to do), the exact equivalents of the French *savoir*.

theoretical and practical knowledge [*savoir*], which is more than skills and know-how in English, as it recalls the Latin *sapere*: to come to know but also, and first of all, to taste. In a nutshell, one has to know how to do in order to make one's life tasty, that is, "worth living" (Stiegler 2013), no matter what we do and who we are. Incidentally, this is even why the central issue of cognitive capitalism is not only cognitive labour and the reticulated ways in which capitalism expropriates the mental energies of the "cognitariat" (Moulier Boutang 2011, 135), but also and first of all generalized proletarianisation. Not to be confused with the proletariat, this generalized proletarianisation is a loss of different forms of knowledge understood as *savoirs*: "knowledge of how to do, how to live, and how to theorize" (Stiegler 2015, 38) and, with the advent of computational capitalism and "algorithmic governmentality" (Berns, Rouvroy 2013, 163-196), "the knowledge of how to conceptualize." (Stiegler 2016, 44[13]) Therefore it is possible to say, with and against Marx, that this proletarianisation is "recruited from all classes of the population." (Marx, Engels 1848, 18)

The capacity to rethink thought, as a crux of a new digital critique, aims to respond to this proletarianisation and to *adopt* hyper-matter, whose organisation is neither neutral nor natural. However, the fundamental question remains: in which *idiom* shall we respond.

The Globish Impoverishment of Knowledge

The capacity to rethink thought, as a crux of a new digital critique, aims to respond to this proletarianisation and to *adopt* hyper-matter, whose organisation is neither neutral nor natural. However, the fundamental question remains: in which *idiom*[14] shall we respond. In fact, to rethink thought in order to adopt hyper-matter as an instrument for deproletarianisation (Stiegler 2016) requires us to fight against the "everything in English" imperative which has radically changed "philosophical geopolitics" (Cassin 2014). For the two last decades, this imperative has systematically reduced European philosophical languages to dialects for speaking at home. This phenomenon, I argue, is a different facet of what Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz call the "Anglocene." (2016, 116) No matter where we come and speak from, we *all* suffer from this overwhelming *monolinguistic dominance* which makes us even incapable of care-fully thinking and thoughtfully caring.

13 The notion of proletarianisation, as developed by Stiegler, was synthetically described in an entry in the Geneva2020 glossary, prepared by Anne Alombert and translated by Dan Ross. https://internation.world/glossary.html.

14 The French word *idiome* refers to any instrument of linguistic communication used by a community. Therefore, it can also embrace the term "language," like the Spanish *idioma*.

What is at stake here is not really the question of this or that language one speaks or writes in but, rather, the question of the idiomaticity and the epistemological limitations within the idiomatic, that is idiotic limits of any language (Derrida 2009, 175). Understood as *savoir*, knowledge is always idiomatic, which means that it has to be localised in a singular idiom in order to be practiced. The monolinguistic dominance of English-becoming-Globish, in the field of producing theory, is dangerous because it systematically destroys these localised forms of knowledge, as monoculture does for biological diversity, and ends up becoming *insipid*, that is devoid of taste and knowledge The existence of idiomatic limits is necessary, as only idioms make us capable of producing singular, that is, local and idiomatic, differences. Therefore my critique of Anglocentrism has nothing to do with any Anglophobia or Anti-Americanism. It rather advocates for going beyond theoretical monoculture and reopening *idioma-cities*. To think from within the Anthropocene means to fight against the Globish impoverishment. If we urgently need to open a vital and viable alternative *within* the Anthropocene rather than out of it, this (still possible) alternative also entails going beyond Anglocentric theory (and the, largely, Anglocentric university). The digital makes this change techno-logically possible through technocritique at the service of noo- and technodiversity.

III. What Is Critique In the Digital Era?

The Powers and Principles of Reinvention

In order to see why this technocritique is at odds with the theoretical assumptions of new materialism, it is necessary to determine what we actually mean by "theory" and "critique." There is a difference between how these two terms are understood within what is generally defined as the humanities in the U.S. and European philosophies (referred to as "continental philosophy" in the Anglo-Saxon tradition). In this regard, technocritique is primarily an attempt to retrieve the European sense of critique and redefine the latter as a task. However, drawing on the legacy of European philosophies, reinterpreted beyond the philosophical clichés used and reused by "theory," this old-new critique is to be reinvented in relation to the crisis of theoretical knowledge related to hyper-matter, which means in relation to the question that these European philosophies largely considered secondary in their history. This question is that of *technē* in its vital relation with *epistēmē*.

As one of the editors of Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, which became *A Philosophical Lexicon* in its English-American version, Emily Apter points out:

> "Theory" is an imprecise catchall for a welter of postwar movements in the human sciences—existentialism, structural anthropology, sociolinguistics, semiotics, history of *mentalités*, post-Freudian psychoanalysis, deconstruction, post-structuralism, critical theory, identity politics, postcolonialism, biopolitics, nonphilosophy, speculative materialism—that has no equivalent in European languages. What is often referred to as "theory" in an Anglophone context would simply be called "philosophy" in Europe (2010, viii).

To understand this fundamental divergence means to understand the very conditions of what we refer to as "critique." Recalling this crucial difference in the context of the feminist critique developed in English-American academia, Karen Barad says: "I am not interested in critique. In my opinion, critique is over-rated, over-emphasized, and over-utilized. […] Critique is too easy, especially when a commitment to reading with care no longer seems to be a fundamental element of critique." (Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012, 49. Interview with Barad).

However, this too-easy cultural critique, rejected by Barad, has little to do with a philosophical critique as a constitutive element of what Jan Patočka referred to as *Evropský rozum*: European reason (2007, 187-190). At the very beginning of *Plato and Europe*, the Czech philosopher, recalling what "we know well enough" points out that "every truth starts from error or half-error, that truth is always the conquest of progressive criticism of that which we originally thought, criticism of our opinions. Reflection moves along the path of opinion and its critique." (2002, 2) The question is whether such a critique could ever be "over-rated, over-emphasized, and over-utilized"? I would rather argue that Patočka's sense of critique is very precisely what is so dramatically missing these days. Indeed, only this critique—from the Greek *krínein* (to discern and judge) to Kant's three *Kritiken*, Horkheimer, Adorno and *beyond*—gives us "the possibility of rationally distinguishing between *knowledge*, *opinion* and *dogma* (for example, as revelation), against all "argument from authority," that is, not founded in reason." (Stiegler 2015, 21) Therefore, what Patočka means by critique is tightly connected to what Stiegler, with a nod to Lyotard, defines as knowledge [*savoir*], notably the knowledge of how to theorize (38), which cannot be reduced either to cognition or to the cultural critique rejected by Barad.

A *critical* distinction between European philosophical critique and

English-American cultural critique is necessary in order to redefine critique in the digital era. Curiously enough, even though English-American cultural critique constantly refers to European philosophers, also referred to as "cultural theorists" (Eagleton 2003, 40), this critical difference stems from the uses of European references within "theory." As Apter points out,

> Anglophone readers [are] accustomed to an eclectic "theory" bibliography that not infrequently places G.W.F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva, Jean-Luc Nancy, Antonio Negri, Hélène Cixous, Kojin Karatani, Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Rancière, Bruno Latour, and Slavoj Žižek in the same rubric with Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Donna Haraway, Henry Louis Gates, Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Friedrich Kittler, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Edward Said, Fredric Jameson, and Paul Gilroy (2010, viii).

This eclecticism takes European philosophers "not so much [for] references as [for] common nouns, a form of discourse's very breath" (Cusset 2008, 92)[15]. New materialism can be seen as an extension of the English-American way of producing "theory" and a consequence of the "eclectic 'theory' bibliography."

New Materialim(s) in the Light of European Critique

According to the entry "Neo/New Materialism" in the *Posthuman Glossary*, the term "neomaterialism" appears in the work of Rosi Braidotti (2000) and Manuel DeLanda (1996) whereas "the new materialisms are mainly a research methodology for the non-dualistic study of the world within, beside and among us." (Braidotti, Hlavajova 2018, 277) However, in an interview published in a book which is supposed to draw a cartography of these new materialisms, DeLanda himself points out: "I am not convinced that avoiding dualities is the key to a new way of thin-

15 For the sake of this rigour, I am reluctant to agree with Rosi Braidotti's conviction that "nowadays, there can be no reading of Canguilhem without taking into account Haraway's work; no Derrida without Butler or Spivak; no Foucault without Stuart Hall and no Deleuze without materialist feminists. This is a point of no return." (Dolphijn, van der Tuin. Interview with Braidotti 2012, 49) This is precisely the kind of theory that has hit the wall and requires us to find a bifurcation point.

king." Also, he clearly suggests that "the idea that matter has morphogenetic capacities of its own and does not need to be commanded into generating form" does not entail "rejecting dualisms." (Dolphijn, van der Tuin. Interview with DeLanda 2012, 43–44)

One may ask, then, whether this "non-dualistic study of the world within, beside and among us" is not just a slogan which sounds attractive but does not offer an insight into the nature of dualisms and the philosophical challenge they represent. After all, the solution is not to reject dualisms but, rather, to apprehend them in a non-substantialist way, which it would be possible to define as metastable (Simondon 2009, 6). That the uses, misuses and abuses of dualistic thinking in culture and society can take the most oppressive and detestable forms is one thing. That dualisms constitute (techno)logical supports in thinking *as* schematizing is another. Separating these two orders would be absurd. However, not discerning them or suggesting that one is a consequence of another makes us dwell in an impotent misunderstanding and produces theoretical disorder, that is entropy.

Besides, it is peculiar that some promoters of new materialist scholarship, in their attempt to reject dualisms, ultimately refer to Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (Braidotti, Hlavajova 2018, 277). However, since *Matter and Memory*, Bergson clearly maintains the dualistic conception of being (in relation to the reality of spirit [*esprit*] and the reality of matter). By contrast, in relation to the distinction between mind [*esprit*] and body, he rather suggests that to overcome dualisms does not mean to reject them but rather to deal with them differently than in terms of opposition (Bergson 1990, 9). It is, then, rather unclear on what basis new materialism can be defined as a "new metaphysics" (Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012, 13) and what is actually new in this affair. After all, Bergson's main objective was to found a positive metaphysics based on intuition, distinct from but not opposed to intelligence as a capacity of acting on matter by means of tools, typical of the living beings called humans, yet not specifically. That in his approach to intuition Bergson still remained a fierce opponent of the modern concept of intelligence, which was making its appearance in biology and psychology (Malabou 2017, 59-63), makes the new materialist misunderstanding even bigger.

The Misfortunes of Posthumanist Discourses

The question of technical life, discussed both by Bergson and Canguilhem, seems to be one of the most critical misrecognitions of new mate-

rialism. This misrecognition, I argue, is a consequence of posthumanist assumptions, which are focused on the agency of non-human matter and do not pay too much attention to what is human, under the pretext of going beyond anthropocentric limitations. "It has become a veritable doxa in certain circles of the humanities and social sciences today to invoke an appeal to humanity's 'entanglement' with a vast non-human world as the basis for a posthumanist ethics and politics." (Rekret 2016, 225) If countless discourses produced by this doxa are confusing, it is because, pretending to be an academic avant-garde, they rather foster a political status quo, their solemn political declarations notwithstanding.

However, the overinvestment of the term "posthuman"—which needs to be juxtaposed with a too facile and utterly entropic "postology" of Globish academia (posthuman, postdigital etc.)—goes beyond new materialist circles. In fact, posthumanism appears as a global intellectual *trend* of the first two decades of the 21st century, whose theoretical bases are as imprecise as that of postmodernism, from the last two decades of the previous century. As a result, this term has quickly become a catch-all label which scarcely means anything. Notwithstanding my interest in works by N. Katherine Hayles, Dominic Pettman, Cary Wolfe and, last but not least, Karen Barad, who all describe their respective research as posthumanist and try to define what posthumanism means on their own, I argue that this term is simply too generalist, rather than general, since it can be defined only as opposed to a more or less caricaturized humanism and its Anthropos, who becomes a hollow man to be attacked.

In this respect, recall Foucault who, in 1984, when responding to the neo-humanist reaction and the alleged inhumanism of the so-called postmodern philosophers, pointed out that

> Humanism is "a theme or rather a set of themes that have reappeared on several occasions over time in European societies; these themes always tied to value judgments have obviously varied greatly in their content as well as in the values they have preserved. Furthermore, they have served as a critical principle of differentiation. In the seventeenth century there was a humanism that presented itself as a critique of Christianity or of religion in general; there was a Christian humanism opposed to an ascetic and much more theocentric humanism. In the nineteenth century there was a suspicious humanism hostile and critical toward science and another that to the contrary placed its hope in that same science. Marxism has been a humanism; so have existentialism and personalism; there was a time when people supported the humanistic values represented by National Socialism and when the Stalinists themselves said they were humani-

sts. From this we must not conclude that everything that has ever been linked with humanism is to be rejected but that the humanistic thematic is in itself too supple, too diverse, too inconsistent to serve as an axis for reflection." (1984, 44)

The inconsistency of the "humanistic thematic" is precisely what makes posthumanism inconsistent too. In fact, the firm rejection of what cannot "serve as an axis for reflection" can do nothing but make us drift into more and more diluted debates and distract our attention from what actually comes to matter and what doesn't, to paraphrase Barad (2014, 175), in the critical stage of the Anthropocene.

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In fact, fetishizing non-human agencies, new materialist posthumanism overlooks the specificity of how inorganic matter organises—and disorganises—*exosomatic* human organisms, in the process that Alfred Lotka termed "exosomatic evolution," that is, an "increased adaptation [of the human species] […] achieved by the incomparably more rapid development of 'artificial' aids to our native receptor-effector apparatus." (1945, 188) What Stiegler, with a nod to Lotka, as well as to Erwin Schrödinger and Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, develops as exosomatisation (2018a[16]), substantially challenges posthumanism insofar as exosomatisation requires us to reconsider anthropology *as* technology and take account of the epistemological limitations of either biology or quantum physics when dealing with the *inhuman* issue (Barad 2012, 206-223).

"The Past Is Never Finished"

My ambivalence with regard to posthumanism, in its inherent relation to new materialism, does not strive to rehabilitate humanism. This is

16 In short, exosomatisation is a process in which exosomatic organs (artificial aids developed outside the body)—from knives, arrows, wheels to carts, cars and self-driving cars; from abacus to calculator, computers and clusters—have greater and greater impact on the organization of life on Earth. The Romanian economist Nicolas Georgescu-Roegen argued that the exosomatic evolution is an extension of biological evolution, and the economic process is a continuation of exosomatic evolution (1971). Drawing on Lotka's observation, Georgescu-Roegen pointed out that "with the exosomatic evolution, the human species became addicted to the comfort provided by detachable limbs, which, in turn, compelled man to become a geological agent who continuously speeds up the entropic degradation of the finite stock of mineral resources." (1976, xiv) In this regard, exosomatisation is an essential process for the development of human material life.

precisely the false alternative produced by posthumanist discourse(s) that I would like to overcome. What posthumanism and new materialism cannot see, in their urge to break with humanism and a caricaturized Western philosophy, is the fact that new concepts can only be produced in a constant critical task of rethinking, rereading and rewriting the past, in order to produce a difference in relation to what is happening *now*, which means: to make the future happen. "The past is never finished," as Karen Barad ingeniously points out from her physicist's perspective (2007, ix). However, what remains to be rethought, through this unfinished past and largely at odds with Barad's approach to matter, is the possibility of the future, as the capacity for infinitely transforming the noosphere, repassing through the infinitely long circuits of knowledge as *savoir*.

Therefore, in order to take up this task of rethinking the past in a new material reality, it becomes necessary to retrieve—without the slightest Eurocentric pretention—the European sense of critique and to take 'theory' for anything else than a specifically American, historically-conditioned and out-of-date way of approaching European philosophies. It is erroneous to argue that "by the start of the third millennium, 'French' theory belongs to the world in a diasporic, not a universalist mode" and posit that "the Frenchness of post-structuralism is lost in translation." (Dolphijn, van der Tuin. Interview with Braidotii 2012, 26) French theory, identified with French post-structuralism, was a "curious American construction." (Butler 1999, x) By contrast, it is necessary to acknowledge that French philosophy does not really exist since it "has always been developed in relation to Germany and Germanic countries, with Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Hegel, Husserl, Wittgenstein and Heidegger as the main interlocutors of French philosophers." (Stiegler 2006)

In fact, what is "lost in translation" is not "the Frenchness of post-structuralism," which is, after all, a very essentialist category, but what Stiegler defines as the "Franco-European accident of philosophy." (2006) That this peculiar translation often gave a second life to European philosophies and inspired many ground-breaking methodologies is unquestionable. However, in order to break with theoretical monoculture as an adverse effect of this translation, it becomes urgent and necessary to rediscover what we call French philosophy *as if* poststructuralism/postmodernism, which was largely a phenomenon of reception, had never occurred. Which means, on the one hand, to critically discuss the legacy of Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard etc. in relation to German philosophy and beyond the theoretical clichés and, on the other hand, to

pay attention to those French philosophers who were rather not on a standard poststructuralist agenda: from Bergson, Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty, Canguilhem, Leroi-Gourhan and Simondon to André Gorz.

Rediscovering this "Franco-European accident of philosophy" is also the only way to apprehend the newest materialist developments of French philosophy, notably in the works by Catherine Malabou and Bernard Stiegler who, respectively, describe a new material reality and its potent political implications, in relation to neuronal plasticity and the pharmacology of technics, two crucial appearances of material life, to which "new materialism," mainly focused on the agency of non-human matter, does not pay too much attention, under the pretext of going beyond anthropocentrism. Consequently and critically reinterpreting the "poststructuralist" legacy, beyond the interpretative clichés of French theory, Malabou and Stiegler, independently from each other, do not only show that this legacy has a second materialist life, developed on a much more solid *scientific* basis than "new materialist scholarship" and much more inspiring epistemologically than what Braidotti calls "this [specifically American, MK] second life of post-structuralism, which in the meantime dies away in Europe and disappears especially from the French intellectual scene." (Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012, 26)

Perhaps, since theory has become Globish, the old-new European critique, speaking from within an already provincialized Europe, should entail provincializing America—that is, getting away from the "clichéd and shorthand forms" (Chakrabarty 2007, 3) of European philosophies that theoretical monoculture is deeply embedded in when (re)producing its allegedly emancipatory discourses against mere slogans such us European universalism.

Perhaps, since theory has become Globish, the old-new European critique, speaking from within an already provincialized Europe, should entail *provincializing America*—that is, getting away from the "clichéd and shorthand forms" (Chakrabarty 2007, 3) of European philosophies that theoretical monoculture is deeply embedded in when (re)producing its allegedly emancipatory discourses against mere slogans such us European universalism[17], Cartesian dualism, the binary character of Western philosophical thinking and other popular culturalisations of philosophy, uncritically used in "critical theory." What is at stake here is, on the one hand, to criticize—with an acute awareness of how this critique might appear difficult discursively and with a conviction that it is absolutely necessary—this *culturalist* approach to philosophy and, on the other hand, to challenge the too facile "idea of Europe as coinciding with the universalizing powers of self-reflexive reason." (Braidotii 2013, 13) This is the only way to step out of the theoretical stasis of 'critical theory' and work for the reopening of what Hui, developing Stiegler's concept of

17 That universalism is a purely European invention is one thing. That European philosophies cannot be reduced to it is another (Lindberg et al. 2014, 1).

inorganic matter, calls upon as "post-European philosophy." (2019, 278)

The Weak or misguided reading of European philosophers, which is typical of the dominant Anglo-American theory, cannot make *us* post-European. Indeed, the term "post"—as Patočka argued, with no reference to the postology of post-whatever (2007, 274)—presupposes the very term Europe, insofar as to call upon Europe in the planetary era means to call it into question by means of critique. A much more attentive insight into the legacy of European philosophies is needed in order to reopen an authentically new materialist and post-European epoch. When compared to the burgeoning new materialist theories, Stiegler's approach to matter, which served me as a starting point to develop my argument in this article, provides much better explanatory power not only because it stems from a heterodox critical reinterpretation of European philosophies from the Greeks to poststructuralism. Stiegler, along with Simondon and Hui, also shows that the planetary —that is post-European—era entails redefining our approach to technology, in order to let us understand what it actually means that matter matters and why we need to go beyond new materialism(s) in order to elaborate this redefinition.

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Tytuł: Dlaczego nowy materializm nie jest odpowiedzią? Hypermateria, krytyka a teoria

Abstrakt: Artykuł przedstawia nowy model materialistycznej krytyki filozoficznej (technokrytyka ogólna lub krytyka cyfrowa) jako krytycznej odpowiedzi na nowy materializm/nowe materializmy. Bazując na ponownym odczytaniu dziedzictwa europejskich filozofii oraz pracach Bernarda Stieglera, Yuka Hui'ego i Gilberta Simondona, artykuł dąży do wypracowania autentycznie nowego oglądu teoretycznego materii, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem techno-logicznego trybu jej organizacji. Zawarta w artykule krytyka nowego materializmu jest przeprowadzona w odniesieniu do bezprecedensowego kryzysu modelu wiedzy teoretycznej. Otóż końcówka drugiej dekady dwudziestego pierwszego wieku dobitnie pokazuje, że badaczki i badacze pracujący w obrębie nauk humanistycznych nie zdołali stawić czoła kluczowej kwestii decydującej o ich zdatnej do życia przyszłości: cały model teoretyczny i metodologiczny, który do tej pory napędzał współczesną humanistykę i kształtował nasze klasowe, postkolonialne, genderowe, querrowe i inne wrażliwości jest pogrążony w głębokim kryzysie epistemologicznym z uwagi na utratę własnej przyczyny sprawczej i celowej. Dotychczasowy model uprawiania teorii jest niewystarczający, o ile nie przestarzały w tym sensie, że rozwijana w drugiej połowie dwudziestego wieku „teoria" nie uwzględniła rewolucyjnych zmian w zakresie cybernetyki, które, począwszy od lat pięćdziesiątych, całkowicie przekształciły naturę wiedzy. Dlatego też kluczowe wyzwanie polega dzisiaj na wypracowaniu nowej *episteme* w nowym uwarunkowaniu cyfrowym. Wypracowanie takiej *episteme* wymaga jednak radykalnego przekształcenia tego, co nazywamy „teorią" lub „teorią krytyczną", a także uwzględnienia osiągnięć w zakresie rozwoju nauk i technologii (niekoniecznie w ramach nurtu STS), co pozwoli na położenie fundamentów pod nową krytykę ekonomii politycznej w epoce hipermaterialnej.

Słowa kluczowe: entropia, posthumanizm, nowy materializm, technologia, materia nieorganiczna Bernard Stiegler, cybernetyka, Yuk Hui, Gilbert Simondon

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Procreation and Cooperation. On Futurist Reproduction Postulates

The article constitutes an attempt at analysing futurist pronatalist discourse, on the basis of the manifestos and artistic praxis of the Futurists. The reproduction postulates, prevalent in the works of the Polish Futurists and usually placed in the context of vitalism, characteristic of the 1920s, are shown from a biopolitical perspective, emphasizing the intersection of the biological with the political and social horizons. The author attempts to trace especially the political entanglements of the "population project" of the Polish Futurists, which turns out be marked by numerous paradoxes, situating itself between the pronatalist rhetoric typical of nationalist discourse (on the one hand, the discourse promoted by F.T. Marinetti, and on the other, the one formulated in Poland directly after regaining independence) and thinking in terms of a community which starts from the material functions of the body. In this second context, the reproduction postulates are not only an attack on bourgeois morality, but are closely connected with the futurist critique of all social institutions and the state apparatus with its biopolitical dispositions.

Keywords: futurism, reproduction, population, immunization, communization

"Get you to bed, that your belly grow!"[1]
Aleksander Wat

In the endless dispute "reason or the heart," among the Polish Futurists it is the belly that wins. "The world's a vast and milky lump indeed, / possessed of infinitely many guts," writes Aleksander Wat in 1921 in his poem "Begetting" ("Płodzenie," 1921, Wat 1997, 285); while, in another place, he observes, "your bellies have swollen like balloons!" (Ibid., 284). Wat's view chimes well with a remark made by Anatol Stern in 1919: "bellies are heavily laden with foetus." This is the same Stern who managed to fit the sun in a belly (in the title of one of his poems: "The Sun in a Belly" ["Słońce w brzuchu," 1919, A 201]). In "Dream Women" ("Kobiety wyśnione"), instead of Venus, Stern praises "a big-bellied maid." Whereas, in "Nymphs" ("Nimfy," 1924, A 213) he draws the following picture: "The broad, borne, holds him by the hand / and calls / ha ha that hut has a fat gut"; and, later, "She points her finger at the flowered hill – / she is not ill at all – of her round tum / a small and chubby bub will promptly come / which from her tits will need to drink its fill." In the poetry of still another Polish Futurist, Bruno Jasieński, we can find the following succinct anecdote: " – A young girl she did go to town / – Um-pa-pa, Um-pa-pa-pa-pa / – Came back with her belly grown" ("The City"/ "Miasto," 1921, A 147). Faced with a procreational collective mobilization, it is necessary to implement special solutions: "In cosmic spaces, / among birthing stars, / let's put up hospitals and birthing homes" ("Płodzenie," 1921, Wat 1997, 285)[2].

Undoubtedly, everything "breeds and begets here" (Wat 1997, 284). The above enumeration is just a small sample of excessively proliferated ideas, images and metaphors of procreation. The Polish Futurists, not caring about neo-Malthusian warnings and eugenic ideas, express a dream about a real demographic explosion. "Get you to bed, that your belly grow!" – Wat appeals to his readers in "Begetting" (Wat 1997, 285); and, in "Fertility" ("Płodność"), he repeats his call on a cosmic scale:

1 The fragments of the futurist poems cited in this article were translated by Jakob Ziguras. Unless otherwise specified, all the cited works, translated here, come from the following edition: *Antologia futuryzmu i Nowej Sztuki*. 1978. Red. H. Zaworska, Z. Jarosiński. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. They are marked with "A" and the page number in brackets. I would like to thank especially Agata Wilczek for her invaluable help in translation of this article and Jakob Ziguras for the translation of the poems, careful reading and accurate advice.

2 Although these considerations relate to the reproductive imagery of a belly, it functions in futurist poems very often also as a figure of hunger or a powerful, vitalistic desire.

"May earth in bunches of quadrillion children bloom […] that the cosmos swarm with human beings" (Wat 1997, 286). Stern, in the poem "A Woman" ("Kobieta"), formulates his own appeal: "Come quickly – let us build a corporeal tower, / on which, instead of stones, you will be giving me children!" (Pójdź prędzej – wieżę wznieśmy cielesną, / na którą mi, miast kamieni, będziesz dawać dzieci!"). And Tytus Czyżewski, in "Transcendental Panopticon" ("Transcendentalne Panopticum", 1922, A 121) calls: "let us beget ourselves, be born, electrified." This, provisionally called, "reproduction postulate" is at the same time one of the foundations of the futurist social critique, based on the rejection of all the rules of bourgeois reproductive morality. Thus, when the Futurists in various ways (both in their manifestos and poetic praxis) promote involvement in reproductive work for the sake of offspring production, regeneration, health and life maintenance, they try to undermine – in their own opinion – the traditional model of the family and the bourgeois gender contract. However, it is a kind of a "blind spot" in the futurist view.

Yet, was it the goal of futurist art to become a kind of institution providing an alternative to the state, biopolitical activity concerning the social implementation of the procreational ideal? Although the concept of the artistic modelling of procreational processes may sound a bit absurd, nevertheless, the idea of biopolitical, pronatalist social intervention that sometimes appears in futurist art cannot be denied. On no account is a brand-new futurist world synonymous with a technological utopia: the futurist project is by no means based mainly on machines; rather, it is based on bodies. After all, the new political economy proposed by the Futurists is to be the new politics and economy of bodies, being at the same time a planned blow to bourgeois morality and the very organisation of sexuality (Foucault 2007, 95). In fact, it misses the target and fails. However, the idea of founding the whole project on the materiality of the body seems to be a natural – though not frequently described – consequence of the dismantling aims of the avant-garde. While mounting an attack on ossified institutions and structures of power, the Futurists seek life, potential and positive values, not on the level of political, social and cultural forms, but on this very level of bodies. It is in bodies that they find a potential point of departure for the formation of new, productive bonds and political relations. Hence, their call to reproduction is intended to be a political postulate, based on the specific material reality of the body. Surprisingly, it is in the return to this reality that a possibility of conceiving new forms of community opens up. On the one hand – which is characteristic of the whole move-

On no account is a brand-new futurist world synonymous with a technological utopia: the futurist project is by no means based mainly on machines; rather, it is based on bodies.

ment – these forms are based on sexual exclusion[3]; on the other, they reveal its unexpected face.[4] But the question about the origins of this reproduction postulate and the whole population project of the futurist avant-garde prompts at least a couple of answers.

Where is life?

Although in the field of historical literary calques Futurism functions together with machinism, technological progress and the power of civilisation, "life" or "life itself" is one of the futurist key words. Nonetheless, we deal here with an ambivalent understanding of life. On the one hand, it undeniably forms a part of vitalism, a belief typical of that historical moment and founded on the hypothesis that phenomena of life contain non-material, non-physical and non-chemical vital forces. On the other hand, the Futurists do indeed firmly deny to the concept of life any metaphysical character, thinking in the same way as the materialists, who reject all forms of the vitalist hypothesis. They are rather suspicious of the enigmatic potential of creative life, the mystical elements of creationist optimism. And although, apparently, life in their views seems to be a superfluous, cosmic force, experienced as eternal abundance, it will more often find for itself a specific form. Undeniably, it is procreational figures that can serve as such forms: for the Futurists, life is not everywhere and nowhere at the same time. It is in a sexual act, in begetting, birthing, the exchange of body fluids, physiological processes and their effects; it is in a body, but most importantly, in a belly.

"And they praise You, / With your belly above broad loins / Woman!" (Tuwim). Although this "ode" to a belly sounds very similar to the futurist apologies quoted above, its author is Julian Tuwim, who makes

3 This problem was widely discussed in women's replies to Marinetti's texts and in futurist women's manifestos, such as those of Valentine de Saint-Point, Mina Loy, Rosa Rosá or Enif Angiolini-Robert. This issue requires further discussion.

4 Lucia Re describes the complexity of this problem in the context of Italian futurism: "It is […] rather misleading and historically narrow to associate Italian futurism *tout court* with the misogynistic violence of its origins, for in its long and complex history futurism's relationship with women and its construction of the feminine" went through several different phases, although the discourse concerning gender and the relations between sexes remained a fundamental ground on which futurism insistently displayed its 'difference' and staked its importance as an avant-garde movement" (Re 2009, 800).

a woman, "a big-bellied mare," "a wonderful mother," or "a swollen female," the main character of his famous dithyramb "Spring" ("Wiosna") (published in the volume *The Dancing Socrates* from 1918, but written in 1915). "Spring" is just one of plentiful examples showing how, in the literature of the mid-war period, the procreational potential promoted by the Futurists, as well as woman reduced to a reproductive role, are entangled in a dense web of intertexts. In this regard, the futurist ideas situate themselves between the Skamandrite's vitalism, with its images of life energy – often personified as a glorified primeval mother, or perhaps rather "a primal belly" ("prabrzuch") (Ritz 2002, 157) – and Peiper's sex antagonism, which leads to the exclusion of women from the processes of civilization (Ritz 2002, 165).

Commentators usually interpreted the explosion of reproductive energy in the work of the Polish Futurists as a reference to primitivism – a trend which linked together all the European movements, the Dionysian element widely disseminated in the culture of the beginning of the century or vitalism, typical of the poetry of the 1920s, inspired by the philosophies of Henry Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche[5]. Still, these explanations do not exhaust all possibilities. For there would be no significant difference, from this vitalist perspective, between the poetry of the Skamandrites and that of the Futurists: between Tuwim's "Spring" ("Wiosna") and Wat's "Begetting" ("Płodzenie"), between Wierzyński's "Spring and Wine" ("Wiosna i wino") and Jasieński's "Shoe in a Buttonhole" ("But w butonierce"). Yet, it seems that the difference is considerable. Admittedly, the characteristic motifs of spring euphoria, ecstasy or apotheosis of the present, which link the early Skamandrites' and Futurists' texts, were often pointed out. On the one hand, "the same stream of images emerges, regardless of theoretical programmes" (Dellaperrière 2004, 94); on the other, what was a core issue for the Skamandrites, for the Futurists constituted rather a point of departure. In the place of the Skamandrites' vitalism and sensual approach to life, in the poetry of the Futurists appears materialism (Ibidem).

An interesting perspective seems to be offered by Adam Ważyk, who, in *The Peculiar History of the Avant-garde* (*Dziwna historia awangardy*), at the beginning of the part entitled – significantly enough – "The Revenge of Matter" wrote: "In poetry, Futurism praised matter, and it was its fundamental feature" (Ważyk 1982, 340). Futurist materialism

5 Grzegorz Gazda pays attention to the fact that the studies of Italian Futurism appear in the Polish press together with the translations of Bergson's works (Gazda 1974, 62).

was to have a "philosophical," "elemental" and rather "naive" character (in fact, not differently from vitalism and organicism), presenting a view of "man as a non-spiritual being" and, thus, finding its negative point of reference in the cult of spirit of the Young Poland period. Ważyk supported his arguments with glaring examples: "Instead of cosmic forces in man – electrons and animal atavism (Czyżewski); instead of soul – the miracle of the human body (Stern); instead of metaphysical hunger – a hungry stomach (Stern, Wat); instead of lust, that is erotic fatalism – joyous fertility (Wat); instead of masks of culture – the savage's instincts (Stern) and, of course, cannibalism (Jasieński) – a proposition as real, as probable as the one believing that Little Red Riding Hood will devour us all" (Ważyk 1982, 340).

However, the most important question is the following: where can the rethinking of futurist reproduction postulates, not from a vitalist perspective but from a material one, lead to? Ubiquitous in futurist poetry, the images of the cult of fertility – usually presented through the lens of vitalism – were to constitute the emanation of *élan vital*, which was the source of the development of the world of things, the guarantor of the survival of the species and of creative evolution. Yet, futurist fertility definitely cannot be enclosed within the frameworks of Bergson's creative energy and the vitalist hypothesis; the forces of fertility are almost always related to reproduction shown in a purely materialistic way. What is most interesting, however, is the fact that it is not biological and physicochemical processes that unmask and, at the same time, destroy the mystery of *élan vital*. Procreation, in the futurist artistic projects, is presented neither in a vitalist nor in a strictly biological perspective – this is not what this juxtaposition of alternatives looks like; but the metaphors of fertility, sexual potency and reproduction are inextricably bound up with what I would call a futurist population project, emerging at the intersection of life ¬– understood both vitalistically and materialistically – and social and political utopia. Evan Mauro writes about the "politicisation of life" – fundamental for the avant-garde, especially for Futurism – which "was designed as an alternative criterion of value to liberal capitalism's regime of accumulation" (Mauro 2013, 120). If, as Michel Foucault claims, in the term of "population", juridical-legal regulations of the population are closely linked with control of the body (Foucault 2010, 20-27), the biological horizon is intertwined with political and social ones. In this sense, the futurist concept of life inevitably goes beyond the rigid boundaries of the vitalist framework of interpretation. It rather provokes one to make an attempt – essential for neo-materialist reflection – to rethink the opposition between the

biological and the social, that situates in the biopolitical perspective. Indeed, this anagrammatic closeness of procreation and cooperation must have impregnated the futurist imagination!

The division of reproductive labour

Although the Polish Futurists firmly declared: "Marinetti is foreign to us,"[6] admitting only a superficial familiarity with the work of their Italian predecessors and rather accentuating their fascination with Mayakovsky and the Russian avant-garde; yet, both their pronatalist rhetoric and the chosen line of presenting sex relations – characteristic of strong, male, heterosexual subjects[7] – had its source in Marinetti's manifestos, no matter how their main ideas reached Poland and whether they were used and transformed, whether consciously or not. Hence, when Stern and Wat write that "the value of a woman lies in her fertility" and Jasieński specifies: "Among architectural, artistic and technical works we distinguish THE WOMAN – as an ideal reproductive machine," they repeat the most famous ideas of the misogynistic rhetoric of Italian Futurism. In fact, such claims of futurist "body politics" uncover and expose the typical idea of male exploitation of the female body in capitalism. As Silvia Federici shows, "the body has been for women in capitalist society what the factory has been for male waged workers: the primary ground of their exploitation and resistance, as the female body has been appropriated by the state and men and forced to function as a means for the reproduction and accumulation of labor" (Federici 2004, 15).

Clara Orban, like many others, claims that "procreation or at least continued multiplication of the species, was central to Marinetti's vision" (Orban 1995, 56–57). This is, of course, a part of the male-centric cultural paradigm, based on patriarchal symbolic violence. It is true that Marinetti states that a woman, with her reproductive potential, does not belong to a man, a husband, or a family; yet, she does not belong

6 The complex problem of the Marinetti's impact on Polish avant-garde movements was precisely described in Przemysław Strożek's monograph Marinetti i futuryzm w Polsce 1909–1939. Obecność – kontakty – wydarzenia (Strożek 2012).

7 "Futurism emerged from the 'crisis of masculinity,' as a response to the anxieties concerning social transformations at the beginning of the 20th century" – writes Kasper Pfeifer, in the opening to his detailed analysis of the futurist models of masculinity (Pfeifer 2018).

to herself either and does not have power to dispose of her own body. She belongs to the future, being an essential element of the racial expansion project, and reduced to a biological function (Ibidem).

What transpires here, however, is a male vision of reproductive work: either shared by both sexes or heroically taken over by men. All this occurs among the images of men giving birth with which the poetry of Italian as well as Polish or Russian Futurists is replete. A good illustration may be provided by Aleksander Wat's "Fertility" ("Płodzenie"):

> On May 7, 1921
> In Warsaw, at Green Square
> A man was giving birth at dusk,
> Screaming in a voice, mellow and wild;
>
> everything breeds and begets […]
> A man, a woman and that neuter
>
> 7 maja 1921 roku
> W Warszawie, na placu Zielonym,
> Mężczyzna rodził o zmroku,
> Krzycząc głosem matowym, zdziczonym;
>
> wszystko rodzi i płodzi […]
> Mężczyzna, kobieta i ten nijaki

It is not hard to explain, however, wherein the root of these types of images lies. In a similar way, the Futurists are aware of their mental experiments aimed at seeking new methods of reproduction, which separate fertilization from the sexual act, and foetal development and childbirth from the female body. Yet, once again, these have nothing in common with an emancipatory vision, exempting women from their reproductive obligation. These model images of male procreative self-sufficiency, are expressed either in the visions of machines taking over a reproductive role or in the representations of men possessing reproductive powers, in the visions of hermaphroditism, often based on a fantastical concept of parthenogenesis.

The most vivid expression of this male idea of sexual self-sufficiency can be found in the idea of romantic love, which stands in strong opposition to monogamous models (Rainey 2009a, 7) and the traditional concept of sexual differentiation. Marinetti's novel *Mafarka the Futurist,* "written immediately before the first Futurist manifesto, constitutes Futurism's imaginative centre and enacts its fantastical parthenogenesis:

Gazourmah, the metallic man-airplane, is conceived without the help of the 'maleficent vulva,' and is thus endowed with superhuman life and hyperconsciousness by the ecstatic self-sacrificing kiss of his father Mafarka" (Wittman 2009, 413). Mafarka's motto sounds very clear: "Man's spirit is an unused ovary… We shall fertilize it." Thus, he introduces a classic patriarchal antinomy of a male spirit and a female matter. Yet, Marinetti tries to go beyond "this old dichotomy and sexual differentiation by spiritualizing matter through the creation of a mutant futurist being" (Re, 50). As a result, the ground is laid for a vision of a world without women, a world of men and machines, in which – as Clara Orban aptly sums up – "even the enemy has a role to play, but woman has none" (Orban 1995, 56). Marinetti's mental efforts are aimed at creating a world in which the procreative function will be transferred. Hence, he builds images of the machines generating beings or men possessing reproductive powers[8]. According to many female researchers, in addition to interpretations of a social and political character, these fantasies would probably cover a characteristic fear of femininity, connected with a fear of losing masculine individuality and autonomy and, most importantly, a fear of sexual and reproductive dependence on a female body.

Politically entangled fertility

Although, on many occasions, Marinetti tried to propagate a social promotion of women, in fact, he always used arguments focused on their reproductive destiny. Even his support for divorces had no emancipatory meaning. In *Manifesto of the Italian Futurist Party*, he spoke for "Easy divorce. Gradual devaluation of marriage for the gradual increase in free love and creation of children of the state" (Marinetti 2009, 248). The futurist imperative for building a new world entails the collapse of the traditional idea of the family and marriage, which Marinetti regarded as one of the essential manifestations of the system of social repression. Surprisingly enough, on his way to the destruction of the institution of the family, as well as the whole bourgeois order and division of

8 The thought experiments concerning men giving birth will – interestingly enough – become a leitmotif among the avant-garde artists of the beginning of the 20th century. As one more example, let us mention a satire on the emancipatory ideas and population projects of those times, namely: Guillaume Apollinaire's pre-surrealist burlesque entitled *Les mamelles de Tirésias* from 1917.

roles, Marinetti nevertheless perceived feminists as his most important allies (Re 2019, 51).

This futurist dismantling of the family implies the necessity to direct reflection to the level of the population. It looks as if, in their biopolitical vision, a significant part of which undeniably concerned the plans to destroy the family, the Futurists followed a path similar to the one described later by Foucault, who claimed that, in the history of culture, "the perspective of population, the reality of phenomena specific to population, makes it possible to eliminate the model of the family" (Foucault 2007, 140). Taking the perspective of population, as related to the phenomena occurring on a larger scale and irreducible to the framework of the family (Ibidem) or the local context, seems to be naturally bound up with the total project of the "futurization of life". Its range was to have a universal character, by establishing a close link with the campaign for collective involvement in reproductive work.

Marinetti's ambiguous political orientation, and his changeable views and alliances, were subject to a plenitude of interpretations in the international studies on the avant-garde. The complexity of the political issues of Italian Futurism was most widely examined by Günter Berghaus, who, already in the subtitle of his book *Futurism and Politics*, stretched the horizon of his interpretation between rebellion and fascism, and in the course of his analyses showed the history of the movement from the perspective of the influences of anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, revolutionary socialism, Italian irredentism, nationalism, the intended accessions to both the Left and the Right, up to the final support of Italian fascism (Berghaus, 1996). Even when all these contradictions were taken into account, what was still pointed out many times were the close connections between the sexual politics of Marinetti's project and pronatalist rhetoric, characteristic of nationalist discourses and the discourse used later by Mussolini (Orban 1995, Gentile 2003, Re 2016).

In any analysis of the biopolitical aspects of the project conceived by the Polish Futurists, what remains absolutely fundamental is the historical moment at which they enter the literary scene. In the atmosphere of post-independence optimism, the postulates repeated after the Italian and Russian Futurists sound completely distinct. Polish public opinion, after 1918, is dominated by such issues as: population processes in postwar Europe, disturbances and transformations in the demographic structure, the balance of the sexes becoming upset, and a fall in the birth rate during the war and postwar compensative efforts, resulting in a high – one of the highest in Europe – birth rate until the end of the 1930s. A general national euphoria based on the idea of building

the state favoured this phenomenon as well. Thus, the historically and socially-conditioned phenomenon merges with the national postulate that the number of Polish people should grow (Kałwa 1999, 123), which has its three key dimensions: religious, economic and national. This exceptional interest in "maintaining a high reproductive rate among the proletariat" is shared by "the Catholic Church, capitalists and the state, which had aspirations to build a military power" (Kałwa 1999, 125). This tangle of motivations was grasped by Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński in his famous essay "Women's Hell" ("Piekło kobiet") from 1929: "Capitalism gladly sees the excessive supply of workers, which lowers their price and throws them on the mercy of capital; militarism – *der Kaizer braucht Soldaten* – is faithful to the traditions of Frederick II, who regarded his subjects as his own "large zoo"; all this endows the commandment "Reproduce!" with patriotic, civic and social appearances" (Boy-Żeleński 1933, 83). In an atmosphere of increasing nationalism, the right-wing narrative formulating reproduction postulates saw a decrease in reproduction – understood as an opposition to the "duty of begetting Poles" – as tantamount to the weakening of the nation (Marcinkowska-Gawin 1997, 143). Hence, when Boy formulates his famous postulate about the "demobilisation of wombs," he exposes the irreducible historical relationship between population politics and reflection in the categories of nationalism and militarism[9].

Far from the subversive potential and the anarchism declared by the Futurists – and, in fact, remaining in the sphere of declarations – thinking in the categories of nationalism and enthusiasm for the newly-created state, constantly manifest themselves. For instance, when Czyżewski or Jasieński develop numerous organicist metaphors, perceiving a nation "as a physiologically living creature," which "must form its own strong organism and its most suitable contemporary life" (Jasieński 1978, 40). One can thus ask if the reproduction postulates, and the whole population project in the work of the Polish Futurists, really reveal their paradoxical relationship with conservative pronatalist discourse.

9 The real critique of pronatalist rhetoric will gain widespread popularity only later, in the public debate on birth control, which will commence in Poland at the end of the 1920s. Conservative and Catholic circles will stand then in opposition to the supporters of neo-Malthusianism—as those who were in favour of the idea of birth control were collectively called.

Big-bellied city and countryside

As an indispensable part of the futurist utopia project, a great festival of fertility, would be, however, first and foremost connected with the critique of bourgeois culture and an attempt to transgress the language, forms and social relations created by capitalist economy. In the introduction to "The Land on the Left" ("Ziemia na lewo"), Stern and Jasieński outline a clear alternative: "Poets, choose: a living room of bourgeois culture lined with exotic, crumpled cushions of sentiment, or a naked street shaken with labour pains" (Jasieński, Stern 1978, 73–74). Futurism is to be a cultural and biological rebirth. The representatives of the movement understand this in a somehow straightforward way: without birth, there will be no rebirth; thus, they problematized the relationship between the biological, the social and the political. A city, though sometimes also the countryside, constitutes a stage for this provocative spectacle of potency and impotency.

Futurism is to be a cultural and biological rebirth. The representatives of the movement understand this in a somehow straightforward way: without birth, there will be no rebirth; thus, they problematized the relationship between the biological, the social and the political. A city, though sometimes also the countryside, constitutes a stage for this provocative spectacle of potency and impotency.

German Ritz proposed an interesting correlation between depictions of a city and gender issues, in the avant-garde projects of the 1920's. Ritz placed a futurist city on the map of the interwar period somewhere between Peiper's city and the Skamandrite's palimpsestic one, consisting of a civilizational, modern surface and a mythical, romantic depth (Ritz 2002, 156). The most significant point of reference for this line of argument can be Tuwim's "Spring," whose addressee is a Dionysian, orgiastic crowd. And, according to Ritz, a city is the real "area of the battle of the sexes," where the subject is constituted in relation to nature; in the formation of this relation the attitude to the Other, that is, to the other sex, is revealed. The avant-garde battle for a city (marked by femininity) would, in fact, constitute a representation of the male fight for domination and possession (Ritz 2002, 158).

In the analysis of Stern's poem "Nymphs," Ritz shows a transition from the objectification of a woman in her procreative task and her elevation in the myth of a foremother, up to the point at which a woman becomes once again a subject of language (Ritz 2002, 162). This moment is an outburst of female laughter, when words are, at the same time, subject to dadaistic disintegration and syllabic combination, as well as to onomatopoeic operations, in which phonemes imitating laughter ("ha ha") and particles ("ha ha that hut has a full gut") are linked together. In the word play, in the Polish original, laughter, belly and home form here a combination,[10] which, in a way, refers to an old Polish

10 Beata Śniecikowska thoroughly analyzes the implications of the instru-

proverb addressed to a guest, welcoming and encouraging him or her to eat. On the one hand, it is an euphoric invitation to enjoy all the offered benefits and goodness, which – once again – reduces a woman to a belly, to a sexual and reproductive function; yet, on the other hand, it is a suddenly, surprisingly resonating voice – subversive, the simultaneous singing and laughing of a woman subject, which dismantles the male-centric paradigm and male language, "independently organizes *morphe*, creates carriers of meaning, and thus initiates the process of semiosis" (Ritz 2002, 162). Hence, the ludic sing-song manages to break the avant-garde construct of inventiveness, invariably perceived as a male one.

What disturbs this construct is a female, ludic linguistic invention. The civilised countryside becomes a textual space of the event, which "loosens the historical anchoring of the symbolic order, determined in cultural (civilisation) terms, so the participants of the battle of sexes can constitute it anew in a ludic way" (Ritz 2002, 163). Ritz expands his thesis in relation to other poems written by Stern, in which a man of the city is a prisoner of the order of the sexes, and only in primitivist comebacks, a secondary naturalness, on a ludic or folk plane, can he form anew his/her sexual relations. This ludic vitalism has a considerably more important role to play than it has usually been given.

Nonetheless, it can easily be noticed that this rhetoric of male conquest – referring to the city and resulting from the tensions occurring in the battle of the sexes – crumbles in numerous images of infertility/impotency or wrong investments of procreational potential, which, in fact, very frequently become metaphors of the city itself: a city that is still non-modern by the futurist standards. Thus, for instance, Aleksander Wat begs fertility to come "in our cities, yellowed as eunuchs" (Wat 1997, 285), calling on the futurist restorers: "let's crawl from cities, as from shrivelled husks, / cities where barrenness already strikes the gong," and conjuring up visions of a future revival on the scale of the biblical Flood: "We'll flood with tar cities of history, / And set you on the peak, fertility!" (Wat 1997, 287).

Thus does futurist sexual politics stretch the city between three negatively valued, inappropriate forms of investing reproductive potential. Firstly, the family: associated with a conservative view of procreation, which is rooted in the principles of bourgeois morality, against which the Futurists fight so hard. Secondly, prostitution: a sign of economic

mentation in Stern's poem, showing how the text is connected with the idea of primitivism (Śniecikowska 2008, 419-423).

violence, shown as a waste of life energy and serving as a symbol of patriarchal, bourgeois corruption. In the third "dark" point on the city map, we encounter a negative character: an impotent or an onanist, accused of wasting reproductive potential. Each of these elements appears to be hostile to futurist revolutionary goals.

A similar critique is undertaken by Jasieński in his poem "The City," in which he shows the city as a real biopolitical metropolis. The author of "The Land on the Left," builds an analogy between three elements: a factory, a city and a body – placing them together in a cycle where industrial production corresponds to sexual reproduction; yet, at the same time, in the operation modes of the same machine, enormous reproductive potential is constantly wasted:

"Dark. Silent. Black.
None will make a sound, awaken.
It works, it works, at night
THE CITY—FACTORY OF MEN." (A 147)

"In brothels, hotels […]
In a thousand throngs with the rhythm of blood
Works a gigantic Dynamo.
Upon kilometres of straw the City lounges –
A vast, brewing henhouse" (A 147)

„Ciemno. Cicho. Czarno.
Nikt się nie ozwie, nie zbudzi.
Pracuje, pracuje w nocy
MIASTO – FABRYKA LUDZI" (A 147)

„Po burdelach, hotelach […]
Tysiącem tłoków w rytmie krwi
Pracuje gigantyczne Dynamo.
Na kilometry sienników rozparło się Miasto –
Wielki, parzący się kurnik" (A 147)

In his vision, the poet transforms the industrial city into a biopolitical one, in which a factory is no longer separated by a wall from the urban space, and thus shifts the boundaries between the private and the public. Production and procreation take place within the area of the whole city, as in a biopolitical metropolis – as it is described by Negri and Hardt – which turns into a space of reproducing hierarchy and exclusion,

practising male dominance and sexual violence towards women. The impersonal metropolis itself – called by Jasieński "a factory of men" or "a gigantic Dynamo" – wields here "a silent economic control that is as vicious and brutal as any other form of violence (Hardt and Negri 2009, 280).

In the futurist manifestos, it is tiredness and exhaustion that serve as synonyms of bourgeois culture; the avant-garde reaction to them must be energetic and violent. Hence, they must respond to the principle of capitalist accumulation, the bourgeois ethics of saving and growing wealthy, with the uneconomical frenzy of spending, multiplying and begetting. They promote wasteful spending of potential; yet, not in order to lose but in order to multiply. It is neither the economy of wasting nor of reasonable accumulation; it is the frenzy of uncontrolled and dangerous multiplication. This politics of reproduction shown in the language of sexual economy makes it possible to easily determine the adversaries of the avant-garde. These will be: a frugal burgher, who procreates according to the conservative marriage pattern and a decadent, who – depending on the context – is personified either by an impotent or an onanist,[11] but definitely most often as a poet.

Jasieński repeatedly returns to these themes, making a poet-decadent--impotent one of the antiheroes of his manifesto *To the Polish Nation* (Jasieński 1978, 14) and, in another place, demonstrating the anti--futurist features of onanism, best suited to characterize all the passeisms: "Cubism, Expressionism, Primitivism, Dadaism have outdone all the 'isms.' What is left as a not yet exploited artistic trend is onanism. We suggest it as a collective name for all our opponents. As a form of justification we emphasize the fundamental elements of anti-futurist art: asexuality, inability to impregnate the crowds with their art, calm and passeistic masturbation in the darkness of melancholic studios" (Jasieński 1978, 17).

A poetic transformation of this theme can be found in the endings of the two poems by Aleksander Wat cited below:

> "Only the poet, oblivious of the law of fertility,
> hunts his own shadows, slouching low.
> Don't heed my verses, O naïve brood!

11 "Insults such as 'eunuch,' 'castrate,' or the insinuations about the adversaries' alleged impotency, functioned in the language of the Italian Futurists as tried-and-tested invectives, with which their opponents were plied" – writes Kasper Pfeifer, in his thorough analysis of the futurist models of masculinity (Pfeifer 2018).

Get you to bed, that your belly grow!
In that enormous, swollen, wondrous clod,
sits and howls the real *futurus*" (Wat 1997, 285)

"Jedynie poeta, niepomny prawa płodności,
Garbiąc się, łowi swe własne cienie.
Nie słuchajcie moich wierszy, o naiwni ludzie!
Idźcie do łóżek, aby brzuch wam urósł!
W tej olbrzymiej, wzdętej i cudownej grudzie
Siedzi i ryczy prawdziwy futurus!"

Thus do we read in "Begetting," and in (the almost twin-like, as befits the cult of multiplication) "Fertility":

And when in wastes my hours, barren, boom —
heavy, pulsing, and like shot run low —
like a bell, swollen up with blood and sperm,
I call you with the virile roar of buffalo (Wat 1997, 287)

I gdy godziny me w pustkach bezpłodnie grzmią
Ciężkie, pulsujące i wyczerpane jak ołów,
Jak dzwon nalany spermą i krwią
Wołam cię płodności porykiem bawołów

Both of Wat's poems finish with a view of infertility, whose "carrier" is a poet-impotent, a view which turns the classic, metapoetic rhetorical tropes inside out. Instead of praising his creative power, the poet is presented as "oblivious to the laws of fertility". He has no talent and word at his disposal, but only "blood and sperm." Instead of calling upon a muse for help, he is calling upon fertility – not with a rhyme but with the roar of buffalo; while the reader is called upon not to listen but instead to beget, not to passive reading but to reproductive activity. Thus, the desirable product of poetic efforts is not a poem but "that enormous, swollen, wondrous clod" – a pregnant belly, from which a voice of future, a howl of the real *futurus*, is heard.

Immunization and communization

The paradoxical entanglements and involvements of the futuristic social and political criticism outlined above should be considered its weakest

point, which makes it impossible to create a coherent vision of the society of the future. However, it surprisingly becomes possible, if we change the perspective and start not with the explicit criticism but from the concept of life.

In 1923, Bruno Jasieński wrote, "the Polish organism, unprepared by a vaccine, caught a bug of modernity. The fight of the organism with the bug has started, the fight for life or death – the hasty, frenzied production of one's own antitoxins. […] this period of fight and painful transformation of the organism will go down in the history of modern culture under the name of Polish Futurism" (Jasieński 1978, 53). By means of this precise, organic, immunological and at the same time martial metaphor, Jasieński reveals the connection between a virulent modernity and the social organism attacked by it. The stimulation of its immunological mechanism results in the call for an immunological response, which would be the avant-garde: born in pain and fever, standing – as a defence mechanism – on the side of life. Jasieński formulates the immunological argument in the context of the diagnosis of a suddenly emerging external threat to social identity, namely, modernity. In the view of the poet, however, immunization does not have the nature of a reactive attempt aimed to preserve identity and protect subjectivity: the process of antitoxin production initiates the painful transformation of the whole organism.

This paradox might suggests that what we deal with in the futurist project is a peculiar dialectics of immunization and communization. Immunization is a fundamental process constituting an organism by making it immune or resistant, and connected with separating it from the external environment, by enclosing and sealing – both its corporeal and subjective – boundaries. For Roberto Esposito, immunization becomes a form of biopolitical demarcation of the boundaries between I and non-I, a movement aimed at the protection of individual life, at individual safety, at the preservation of identity (Esposito 2013, 58). Communization is quite the contrary. Both terms derive from the same root: *munus*, which means a "gift" given in a community (Esposito 2013, 14, 55, 59).[12] Hence, the dialectics of immunization and communization is the dialectics of enclosure and opening – of that which is "proper," one's own, and that which is "common," of giving and refusing to participate in the circuit of social circulation (Esposito 2013, 59).

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12 Mikołaj Ratajczak analyzes, in detail, this etymological trail in the article: *Poza paradygmat immunizacji: biopolityka w filozoficznym projekcie Roberta Esposito* (Ratajczak 2011).

Undoubtedly, the futurist reproduction postulate seems like an ecstatic explosion of communal life. In the centre of Futurism there stands an affirmative politics of life, which – by means of art – promotes new forms of collective coexistence, breaking by means of an immunological independence from the dimension of community, from *communitas*. At the same time, it means situating oneself against property right, in its basic form connected with the body and fundamental for formulating the concept of subjective identity. It can be said that a Futurist does not want to own anything, even his or her body.

A figure perfectly antithetical to the above outlined ideal would be an onanist, appearing in so many futurist manifestos and poems, including the most famous – "The Pissoirs" (*Pissuary*) by Stern (Majerski 2001, 78) – as the one who refuses to participate in the euphoria of procreation, in other words, an optimistic vision of creating the new life of a new community. It is mainly he who comes under fierce criticism from the futurist population project.

Taking the perspective of the dialectics of immunization and communization, allows for a slightly different arrangement of other futurist aporias. Undoubtedly, these aporias include the tension between thinking in national categories and cosmopolitanism, related to the total project of a supranational community which does not lay claim to any identity. This is one side. On the other, however, what is also unravelled here is one of the reasons why the Polish Futurists do not become Dadaists – in such a case, they would have to completely turn all the institutional forms inside out. And this is what they cannot do; on the rising tide of the post-independence euphoria they save the state as a new creation. Hence, the images of begetting and birthing frequently seem to ally themselves with nationalist, pronatalist rhetoric. Yet, the Polish Futurists become entangled in a peculiar paradox, as they decide at the same time to speak out against isolationist ideas of biopolitics, ignoring social relations and political borders. For they are real cosmopolites, who conceive a horizontal community against all hierarchies and borders.

Moreover, the communizing angle enables us to see one of the possible solutions to the paradoxical connection between the fascination with primitivism and the ludic, and technological utopia. The communizing ideal and dream about community make it possible to establish a link between the futurist understanding of the past and of the present – thanks to the aporia underlying the very concept of community, which is always and at the same time a matter of the past and the future. On the one hand, its – primeval and lost – ideal is situated in the past. On the other, the Futurists perceive community as one which is still to come;

it is a matter of the future and of future collective work. The Futurists want to unite, not on the basis of universally binding social and political laws but according to different rules, against social hierarchies, political divisions, economic exchanges. In this sense, thinking in terms of community or the collective is the most significant element of the futurist hostility towards politics and society.

The Polish Futurists seem not to think about subjects in terms of stable, sterile, sealed borders; on the contrary, they expose the boundaries of the subject to numerous disturbances, openings, exchanges and transfers – exactly against the modern tendency to the immunological sealing of a corporeal layer (Pacewicz 2017). Thus, Aleksander Wat's description of the world as "a vast and milky lump indeed,/ possessed of infinitely many guts,/ a starry-breasted mare with milk to feed/ stones, plants, beasts, humans, spirits," may best convey a dream of liberating oneself from "the destructive and self-destructive logic of *immunitas*" (Esposito 2013, 64) and as an attempt to return to thinking about its opposite, "the open and plural form of *communitas*" (Esposito 2013, 64), which would imply the exposure to all the risk connected with the unsealing of the protective barriers of body and subject. It is just as if the real futurist revolution started from the body and the material functions of corporeality, in which unregulated and uncontrolled exchanges with the world and within a community lead to a great orgy of bodies.

Within this sphere, birthing and begetting are neither a matter of family, nor of institution, nor of state, but become a matter of collective life. Thus, they stand not only against culture, society, morality, religious rules and the family, but against the whole political apparatus with its biopolitical dispositions. The futurist anti-bourgeois claims fail in many fields, allying with conservative discourse or overlooking paradoxes and weaknesses, resulting from a narrow understanding of social, political, economic and gender categories. The communizing angle make it possible to see the potential of futurist thinking in terms of community or the collective and opens the path of completely different, alternative understanding of their political project, starting from the concept of life and body with unsealed borders.

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Autor: Marta Baron-Milian
Tytuł: Prokreacja i kooperacja. O futurystycznych postulatach reprodukcyjnych
Abstrakt: Artykuł stanowi próbę analizy futurystycznego dyskursu pronatalistycznego na podstawie manifestów programowych oraz artystycznych realizacji. Postulaty

reprodukcyjne, na szeroką skalę obecne w wystąpieniach polskich futurystów, sytuowane zwykle w obszarze typowego dla lat dwudziestych witalizmu, ukazane zostają w perspektywie biopolitycznej, eksponującej miejsce przecięcia tego, co biologiczne z horyzontem politycznym i społecznym. Autorka próbuje prześledzić zwłaszcza polityczne uwikłania „projektu populacyjnego" polskich futurystów, który wykazuje liczne paradoksy, sytuując się pomiędzy pronatalistyczną retoryką właściwą nacjonalistycznym dyskursom (z jednej strony, tym propagowanym przez F.T. Marinettiego, z drugiej natomiast, konstruowanym w Polsce bezpośrednio po odzyskaniu niepodległości), a myśleniem w kategoriach wspólnoty, rozpoczynającej się od materialnych funkcji ciała. W tym drugim kontekście, reprodukcyjne postulaty są nie tylko atakiem na burżuazyjną moralność, ale ściśle wiążą się z futurystyczną krytyką wszelkich instytucji społecznych i aparatu państwa z jego biopolitycznymi dyspozycjami.

Słowa kluczowe: futuryzm, reprodukcja, populacja, immunizacja, komunizacja.

ANNA KAŁUŻA
Translated by: JOANNA SOĆKO

Materiality of Poetry: Words and Bodies/ Words and Pictures (Ewa Partum, Andrzej Tobis, Adam Kaczanowski)

The article discusses the possibilities of the emergence of a neo-materialistic aesthetics of the poem. Each of the analyzed examples—Ewa Partum's active poetry, Adam Kaczanowski's toy-art and Andrzej Tobis's photographic archive—reveals different aspects of this aesthetics.

The case of Partum shows that the material concreteness of poetry—today also associated with virtuality— requires other ways of perceiving / commenting / documenting the "poems" happening between the media. Active poetry consists in drawing the text (which eventually turns out to be a jigsaw made of letters) out of the formula of the finished object and making the medium of writing/language the material from which the object of artistic attention is "made". I call Tobis's project neo-materialistic, since it shows how we move from the human hybrid level we move to normalization and stabilization (and vice versa). Tobis seems to reach the moment when this normalization is actually happening and, at the same time, he shows levels of transformations, mutations and deviations. Kaczanowski "invents" for his poetry a medium different from the traditional record and the traditional form of the book. This principle of "invention" turns out to be very important, because it decides whether some materializations are poetic objects or not, without specifying any initial aesthetic, political and ideological criteria.

In the most general terms this new-materialist aesthetics has been linked here with the transmedia horizon of art and the transformations of materialistic thinking made under the influence of the non-anthropocentric imagination.

Keywords: poetry, new-materialist aesthetics, transmedia, artistic activities

My concern in this article is with the potential of materialistic thinking in/about Polish poetry of the twentieth and twenty-first century. I attempt answering the question whether it is possible— and if so, on what basis to shift interest in this register towards new materialisms, which I would roughly understand—after Donna Haraway or Bruno Latour—as posthumanist, non-anthropocentric conceptualizations of associated species or quasi-objects. Generally speaking, my reflection would have to do with the scope of understanding of the world in which dualism or dialectics, derived from both constructivism and representationalism, do not work and the search for material-discursive and material-visual connections is more fruitful (see Barad 2003, 801-831; Barad 2007, Haraway 2003, Latour 2011). I would like to ask, therefore, whether the aesthetic and artistic order of poetry can be thought in accordance with the order proposed in the natural, sociological and exact sciences. This is how it works in art, especially in transmedia art, where critics and artists more and more often talk about artistic research rather than creation (see Herbst & Malzacher 2018). Is a similar situation possible in Polish poetry? That is, can its value also be based on a connection with scientific and natural inventiveness?

In order to address this question I will focus on (post)conceptual artistic practices which combine the linguistic order with the bodily and pictorial order. I will discuss Patrum's active poetry, Kaczanowski's strategy of clownery and Tobis's *A-Z* project, because these are good examples of a poetry that questions the border between bodily, linguistic and pictorial media. In my analyses, I will concentrate on the relations between particular systems of signs and types of media, in order to capture the form of materiality proposed by the authors mentioned.[1]

Ethical and political consequences of understanding poetry as a visual-verbal medium

I would like to begin, however, from a brief outline of the history of Polish poetry. If I were to indicate the tradition of current conceptions

1 Of course, it would be necessary to explain why the medium category would be more useful in the context of research on the materiality of poetry than categories originating from the area of semiotic research. The medium is something much broader than the semiotic system: after Tomasz Załuski, I would like to assume that the medium is a "combination of material and technology with a specific way of using it, with the overriding level of conventional artistic and cultural practices, thanks to which selected features of the material and technological layer become significant, not only in the artistic or cultural context, but also in social and political contexts." (Załuski 2010, 11).

of language and the poem which could be called materialistic, I would derive it from the avant-garde tendency to emphasize the opaqueness of the code (see Sławiński 1998; Orska 2019; Browarny et al. 2018). Nevertheless, linguistic innovativeness or fixation on experiment, which always increase the visibility of the code, do not suffice, I think, to enable us to speak about the neo-materiality of the poem, code and poetry in general. Even if modern Polish poets used various techniques to differentiate the language of prose from the language of poetry, this usually entailed diminishing the materiality of the world seen. This is how the categories of reference and autotelicity work: the more attention focused on the medium itself (language), the lower the importance of non-literary references (see Kluba 2004). Similarly, concrete poetry contributed to the philosophy of the (autonomous) sign (see Wysłouch 2001). Obviously, the ontological duality of, on the one hand, words, text, language, poem, poetry, and on the other hand the world, reality, the body etc., was an effective blockade against materialistic thinking.

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Conceptions of poetry in general, as well as interpretations of particular poems, have been inspired by similar assumptions of ontological duality. For a very long time the dominant philosophy was the hermeneutic tradition of interpretation (characterized by the effort to bypass the formal and rhetorical resistance of, for example, language, in order to discover meaning, show the authenticity of emotions or the sincerity of intentions), superseded by the structuralist and poststructuralist-deconstructive approach, which—contrary to the hermeneutic one—puts emphasis mainly on language constructions and their autonomous vitality (see Vattimo 2011; de Man 2004; Michaels 2011). To sum up, looking at various poetic undertakings, authorial conceptions of language and different methodologies of reading poetry makes it difficult to explain whether it was the criticism of poetry or rather various poetic realizations that did not favour materiality—this significant, sense-creating and active constituent of reality, equally as important as the others.

If the increased interest in the materiality of works of art (a work of art as an object) is a characteristic of the aesthetic ideology of artistic and literary modernism (Foster 1996; Buchloh 2003, Bishop 2012), one can assume that the persistence of the once dominant idealistic aesthetics of the poem indicates that a significant part of Polish poetry is not modern. This is important in the context of our cultural heritage: if we consider the prevailing part of the Polish poetry of the twentieth century as not modern—that is, as indifferent, critically hostile or counter to modernization processes—it is difficult to expect that poetry to be seriously involved in neo-materialist thinking of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is in a sense directly linked to modernity: some researchers are looking for its beginnings where the beginnings of moder-

nity were sought, taking the discovery of the steam engine as the starting point (Clark 2015, 2–18).[2]

It is difficult to speak about 20th century materialist traditions in Poland without referring to the poetry of, among others, Julian Przyboś, Adam Ważyk, Tymoteusz Karpowicz and Witold Wirpsza, whose artistic strategies tell of a critical awareness of modernity. Turning to new aesthetic formulas allows for placing their poems outside the dominant anti-modernist trend represented by Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. Polish poetry has not become modern even after 1989: to a large extent it has remained in the scope of mythological, mythical and religious imagery. The best examples of this thesis are the most praised and recognized poetry volumes of that time, such as those of Marcin Świetlicki, Jacek Podsiadło, Marcin Sendecki, Marzena Broda, Marzanna Kielar and Ewa Sonnenberg, which legitimized a post-romantic philosophy of language and the poem. Even if we were able to indicate the materialistic dimensions of the Polish poetry of the late twentieth century, it would always be contaminated, so to speak, by some kind of idealism or formalism.

It is worth remembering that, in the 1990s, ideas concerning the materiality of poetry changed, under the influence of new techniques. As a result, conceptions of language and medium from beyond the structural and semiotic system have been widely appreciated. The focus was on the biological and adaptive qualities of signs which allowed the appreciation of the bio-art trend.

It is worth remembering that, in the 1990s, ideas concerning the materiality of poetry changed, under the influence of new techniques. As a result, conceptions of language and medium from beyond the structural and semiotic system have been widely appreciated. The focus was on the biological and adaptive qualities of signs which allowed the appreciation of the bio-art trend (in Poland, somehow, not particularly esteemed—see Bakke 2015; *Signs of Life. Bio Art and Beyond 2007*). One of the consequences of adopting another philosophy of the medium was not only to position language against non-literal semiotic and communication systems, but also to think about ways of coding information by animals, bacteria, and other biological organisms. Poetry turned out to be not only a product of genius, inspiration and a special metaphysical and spiritual structure of man, but also the effect of the biological and material life of more or less complex organisms. Another consequence of this shift was the inclusion of literary studies in the context of visual literacy and "literacy visualcy" as well as studies of verbal and visual media (see Mitchell 2008, 4–19; Mitchell 1994, 83–107). Therefore, it was possible to abandon comparative and competitive perspec-

2 The Anthropocene is a flow of geological factors parallel to a flow of political, social and cultural factors. If modernity is a state of increased influence of human activity on the environment, the Anthropocene reveals its consequences —radical and dangerous for our biological survival. See also: Abriszewski 2018: 371–372.

tives (poetry as image, image as poetry) and focus on the possibilities of establishing multifaceted relations between them.

Contemporary material approaches to poetry generally spring from the conviction that the separation of cultural objects from historical, economic, personal, psychological, material and technological or similar conditions is impossible. We cannot think about a text, a poem, or poetry, exclusively within their own intratextual scope: materialistic thinking cannot be limited to the text itself. The conviction about the materialistic foundation of verbal-visual media (because this is how I want to talk about poetry) would lead us to an ethical project, in the sense that it would not allow us to reduce the number of entities involved in the object's production, distribution, circulation etc., as happens in the traditional understanding of the creative process.[3] Perhaps, in Polish modernism, the duality of language and world has persisted for such a long time, due to the fact that "the world" had been reduced to the homogenous form of whatever is not the poem? If we reduce the huge variety of factors affecting the material forms of human activity, we can easily talk about poetry in terms of genius, talent, intuition, ability etc., leaving aside all the material conditions of language, the subject, the object and the processes that occur between them. Therefore, although I believe that attempts to read text as if it were producing images most closely approximate to materialistic thinking, I perceive all efforts to compare literature with the visual arts, or to "equate art with a material object" (Michaels 2004, 18) as only a partial realization of the materialistic philosophy of poetry. The new materialisms (e.g. Latour's materialism, to which I am referring most eagerly here) involve codes, media, matter, materials and many lives that are disproportionate to each other on many levels and in many respects, and it all happens without any prior decision about what is a code, what is a material, what is an entity and what works or what does not work. Texts, similarly to Latour's entities, are not points but trajectories, and to claim their materiality is to appreciate the anti-essential aspect of reading: it helps us to understand how it happens that we are convinced that some texts engage in the activity of mean-ing in the way they do. The essences (meanings) demand a stabilization ensured by institutions, historical processes and ideologies.

3 I refer to Bruno Latour's reflection concerning the multitude of actors who in modern orders were subject to purification processes and were invisible to people who were separated from them. (Latour 2011)

The ethical aspect of such poetic materialism results from the political ambitions of poetry, as it shows how discursive formations, currents of thought or networks of meanings become real and contribute to the physical world (Latour 2009, 185-252) and, therefore, it does not allow these powers to become invisible. Poetic materialism—sometimes via reification, sometimes via hypostases—introduces into the field of vision what is politically significant and what tries to remain invisible in order to shape our world more effectively.

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In order to take the opportunity given by the tradition of linguistic and concrete poets, I prefer to speak about the incommensurability of the material code, the material environment of the poem and the materiality of the poem itself, rather than speaking about the dualism of text and world. Incommensurability is an important aesthetic and philosophical category of modernity. In the opinion of Jacques Rancière, it defines the gap between the sensual (material) appearance of the object and its meaning, but it also marks the difference between various media and various arts. The conviction that all arts are exchangeable was questioned by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, but according to Jacques Rancière such an approach led to an excessive elevation of incommensurability (Rancière 2007, 66-73). Bruno Latour speaks of a hyper-incommensurability (Latour 2011, 90); Timothy Morton speaks of asymmetry "between the infinite powers of cognition and the infinite being of things" (Morton 2013, 25); Timothy Clark, on the other hand, speaks about an incommensurability characteristic of the Anthropocene (Clark 2015). The aesthetic idea of incommensurability was used in the 1960s to question the possibility of thinking about the common world (Waters 2010). Treated as a resultant of discreteness, it became an apology for the world insofar as it is strange and alienating. Since we all live in separate worlds, we do not have to be interested in and feel responsible for each other. Discreteness and incommensurability have become the justification for economic exploitation and for social, class and gen-

der inequality. The idea of incommensurability does not have to lead to the destruction of our relationship with what is not similar to us or what is different and distant from us. In the light of the of the fact that such thinkers as (among others) Jacques Rancière represent this idea as liberation of visibility forces from the stranglehold of word forces, it is possible to say that incommensurability enables us to think about the world with no reference to any homogenizing "common measure" (Rancière 2007, 66-79). In this perspective, one can take incommensurability as a promise of emancipation of hitherto suppressed forces that reject „common measures" but maintain what is common (Rancière 2007, 774). Bearing in mind the idea of incommensurability, I would like to analyze some cases of poetic and artistic activities and I would like to focus on the ethical and political possibilities of neomaterialistic aesthetics.

Active poetry

Since circa 1971, Ewa Partum, has created various types of experiments with word formulas. In the Poetry Office in Warsaw, she displayed *Obszar na licencji poetyckiej* [The Poetic License Area]. The artist scattered a few sets of alphabet letters on the floor of the flat, so that the visitors, who were coming out of the exhibition, were literally taking the letters away, because the doormat was soaked with glue. During another active poetry performance, Partum scattered the letters which contributed to a fragment of Joyce's *Ulysses* in a passage of the Warsaw underground, and the letters were spread by people passing along this route. Likewise, in the case of *Metapoezja* [Metapoesis], from 1972, the floor of the exhibition was covered with paper blocks of letters, and the visitors transferred them from one room to another. Simultaneously, Partum was composing visual poetry on pages which contributed to the series *poem by ewa*. In 1971, she created, i.a. a page with her lipstick marks which reproduced the layout of the alphabet, and which Partum signed: "my touch is the touch of a woman."

In this case active poetry consists in drawing the text (which eventually turns out to be a jigsaw made of letters) out of the formula of the finished object and making the medium of writing/language the material from which the object of artistic attention is "made." In the case of Partum, language signs become insistently visible and deprived of semantic values as they appear in the public space. Andrzej Turowski, commenting on the conceptual nature of Partum's linguistic actions, recounts their effects as follows:

> The letters scattered by Ewa Partum were sticking to the visitors' shoes and wandering with them around the city, getting lost among the rubbish on the streets. Maybe for a moment they formed a word, maybe for a moment they took shape, maybe somebody got interested or maybe got upset with their insistent presence. Finally, they disappeared somewhere, leaving only traces in the minds of those who carried them out.[4]

One can, of course, talk about interactive poetry, as Turowski does; but, first of all, we should ask how the forms of linguistic signs, whose systems we sometimes call poetry, can be part of the image of the public space.[5]

Partum shows that this can happen because of the "clinginess" of the material, which poetry uses for itself. Scattered cards, which had been cut by the artist, adhere to the bodies of people visiting the exhibition and thus leave the confined space of the museum. Due to such actions, poetry is supposed to become a public, common and collective art. However, we must admit that in the case of Partum, this strategy does not work well: it is not enough to scatter the letters and deprive the art of its meanings (as if it were matter) in order to make the poems active in public. It works badly—poetry eventually ends up as an unwanted rubbish[6]—and it is not because Partum did not think her actions through. In order to make the events of "active poetry" more effective, we would have to know what was happening not only during the action itself, but also later, so as to see how the poems create a public space, how they create new, distinct entities in a public space and how they make certain bodily states become subject-states, etc. It is not enough in this case to register a project reduced to the author's actions, we should also be able to follow/get to know the reactions (bodily, verbal) of people who have been included in the course of events.[7] This situ-

4 „Rozrzucone przez Ewę Partum litery przylepiały się do butów zwiedzających i wędrowały z nimi po mieście, gubiąc się wśród śmieci ulicy. Może na chwilę utworzyły słowo, może przez moment przybrały kształt, może kogoś zainteresowały, może zdenerwowały swoją natarczywą obecnością. W końcu rozpłynęły się gdzieś w przestrzeni, pozostawiając jedynie ślady w myślach tych, którzy je wynieśli" (Turowski 2012-2013, 51).

5 Of course, I mention here only one of many artists whose poetic actions were performed within the public space. See Jenny Holzer, Jadwiga Sawicka, Giselle Beiguelman.

6 In my opinion, changing poetry into rubbish is not intended by the poet although it may serve as proof that the „waste" elements universally participate in culture making.

7 This is what happens a few decades later in the case of Giselle Beiguelma-

ational and documentary knowledge will increase recognition of such activities, determine their boundary conditions and enable us to trace the aesthetic and social consequences of artistic actions, going beyond their momentariness.

The case of Partum shows that the material concreteness of poetry— today also associated with virtuality— requires other ways of perceiving / commenting / documenting the "poems" happening between the media. This example suggests that this poetry, which wants to increase its materialistic potential, is exposed to blockage in channels remaining beyond our visual and social sphere. We leave out a whole series of material-discursive powers and effects. In one of her manifestos (accompanying the action *Obszar zagospodarowany poezją* [The Area Managed with Poetry] in 1970), Partum wrote: "The implementation of poetry should become the reason for the creation of a real area managed by imagination in a way that extends its boundaries."[8] The artist suggests here that poetry is not only a collection of artifacts defined as poetic works, but that it produces its own fields of influence, and should therefore become a situational and contextual framework for social and individual forces.

Partum's commitment to the materiality of art is confirmed, among others, by the action *Hommage á Solidarność* [Homage and Solidarity], during which the artist "kissed out" the Solidarity inscription on a roll of paper. Dorota Monkiewicz, commenting on the course of this performance, politicizes the physical and sexual objects:

> …the traditional topos of patriotic national art, lined with the phantasm of a woman's body (an example of which we can see in Jacek Malczewski's *Polonia*) is confronted with an active female subject falling into a public space with a project of total emancipation—feminist and national at the same time.[9]

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n's *no-poems*. The poems conceived as ephemeral events in the form of sentences displayed on billboards and transmitted back to the Internet via the camera, do not focus only on „broadcast messages." The recording of the events includes not only the activities consisting in placing the text in public space; it also gives an insight into the reaction of involuntary participants. More about the project: *Poetrica – São Paulo* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pgL6xNvrvI

8 „Realizacja poezji powinna stać się powodem powstania realnego obszaru zagospodarowanego wyobraźnią w sposób rozszerzający jej granice" (after Gryglicka 2012, 477).

9 „…tradycyjny, podszyty fantazmatem kobiecego ciała topos patriotycznej sztuki narodowej (zobaczmy go chociażby na przykładzie obrazu *Polonia* Jacka Malczewskiego) jest konfrontowany z aktywnym kobiecym podmiotem wchodzącym w przestrzeń publiczną z totalnym projektem emancypacyjnym – femini-

According to the critic, Partum deconstructs the national narrative. The actions of a particular woman-artist make it impossible to establish femininity as an emblem of national ideas. Moreover, several years later, Partum repeated this performance in Spain and gave it a new title, *Pearls*, as she cooperated with Spanish women, "kissing out" the national flag with her lips. This action was supposed to be an allusion to the slave labor of women in the sex business and a reflection on the "status of women from poor countries in the liberal societies of Western Europe."[10] In any case, the body in Partum's work / Partum's body serves as a medium and material and, as such, it ceases to be understood only as a representation, it stops being marked only as a social construct devoted to playing its special role, but—as the body that exists in reality—it opposes itself to being treated solely as a representation, construct or phantasm. In some contexts it is a phantasm, in others it is real, everything depends on the strategic and contextual setting, which is also reflexively negotiable.

Translations

Andrzej Tobis has been working on his *A-Z* project for several years. It consists of an archive of photographic equivalents of dictionary entries from *Bildwörterbuch Deutsch und Polnisch* published in 1954. As Tobis writes, in the introduction to the catalogue book from the 2017 exhibition in Wrocław: "During eleven years of work on the *A-Z* project, I've managed to find, up till now, not much more than seven hundred visual equivalents of entries from the original dictionary."[11]

Tobis's project is a radical denial of the aesthetic assumptions originating from the Kantian tradition. Their common feature is not so much that they subject what is material, sensual or perceptual to mind, generality and reflexivity, but rather that they outline the division between sensual pleasure and contemplative pleasure, matter and form. According to critics of Kant's theories, this led to a lack of interest in the material conditions for the existence of a particular thing (Nead 1998, 49; Hudzik 1994). In his project, Tobis deconstructs the aesthetic that allows one

stycznym i narodowym zarazem" (Monkiewicz, 2012-2013, 83).

10 „statusem kobiet z krajów ubogich w liberalnych społeczeństwach Europy Zachodniej" (Monkiewicz 2012/2013, 85)

11 „W ramach jedenastoletniej pracy nad projektem *A-Z* udało mi się do tej pory odnaleźć niewiele ponad siedemset wizualnych odpowiedników haseł z oryginalnego słownika" (Tobis 2017, 3).

to determine what are the external characteristics of the environment, and what are the inner properties of the thing itself. Searching for the material equivalents of the old dictionary entries in the environment of—mostly—Upper Silesian cities produces visual and intellectual effects that make it impossible to confirm old categories. Tobis achieves this result on many levels: starting from multiplying the effects of the project—which was published in the form of a column in the magazine *Ultramaryna*, displayed in the form of educational cabinets in a museum, and printed as a book or as *Mały zestaw wakacyjno-katastroficzny* [Small Vacational and Catastrophic Set] included in *Notes na 6 tygodni* [Notebook for 6 weeks]—and ending with the interpretation of specific boards. The object, its presentation, its dictionary entry (in Polish and German) and its ideological, imaginative and symbolic meanings intertwine on these boards in such a way that they constitute various levels of configuration and do not become matter divided from form but, rather, function both as matter and form depending on a particular configuration.

Magda Heydel discusses Tobis's photographic and verbal configurations as being subversive to the stability and disambiguity of the rules governing the world of words and the world of things. But even when she discusses this project in the context of old problems concerning representation and language equivalents of reality, Heydel expresses doubts that could lead her (and therefore guide us) to non-dualistic situations:

> Is the sunrise painted on the chimney of a cold store sunrise or not? Are some crumpled petticoats and stockings lying at the bus stop women's clothing or not? Is a pillow weighed down with a brick in a puddle a pillow, or not (anymore)?[12]

Exactly. However, Tobis's *A-Z* dictionary cannot be captured with the reality-sign dualism or read as a part of the strategy of identification (the image is what it is made of). We are dealing here with the so-called flat ontology that was elucidated by Andrzej W. Nowak (Nowak 2016, 268) who referred to the *go/ weiqi* game. This is how Krzysztof Arbiszewski depicts Nowak's conception in the context of Latour's philosophy:

12 „Czy wschód słońca namalowany na kominie chłodni jest wschodem słońca, czy nie? Czy jakieś zmięte halki i pończochy leżące na przystanku autobusowym to odzież kobieca, czy nie? Czy przyduszona cegłą w kałuży poduszka jest poduszką, czy (już) nie?" (Heydel 2017, 7).

> chess is a game in which each of the participating pawns has predefined "intrinsic" properties (essences), which are realized in a world with similarly specific properties (the traditional chessboard). The aim of the game is to develop the optimal configurations of these internal properties over time in the "outer" world. In *go / weiqi,* on the other hand, every stone is identical, it is only something that occupies a place. Its role, and the structures it creates, happen entirety "on the outside." There is no implementation of pre-existent essences under specific conditions, as in chess, but only transforming structures, and the stones acquire their locally defined characteristics precisely as part of these structures.[13]

According to Abriszewski, both games describe well the schemes of Latour's "New Constitution," which has a lot in common with the aesthetic projects of modernity. *go/weiqi* reflects the translation processes that result in the production of temporary, local, networked orders. Chess–being defined as "rigid"—can be considered useful for understanding the divisions between nature and culture (matter and form) established by modernity. While the first type of game does not allow us to distinguish these poles—because it does not use the term "thing in itself"—the second type of game clearly and stably determines the characteristics of each of them. Apparently, the analogies between Kant's aesthetic divisions (sensuality vs. reflexivity) and the poles of culture and nature that appear on one of the levels of the Constitution of Modernity are quite irresistible.

Let's analyze the layout of the board *Der Fuchs/Lis/Fox*: German and Polish names accompany a photo of a fox that lies on a path of small stones in a rather strange position—as if it had rebounded from an attached plank, set perpendicularly to the surface of the ground. This position is explained by the story that Tobis attaches to the photo. This is a story about a family in Podhale, which was involved in the preparation of animals:

> In Podhale, I came across a family of highlanders selling stuffed forest animals and tanned cow and ram skins by the road. What caught my attention was

13 „…szachy to gra, w której każdy z uczestniczących pionków ma predefiniowane „wewnętrzne" własności (esencje), które realizują się w świecie o również określonych właściwościach (tradycyjna szachownica). W grze chodzi o to, aby wraz z upływem czasu, w „zewnętrznym" świecie rozwijać optymalne konfiguracje tych wewnętrznych własności. Z kolei w *go/weiqi* każdy kamień jest identyczny, jest tylko czymś, co zajmuje miejsce. Jego rola oraz wytwarzające się struktury w całości odbywają się „na zewnątrz". Nie ma tu realizowania przedustawnych esencji w określonych warunkach, jak w szachach, a jedynie przekształcające się struktury, kamienie uzyskują swe lokalnie określone cechy właśnie jako części tych struktur" (Abriszewski 2018, 386).

> a hare, which was formed in such a way that it was holding a walking stick in one hand and a pipe in the other (later, it turned out it was a rabbit, but a bigger one). I decided to take a photo of it. Beside it, on the ground there was a little fox, which I also photographed, as you can see. It must have fallen off the rack because of the wind. The highlander comes and says: "Why can't you pick it up? It's fallen down". And I go: "I'm taking pictures of the situation as it is; if it has fallen down, let it lie there". And the highlanders goes: "But it doesn't look nice". And I ask: „Why not nice?" And the highlander answers: "Because it looks as if it's dead" (Tobis 2014, 324).

Together with Tobis, we follow the history of the emergence of objects and their creators. We move from the world of living nature (suggested by the photo) through the narrated process of stuffing animals and displaying them, to (self)abstraction or (self)elimination resulting from the denial of human participation in this process. "It looks as if it's dead"—this sentence, spoken by the seller of the stuffed bodies of the animals, is a sign of this (self)elimination. It enables the creation of a (temporary) illusion of living nature. At some level of de-essentialising the notion of a fox—which is, I think, what Tobis's chart is doing—we learn about human participation, and then about its removal; between these levels it is not very clear what is made by the human being and what is the work of nature. Here, the fox—a body, a specimen, raw material provided by nature, is subject to appropriate killing and mummification practices, which—after their (self)erasure—still allow the animal to be captured as natural and alive. The concept and name of a fox is linked to its painting from the exhibition of dead, exhumed animals offered for sale. Names assigned to the ready objects, displayed in the framework of educational cabinets, become not a tool for normalization but a tool for multiplication, in the form of a hybrid, as the expected image of an animal is transformed into a human-animal-artifact hybrid. In the visual-verbal medium, stabilized ontological categories, suggested by assignation of the name, are liberated from the law of order and stabilization, and what is more, they show how the stabilization processes are being erased from the visual field of social and institutional practices.

I call Tobis's project neo-materialistic, since it shows how we move from the human hybrid level we move to normalization and stabilization (and vice versa). In this case, this is due to the erasure of the human factor. It is true that in Tobis's work we still have visually ready, formed shapes, as if they were already subjected to normalizing factors. However, in his project—and especially in the series with text, photo and

dictionary term—Tobis seems to reach the moment when this normalization is actually happening and, at the same time, he shows levels of transformations, mutations and deviations.

The invention of poetry

Adam Kaczanowski, an author of traditional volumes of poetry, creates as well short films with children's toys (usually Djeco, De agostini, LEGO) which are the characters of his texts. The use of toys in artistic presentations is known from, among others, the controversial staging of Zbigniew Libera. In his most famous work, *Lego* (1996), the artist used figurines, which were elements of the Danish company's plastic brick sets, to construct a concentration camp, and in *Eroica* (1998), he used figurines of women whose hands were raised in a gesture of surrender, which was a clear allusion to a photograph taken during the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. Generally, it can be said that the use of children's toys displaces the realistic perspective of the performance, provoking us to search for borders, beyond which the toys—seriously and not seriously—stop antagonizing the images of the world. In this "toy strategy," which, in art criticism, is called toy art (Kowalczyk 2010, 135–153), Kaczanowski includes also the staging of his own body. Unlike Ewa Partum, who works primarily with nudity, Kaczanowski dresses up as a clown, although sometimes he reads poems almost naked.

Kaczanowski's films, which are separate projects and which do not always use the texts published in his poetic books, are available on the website tumblr.com. The internet project *Moje życie jest prawdziwe* [*My life is real* (Kaczanowski, no data)] consists not only of film animations but also of static scenes—picturebook chapters. We are referred from the pictorial novel to the short films of *Moje życie jest prawdziwe*, and the tag "adamkaczanowski" begins to function as an in-text fiction, located in the external fiction of individuality that is prepared by the first name and surname. In turn, on Kaczanowski's website, we can watch the recordings of the author's performances in the disguise of a clown.

Let's analyze one of the videos in the series *Moje życie jest prawdziwe*. It is titled *Altana śmietnikowa* [A Dustbin Arbour], and the off-camera narration accompanying the presentation of subsequent shots has not been included in any book. We listen to and watch the story of a man in his family and home environment. He fantasizes about somebody who lives in a dustbin arbour and who "has not lost his sense of humor."

It seems that the subject's fantasy embodies middle class dreams about basic self-sufficiency (domestic and commercial) and eccentric behaviour that transgress the ritualized order of the ordinary day.

The first scene takes place in the bathroom: a female figurine standing at the mirror wears only a T-shirt and is naked from the waist down; a male figurine sits on a toilet bowl with his pants dropped. In the foreground, although moved from the center of the stage, there is a large rubbish can. In the mirror, apart from the face of the female doll, we see a moving mouth that says the first part of the text: "I throw out the rubbish every day. I do it in the morning when I go to work." In subsequent scenes, the toys are joined by figures of a dog and a horse, and an important supplement to the scenery is a large packet of fruit Flaggis jelly. We can see a male figurine sitting on a dog, a female one sitting on a horse, and the dustbin that is being held by the figurine of a boy standing on the upright legs as if it was an exercise device. In subsequent scenes, the mirror still captures the reflection of human lips and faces, and the shadow of the human head appears in the background of the depicted scenes. In one of the last sequences, the head of a male figure is reflected in the mirror—in an earlier stage we see this figure in a rubbish bin with jelly packaging on its head. "I buy this rubbish every day"—this is the last sentence of the text. In the final sequence—the scenery from the previous performance being unchanged—there is a hand reflected in the mirror and it turns off the camera.

In Kaczanowski's work, the image of the human face, or the lips, in the mirror introduce the effect of disturbed proportions; in comparison with the size of the toys, the lips are enormous, "truly human": they become the sign of the superior, dominating force, and at the same time they break the illusion of the performance. Their function, however, is not only to strengthen the materiality of the medium or to weaken the credibility of the narrative. The primary purpose of the "talking reflection" is to put a human measure inside the toy scenes and deprive it of its triumphal position. For this reason, the story about the toys refers to human life—human life as authenticated by the voice of Adam Kaczanowski, who, with the reflection of a part of his face, materializes himself in the bodies of toys.

In the context of neo-materialism, I am primarily interested in the fact that Kaczanowski "invents"[14] for his poetry a medium different from the traditional record and the traditional form of the book. This prin-

14 I refer, here, to Rosalind Krauss's expression: "reinventing the medium" (See Krauss 1999).

ciple of "invention" turns out to be very important, because it decides whether some materializations are poetic objects or not, without specifying any initial aesthetic, political and ideological criteria. In Kaczanowski's project, clowning, undressing and toy art function as media of signs and sounds and thus link poetry with the material particulars: the body, toys-objects, clothing. They allow the poetry to be released from regimes that recognize only its textual, "literate" character and, at the same time, they enable poetry to remain material. Kaczanowski's artistic projects are "spreading" to more and more different areas, finding other media for themselves: children's toys, bodies of participants, videos, etc. Of course, somebody may notice that similar experiments are carried out by various performers, public art artists going out with objects onto the streets, conceptualists who refused to treat their works as objects: broadly speaking, the art of the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. In the case of Kaczanowski, however, it is not about new sources of inspiration or new articulations of artistic quality after the aesthetic character of art has been questioned; it is about the possibility of moving from one medium to another, about the potentiality of "shifting" one medium to another and transforming the medium into the material of poetry and vice versa. Kaczanowski's body is basically both a medium and a material—the closeness between them never leads to identification, but to an interesting play of tensions defined by the horizon of transmedia.

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Tytuł: Materialność poezji: słowa i ciała/ słowa i obrazy (Ewa Partum, Andrzej Tobis, Adam Kaczanowski)

Abstrakt: W artykule zostały przedstawione możliwości zaistnienia nowomaterialistycznej estetyki wiersza. Każdy z analizowanych przykładów – poezja aktywna Ewy Partum, toy-art Adama Kaczanowskiego i słowno-fotograficzne archiwum Andrzeja Tobisa – ujawnia inne aspekty tej estetyki. Najogólniej jednak, nowomaterialistyczna estetyka powiązana została tu z transmedialnym horyzontem sztuki oraz z przeobrażeniami myślenia materialistycznego dokonanymi pod wpływem nieantropocentrycznej wyobraźni.

Słowa kluczowe: poezja, nowomaterialistyczna estetyka, transmedia, aktywność artystyczna

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Materiality as Resistance and Protection: The Case of Andrzej Sosnowski

This article elaborates on a conception of poetic form derived from the work of the contemporary Polish poet Andrzej Sosnowski, in order to further our understanding of form as something material and dynamic rather than static and purely "textual". Sosnowski often comments on the materiality of poetry as a useful metaphor that allows us to grasp its peculiar semi-autonomous condition; hence his eagerness to employ the metaphors of poetry as choreography, bodily gesture or action.
By putting Sosnowski's comments in the context of contemporary debates on form and matter in literature—from historical materialism and its traditionally complicated relationship to formalism to a more traditional philological approach to the so-called "new materialisms"—I attempt to point out a possibility of transcending the usual tensions and divisions organising these debates. Here, I find particularly useful the notion of "affordances," as used by Caroline Levine, as well as the techno-poetic approach of Nathan Brown, and certain conceptual tools offered by the "new formalist" movement. Finally, I reference the work of Adam Ważyk, Sosnowski's predecessor and one of his main inspirations, in order to show the poetic form as a way of protecting/preserving certain forms of life. Ważyk's idea of form as a means of resisting entropy provides a unique insight into the more practical aspects of the politics of poetic form.

Keywords: Andrzej Sosnowski, Adam Ważyk, poetic form, new formalism, politics of poetry, materiality of poetry

There's a particular voice in contemporary Polish poetry that stands out as a starting point for a whole range of comments, essays and conversations on the materiality of language. It belongs to Andrzej Sosnowski—a crucially influential poet and an equally influential translator, known for his insightful commentary on Ezra Pound, Elizabeth Bishop and others. The critical reception of his early poems, published in the early 90s, proved—first and foremost—that there was an urgent need for new ways of discussing poetry. Poetry criticism in Poland was in dire need of modes of thinking and writing that would differ radically from the moralistically-oriented language of the 80s, ones that would keep close track of the philosophical and theoretical developments in which Sosnowski was explicitly interested and which would eventually prove immensely influential within the Polish humanities in general. Today, we would associate these developments with a particular strand of so-called *French Theory*, one that's tied in particular to the names of Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man—Sosnowski was an Americanist by trade, and through his residency in Canada he could witness these developments first hand.

But this shift towards a certain version of *French Theory* (and deconstruction in particular) had a very clear downside; some of the critics used it as a thinly veiled proxy for a more general obsession with textuality. Numerous reviews of Sosnowski's early books, especially those written outside of the framework of professional criticism, seemed to focus on the near-legendary „difficulty" and „illegibility" of his poems—suggesting that Sosnowski's readers should focus their attention on the "language as such," detached from such traditional categories as meaning (see Maliszewski 1995; Jankowicz 2002; Gutorow 2003a). An entry on Sosnowski in Polska Poezja Współczesna. Przewodnik Encyklopedyczny (The Encyclopedic Guide to Contemporary Polish Poetry) summed this up neatly by stating that, according to critics, his poetry "invested in the materiality and transitivity of language" (Kałuża n.d.).

Critical essays on the early Sosnowski were full of similar observations: "Sosnowski's poetry constitutes a battle between [authorial] intention and the living element of speech or writing"; it "shows the word in its material shape rather than its meaning." These observations led inevitably to a certain theoretical position:

> The most important aspect of Andrzej Sosnowski's poetry is the language itself. The way in which the poet employs language—his "drift towards the unknown"—makes invalid the game in which the reader has so far participated, and which has been based on unveiling meanings, revealing intentions and guessing the reasons or consequences of certain events. (Turczyńska 2010)

Thus, the word, seen in its "materiality," becomes synonymous with the word that doesn't yet have any meaning, that appears only as a sound or an image. Or, to rephrase that in more practical terms, if the "material" word had any meaning, it would be rooted firmly and solely in the word itself, independent now of the author's will and/or intention. And to "read" such a word, at least according to these critics, meant submitting to it, affirming the incomprehensible and focusing on experience rather than understanding.

In practice, however, this type of submission and affirmation seemed to produce a very particular type of a critical commentary. Though the 90s gave us a few original and now-canonical readings of Sosnowski's work (see Orska 2006, Gutorow 2003b), a typical essay focused on the "materiality of language" in his poems had certain common features. It started with the critic confessing that they did not understand the text; this condition was then affirmed and backed up by the assumption that the poem actually *wanted* to remain incomprehensible—a suggestion of intention acting against itself, or meaning working against the possibility of meaning. What usually followed, though, was a reading of a number of specific poems, a reconstruction of various lyrical scenarios and communicative situations, in search of an answer to the very traditional question of "what these poems are about"—the answer being, at least in some of the worst cases, that the poems were simply and solely interested in themselves: in the issues of meaning, language, communication etc. Thus the materiality of language was quickly equated with a kind of self-referentiality—and at the same time betrayed the inefficiency of this mode of criticism, its ultimate inability to either provide "traditional" interpretations or to go beyond the need for such interpretations.

Thus the materiality of language was quickly equated with a kind of self-referentiality—and at the same time betrayed the inefficiency of this mode of criticism, its ultimate inability to either provide "traditional" interpretations or to go beyond the need for such interpretations.

Meanwhile, Sosnowski himself seems eager to comment explicitly on the materiality of poetic language, but his comments stem from a very different approach. The question he poses as central concerns the metaphor. "Metaphors—can one somehow justify their use?", asks Sosnowski somewhat paradoxically, only to answer with the example of materiality-as-a-metaphor, the "materiality of language" as a metaphorical way of grasping certain function or ambitions that one finds in a poem:

> Let us consider, for instance, the power of a certain text. Let's consider the oft--used phrase "powerful stuff," and so on. In such common phrases one finds a reference to the hidden physicality of poetic influences. Dark stuff, right? I've come up with a humble theory that suggests that every incisive action performed within language is a gesture of a disappointed body. Disappointed meaning—because this "theory," or more like an intuition, has little to do with the body's

> resentment and its desire to compensate or whatever—and so „disappointing" in the sense of the body acting, ambitiously but ultimately in vain, far beyond its own reach, beyond its „jurisdiction", in a void. What we see here is the melancholy of an extended line, one that runs straight into infinity. Instead of a dance - or "instead of flowers" (*zamjast kwiatuw*), as in Bruno Jasieński's famous dedication in "Pieśń o Głodzie." In other words, the language of a certain heightened intensity, the language that has a specific temperature, density and solidity— and I'm still thinking of poetry here—is a language that understands its bodily beginnings and wants to take them as far as it can, thus creating something like a spectre of a near-articulate physicality. Well, I guess I'm a hopeless materialist, because even the breath of an empty word—or maybe better, the empty breath of the word—seems to me to have a material form. (Sosnowski 2010, 184)

(Sosnowski then repeats these intuitions in *Stare śpiewki*, a collection of lectures published in 2013.)

Let us point out the main differences between this approach and the one advocated and practiced by Sosnowski's early readers. Firstly, Sosnowski intentionally and explicitly limits himself to talking about the materiality of poetic language, rather than language as such. Secondly, the materiality of poetic language stems here directly from its bodily beginnings, tied to the body of the speaker. Thirdly, the materiality of language is seen here as a metaphor; nothing is said about its (alleged) potential to fundamentally alter our understanding of the concepts of sense or meaning. Sosnowski employs the metaphor of linguistic materiality—which he also compares to the material nature of light—not to escape the boundaries set by such categories as meaning and understanding, but in order to express certain practical intuitions about poetry: that rather than being a mere account of experience, a poem is able to preserve in itself—and thus carry on, extend—a certain movement, or a certain gesture, something more than a static image. That's why another "material" metaphor employed by Sosnowski is that of a choreography: "It's always about a choreography, a multitude of steps and figures, a multitude of sounds and voices." We can even think of the poem as a stage adaptation: a re-enactment of movement, in the absence of the original body. The spectral nature of the poem's "near-articulate physicality" seems to stem precisely from this: from our repeated attempts to imagine the poem as resembling light (or dance, or movement) rather than from any actual, factual similarities between the two.

In other words, the materiality of poetic language is a metaphor we use in our attempts to articu-late—and perhaps narrate—all the things that happen when the language becomes a poem.

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that happen when the language becomes a poem. This becomes much clearer when, later in the same interview, Grzegorz Jankowicz asks Sosnowski about the link between "materiality" and "incomprehensibility." Sosnowski's answer seems to subvert the expectations of many of his readers:

> I think that the "materiality" of poetic language signifies mainly its untranslatability, which is not necessarily the same as its "hermetic" or "incomprehensible" nature. If the meaning "is shaken at its foundations," then it has to do with paraphrasis, explanation, lesson, one's articulation of the so-called message—a transmission of the poem's meaning outside the poem. (...) It is now common to think of meaning as something that can be expressed in many different languages, as if there was a certain universal place, similar to a currency exchange, where one can swap meanings in peace and quiet, exchanging one hard currency for another—yes, a different one, but ultimately they're all quite similar. It seems to me that a poem resists such a circulation, it does not give in to the attempts to liquefy it in such a manner, it can only joyfully lose its liquidity. "Understanding," however—well, this is a whole other story. Why should I maintain that I don't understand even something as extreme as Schwitters' "Ursonate" or the rituals of Artaud? I believe I do understand—does it make sense to call them hermetic? One could also approach this from the point of view offered by Wallace Stevens: a poem must resist the intelligence almost successfully (...) So there is no return to this or that expression "from before" the poem, because the poem itself is not a mere translation of something that existed before it. (Sosnowski 2010, 185)

What the poet seems to defend here is the very traditional idea of understanding—the *possibility of* understanding, the *need for* understanding—as a foundation for reading even the most difficult and complex of texts (or works of art). But in order for the reader to understand this particular textual form that we have come to call poetry, they have to first recognise its specificity—its essential untranslatability. Before we develop these intuitions any further, we need to sketch out a somewhat broader context.

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At the risk of oversimplification, it seems that one could approach the issue of the materiality of poetic language from two distinct perspectives. Firstly, there's the more traditional, philological approach that has as

a starting point such obvious examples of the poem's "physicality" as its rhythm, rhyme, sound, shape on the page etc. Secondly, there's a more socially oriented point of view that seems to have more to do with the materiality of language as such—the materiality of language as a social practice—rather than, specifically, poetry.

The former approach focuses, nominally, on the audial and the visual aspects of the poem (Attridge 1981, Arrata 2011); but, when transposed onto a theoretical level, it serves as a means of emphasising the tension between "form" and its "content," between materiality and meaning—laying foundations for the typically poststructuralist separation of the authorial intention and the now-independent language. That's precisely the conclusion of a well-known essay on the materiality and meaning in poetry, by Derek Attridge:

> The organisation of the linguistic substance in poetry acknowledges—and enforces—the fact that literary language is not the language of daily discourse, and that the "meaning" of a literary text is not to be located in some authorially underwritten intention or critically validated interpretation, but in what the text itself does for its readers, or, more accurately, in what its readers are able to do with, and within, the linguistic structures by which it is constituted. (Attridge 1981, 245)

Today this semi-philological, semi-poststructuralist approach seems somewhat archaic—it must necessarily be reviewed in the context of the renewed interest in materialist thinking within the contemporary humanities. More often than not, the notion of the materiality of language will now invoke a broad social and political context, defined by the ongoing tension between the "old," Marxist materialism, and the so-called "new materialisms" (see Dolphijn & van de Tuin 2012, 91–110; Coole & Frost 2010, 30), seen by some as the postmodernist brand of materialism (Eagleton 2016, 13). The very idea of a materialist renewal is thus inherently problematic, if only for the lack of clarity on what "materialism" is actually supposed to mean, as it seems to be defined both in relation to materiality and matter itself (Beetz 2016, 1-7). Having said that, when it comes to language, both sides of the debate are, broadly speaking, focused on language as a social practice.

On the historical-materialist side, the most important theses on language were recently effectively summed up by Johannes Beetz:

> There is, again, (1) the positive materiality of matter here consisting of sound waves, the bodies of gestures, and inscriptions on surfaces. These phonic, graphic, and gestural materials, however, become language only through practices of

> signification and meaning production, as this is what differentiates them from other sonic, visual, and haptic materialities. Therefore, (2) language possesses a materiality of mutability that refers to the fundamentally processual and practical character of language. Speaking, writing, gesturing, reading, understanding, etc. are material practices outside which language does not exist. Language, then, to recall Marx's critique of Feuerbach, should not be understood as an object of passive contemplation that confronts individuals in its materiality, but as a practical human activity that materializes in practices. Signifying practices depend on codes or "regulated differences"—what Kristeva calls "objective laws"—in order to function. (3) The effectivity and facticity of those laws exerts a material (i.e. effective) force on individuals, who must follow them if they want to communicate and interact. (Beetz 2016, 87–88)

Beetz is looking to materialism for a possible reconstitution of a subject that has previously been decentralised and "dispersed" into language by poststructuralist thought. In order to achieve this, he recalls and reviews the traditional Marxist understanding of language (although he is aware that, as Raymond Williams famously noted, "Marxism has contributed very little to thinking about language itself" [Williams 1977, 21]). Here, language is seen as a "practical consciousness" (Engels) or an activity (Marx) and, taken together, these two concepts result in a vision of language as "a distinctive material process" (Williams 1977, 38). Beetz shares this general outlook with Shalini Shankar and Jillian R. Cavanaugh, editors of the anthology *Language and Materiality*:

> we see the language of everyday life as material practice: embedded within structures of history and power, including class relations and markets, but also having physical presence. The language of everyday life is what people do with and through language as they work and play, making meaning and creating value in the process. (Shankar & Cavanaugh 2017, 1)

Thus the *materialism* of language refers here mainly to its social aspect (Eagleton offers a similar perspective). Although, like I said, this renewed interest in materialism can be seen on some level as a way of nuancing our understanding of poetic language, this kind of commentary necessarily remains quite vague and theoretical in nature. It serves to embed the language in the fabric of social life, preventing it from being separated from its author; but it pays little attention to the specificity of particular textual, rhetorical and literary forms. Those with a more practical approach, like Sosnowski, will eagerly recognise the social roots of the poem's materiality; but, their interests are ultimately in something quite different—in the specific material production associated with poetry.

There is, however, yet another starting point, and a discourse that seems to run somewhat parallel to the main contemporary debate on materialism in the humanities. It is associated with a general turn towards a more practical, or practice-oriented, understanding of the humanities (see Domańska 2010; Rewers 2012; Nycz 2017). Its foundation is the notion of *poiesis*, understood now as a practice or an activity; and a renewed interest in *poetics* as a particular way of defining the object of one's research (see Nycz 2012). In other words, the focus is on the act of making itself, rather than any particular conception of materiality.

It is within this general framework that Nathan Brown has developed his own understanding of a new materialist poetics. In *The Limits of Fabrication* (Brown 2017), he takes as his starting point the equation of poetry and making—again, the notion of *poiesis* is crucial—understood here quite literally, as a work of material construction. Brown's book is a comparative study of sorts, where one side of the comparison has to do with technological innovation, and the other with innovation in poetry (seen now as a "branch of material research and fabrication," Brown 2017, 12). Deriving his idea of materiality from matter in its most empirical, intuitive sense, he remains primarily interested in the process of poetic invention, understood as a production of new arrangements within the poem: "experiments with the invention of new poetic forms through an engagement with the fundamental materials of poetic language (mark, space, grapheme, phoneme, breath, sound, signifier" (Brown 2017, 13); this production resembles closely the invention of new physical materials, e.g. in nanotechnology. But this almost-perfect translatability of the poetic into the technological—and vice-versa—becomes a source of bother for the otherwise enthusiastic reviewer of Brown's book:

> If one of the characteristics that different forms of matter, in all of their variant forms, may be said to share is a certain resistance, a capacity to elude attempts at their refabrication or repurposing, it may be this most common aspect of materiality that is unwittingly minimized in Brown's account. To fully foreground this would be to ponder just how that resistance is overcome; how it is that the very different forms of matter in question resonate upon one other or, just as likely, how they are ultimately fated not to do so. (Eyers 2017)

This idea of resistance seems strikingly similar to that offered by Sosnowski: the poem's materiality is fulfilled in its ability to resist translation, to resist having its meanings expressed through another medium.

Brown and Sosnowski share quite a few intuitions; broadly speaking,

they may be seen as representing the same wing or faction within the broad church of poetic materialism. They eagerly acknowledge the social and political dimension(s) of the poem's materiality, its nature as an essentially social practice, but ultimately they put focus on what the poem *does* with its specific matter, on poetry as a process of material production. Their approach is practical, rooted in poetics rather than philosophy. They may even be seen as belonging to roughly the same literary tradition, with Brown tracing his own lineage back to Ezra Pound. But there is an important difference as well. Whereas Brown seems to think that the poem's material nature is revealed in—or indeed guaranteed by—its ability to be translated into another medium, another language (e.g. that of technology), for Sosnowski it is precisely the poem's *inability* to be translated into anything else, its *resistance* to paraphrasis, that confirms its material specificity. In other words, poetry reveals its material character not through a dialogue with another medium, but through its *form*. There is no materialism in poetry, Sosnowski seems to say, but that of form.

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The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics suggests that the form is something that is "not translatable, paraphrasable, or reducible to information" (Wolfson 2012). This only confirms both Sosnowski's and Eyers' intuitions. But what is the purpose of the form's resistance? Why is it something worth appreciating from a practical—and materialist—point of view?

In order to find an answer to this question, we may need to introduce Adam Ważyk—an avant-garde Polish poet and translator, expert on the historical theories of poetry, who preceded Sosnowski by several generations and greatly influenced his work. Although Sosnowski is often read through the lens of his English and American inspirations, he belong first and foremost to a tradition of the Polish avant-garde poetry that goes back to the 1920s and stems from a series of debates on the technical possibilities of linking together poetry and modernity in its most current, immediate aspects. These arguments first took place in journals such as *Zwrotnica* and *Nowa Sztuka* (see Wójtowicz 2014) and were later taken up, in the 50s and 60s, as a part of a larger debate on the relationship between literature and the state, only to be eventually largely forgotten due to the influence of the moralistically-oriented, explicitly anticommunist criticism of the 70s and the 80s. Adam Ważyk, as a cen-

tral figure of many of these debates and one of the leading "official" authors of the 50s, was for a long time condemned to the same fate (Kaczmarski 2017; Skurtys 2015; Orska 2013; Shore 1997). Sosnowski is currently one of Ważyk's most influential advocates, and arguably the person most responsible for reintroducing him and his work to contemporary readers.

Ważyk's essays on *wersologia*—versology, a branch of poetics now largely forgotten in the contemporary humanities—were, and to a certain extent still are, strikingly innovative and original, not only in the Polish context, but the European one as well. They focus largely on the issue of the poem's *organisation* and its goal, i.e. why the poem always seems to need to be organised in a certain manner, why it leans towards order even in its more anarchic forms. Ważyk, quite unexpectedly, links this issue to the issue of entropy (Ważyk 1964, 20).

This reference to a term usually associated with "hard" science is nothing new to Ważyk, who studied mathematics at university, during the interwar period. It is also not that surprising in the historical context—obsession with science/technology was, after all, one of the running themes within the avant-garde movement. But whereas such borrowing of scientific terms is usually quite symbolic, and produces only the loosest of analogies, Ważyk is surprisingly serious about how crucial the idea of entropy is to poetry and poetics:

> The principle, according to which the temperature within an isolated system will always reach equilibrium, unless new energy is added from the outside, reveals for us the irreversible, one-way nature of the time flow—it's the law that was later defined as concerning the transition from the less probable states to the more probable ones. Order is less probable than disorder. Modern cybernetics has turned this into a general law of increasing entropy, which is the measure of disorder in the macroreality. (Ważyk 1964, 20)

In the context of language and communication, he sees entropy as closely tied to the issue of information:

> Information tends to diminish, to dissipate. The recipient can receive less information than the amount that was sent, but he cannot receive more. The loss of information is the equivalent of an increase in entropy. The organisation of the poem, constituted as a way of slowing down this process, is itself subject to it. (Ważyk 1964, 20)

In order to "delay this process," Ważyk explains in the next few paragraphs, what is "constituted" (*powołana*) is the "organisation" (*orga-*

nizacja) of the poem. That is the shortest definition of form provided by Ważyk:

> The poem's organisation represents a cycle: the same (or similar) configurations of phonemes and accents return, the number of syllables or accents repeats itself, the similarities between various intonations are emphasised. Even the same sentences may be repeated, but these repetitions are carefully dosed out and not all authors use this particular tool. (Ważyk 1964, 27)

The organisational surplus within the poem—its repetitions, redundancies etc.—is what opposes or resists entropy, as it serves to preserve and convey the information (see e.g. Koronkiewicz 2017, Kaczmarski 2017, Skurtys 2015):

> We are too firmly intertwined with the irreversible stream of events. We can only oppose this through the repetition of certain signals. This is exactly what we do when we use the poetic form. We refer back to a contradiction that occurs between the forward movement of the poetic vision (which is compatible with the direct human experience) and the cyclic movement of the poem. (Ważyk 1964, 27)

The form resists and opposes the flow of time, it establishes the hierarchy of information and, to a certain extent, reifies something that may no longer be there. Imagined like this, it acts now in the service of fruitful communication—against the forces of distortion and transformation. Here we go back to the issue of translatability: resisting entropy means insisting that the meaning is not "hard currency," that the poem cannot be paraphrased without loss, summarised or refabricated. Thus the form may be seen as being a *protective* force. But what exactly is it supposed to protect?

By borrowing from the language of science and technology, Ważyk abandons the traditional formalist framework. This is only reinforced by his belief that the form does not exist in and of itself, it cannot be considered as a context sufficient to determine the poem's true meaning and importance—the poem "becomes interesting only as a certain organisation controlled by the human being" (Ważyk 1964, 6). These remarks seem to be closely linked to Sosnowski's idea of "the spectre of a near-articulate physicality," which preserves or, even better, choreographs, projects out and extends a certain bodily gesture, a gesture that may originate in all kinds of human activity. But these metaphors are still all very unclear—and it seems that, in order to pin them down, make them more technical or more precise, we need to go beyond the traditional, "old-school" notion of poetic form.

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Thus it seems that we can no longer avoid the crucial question: how do we define poetic form? *Słownik Języka Polskiego*—one of the most popular dictionaries of the Polish language—offers 15 definitions; the *Oxford English Dictionary*—another 22. These numbers may not seem very encouraging; but, they are quite telling. *Słownik Terminów Literackich* (a Polish dictionary of literary terms) emphasises the fact that form "is usually defined by its opposition to either material or matter [content]. In the case of the former, "form" is used to denote a developing of the material, its formation; while the latter refers to what is immediately accessible in the perceived work of art, on the vehicle of its matter [content]." Similarly, the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* focuses on the tensions and contradictions that have historically defined our understanding of form:

> Poetic form used to be binary: what was not content or context; the shape rather than the substance; any element or event of lang.[uage] not translatable, paraphrasable, or reducible to information. The binary entails a distinction between preexisting origin and material result, between determination and effect, between idea or feeling and its realization. Yet lang. theory from the 18th c. on (and poetic practice well before) has been challenging these binaries, most forcefully with the notion of constitutive form—form as active producer, not just passive register, of meaning. (Wolfson 2012, 497)

In the context of poetry, form can thus be seen as a kind of "shape" the poem takes when appearing before us, a shape that as much organises and preserves its source, as it refers us back to it. Form, as Angela Leighton rightly points out, remains—paradoxically—both an antinomy of matter and its only way of manifesting itself:

> Somehow this platonic problem of form which is both ‚essential', yet becomes visible or "manifest" in "material things," transfers to the world itself. It is an abstraction from matter, removed and immaterial; but it is also subtly inflected towards matter. As a word it holds off from objects, being nothing but form, pure and singular; at the same time, its whole bent is towards materialization, towards being the shape or body of something. (Leighton 2007, 1)

Leighton is the author of an impressive review of the historical conceptions of form, aptly called *Form's Matter*. Crucial to her study are the ideas of form that focus on its active aspects, perceiving it as a type of action or a force—such as offered in the work of Susan Wolfson and

Dennis Donoghue (Wolfson 1997; Donoghue 2003). In her search for a perspective that would go beyond the default notion of form as something static and stable, Leighton refers eventually to comments by Michael Wood, who suggested that every writer "need[s] at some stage to ask what literary forms know or know of" (Wood 2005, 135-36, quoted in Leighton 2007, 27). Leighton elaborates:

> [Wood] proposes that form is neither just a property of writing nor a characteristic of the individual artwork, but knowledge itself—a tasty, secret kind of knowledge, and one not easily grasped. (...) This, in a sense, is the intuition of all those artists and writers who have ransacked the word "form" to find out, not so much what it might be or mean, once and for all, but rather, more uncertainly, what it might continue to 'know or know of." (Leighton 2007, 28)

All these provocative ideas—form as action, form as force, form as knowledge—serve as a foundation for a broader turn towards the so--called "new formalism" (or "formalism 2.0."). Not to be mistaken for the similarly-named movement in the American poetry of the 80s, this relatively new development in contemporary literary studies seeks to renew our interest in literary form beyond the framework offered by the "old" formalism associated with New Criticism and structuralism. New formalists, as Fredric Bogel rightly points out, are not interested in a simple and somewhat naive renewal of the abstract formalism of the post-war period (Bogel 2013, see also Theile & Tredennick 2013). On the contrary, they demand a productive closure to the process of "textualisation" of reality, begun by French Theory and modern cultural studies. This closure can only be achieved by applying poetics—the knowledge of the formal organisation of the text—to the larger project of "reading the world." This is the starting point for new formalism, as offered by Ellen Rooney: "The extinction of an entire range of modes of formal analysis has eroded our ability to read every genre of text—literary texts, nonliterary texts, aural and visual texts, and the social text itself" (Rooney 2006, 35). Rooney's manifesto was answered in 2015 by Caroline Levine in her *Forms*. The American critic provides a general definition of form: "Form, for our purposes, will mean all shapes and configurations, all ordering principles, all patterns of repetition and difference. (…). It is the work of form to make order." (Levine 2015, 3). For Levine, form may thus relate in equal measure to the organisation of the text—or a work of art—and to various social issues and dynamics. In order to justify this "universality" or "mobility" of form, Levine introduces the notion of "affordances" (borrowed from the contemporary

design theory). An affordance encompasses all the possible functions of a certain "thing," including the ways it can be used, its potentialities and some of its features:

> Glass affords transparency and brittleness. Steel affords strength, smoothness, hardness, and durability. Cotton affords fluffiness, but also breathable cloth when it is spun into yarn and thread. Specific designs, which organize these materials, then lay claim to their own range of affordances. Specific designs, which organize these materials, then lay claim to their own range of affordances. A fork affords stabbing and scooping. A doorknob affords not only hardness and durability, but also turning, pushing, and pulling. Designed things may also have unexpected affordances generated by imaginative users: we may hang signs or clothes on a doorknob, for example, or use a fork to pry open a lid, and so expand the intended affordances of an object. (Levine 2015, 6)

By introducing the notion of affordances, Levine is now able to analyse of the function of the poetic form in a manner that includes all the *potential* uses of various forms—the things that forms are *capable of*, so to speak:

> Rhyme affords repetition, anticipation, and memorization. Networks afford connection and circulation, and narratives afford the connection of events over time. The sonnet, brief and condensed, best affords a single idea or experience, "a moment's monument," while the triple-decker novel affords elaborate processes of character development in multiplot social contexts. (Levine 2015, 6)

The notion of affordance as a set or a collection of abstract features and potential functions allows Levine to explain the "mobility" of forms, their ability to appear in very different contexts and areas of life (e.g. how rhythm may organise both a poem and the movement of bodies working). When recognised, the mobility of forms allows us, in turn, to discover the "generalizable understanding of political power": for instance, "a panoptic arrangement of space, wherever it takes shape, will always afford a certain kind of disciplinary power; a hierarchy will always afford inequality" (Levine 2015, 7).

Levine's borrowing from the language of design clearly suggests that she associates form with something material, an item or an object. However, form is seen here not in terms of a static "shape" (as was the case with the popular dictionary definitions), but a configuration of forces or a balance of powers; it is active rather than passive (similarly to the idea of form offered by Wolfson and Donoghue). Forms are ultimately mobile—which explains why poets like Sosnowski may instinctively

describe the poetic form in terms of another activity, especially one that remains both dynamic and highly organised, such as dance or choreography.

Due to their mobility, forms can appear or emerge in various contexts; but, what is even more important, they can move or transition between contexts. Or, to put it more metaphorically, they can "lend" themselves out. Let us return to Ważyk who, in his poem "Entropy" (again, a telling title) seems to capture precisely this aspect of the poetic form:

> I saw the ruins of a house
> not dismantled like after the war
> burned out windows
> half naked bricks
> and a beam hanging with almost no support
> there was something bodily there
> that cannot be hid
> as if the ruin was in me
> not in front of me in
> the empty street
> (translated by: Paweł Kaczmarski)

The external form—a ruin—seems to have originated within the body; it lends itself to the body, it becomes embodied—thus allowing Ważyk to develop themes that are particularly important to him, like the constant danger of disintegration (of both the subject and the world around them). What the poem preserves and protects from entropy is not just the information, but also its source, the body from which it originates. As Sosnowski said, in a lecture from 2015, "the life lends itself to the poem." In the larger context of Sosnowski's work, this seems to imply that the poem is itself a form that preserves something that is infinitely and constantly endangered, that exists only barely, all but erased or worn off: a possibility of unalienated life that, under late-stage capitalism, can only exist in this state of extreme precariousness (Koronkiewicz 2019).

In his *Materialism*, Terry Eagleton claims that a return of the body's "plundered powers" is both an inherently materialist demand and one of the goals of socialism—and poetry is uniquely posed to help us achieve this goal. It "seeks to restore to language something of the sensuous fullness that abstraction and utility have stripped from it" (Eagleton 2016, 78). And it is the form, associated here with the aesthetic, that prevents dematerialisation:

> To see something aesthetically is generally assumed to mean seeing it contemplatively; but for Marx the true opposition is not between the practical and the aesthetic, but between both of them on the one hand and the instrumental or utilitarian on the other. We respect the specific qualities of things, which is the province of the aesthetic, when we employ those things for the practical ends for which they were fashioned. It is this that Marx means by use-value. So the practical and the aesthetic are closely allied, which is not how we usually think of the matter. Exchange-value and instrumental reason, by contrast, use objects simply as means to an end, with scant regard for their sensuous specificity. In this sense, for all their practical orientation, they are dematerialising forces. (Eagleton 2016, 63)

New formalism emerges as a close ally to materialism—offering a type of reading that is focused on returning, recalling and re-enacting the forms of life that have been forgotten, lost, or that have so far seemed impossible.

Thus, the metaphor of a material, bodily language—closely linked to the metaphor of an active poem, which, in turn, is rooted in a complex definition of form—points to the protective function of the poem, specifically, its ability to use the general mobility of forms to preserve and carry into the future the ones that are particularly endangered or precarious. From this point of view, new formalism emerges as a close ally to materialism—offering a type of reading that is focused on returning, recalling and re-enacting the forms of life that have been forgotten, lost, or that have so far seemed impossible. In his recent books, Sosnowski seems to explicitly admit that this is precisely how he sees the political goal of poetry as well: its revolutionary potential lies not in its "least poetic" aspects, but quite the opposite—specifically in the things that make a poem a poem. This thought, and the tradition from which it stems, may serve as a focal point for a renewed interest in the relationship between formalism and historical materialism, as well as become a specifically Polish input into the new formalist movement.

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Autor: Marta Koronkiewicz
Tytuł: Materialność jako opór i ochrona. Przypadek Andrzeja Sosnowskiego
Abstrakt: Artykuł przedstawia koncepcję formy poetyckiej zaczerpniętą z twórczości Andrzeja Sosnowskiego, mając na celu rozwinąć rozumienie formy jako czegoś materialnego i dynamicznego, nie zaś statycznego i czysto tekstualnego. Sosnowski często powołuje się na materialność poezji jako użyteczną metaforę pozwalającą uchwycić jej specyficzną semi-autonomiczną kondycję - pochodną tej myśli są chętnie stosowane przez niego porównania poezji do choreografii, gestu, akcji. Ustawiając uwagi Sosnowskiego w świetle współczesnych debat nad formą i materią w literaturze - od materializmu historycznego wraz z jego zwyczajowo skomplikowaną relacją do formalizmu, przez tradycyjne podejścia filologiczne, po tak zwane „nowe materializmy" - autorka artykułu stara się wskazać możliwości przekroczenia napięć i podziałów organizujących to pole. Szczególnie pomocny kontekst znajduje w pojęciu „afordancji" tak, jak rozumie je Caroline Levine, a także w techno-poetologicz-

nym podejściu Nathana Browna czy w poszczególnych narzędziach i koncepcjach oferowanych przez ruch nowoformalistyczny. Przywołuje również twórczość Adama Ważyka - poety, który pozostaje jedną z głównych inspiracji Sosnowskiego - by przedstawić formę poetycką jako metodę chronienia/przechowywania pewnych form życia. Ważyka koncepcja formy jako środka odpierania entropii zapewnia szczególny wgląd w bardziej praktyczne aspekty polityki form.

Słowa kluczowe: Andrzej Sosnowski, Adam Ważyk, forma poetycka, nowy formalizm, polityczność poezji, materialność poezji

KATARZYNA TRZECIAK
Translated by: JAKOB ZIGURAS

Critique. Division. An Archaeology of Separation and a Salvaging Etymology

The goal of this essay is twofold: firstly, it is a description a post-critical tendency within the contemporary, Anglo-American humanities; secondly, it presents propositions which broaden the boundaries current in the post-critical current, which lead to the replacement of critical sci-entificity with an affirmation of everyday readerly affects. The claims regarding the rejection of a criticism based on suspicion, formulated by, among others, Rita Felski, accentuate the elite character of reading, the goal of which is the unveiling of the economi-co-political entan-glement of the text as a product of historical reality. The distrust towards the surface of the text and the illusion of aesthetic autonomy, central for cultural studies, raised the critical atti-tude to the rank of an activity that is revelatory and privileged. The opponents of an unmask-ing criticism underline its limitations—unmasking reveals the ultimate source of every cultural production, the logic of capitalism, the total character of which leaves no chance for change. In defense of change, and in the hope of restoring to literature a widespread interest, there appear tendencies which bring back the individual experience of reading, the basis of which is to be aesthetic pleasure, freed from the historical context and its determinants. In the article, examples

of such tendencies will be pointed out, as also will be their consequences caused by the elevation and universalisation of non-professional reading. The rejection of the political task of criticism leads to the questioning of its anti-systemic potential; in turn, the apotheosis of suspicion paralyses the postulative dimension of criticism. For this reason, in the last part of the essay, I propose going beyond oppositional conceptualisations in the direction of a criti-cism that is situated and material, and whose model, in my rendering, is subordinated knowledge.

Keywords: Post-critique, hermeneutics of suspicion, symptomatic reading, affective criticism, subordinated knowledge

As Fredric Jameson wrote in 1981, "If everything were transparent, then no ideology would be possible, and no domination either . . ." (Jameson 2002: 46). Only, the society of late capitalism − integrated by the circulation of news and information—is addicted to language, the vehicle of mystification, which masks the contradictions of real social relations. Without this sublimating veil—ideology—social tensions, and longings impossible to satisfy, would paralyse the function of the systematic order. Cultural artefacts, those fictions taming the world, are, therefore, symbolic forms; thus, they refer to the conditions of their own production, which are concealed in signs, represented textually, always mediated by language and visible only through a deciphering reading. Indicating the non-independence of immediately available meanings, the American critic explained why the interpretation of a text can never be satisfied with what is visible on the surface, and must seek a deeper meaning, beneath the apparently legible communication, in which the source of the socio-political conditions of that very communication is encoded. The procedure of interpretation, if it is to reach the political unconscious, must take into consideration the need "to rewrite the surface categories of a text in the stronger language of a more fundamental interpretive code" (Jameson 2002: 45). Following, up to a certain point, an Althusserian symptomatic reading (Althusser, Balibar 1970: 29), Jameson placed an accent upon the significance of what is absent at the surface, but which determines existence of this surface, in a hidden form that demands deciphering. The stronger voice, which belongs to the strong critical subject, penetrates to the ideological character of the text, as to a relation between form (the aesthetic dimension) and structures of social rules and hierarchies, in order to unveil the conditions of their fictional unification. A critique which is insufficiently penetrating, and incomplete as a procedure of disillusionment, remains at the surface of the text; it naively assumes the text's legibility and autonomy as an isolated aesthetic object. Such a critique renders the hegemonic voice of the text apparently neutral, conserves its singularity and, ultimately, separates it from its complex relations with what has been silenced in the course of the historical process. In such oppositionally arranged positions, the weakness of such a critical gesture confirms the hierarchies accumulated within the artefact, and accepts the authority of the dominant narrative, beneath which it fails to discern repressed differences and marginalised contra-narratives (Jameson 2002: 76).

Fredric Jameson's wager, and his ideal of critical perspicacity, were strengthened by the horizon of an emancipatory utopia: the hermeneutics of suspicion became a promise of change, since—by systematically

unveiling the rules operative in the cultural field of forces—it initiated the possibility of dissent to their totalising claims (Jameson 2002: 91). Rooted within a Marxist and psychoanalytic lexicon, the interventionist critique, postulated by Jameson, strengthened American critical theory, providing New Historicism, feminist theory, and queer theory with an influential analytic method, based upon a scholarly suspicion that, while deepening meanings, at the same time does not abandon action and does not shun a faith in the possibility of changing the future (Jameson 1998: 54). From this also, there reverberate—throughout the diverse discourses of cultural scholarship in the twilight of the 20th century—the common meanings of concepts, emerging from the Jamesonian imperative "Always historicize!" (North 2017: 11), which are fundamental to the engaged humanities: "the political unconscious," "repressed meaning" (Bordwell 1991: 72), the "text as symptom," and the description of reading as sensitive with respect to dissembling and understatement, and of the critical attitude as one of ruthless de-naturalisation (Butler 2008: 249). The sum of the meanings of the formulations here catalogued, comprises the specific status of scholars of literature, whose task is the discovery of those moments in language that are disclosive of hidden meanings, mechanisms, influences and connections. "What is denied, excluded, or ignored turns out to be fundamental and foundational; whatever seems to be last turns out to be first. Repression, in short, gives critics a never-ending job to do; it ensures the immanence of meaning and guarantees there are salient secrets to be discovered." (Felski 2014: 59). Thus, the critical attitude is here identical with the disposition of the researcher, in other words, with the recognition of the historicity of the text, which demands to be revealed and included within the practice of interpretation.

This "scholary turn" within Anglo-American literary studies, as characterised by the attitude of Joseph North discussed above (North 2017: 9), embodies progressive thought and practice, in contrast to an earlier tendency, namely the aesthetic-formalist approach dominant until the middle of the 20th Century, which characterised the conservative paradigm of New Criticism (in the United States) or the criticism inspired by the formalism of Frank Raymond Leavis (in Great Britain). This was conservative, because it abstracted from historicity, and was founded upon an essentialist, apolitical, universal and elitist treatment of the text, which was interpreted through concepts inherited from the Kantian aesthetic tradition. The movement below the surface of the text, postulated by Jameson, towards its hidden socio-political determinants involved, therefore, a divorce from a universalising reading, which treated the aesthetic code as something constant and unchanging.

For my purposes, two dimensions of this genealogy of the critical attitude—barely sketched here—remain essential. Firstly, I am interested in the later fortunes of the surface of signs and meanings, abandoned together with the Kantian aesthetic tradition. Secondly, however, I would like to examine the understanding and consequences of the "scientificity" ascribed to the historicising and unmasking disposition. This is because there exists a relation between the appreciation of the critical attitude as an activity that is based on suspicion and on penetrating mere appearances, and the model of a knowledge, at the level of which the hierarchies of critical practice are established. Do we, after all, lose something at the moment when what passes for the truly critical and scientific is understood exclusively as a division[1] enabling an exposure, while a capacity for unmasking appearances becomes a synonym for knowledge? The following sketch is an attempt to trace changes in critical and theoretical lexicons, which were performed in the Anglo-American humanities with the intention of weakening the hegemony of the hermeneutics of suspicion.

The source of these changes is a conviction concerning a crisis in the critical humanities, which are incapable of reviving a communal and future-proposing imagination. The wager of my text is, however, the indication that suggestion for a rejection of critical suspicion often lead to apologias for individual affects, which are not so much formative of community as, rather, preserving of the existing rules of a neo-liberal reality. For, the demands for a de-professionalisation of critical practices, to which I will draw attention in my reflections, are, in essence, motivated by a hope of recovering meaning within the already existing system, which deprived criticism of its symbolic capital (Breu 2018: 1). The problem lies in this, that the activities serving its recovery ground the irreversibility and intransgressibility of the neo-liberal order.

Whence, then, derives the faith in the efficacy of non-suspicious criticism? What strategies of reading are supposed to revive a widespread interest in the humanities? And, finally, how to lead critical practice beyond ritually inverted opposition between scientificity and deprofessionalisation?

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1 Connected, in any case, with the etymology of the word "criticism", which refers back to the Greek verb *krinein*, the linguistic core of which refers to winnowing of grain, the separation of the seed from the chaff, and thus to division, to the distinguishing and choice of that which is true or real (Didi-Huberman 2016: 361–362).

The sympton is *passé* (and yet it exists)

In the last decades, a certain portion of the Western cultural humanities performed a methodological volta, in turning attention to aesthetic categories that had earlier been dismissed. Yet, this is not, as one of the pioneers of this turn back—the feminist literary scholar Isobel Armstrong—argued in the 90's, a return to the idealistic and individualistic categories of Kantian aesthetics, happily sent to the junk room of false universals by Terry Eagleton, Pierre Bourdieu or Paul de Man (Armstrong 2000: 45)[2]. Believing in the validity of and need for a return of reflection upon the aesthetic dimension of the text, Armstrong—and other scholars, diverse with respect to their scholarly orientations—thus sought for other genealogies of aesthetics, which would serve the transgression of the limits imposed by the domination of the neo-idealistic perspective. The construction of these genealogies occurs in connection with various sub-fields of theory: for example, research on affects (Isobel Armstrong, Lauren Berlant), philosophical New Materialism (Estelle Barrett, Barbara Bolt, Simon O'Sullivan), or New Formalism (Caroline Levine, Angela Leighton)—to enumerate barely a few of the theoretical marriages that are to different degrees essential and variously exploited today.

In the broadest sense, what unites them is the need to shift scholarly attention from the vertical movement beneath the surface of appearances to horizontal distributions, in other words, the Rancièrean "distribution of the sensible." The lexicon of the French philosopher is not accidental here. For, the symbolic patricide of Louis Althusser (the patron of the symptomatic searching for that which is hidden)[3] lies at the heart of Jacques Rancière's intellectual idiom, which consistently rejects a thought founded on suspicion. This, in turn, makes the author of *Proleta-*

2 Armstrong, recognising the charges against the aesthetic tradition of Kant, formulated from a Marxist position, at the same time indicated the lack of alternative aesthetic proposals. According to her, the anti-aesthetic position does not take advantage of a chance to rethink aesthetics, which does not have to restrict itself exclusively to the compromised neo-Kantian lineage (Armstrong 2000: 54–55).

3 As Jerzy Franczak writes, ritual patricide is bound up with a radical opposition with respect to Althusserian scientism and the "discourse of order," marking out hierarchies (intellectuals vs. workers) precisely through the central principle of the symptomatological procedure. This is because its characteristic feature is the establishment and maintenance of the relation of rule, which strengthens the authority of the philosopher as the one who is able to recognise the mechanism of illusion and, through the reading of symptoms, to achieve the overcoming of illusion (Franczak 2017: 12–15).

rian Nights an exceptionally influential figure in the sphere of those scholars who approach *aesthesis* precisely along the paths trodden by Rancière, and who, by the same token, further develop the aesthetic conclusions of Spinoza. This perspective can be grasped by means of the formulation that *aesthesis* is "both (…) that which is felt and (…) that which is to be felt by the others" (Robson 2005: 166).

The conventional transition (conventional because the logic of linear progress has no application here, on account of the constellatory character of the currents and research within the humanities) from a symptomatological critique—which engages in unmasking and heroizes the critical authority—to a horizontal critique and one that is, in the Jamesonian sense, *weak*[4], indicates a return to the rhetoric of empancipatory promises, effectively pacified by the principle of authority governing a criticism based on suspicion. Bruno Latour wrote about this authority with unconcealed derision, having in mind the relation of criticism to the demystifying and anti-fetishistic attitude: "The role of the critic is then to show that what the naive believers are doing with objects is simply a projection of their wishes onto a material entity that does nothing at all by itself." "And then," writes Latour, "the courageous critic, who alone remains aware and attentive, who never sleeps, turns those false objects into fetishes that are supposed to be nothing but mere empty white screens on which is projected the power of society, domination, whatever" (Latour 2014: 13). The power of disclosure encouraged a rhetoric of specialist, professional activity, supported by a knowledge deposited and expressed in a language allowing for judgements upon truth and illusion, or, in other words, a knowledge belonging to a conceptual tradition contained within the frame of the conceptual pair *technē* and *epistēmē*[5].

4 Jameson recognized as "weak" an interpretation motivated by an ethical disposition. An ethics of reading, as he argued, universalizes the category of experience, granting to it unchanging properties, which allow one to believe in the individual identity of the text. An ethical reading begins from a question about the meaning of the text, which one can pose only then when we abandon the historical and institutional conditions of the production of both individual and collective identities (Jameson 2002:44).

5 As Ewa Klekot writes, the pair *technē* (practical knowledge, based upon experience, and art) and *epistēmē* (knowledge of unchanging things), distinguished by Aristotle, combines the possibility of linguistic representation, foundation upon logical principles, and universality. Whereas, in opposition to them, *mētis* is a specific, situated knowledge, about which she writes in a latter part of her text (Klekot 2015).

Practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge are linked by a hierarchical relations—*technē* follows the rules estanlished by *episteme* and, therefore produces only that which theory, based upon a knowledge of unchanging things, had earlier laid out. *Technē* materializes and makes concrete theory, to which it is subordinate and whose primacy it confirms, through which *technē* itself becomes a temporary form, concealing the real and unchanging principles according to which it proceeds. The antinomy of these two concepts, in essence, legitimates that status of cognition as a penetrating through changeable, temporally formed materialisations, towards the fundamental principles of theoretical knowledge.

The emancipatory promise could not pass the test of a critique aimed at disillusionment, for this—in the extreme variant described in 1995 by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick—is a paranoid practice, or a specific intellectual procedure having a tautological character (it must continually find proofs of its legitimacy, and thus confirm as conclusions its own earlier accepted assumptions). The activity of paranoia, as Sedgwick argues, is the activity of a strong theory—one that is anticipatory, bound up with negative affects, and which believes in the power of disclosure and the privileged position of the one who performs this disclosure.

> The paranoid trust in exposure seemingly depends, in addition, on an infinite reservoir of naïveté in those who make up the audience for these un-veilings. What is the basis for assuming that it will surprise or disturb, never mind motivate, anyone to learn that a given social manifestation is artificial, self--contradictory, imitative, phantasmatic, or even violent? (Sedgwick 2003: 141)

Having posed this question, Sedgwick came to the conclusion that the adoption of the paranoid attitude does not leave room for changing the world; for this reason, she reformulated her own project from the perspective of a possible reparation, proposing, in the place of hierarchy, the affective community of readers. A community that also reconfigures the status and dimensions of a knowledge closely connected to, rather than separated from, affect. The consequence of this reconfiguration turned out to be the opening of a field of different questions, with regard to knowledge itself, its production, the conditions of its activity and the ways in which it might be possessed. Thus, Sedgwick undertook a transition away from such questions as:

> Is a particular piece of knowledge true, and how can we know? to the further questions: What does knowledge do—the pursuit of it, the having and exposing of it, the receiving again of knowledge of what one already knows? How, in

> short, is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among its causes and effects? (Sedgwick 2003: 124)

It would be difficult to treat Sedgwick's diagnosis as particularly subversive—for, in the discovery that knowledge "acts" rather than "exists," one can hear familiar Foucauldian tones. Nevertheless, what remains essential, especially from the perspective of literary studies, is the fact that Sedgwick's theses undermined faith in the power of disclosure as the ultimate gesture unveiling the original conditions of a given literary production. "Unveiling," as the author of *Between Men* purported to persuade readers, is an expression implying the gradual removal from reality (both textual and material) of that which veils its structure and masks its original, irreconcilable contradictions.

Bruno Latour also drew attention to this gesture of symptomatological reduction, postulating, along with this, a form of criticism different from the reductionist one. A decade after the publication of the queer literary scholar's anti-suspicion manifesto, the French critic reminded us, in 2004, of the meaning of her doubts, presenting, at the same time, different dimensions of them—consistent with his own, web-like (rather than hierarchical) vision of reality and emerging from this vision's model of science. The Latourian project was aimed at the Enlightenment foundation of research with respect to the world and to the production of a knowledge understood descriptively; which, as a description of facts, is an excellent tool—as he argued — "for *debunking* quite a lot of beliefs, powers, and illusions" (Latour 2004: 232). This Enlightenment ideal turned out, however, to be paralyzing with regard to the need to fill the place left by these debunked illusions. For this reason, Latour, like Sedgwick earlier, posed questions about the possibility of discovering other critical tools − now not only unmasking delusions and unveiling facts, but also serving the construction and strengthening of a connection with the world and its diverse actors. Latour made into a model of this kind of criticism the thinking machine of Allan Turing— the computer —which processes received data, mediates human activities, links them, and generates new qualities. The computer is not a figure of the heroic critic, who "show[s] that what the naïve believers are doing with objects is simply a projection of their wishes onto a material entity that does nothing at all by itself (Latour 2004: 237–238); rather, it is a model of a criticism that is anti-heroic, which assists emancipatory activities not by severing bonds, but by strengthening them. Criticism, Latour argued in this manifesto, should ultimately be an amplification, and not a removal, of meanings.

It is symptomatic that Rita Felski also formulated her anti-suspicion project by means of the rhetoric of the manifesto, by drawing out the consequences of the findings of both Sedgwick and Latour. *The Uses of Literature*, from 2008, is a distinctive "manifesto for positive aesthetics" (Butter 2009); however, it is non-dogmatic manifesto, since as the author herself declares, already in the introduction:

> This is an odd manifesto as manifestos go, neither fish nor fowl, an awkward, ungainly creature that ill-fits its parentage. In one sense it conforms perfectly to type: one-sided, skew-eyed, it harps on one thing, plays only one note, gives one half of the story. […] Yet the manifestos of the avant-garde were driven by the fury of their againstness [. . .] What follows is, in this sense, an un-manifesto: a negation of a negation, an act of yea-saying not nay-saying, a thought experiment that seeks to advocate, not denigrate. (Felski 2008: 1)

Sedgwick's "Paranoid Reading" and Latour's, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam" equally fulfilled the function of the manifesto as offensive, conflictual manifestations of a struggle with symptomatological critique. In contrast, Felski constructs her voice along the lines of an affirmative declaration—a critical articulation in the spirit of the resignification, postulated by Latour, of the meaning of critique itself—and as protective, preserving and strengthening. The choice of the manifesto, as a non-scientific genre, harmonises with the retreat from scientificity—identified with the procedures of symptomatological deduction—which is formulated in all three examples. Felski underlines, in any case, the necessity of endowing the theory of literature with common sense categories, weakening, as it were, the hegemony of theoretical operations, which are always ready to disarm common knowledge of its naivety. Nevertheless, the problem lies in this, that the author of *Uses of Literature* does not so much destabilise the hegemony of critical suspicion, as, rather, reverse the direction of evaluation in favour of an affirmation of the individual act of reading. She replaces the authority of the heroic critic with the central figure of the non-professional reader, dismisses the method of scholarly suspicion in favour of the affects of the individual—which are non-scientific, non-dogmatic and are "derided by the hermeneutics of suspicion" (Baron-Milian 2017: 177) Ultimately, however, Felski does not seem to be interested in overcoming the impasse of a criticism based upon—in Sedgwick's terms—a paranoid confirmation of one's own assumptions. Since, she proposes its replacement by a distinctive apologetics for readerly everydayness and the individuality of experience. The abandonment of the attitude of suspicion

—accused, here, of an instrumentalisation of literature as an object, and not a source of knowledge (Felski 2016: 15)—leads, ultimately, to a praise of the autonomy of the text, the privileging of which is supposed to return to literature its cognitive function, which is lost in discourses that treat texts as the symptoms of social and political forces external to them.

The project of the transgression of the limits of symptomatology, formulated by this enthusiast of post-criticism, turns out, therefore, to be unsuccessful, since—despite her declarations—it adopts the paranoid logic and arises in accordance with its assumptions. Felski repeats the fundamental gesture of her adversaries; like the fathers of suspicion, Marx and Freud, with respect to the ostensibly enlightened but in essence naïve pseudo-critics of their time, so also the author of *The Limits of Critique* unmasks the entanglements and deficiency of the criticism that she wants to abandon[6]. In essence, then, she remains within the spiral of an unmasking analysis, the effectiveness of which she confirms, in making use of the style of rhetorical polarisation it elaborated, which creates an antagonism between critical attitudes, and by the same token, excludes their connectivity and the possibility of making use of the findings worked out in the context of both dispositions.

Felski's proposal is, however, significant to this extent, that it displays the fundamental difficulty with a potential expansion of the dimensions of criticism, when the tool of this postulated expansion is a dualistic reductionism. For this reductionism admits only a bivalent stretching between a criticism which reveals ideological entanglements, founded upon constructivist assumptions, and a criticism which recognizes the agency of the text or artefact, its capacity not only to register, but also to transform social reality. Post-criticism, in such a version, ultimately restores the sense that affective community of readers is located beyond a historical context, which is produced only situationally in the act of reading. The problem with a critical position thus defined lies, however, in the fact that one can think of a an egalitarian affective criticism only when the politico-economic forces of neo-liberal fantasy are excluded along with the context of both the text and its reading.

6 Hal Foster drew attention to this mechanism, commenting on the error which is inherent in the thought of Latour, and which reproduces the anti-fetishistic tendencies, which he unmasked in a critique oriented around suspicion (Foster 2015: 165).

Criticism Outmaneuvered

Thus, perhaps what is needed is not so much a criticism other than the symptomatological, but rather a non-dualistic orientation with regard to the complexity of the critical operation.

Thus, perhaps what is needed is not so much a criticism other than the symptomatological, but rather a non-dualistic orientation with regard to the complexity of the critical operation. Today, models for such an orientation are provided by new materialist perspectives, which—alongside a whole variety of particular discourses and with respect to their differently defined research aims—are characterised by the need to broaden binary conceptualisations. Disregarding here many doubts and ambiguities multiplying around New Materialism[7], from the perspective of the critical ethos of interest to me, what is essential is that the reflections of scholars of this trend do not so much privilege the material (at the cost of a methodology oriented to the social and cultural) as, rather, display the coexistence of material processes and semiotic-discursive structures (Golańska 2019: 206). These new materialist orientations do not prescribe a turn away from post-structuralist methods and epistemological assumptions, but rather broaden them to include material processes, which are equally as essential for practices of generating meanings as the cultural activities hitherto privileged. Thus, they do not lead, at least not declaratively, to reduction, but rather to an intensification of relations and a multiplication of connections between non-hierarchically conceived orders. In this way, the material ceases to be solely an object subjected to discursive reimagining, and becomes also an active factor influencing formulations and possibilities of articulation. Thus, it is not only—to speak according to Jameson's rhetoric—disclosure of ideological structures of power and meaning, but also transforms these structures.

This reaching for the fundamental—but, of necessity, here only touched upon—assumptions of the ontology of New Materialism, is promising for critical thought also in view of the perspective it offers concerning changes in the definition and production of knowledge. This is because intellectual operations are not universal and—in contrast to the objects subjected to them—unchanging; rather, on account of their embodied character, they do not allow of being separated from place, from what is local and relational, or from contact with what is simultaneously material and semiotic.

Yet, as much as the invocation of new materialist formulations comes with a certain ease, to the same extent their capacity to function as

7 Especially the key question of the transfer of concepts from quantum physics to research in the humanities (Derra 2018: 145–146).

critical-interpretive strategies suggests somewhat more numerous doubts, which increase all the more, if one restricts them to the medium of the text and to the practices of reading[8]. Nevertheless, as certain revivers of aesthetic categories in the context of literature show successfully, the medium of the text has the potential to generate relational links and non-dualistic poetics.

Isobel Armstrong, to whom I have already referred, successfully combined Marxist materialism, or a hermeneutics of suspicion, with a perspective closer to New Materialism; while, at the centre, where both methods intertwine, she placed glass. *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830–1880* (2008) is a monumental analysis of the diverse representations of glass in the culture of 19th century England. Armstrong looked equally to historical documents—(statements by workers, employed in British glassworks, but also the voices of the owners of those glassworks), from which she extracted the economic-political class relations revealing themselves in contact with the material—and to literary texts, as being a part of the material world, simultaneously human and non-human, and resonating "glass culture," emerging from the observation of matter, but also transforming it, because they broaden the material imaginary. The key position of glass—a material that has its own concrete properties and, by the same token, is amenable to human transformations—in specific historical circumstances, allowed this scholar to reorganise textual hierarchies, thus exhibiting complicated relations between the materiality of the literary medium and the materiality of the raw materials incorporated by it. Relations, and this the essential thing, which are not exhibited from the perspective of a unifying and synthesising research, the effect of which could have been a general theory of the representation of glass and of a modernising Great Britain. The relations emerging from *Victorian Glassworlds* are not the result of a pacification of obvious differences between media and

The key position of glass—a material that has its own concrete properties and, by the same token, is amenable to human transformations—in specific historical circumstances, allowed this scholar to reorganise textual hierarchies, thus exhibiting complicated relations between the materiality of the literary medium and the materiality of the raw materials incorporated by it.

8 In the case of spatial and visual arts, the medium appears to incline more towards transmedially oriented concepts of new materialist ontology, which reconfigures the relations between diverse instances and levels of artistic activities. The new materialist perspective in Polish literary studies reveals itself most intensely in the form of interpretive strategies of concrete texts, and therefore functions more often as a lexicon of concepts and of tools for reading, than within the perspective of an ontological reimagining of the status of literature itself. The proposals for such a relocation of the text concentrate mainly upon poetic practices, which do not only thematise the problems extracted within the discourses of new materialism, but above all make use of the findings of these discourses for a reimagining of their own medium and its dynamics, in relation to other actors within the natural-cultural community.

materials, or between the language of the text and the material world made present within it. They are, rather, distinct braids and entanglements of heterogeneous forms and materials, each of which possesses its own attributes and potentialities, but also has a capacity for situationally linking itself with the properties of another medium. Not so much through hidden kinship, in an animistic spirit, and the original, mythical identity of an energetic matter, as through the fact of coexistence in a historically mutable temporality.

The production of interim connections between diversified artistic articulations, goes beyond the ethos of a criticism founded on suspicion, which reduces visibility and legibility to a symptom, demanding an analysis of the ideological structures of power and knowledge. And yet, alongside this, a criticism that takes into consideration the new materialist revision of ontology may successfully avoid the error of an inverted dualism and of the fetishisation of individual affect in opposition to a social instrumentalisation of the text. Paranoid practices, as Sedgwick herself admitted, are indispensable when what is at stake is the recognition and naming of the canons of violence, subordination and the power which commands them; and, thus, when a naïve trust in the apparent transparency of the text would risk conceding the rightness of the violence hidden within it and the perpetuation of its invisibility. Nonetheless, the reduction of the critical attitude to the act of disclosure risks reducing it to the search for a common source, equating heterogeneous artistic articulations and weakening their openness to mutual contamination. For this reason, or so it seems, she should add to a hermeneutics of suspicion a "hermeneutics of susceptibility," which pursues the entanglements, the multi-levelled relations of texts, materials, meanings and affects, both individual and communal, that are in contact with one another. Such a hermeneutics, as the originator of this conception, Anne Anlin Cheng, explains, does not dampen the dynamics of entangling poetics—it does not isolate them, but neither does it reduce them to commonality (Cheng 2009: 101–102), since it discerns the potential of critical practice in a pursuit of the plurality of entangled qualities. Ultimately, such a criticism exposes itself to contamination—it becomes impure, but, through this, potentially subversive, since it disarms the mechanisms that legitimate every declaration of methodological coherence, just as much that which is suspicious, as that which, having abandoned suspicion, wants to be only affirmation.

Critical division, *krinein*, combines the philosophical effort to recognise truth and falsity with the work of the farmer, who distinguishes seed from chaff, and thus the etymology of "critique" weaves together

an intellectual operation with the culture of cultivation:

> To criticise, riddle, sieve: we are thus in the presence of a process; here thought cooperates with a gesture, a gesture with a tool, and the tool with precisely the material that we must sieve, 'riddle', or 'criticise'. There are many kinds of sieve and riddle, each adapted to a particular use, whether in agriculture, philosophy, patisserie, or mineral prospecting. But in each case, we are presented with material sieved by a tool, with a tool set in motion by a gesture, and a gesture mobilised by thought (Didi-Huberman 2017: 254)

The radicality of the critical gesture does not ultimately lie in a merciless unmasking of that which is insufficiently aware and thus naïve, but rather in the subversiveness of *mētis*—a situated knowledge gained thanks to an observation of changing material conditions. *Mētis* and critique are linked by a surprising context. The American political scientist James C. Scott, refers to *mētis* when he describes the activities of peasant communities, activities which assist their survival in the face of a changing nature and its unpredictability. The impossibility of mastering the dynamics of the environment—writes Scott—did not allow for the adoption of universal principles and scientific theories, the codified purity of which guaranteed unchanging rules, but which, precisely on account of their purity—or else, their separation from the material context—made them ineffective in the face of reimaginations of that context (Scott 1998: 311).

Mētis surpassed, by its effectiveness, such abstract formulas, thanks to its implication in the materiality of the world. As a practice deprived of a universal theoretical basis, situated knowledge demanded carefulness and a familiarity with context, which verified, but also narrowed, the efficacy of the activities undertaken. Thus, making use of *mētis* excluded the appeal to normative standards, while the local reach of knowledge limited possibility of making its results normative. Of necessity, therefore, this was a knowledge obtained through participation, not intellectual distance. However, the participatory character of knowledge assumed a confrontation with danger—the undertaking of risk and the possibility of disaster in the face of unpredictable events. The possibility of their survival, therefore, on the capacity to analyse past failures, their circumstances and the activities undertaken with regard these. Context was indispensable for *mētis*, not as a normative point of reference, but as a vehicle of change.

With regard to the status of criticism, central for my article, the anti-systematic character of *mētis* allows one to transcend beyond the frame of a discourse stretched between a suspicious criticism and one

which makes proposals. For, the example of situated knowledge shows that an analysis of the historical transformations of a given context is a work oriented to the future, which there is no way to reconcile with a universal and homogenous picture, from the totalising character of which we are protected by attachment to the local character of action.

The prospective and local dimension of *mētis* elicits its reparative potential—this is a knowledge open to mistakes, accidents and sudden situational transformations, which there is no way to take into account from the standpoint of a universal system. This last maintains its persistence thanks to transhistorical rules, abstracting from contingency, which it subordinates by means of rigid, paranoid explanations. The mutability of *mētis* makes of it a form of knowledge from which the reparative reading postulated by Sedgewick can emerge, as subversive with regard to the paranoid model, because it is open to surprising moments and situational, rather than total, solutions. From a perspective that is programatically suspicious, it is easy to overlook the effectiveness of improvised motifs—like the camp parody mentioned by Sedgwick—the use of which may indicate, each time, a meaning at that time invisible, when aesthetic subversions are only a symptom confirming a politics of exclusion. A situated knowledge requires sensitivity and attention with regard to even marginal phenomena, since it is from the observation of these that further activity arises. For the queer project of reparative reading, this attention is the basis for going beyond the paranoid impasse and an opportunity to formulate a more affirmative and communal experience of reading. The local activity of agrarian communities, based upon cooperation—about which Scott wrote—in an inclusive program of reparative reading, becomes the source of a non-expert and bottom-up practice of reading.

A critical practice, treated as a form of *mētis* would, therefore, be an analogous oscillation between a contextual-historical symptomatology and a projection of a future exceeding former limitations. A consciousness of place is, for such a criticism, indispensable, because economic-cultural conditions are decisive with regard to the efficacy of critical gestures. For, neither a universal suspicion, nor equally a total, post-critical affirmation will save criticism, in a world whose dominating force is maintenance of faith in the impassability of the present.

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Autor: Katarzyna Trzeciak
Tytuł: Krytyka. Cięcie. Archeologia rozdzielenia i etymologia ratunkowa
Abstrakt: Cel tekstu jest podwójny: po pierwsze, jest on opisem postkrytycznej tendencji we współczesnej humanistyce anglo-amerykańskiej, po drugie – w tekście przedstawione zostaną propozycje poszerzające obecne w nurcie postkrytycznym

ograniczenia, prowadzące do zastąpienia krytycznej naukowości afirmacją codziennych afektów czytelniczych. Postulaty odrzucenia krytyki podejrzliwej, formułowane m.in. przez Ritę Felski, akcentują elitarny charakter czytania, którego celem ma być odsłonięcie ekonomiczno-politycznego uwikłania tekstu jako wytworu historycznej rzeczywistości. Centralna dla badań kulturowych nieufność wobec powierzchni tekstu i iluzji estetycznej autonomii, wyniosła postawę krytyczną do rangi działania rewelatorskiego i uprzywilejowanego. Przeciwnicy i przeciwniczki demaskatorskiej krytyki podkreślają jej ograniczenia – demaskacja odsłania ostateczne źródło każdej produkcji kulturowej – logikę kapitału, której totalność nie pozostawia szans na zmianę. W obronie zmiany i w nadziei na przywrócenie literaturze powszechnego zainteresowania, pojawiają się tendencje przywracające indywidualne doświadczenie lektury, którego podstawą ma być estetyczna przyjemność, uwolniona od kontekstu historycznego i jego determinant. W niniejszym tekście wskazane zostaną przykłady takich tendencji, jak również ich konsekwencje, wynikające z uwznioślenia i uniwersalizowania nieprofesjonalnego czytania. Odrzucenie politycznego zadania krytyki prowadzi do zakwestionowania jej antysystemowego potencjału, z kolei apoteoza podejrzliwości paraliżuje wymiar postulatywny. Dlatego w ostatniej części tekstu proponuję wyjście poza opozycyjne konceptualizacje w kierunku krytyki umiejscowionej i materialnej, której modelem czynię kategorię wiedzy podporządkowanej.

Słowa kluczowe: postkrytyka, krytyka podejrzliwa, czytanie symptomatyczne, krytyka afektywna, wiedza podprządkowana

PAWEŁ KACZMARSKI

Materialism As Intentionalism: on the Possibility of a „New Materialist" Literary Criticism

In this article, I draw on the work of authors associated with New Materialism(s) and the material turn, in order to examine and compare various ways of developing a „new materialist" literary criticism/literary theory. I then set these projects against a more traditional historical materialist perspective, as exemplified for instance by Fredric Jameson, in order to point out some fundamental differences between literary criticism focused on the imagined „true" materiality of the text and one that chooses to emphasise instead the inherent materiality of the work of literature as such (on all its levels). Here, the oft-discussed Marxist distinction between the base and the superstructure provides a good example of how these two approaches, though ostensibly similar, may in fact represent two very different, even contradictory schools of thought and criticism.

My goal is not to criticise new materialists for not maintaining some imagined Marxist dogma, but rather, to point out how a nominal attachment to the materiality of text, when combined with a desire to invent a new method of reading, may result in a point of view that, even on its own terms, cannot be seen as materialist.

Drawing on Fredric Jameson's remarks on materialist criticism as a work of „demystification and de-idealisation" rather than a „positive" method, I then refer to the work of Walter Benn Michaels as an example of „negative" materialist criticism that, instead of providing us with a new way of „doing interpretation", allows us to de-idealize the way we discuss literature.

Keywords: materialism, idealism, intentionalism, Marxism, literary criticism, base, superstructure

1. Jameson, or Materialism as a Polemic Stance

What does it mean to approach literary criticism from a materialist perspective? This question, complicated as it is, must be today posed in the context of the so-called new materialisms and the "material(ist) turn"—two largely (although not strictly) interchangeable terms that, in the last few decades, came to signify a loose network of ideas and concepts based on the renewed academic and artistic interest in such things as non-human agency (and the agency of things), the "materiality of matter" (or the life of matter itself), posthuman and hybrid subjectivity, or the relationship between politics and quantum physics. In a way, what changed is the starting point of any serious attempt at a definition: we can no longer associate "materialist criticism" by default with a focus on social history, class struggle, commodity fetishism and so on. Moreover, a certain sensitivity present in many of the new materialist writings—a general focus on the fluid, the diffractive, and the vibrant, owed largely to Deleuze and Guattari—may seem at odds with a more traditional historical-materialist approach. Indeed, the tension between Marxism and new materialisms has already resulted in a large body of academic work (see e.g. Bednarek 2018, Torrent 2014).

But the question of what it means to be a materialist critic has been always complicated, in no small part due to the fact that materialism itself—as a philosophy, practice or movement— never seemed to have a clearly defined, positive meaning. That's why, in *Marx's Purloined Letter*, Fredric Jameson famously suggested that the very notion of "materialism" should be seen primarily as a way of organising struggle, rather than an independent philosophical category:

> As for materialism, it ought to be the place in which theory, deconstruction and Marxism meet: a privileged place for theory, insofar as the latter emerges from a conviction as to the "materiality" of language; for deconstruction insofar as its vocation has something to do with the destruction of metaphysics; for Marxism ("historical materialism") insofar as the latter's critique of Hegel turned on the hypostasis of ideal qualities and the need to replace such invisible abstractions by a concrete (that included production and economics). It is not an accident that these are all negative ways of evoking materialism.
>
> Rather than conceiving of materialism as a systematic philosophy, it would seem possible and perhaps more desirable to think of it as a polemic stance, designed to organize various anti-idealist campaigns, a procedure of demystification and de-idealization; or else a permanent linguistic reflexivity. This is, among other things, why Marxism has never been a philosophy as such, but

> rather a "unity-of-theory-and-practice" very much like psychoanalysis, and for many of the same reasons. (Jameson 1995, 84)

Materialism is thus a name we have come to use, under various social and historical circumstances, in order to link together the varied and possibly scattered "campaigns" against the idealist illusion(s). Indeed, as a conscious practice—rather than, say, a default way of being in the world—materialism is (and *can be*) nothing more than a critical reaction to idealism. This is not a historical or an institutional issue—materialism is negative by the very nature of the term. And strictly speaking, this is an issue of terms and names: as long as you need to call yourself a "materialist," this is only because there's an idealist tendency that you need to differentiate yourself from. Jameson further elaborated on this idea in the expanded version of *Marx's Purloined Letter*, included in the *Valences of Dialectic*:

Materialism is thus a name we have come to use, under various social and historical circumstances, in order to link together the varied and possibly scattered "campaigns" against the idealist illusion(s). Indeed, as a conscious practice—rather than, say, a default way of being in the world—materialism is (and *can be*) nothing more than a critical reaction to idealism.

> These dilemmas are exacerbated if we think, not in terms of consciousness as the older philosophies did, but in terms of language: where the notion of writing a materialist sentence already offers something of a paradox, at least insofar as it suggests that you might also be able to write "idealist" sentences. But probably those philosophically unacceptable sentences are merely sentences whose necessary linguistic materiality we have forgotten or repressed, imagining them to be somehow pure thought. In that case, "materialism" would simply involve reminding ourselves at every turn that we are using words (rather than thinking pure thoughts or having "experiences" of consciousness) (...) In either case, materialism would seem precluded as a philosophy: at best it could be a polemic slogan, designed to organize various anti-idealist campaigns, a procedure of demystification and de-idealization; or else a permanent linguistic reflexivity. This is, among other things, why Marxism has never been a philosophy as such, but rather a "unity of theory and practice" very much like psychoanalysis, and for many of the same reasons. (Jameson 2009, 140)

Instead of a "polemic stance," Jameson now sees materialism as a "polemic slogan," in a shift that seems to further weaken the autonomy of materialism as a distinct philosophical position or methodology. But even more instructive is the example of language, and the (im)possibility of making "idealist sentences." One cannot write a "materialist sentence" in the sense of writing a sentence that is, in its materiality, ontologically distinct from some other sentences; instead, materialism reminds us of the "forgotten or repressed" materiality that's always already there. This is why the inherent negativity of materialist criticism seems to always take the shape of "demystification." Rather than rejecting that which is

not material, a materialist perspective reminds us that everything is material; and, rather than criticising idealism for stealing the world, materialists criticise it for stealing people's minds. Idealism is a con-man rather than a conqueror.

There's an obvious, yet somewhat counterintuitive conclusion, to be derived from Jameson's remarks. Whereas materialism in general, as an inherently political movement, is famously action-oriented and calls for the "unity of theory and practice," when it comes to commenting on language as such—which, one supposes, must include analysing and interpreting literary texts—materialism seems to call for certain *restraint*. The task of a materialist critic is to remind and recall, to *point out* the inherent materiality of language, rather than try and make the texts somehow "more" material; there's after all only so much you can do by changing the way people think about language. This is a genuinely refreshing approach in the field that seems today largely focused on making itself more "performative" in the sense of rethinking the practice of literary criticism so it may become more *direct* in its impact on the material world. Here, Jameson's remarks reinforce the idea that a sense of political urgency should never make us blind to the essential limitations of our own discipline and practice.

If materialist philosophy (necessarily) lacks a clear positive definition, then things tend to get even murkier once we move to the field of literary theory and criticism. Not only has the Marxist tradition produced, over the years, a multitude of wildly different approaches to the central tenets of literary theory, it also lacks, in a way, a single shared source. Despite valuing literature highly, Marx and Engels have famously never offered a coherent and explicit "starting point" for Marxist literary studies, no single work or concept on which a new tradition could be founded. This is why, as Daniel Hartley rightly notes in his brilliant introduction to the history of Marxist literary criticism, "Marx and Engels' ultimate influence on what became 'Marxist literary criticism' is less a result of these isolated fragments than the historical materialist method as such" (Hartley, n.d.). As a result, we should probably see historical materialism in literary studies less in terms of a separate tradition, and more as a political position shared by authors belonging to various movements, groups and even schools. This shared position would be again defined in negative terms: a general opposition to idealism as a tendency within literature and literary studies themselves.

In *Materiality and Subject in Marxism, (Post-)Structuralism, and Material Semiotics*, Johannes Beetz offers a criticism of new materialisms based on intuitions very similar to Jameson's:

> The multitude of papers and books published on the topic of materiality can by no means be said to constitute a field of research representing a homogenous theory or a common definition of what is to be included in the study of the "material."
>
> However, many of them appear, despite their heterogeneity, to be united in an eerie preoccupation with "things" and "matter" and in a surprisingly persistent exclusion of certain fundamental kinds of materiality. This is, at least partly, due to a pervasive understanding of materiality which not infrequently reverts to a reductionist materialism by restricting materiality to matter or matter in motion. This notion, then, conceives of material entities either as passive objects waiting to be acted upon and manipulated, or alternatively as exerting a persistent effectivity, agency, or vitality of some sort. In the first case, material entities are sometimes regarded as materializations of the immaterial or ideational (like 'culture,' social relations, or identity). In the other extreme, as a persistent and effective part of reality, they impose themselves as extra-cultural and extra--social forces. Regarding the material as just one, albeit privileged, realm of existence while retaining the ideational in the form of "culture," "the subject," "language" or "thought" simply inverts idealism without abandoning its dichotomous categories. Furthermore, approaches to materiality that limit their inquiries to phenomena that consist of matter necessarily exclude modalities of materiality not readily identifiable as tangible, solid or given. (Beetz 2016, 3)

The "inverted idealism" of the new materialist thought seems to have a particular impact on the new materialist approach to literature—its peculiar dual status as both a repository of useful intuitions and illustrations, and the traditional domain of the non-material: the semantic, the discursive and the linguistic.

2. Odradek, or the New Materialist Literary Criticism

As Beetz rightly points out, the new materialists have, so far, by and large "disregarded" the "fundamental materiality of language and discourse" (Beetz 2016, 74), devoting little time or energy to the type of reflection on which both structuralism and post-structuralism have been founded. However, some efforts at imagining a specifically "new materialist" approach to literary criticism have been undertaken, and these efforts tend to produce quite a few problems of their own. Problems start, arguably, at the very beginning: with an attempt to root a new way of reading in a certain textual "enigma." Tobias Skiveren, one of the authors at newmaterialisms.eu—an online almanac dedicated to new

materialisms—gives us a good insight into this issue, by opening his entry on "literature" thus:

> A spool of thread can neither run nor talk; and yet, it does both in Franz Kafka's short story "Cares of a Family Man" from 1919. Moving and chatting all by itself, Kafka's spool presents itself as a puzzling enigma for the reader as well as the narrator who simply cannot figure out what kind of being this lively thing is: a diminutive human of wood or a somewhat untraditional tool? Jane Bennett, however, is less in doubt. In *Vibrant Matter* (2010) she utilizes Kafka's story and its non-human protagonist for making present and tangible her ontological concept of vital materiality. Here, the not-quite-dead and not-quite-living spool becomes a speculative figure for imagining what life beyond anthropocentric dichotomies between "dull matter (it, things) and vibrant life (us, beings)" might look and feel like (Skiveren 2018)

If this is to be our starting point, then we might be in trouble already. Firstly, there seems to be a logical error in play here: Odradek's weird status stems not from some sort of a split nature—"not-quite-dead and not-quite-living"—but from ours, the observers', own uncertainty as to what this nature is. He's not part-person, part-object; it's just that the reader doesn't know—indeed, has no means of knowing—whether he's more of a person or an object.

Secondly, although Odradek's nature might indeed be puzzling "for the reader as well as the narrator," it is puzzling for the reader *precisely because* it is puzzling for the narrator; Odradek exists only as a writer's invention, mediated through an account of another of his inventions (the narrator). Indeed, accounting for the nature of Kafka's typical narrators—unreliable, lost, thrown into unusual situations and detached from the world around them—one could even suggest that what's puzzling in *The Cares of a Family Man* is the mental condition of its protagonist, rather than the ontological status of the object of his gaze.

And, finally, even if we leave all these doubts aside and assume that Odradek really is an essentially "nonhuman" protagonist, an item come to life—we should still ask whether this is as "enigmatic" a scenario as both Bennett and Skiveren would have us believe. After all, convention- and genre-wise, what Kafka offers his readers is just a spin on literary anthropomorphism: the indisputable *weirdness* that seems to distinguish Odradek from Frosty the Snowman or Cogsworth is the result of Kafka's narrative technique rather than a simple byproduct of Odradek's own features. In other words, we should ask—at risk of sounding somewhat naïve—whether our ability to imagine non-human actors can be seen

as a proof, specifically as a proof that such non-human actors exist outside of our imagination. Both Bennett and Skiveren seem very eager to assume that it can; this is not only a somewhat simplified view of fiction in general, but it also risks ignoring the nature of literature and art as an essentially inventive and unpredictable practice. If Odradek is a description of an ontological discovery, rather than an invention of Kafka's own imagination (which, in itself, is a product of all the material interactions that shaped it), then agency suddenly seems like a zero-sum game: the agency of the "vibrant matter" comes at the cost of diminishing the agency of an author, and, in turn, makes literature itself seem more deterministic.

To an extent, this issue may stem from an apparent discursive reversal of the argument. Instead of using Odradek as an illustration for a certain otherwise established concept, a way of adding nuance and complexity to an existing narrative, both Skiveren and Bennett use Kafka's story as a starting point—as if Odradek's fictional existence pointed out the existence of a corresponding non-fictional being (or a type of matter). This mode of writing—one where the lines between the anecdotal and the analytical, a dramatisation and an interpretation, are not so much transcended or abolished as they are intentionally blurred—is, unfortunately, quite common in new materialist writing.

Nonetheless, Skiveren understands some of the difficulties inherent in any project of a new materialist literary criticism:

> At first sight, though, literature does not seem to be the most obvious alliance for such projects. How, we might ask, does one align the renewed emphasis on the non-human agency of materiality, biology, and nature emblematic of new materialism with a phenomenon that is traditionally associated with a wholly different domain, namely the all-too-human character of discourse, textuality, and semiotics? (Skiveren 2018)

What's peculiar about this otherwise sober observation is the framing of the issue in terms of a "tradition" existing, one can assume, within literary studies. "Traditionally" literature and the study of literature are apparently solely interested in the matters of "discourse, textuality and semiotics." Moreover, these traditional associations constitute "a wholly different domain" from the ones put forward by the new materialists. This implicit division, the act of separation that seems to lie at the very foundation of a new materialist literary criticism, will become quite important later on; for now, Skiveren notes that

> This challenge is, of course, not an easy one. But one way to bridge the gap, it seems, has been to recast literature as a material force that exceeds the domain of the Anthropos by resisting the epistemological inspections of the reader. No longer simply a discursive site for negotiating more or less subversive identity constructs, literature becomes an abstruse and recalcitrant non-human actor that can never be fully known. (Skiveren 2018)

This understanding of literature's material nature is based on the empirical observation that our best efforts to grasp the totality of a work's meaning almost never succeed—there is always something left to be said about the text, and the interpretation (as deconstruction as well as countless post-structuralist thinkers taught is) is seemingly never complete. It's not hard to understand how some may be tempted to see this remainder as inherently more "material"; we tend to associate resistance with materiality. One could go as far as to say that, from this perspective, the very possibility of the reader's mistake, as well as the imperfect nature of every paraphrase, are both in themselves a hard proof of the text's materiality, and as such they also—and this is arguably more important—serve to sever the link between literature and its "traditional associations" with "discourse, textuality and semiotics."

Although Skiveren points out that certain new materialist thinkers—including Bennett, but also Stacy Alaimo and Mayra Rivera—"construe literature as a privileged site for affectively and imaginatively exploring the world of material forces" (Skiveren 2018), it seems that at this point we should clearly distinguish between any project of a new materialist literary criticism (or theory) and a more general interest in literature as a way of "cultivating more matter-attuned and fine-grained sensibilities" (Skiveren 2018). If the new materialists have indeed, as Beetz points out, devoted little time to the issues of "the fundamental materiality of language and discourse," then this might explain why there have been few attempts at demonstrating, in practical terms, what a "new materialist" mode of reading and criticism could look like. It seems that many authors are more interested in seeking out textual illustrations for certain new materialist concepts, rather than reading texts in a new materialist "way," whatever this could mean. This approach may be ultimately quite misleading. For instance, in the recent anthology *Material Ecocriticism* (Iovino & Oppermann 2014), which seeks to establish a link between new materialisms and the practice of ecocriticism, all four essays included in the section "Poetics of Matter" seem focused on seeking out the works of art that specifically illustrate certain concepts crucial to the new materialist thought and sensitivity; in other words, rather than

sketch out a new materialist *mode* or *way* of reading, they invoke these works in order to prove that certain general philosophical intuitions are shared by a larger group of people, some of them artists or writers. These readings, however inspiring and productive they might prove on a case-to-case basis, tell us little about a new materialist approach to literature or text as such. It might very well be, for instance, that Walt Whitman (or Wallace Stevens, to mention just two authors eagerly referenced in the new materialist circles) shares, at least in his more ecstatic moments, a certain general view of the world with Jane Bennett or Gilles Deleuze. This, however, neither requires the critic to call on a new set of theoretical tools (indeed, in this particular case all four essays are quite traditionally hermeneutic), nor tells us anything about the *practice* of new materialist literary criticism. This tendency is obviously neither new, in the context of modern literary studies, nor particularly harmful in and of itself; it just seems important to distinguish such an approach from any serious attempt at founding a "new materialist" mode of literary criticism.

Another approach to literary studies that may share some of the new materialist sensitivity but mustnonetheless be sharply distinguished from any possible new materialist *criticism*, focuses on the empirical observation that readers tend to ascribe agency to certain fictional characters or beings, and uses various sociological and psychological tools in order to explain that phenomenon or its social consequences. This approach combines sociology of reading and reception, evolutionary psychology and neuroaesthetics—to name just a few disciplines—in order to research and explain our reactions to text, rather than establish a new mode of interpretation.[1]

3. Popeye, or the Search for Materiality

Skiveren's summary is telling in its intuitions; it creates an impression that, for the new materialists, the „true" materiality is mainly to be found in the domain of the non-human, and so the material side of any text consists primarily in things that are independent of the author, their style, their intention and their technique. One can sometimes see this

1 An excellent example of such an approach is Blakey Vermeule's *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters?* (2010), which, as demonstrated by Jennifer Ashton (2011) not only avoids many of the traps associated with post-humanist literary criticism and the affective turn, but seems entirely compatible with the „strong" intentionalism as sketched out by Walter Benn Michaels.

sentiment surface seemingly unintentionally, as in the preface to Serenella Iovino's and Serpil Oppermann's anthology of essays on materialist ecocriticism:

> Agency assumes many forms, all of which are characterized by an important feature: they are material, and the meanings they produce influence in various ways the existence of both human and nonhuman natures. Agency, therefore, is not to be necessarily and exclusively associated with human beings and with human intentionality, but it is a pervasive and inbuilt property of matter, as part and parcel of its generative dynamism. From this dynamism, reality emerges as an intertwined flux of material and discursive forces, rather than as complex of hierarchically organized individual players. (Iovino & Oppermann 2014, 3)

> Resisting the emphasis on linguistic constructions of the world, formulated by some trends of postmodern thought, the new materialist paradigm is premised on the integral ways of thinking language and reality, meaning and matter together. A key point, provided by Karen Barad's theory of agential realism, is that phenomena result from the intra-actions of material and discursive practices and agencies, which co-emerge at once (hence intra-and not inter-action), thus constituting the world "in its ongoing becoming." Matter and meaning, Barad states, are "inextricably fused together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder. . . . Mattering is simultaneously a matter of substance and significance" (...) In other words, the borders between meaning and matter are constitutionally porous, making the "intimate" material-semiotic connection between the "inside" and "outside" of organisms recognizable at smaller as well as larger levels of organization. (Iovino & Oppermann 2014, 4)

> The emerging dynamics of matter and meaning, body and identity, being and knowing, nature and culture, bios and society are therefore to be examined and thought not in isolation from each other, but through one another, matter being an ongoing process of embodiment that involves and mutually determines cognitions, social constructions, scientific practices, and ethical attitude (Iovino & Oppermann 2014, 5)

> If ecocriticism has a grounding assumption at its origin, it is the tight connection between literature and the natural-cultural dynamics of the material world. (Iovino & Oppermann 2014, 6)

Saying that literature is „tightly connected" to the „dynamics of the material world" is obviously vastly different from saying that literature itself is a material construct. Similarly, phrases like „an intertwined flux of material and discursive forces," „inextricable fusion" of matter and meaning, „integral ways of thinking language and reality," „borders between meaning and matter" that are „constitutionally porous" etc. all suggest that meaning—language in its specifically semantic aspect—remains closely *linked* to the material world, but is not in itself a proper part of this world. Although Iovino and Oppermann immediately attempt to shift focus to how closely and inextricably these two spheres are tied together, what's more important from the materialist perspective is this strong assertion of fundamental (even if purely analytical) difference.

The purpose of this assertion is to emphasise the sheer force of materiality present in the natural world, especially in its non-human actors and spaces. Considering Iovino and Oppermann see their project as a part of the „material turn" (Iovino & Oppermann 2014, 2), and seem to believe that whereas the materiality of the text has been largely ignored within literary studies, the text's meaning has traditionally been a privileged category within literary criticism, what emerges is a picture of the relationship between meaning and matter as a zero-sum game: the more we focus on the text's actual materiality—understood now in terms of non-human agency, and the link between text and nature—the less we can focus on its meaning.

Eileen Joy, who, in her search for a new mode of reading, reaches out to both new materialisms (e.g. the work of Jane Bennett) and speculative realism (including Graham Harman's object-oriented ontology), also instinctively identifies the material aspects of the text with its non-semantic and non-authorial side, as if its „proper" materiality could only be found outside all the activities traditionally associated with interpretation:

> And the idea might then be, not to necessarily make sense of a literary text and its figures (human and otherwise)—to humanistically re-boot the narrative by always referring it to the (always human-centered) Real (context, historical or otherwise, for example, or human psychology)—but to better render the chatter and noise, the movements and operations, the signals and transmissions, the appearances and disappearances of the *weird* worlds, and their figures, that are compressed in books (a different sort of realism that always exceeds the intentions of authors and readers, and thanks to language's errant-deconstructive tendencies, cannot be fully captured in the nets of *our* semantics only), and to see

> better how these teeming pseudo-worlds are part of my brain already, hard-wired into the black box of a kind of co-implicate, enworlded inter-subject-object-ivity in which it is difficult and challenging to trace the edges between self and Other, between the Real and the fabulated. (Joy 2013, 31)

In this single (!) sentence Joy clearly establishes a link between what she calls the „weird" reading and the various modes of reading interested in such notions as context, history, „the Real" or the intentions of human actors (authors and readers). Although one could argue that „the chatter and noise," „the appearances and disappearances of the *weird* worlds" may very well be present in the text because of its author's intention, as a part of its *meaning* (as is the case with that old Speculative Realist favourite, H. P. Lovecraft), Joy locates all these elements firmly and explicitly outside „our semantics". Thus her „weird reading" must be clearly distinguished from simply reading „for" weirdness, i.e. reading that is particularly interested in the intentional moments of weirdness within the text. Joy links this project to Jane Bennett's notion of „vibrant matter," as well as a vaguely Spinozian perspective:

> Yet, narratives also contain discrete, disconnected instances of being and becoming that are always attempting to expand beyond or subvert the larger narrative system—these instances, or "units" (as Ian Bogost would term them) are like *things*, material elements with their own *conatus* (Spinoza's term for any thing's tendency to persist in existing), which always leaves the system open to a creative and possibly fruitful chaos (a plenitude of generative unruliness whose historical tense would be the future perfect subjunctive: *what would have been*, or, *what would have not been*). (Joy 2013, 29)

These instances are precisely the „chatter and noise" on which Joy seeks to found her „weird reading." Although she does not explicitly deny the materiality of, say, the communicative function of literature—to do that would be indeed quite provocative, even by the new materialist standards —still, by emphasising the status of „chatter and noise" as *material things*, she strongly suggests (just like Iovino and Oppermann) that it's they who constitute the „properly" or „truly" material side of the text. While a simple „reading for weirdness" would make no assumptions about the ontological status of this or that element of narrative, „weird reading" seems entirely based on the assumption that certain aspects of a work of literature are if not *more* material, than at least material *in a fundamentally different manner* than all others.

Levi R. Bryant, a speculative realist philosopher who's often commented on Joy's ideas, seems to recognise the fundamental issue with

this approach, at least on a theoretical level, although he does not link it directly to Joy's work. He opens his commentary on Joy's lecture with these remarks:

> One of the things that I've found most stunning, that in certain ways I somewhat regret, is my claim that fictions are real. Now there's something about me that seems to create a ruckus wherever I go– and that's been above all true of my pronouncements on this blog –but there have been few things I've said that have generated more heat than this thesis. Now for any materialist I would think this thesis would be obvious. If you're a materialist then you're committed to the thesis that all things are, well, either material or void. Fictions aren't void, so that entails only one option: they're material. (Bryant 2011a)

Bryant begins with a clear assertion that fictions—which seem to stand here for texts in general— are material *as a whole*, by default. He thus seems to avoid a fundamental split between the meaning and matter, on which both Joy's „weird reading" and Iovino and Oppermann's „material" ecocriticism are founded. Unfortunately, he quickly veers into the familiar territory:

> For years, along these lines, my mantra has been that texts aren't simply *about* something, they *are* something. In other words, texts should not simply be understood in their referential and modal dimension, but should also be understood in their sheer *materiality* as entities, like animals, humans, rocks, and neutrinos, that circulate throughout the world. This is at the center of what I mean when I say that fictions are real. I am not making the claim that there is a person that exists like a *human*, named Popeye that I could marry, that has amazing biceps, that grows stronger when he eats his spinach, etc. No, I am making what I believe to be the obvious and common sense thesis that the cartoon Popeye ought not simply be understood as what it is *about* (its referential dimension), but also in terms of what it *is* (a material entity circulating about the world). (Bryant 2011a)

As soon as Bryant makes a seemingly innocent observation that „texts aren't simply *about* something, they *are* something," he enters the path that eventually leads him back to a fundamental split between the material and non-material aspects of texts. If what makes texts material is their "being," rather than their being „about" something, then they are only material *in spite of* the latter. Their existence as „material entities" is then opposed to their „referential dimension" which, consequently, appears as essentially non-material. Although Bryant eagerly concedes to fictions their material nature, he then confines it solely to one aspect

of their being—that which he sees as traditionally omitted by those modes of criticism that focus on the meaning of texts. Meaning and matter are thus again pitted against each other. Indeed, one can imagine that the split between referential and material may be just the first step in a potentially infinite series of similar division: because, to put it bluntly, why should one stop here, at this arbitrary level, just below the surface of the text's totality? Surely there are things—that is to say, forces and processes of a social, cultural and economic nature—that, although linked to the text's "circulation," remain *less* material than the others; say, the physical transport of books, as compared to a mere conversation among their readers? And even then, one can imagine that some copies of said books can be seen as *more* material than others—are paperbacks, for instance, more „material" than ebooks? What about audiobooks—are the ones sold on tape more „material" than the ones distributed digitally?

All these questions stem, of course, from a set of inherently non-materialist assumptions; and absurd though they may seem, they all follow logically from the initial split between the texts' „referential" and material sides. This split is, in fact, in clear contradiction with Bryant's own initial remark that a materialist remains „committed to the thesis that all things are, well, either material or void." What is it that would make this thesis applicable to a fiction as a whole, but not to all of its dimensions? In other words, why is its „referential dimension" exempt from this fundamental rule? Doesn't it follow, from Bryant's own assumptions, that both the text's „being" and it's „being about something" are „either material or void"? In other words, mustn't the meaning itself be „either material or void"?

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In a sense, Bryant's approach is not unlike the never-ending search for the fundamental particle in philosophy or physics: where the very possibility of a further division pushes the moment of discovery of the true foundation of our material reality further away. Whereas Jameson and other historical materialist thinkers suggest that we can only assume a materialist *perspective*, Bryant (as well as Joy, Iovino and Oppermann) are all on the lookout for the *source* of the matter's (and text's) own materiality.

This, obviously, puts the whole idea of a „material turn" in literary criticism in a very precarious position. We either embark on a never-ending search for the „truly" material elements of the text—which will not only inevitably lead to predictable arguments over which thinkers and critics are more materialist than the others, but which also immediately gives an astonishing amount of ground to those who would like

to see literature as the domain of pure ideas—or we accept that the object of a meaning-focused analysis is in no way less material than that of a potential new materialist criticism; but then the latter's own reason for existence more or less vanishes. We can obviously sympathise with some of Bryant's (and Joy's) apparent political goals: their desire to make literary criticism more inclusive, egalitarian, democratic etc. But ultimately, if we follow Jameson's intuitions, these „new" materialist approaches serve only to reinforce the old idealist cliché, namely, that the discursive, the intellectual or the textual dimensions of a work of art are somehow less „material" than things like print, paint or canvas.

This is by no means to say that a sincere interest in Marxism may magically prevent anyone from making mistakes similar to those of Joy and Bryant. A good example is Imre Szeman's *Introduction: a Manifesto for Materialism* from 1999. Szemen, although ostensibly sharing many of the intuitions that gave birth to the „material turn," remains committed to a certain heterodox line of historical materialist thinking. He writes his manifesto with an explicit goal of including in the critical practice—particularly in reference to Canadian literature and criticism—things that have historically been „left out" and forgotten, due to the critics' apparent lack of focus and consequence in the matters of matter and materiality. Like myself, Szemen starts with Jameson's remarks on the inherently polemic nature of materialism, and—wary of the fact that „while there may be numerous materialisms in name, few are *materialist in spirit*" (Szeman 1999, 4)—is initially careful not to turn an essentially negative approach into yet another positive method: „If materialist criticism is thus often concerned with matter, the materiality of social and cultural forces, and with political economy, it is not just because it is «materialist» but also because these are the elements most commonly «left out» of typical examinations of cultural objects, especially in the case of literary texts" (Szemen 1999, 6). His project of materialist criticism, it seems, will remind us about the essentially material nature of *every* aspect of the text, rather than try and point out then elevate its „truly" or „particularly" material elements.

But unfortunately Szemen soon follows in the steps of Joy and Bryant, albeit for a slightly different reason. Following Régis Debray, who famously criticised Marxism for not examining closely „the connections between text and world", Szemen proposes a renewed focus on the „material" (as in „physical") production of the texts (meaning mainly texts-as-objects, or vehicles), as well as the institutional framework that makes this production possible. Although a focus on these largely political and socioeconomic issues may seem to reinforce the materialist

nature of his project, Szemen finally succumbs to the idea of this supporting apparatus being the only truly material force, as opposed to the „intellectual" sphere, which includes things such as concepts, discussions, but also „bookish common knowledge" and—presumably—meanings (Szemen 1999, 10).

Without going into further detail, what Szemen's manifesto proves is that a division of the kind we see in Joy's and Bryant's work is a necessary consequence of seeing any project of „materialist literary criticism" in terms of a *method*. Although understandable on a practical level— in the contemporary humanities establishing a new method or a new turn may seem not only the best, but the default way of asserting one's autonomy and position—an attempt at inventing a materialist method of reading and interpreting texts seemingly always results in a split between an imagined „material" side of of the text and its non-material counterpart. The reason is clear: a self-proclaimed materialist critic will seek to emphasise the material nature of the text, which they can do only by elevating some of its aspects above the others. The only other way to imagine materialist criticism would be to see its task—at least when it comes to reading and interpreting - solely in terms of restoring a „natural" balance, regaining a way of perceiving the text which is not only material but also, and as importantly, default. In other words, it would once again be a polemic stance rather than a method—a stance that consciously limits itself to revealing and refuting various forms of idealism, rather than „inventing" anything new. It seems, however, that the very idea of a „natural" way of reading would be anathema to many contemporary critics, including those associated with new materialisms.

The reason is clear: a self-proclaimed materialist critic will seek to emphasise the material nature of the text, which they can do only by elevating some of its aspects above the others. The only other way to imagine materialist criticism would be to see its task—at least when it comes to reading and interpreting - solely in terms of restoring a „natural" balance, regaining a way of perceiving the text which is not only material but also, and as importantly, default. In other words, it would once again be a polemic stance rather than a method—a stance that consciously limits itself to revealing and refuting various forms of idealism, rather than „inventing" anything new.

4. Überbau, or on Genuine Materialism

In more ways than one, the split at the heart of the new materialist literary criticism resembles the well-known Marxist division between *Basis/Grundlage* and *Überbau*, the base and the superstructure. Or, should we say more precisely, it resembles what many non-Marxists believe to be the Marxist version of this divide: a fundamental split between the socioeconomic „foundation" of all social reality and a nigh superfluous cultural „supplement" that's almost entirely dependent on the former.

This is obviously a well-known and oft-discussed issue that has resurfaced numerous times throughout historical materialism's relatively short history and even today it can be approached from many different angles.

For my part, in the context of this essay, I believe a brief discussion between David Graeber and Richard Seymour that took place over a decade ago might prove particularly instructive.

In *Turning Modes of Production Inside Out* (2006), Graeber set out to criticise the notion of the „mode of production" in what he saw as its traditional Marxist sense, in order to offer a new understanding of this category—one that would be rooted more firmly in the world of everyday human interactions, „processes by which people create and shape one another":

> The question then becomes: what would a 'mode of production' be like if we started from this Marx, rather than, say, the Marx of the Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy? If non-capitalist modes of production are not ultimately about the production of wealth but of people—or, as Marx emphasizes, of certain specific kinds of people—then it's pretty clear that existing approaches have taken entirely the wrong track. Should we not be examining relations of service, domestic arrangements, educational practices, at least as much as the disposition of wheat harvests and the flow of trade?
>
> I would go even further. What has passed for 'materialism' in traditional Marxism—the division between material 'infrastructure' and ideal 'superstructure'—is itself a perverse form of idealism. Granted, those who practice law, or music, or religion, or finance, or social theory, always do tend to claim that they are dealing with something higher, more abstract, than those who plant onions, blow glass or operate sewing machines. But it's not really true. The *actions* involved in the production of law, poetry, etc., are just as material as any others. Once you acknowledge the simple dialectical point that what we take to be self-identical objects are really processes of action, then it becomes pretty obvious that such actions are always (a) motivated by meanings (ideas) and (b) always proceed through a concrete medium (material), and that while all systems of domination seem to propose that 'No, this is not true, really there is some pure domain of law, or truth, or grace, or theory, or finance capital, that floats above it all', such claims are, to use an appropriately earthy metaphor, bullshit.
>
> (...)
>
> A genuine materialism, then, would not simply privilege a 'material' sphere over an ideal one. It would begin by acknowledging that no such ideal sphere actually exists. This, in turn, would make it possible to stop focusing so obsessively on the production of material *objects* – discrete, selfidentical things that one can own – and start the more difficult work of trying to understand the (equally material) processes by which people create and shape one another. (Graeber 2006, 70-71)

Graeber's criticism seems truly on point, in that it touches on a way of thinking, or an ideology, that seems prevalent in capitalism and on which, as he rightly points out, all systems of domination seem to at least partly rely. In his attempt to distinguish „genuine" materialism from what may be seen as idealism in reverse (distinguished as historical materialism), he's even careful not to speak of the dialectical unity of „meaning" and "matter"—so this idealist opposition is not reintroduced by accident—but rather of the unity of „meaning" and „material", or „medium".

The only major issue with Graeber's argument is that its nominal target seems somewhat ill-defined. His idea of „genuine materialism" is surprisingly close to that of non-Stalinist marxists; Richard Seymour was quick to point this out on his blog:

> This is a lucid passage, and also a very frustrating one. It is lucid about the fetishism of ruling class ideology, and frustrating in how it represents its supposed foil. To begin with, it is unclear what is meant by „traditional Marxism." Suffice to say that it wouldn't include E. M. Wood, E. P. Thompson, Alasdair Macintyre, or any number of anti-Stalinist marxists who have problematised the idea of a base-superstructure dichotomy, either rejecting the whole metaphor, or maintaining that conceiving it as a dichotomy is contrary to Marx's original intention. These arguments were often directed against a highly mechanical and scholastic interpretation of Marx that was popularised by the Soviet Union and its supporters, the purpose of which was to rationalise Stalinist accumulation methods. The logic of the Stalinists was that if the superstructure is determined by the economic base then we must only develop the means of production and the political superstructure of socialism is sure to follow. So it is possible that by „traditional Marxism," Graeber actually means Stalinist vulgarisation. Or it could just be another sock-puppet-as-protagonist, cf. „standard leftist," „typical PC liberal," etc.
>
> That Marx himself does not intend the base-superstructure metaphor as a dichotomy is clear in the *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, the text which Graeber finds particularly problematic (as opposed to, eg, *The German Ideology*)
>
> (...)
>
> [N]owhere does Marx suggest that the superstructure is ideal, or that there is actually an „ideal sphere" distinct from material activity. In fact, Marx's position on this is remarkably similar to that of Graeber. Marx, and I suspect most marxists, would not be scandalised by the assertion that the actions which produce law and poetry are themselves material. The thrust of the quoted passage from the ‚Preface', as I read it, is not that material processes produce

> a separate, ideal superstructure. It is that what is referred to as superstructural is in fact a material process—more specifically, a process brought about by human activity. It is, in other words, precisely to reject the reification of social processes and their transformation into autonomous entities that dominate life in an almost god-like fashion. (Seymour 2010)

Graeber's „genuine" materialism is in fact, as Seymour points out, at its foundation basically identical with historical materialism as it appears outside of a „vulgarised" Stalinist framework. It remains based on two basic tenets or observations. First, its insistence on defining things like „superstructure" in terms of processes rather than reified objects (here, new materialisms, with their rhetoric of change and fluidity and porous borders, may seem like historical materialism's natural ally). But more importantly, this version of materialism rejects the very idea of the base/superstructure division as an instrument for defining the „truly" material side of reality. Both the base and the superstructure are produced through a material activity; indeed, the very possibility of thinking them separately, the *idea* of base and superstructure as distinct spheres, is no more or less material than anything else. The meaning and the medium are both equally „material"; or, rather, they are simply *both material*, because the word „equally" assumes that things may be material in different proportions, thus opening up a way for the new materialist split to be brought back. To put this whole issue back in the context of literary criticism: texts are either material or void, but so is the meaning itself and, indeed, everything else about them. A materialist „method" that does not understand this can be only idealism in reverse.

Graeber and Seymour seem to follow, at least in spirit, many of the remarks offered by Maurice Godelier in his seminal *The Mental and the Material: Thought Economy and Society* (Godelier 1986). In both cases, what's at stake is not only a certain notion of materialism as a practice, but also a renewed appreciation of „superstructure" as an equally material part of our shared reality and lived experience:

> Thus it is by abstraction that thought may separate the various parts of a whole, the productive forces from the relations of production, and divide these two realities (thenceforth habitually called the ‚infrastructure') from the remainder of social relations (which then become ‚superstructures'). In passing, it is worth noting that ‚infrastructure' and ‚superstructures' are very poor translations of Grundlage and Überbau, the terms actually used by Marx. The Überbau is a construction, an edifice which rises up on foundations, Grundlage; and it is a house

> we live in, not the foundations. So another translation of Marx, far from reducing the superstructures to an impoverished reality, could have emphasized their importance. (Godelier 1986, 6-7)

And so it seems that the material *turn* is not a very materialist *term* after all.

If the idea of a „material turn" seemed doubtful before, now we have an even clearer reason to treat it with suspicion and even scepticism. Of course, the vague metaphor of a „turn" can be reinterpreted and reused in countless ways, so no doubt there will be those who understand the material turn simply in terms of reminding ourselves of the „forgotten or repressed" materiality of certain parts of our lived experience, social or otherwise. But for many others, a „material turn" seems to imply that we need a new method, or a new research field or a new theory, in order to revive materialism or—even worse—in order to live more „material" lives. The latter is obviously never the case—as it would imply that we can also truly escape the material world, a skill that even tenured professors of literature do not seem to possess—while the former, i.e. the idea that we need a new set of theoretical tools to „revive" materialist criticism, seems at least doubtful: if materialist criticism is just a polemic stance, if at the end of the day *everything* is a product of material activity, what's needed is consequence in pointing that fact out, rather than the safety of an established method. And so it seems that the material *turn* is not a very materialist *term* after all.

5. Toad-rock, or a Reenchantment

Of course, a general criticism of new materialisms as such—as a philosophy or a discursive practice, so to speak, rather than a specific approach to literature and interpretation—has been articulated by some very prominent Marxists, including Terry Eagleton (2016) and Slavoj Žižek (2014). The former is particularly explicit in his criticism of new materialisms' totemic or fetishistic vision of the world („it is essentially a pagan vision" [Eagleton 2016, 10]), in particular its vision of matter, which seems to reproduce the fetishism typical to post-structuralism as the direct predecessor of new materialisms („where thinkers like Jacques Derrida say 'text,' new materialists say 'matter.' Otherwise, not much has changed" [Eagleton 2016, 11]). All of this culminates in what Eagleton sees as a hasty downplaying of humanity's agency; new materialists end up „with the kind of contemplative vision of the world that (...) Marx criticises in Feuerbach" (Eagleton 2016, 13).

Eagleton offers some well-articulated and politically crucial criticism

of the new materialisms; however, his arguments rely on a broad consensus as to the idea of alienation, i.e. a general recognition that alienation exists and remains (at least by default and is most cases) something that we should fight and resist rather than embrace; that it is first and foremost a weapon of capital rather than a tool for universal emancipation. Meanwhile, such a consensus is hardly a given among the new materialists. In *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Coole & Frost 2010)—an anthology that serves if not as a source document for the new materialist movement, then at least as a focal point of sorts—Jason Edwards directly attacks Henri Lefebvre for his attachment to the very idea of alienation, seeing it as one of the most „problematic" moments of the philosopher's work (Edwards 2010, 291). Elsewhere, the proponents of material ecocriticism openly call it „a story-laden mode of reenchantment." (Cohen 2014, x). They seem to fear neither the fetishistic (or totemic, or „pagan") vision of the world offered by the new materialisms, nor the danger of it being weaponised by capital.

The importance of Eagleton's criticism, which we could probably see as the model Marxist criticism of new materialisms in general, cannot be overstated; it seems politically urgent and hugely important, and it will no doubt speak to at least some of those involved in the new materialist project. But short of assuming that those unconvinced are not worth debating, it seems almost equally important for historical materialists to develop a line of criticism that would point out various contradictions within the new materialists' own framework—and seek to persuade them on their own terms, so to speak.

One such argument—indeed, one that seems already prevalent among the critics of new materialisms, although it arguably has its roots in some criticisms of the Agent-Network theory— would start with the very notion of non-human agency. The empirical and experiential foundation of the idea of agency, this argument would go, is our own subjectivity, either individual or collective; by default, we imagine agency in terms of something that we (as humans, or people, or whatever other collective noun we may think of to call ourselves) possess. That's why our understanding of agency has changed throughout history, but that is also why we tend to measure the agency of non-human actors (such as animals) in terms of the similarities they share with us. Because our understanding of our own agency is neither universal nor ahistorical, there is some urgent political criticism to be made here as well. For instance, one could argue (and indeed many do) that we can hardly imagine our own agency—or ourselves as actors—in terms other than that of contract and/or casting a vote, and we should try and come up

with a radically different notion of our own agency. But this is hardly the same as a philosophical call for expanding our understanding of agency so that it may include rocks, cars and chairs. Such a call requires much more than anecdotal evidence and concepts borrowed from quantum physics—namely, it needs to be based on a clear explanation of the passage between our everyday experience, our understanding of agency as it already appears in our daily lives (and our politics), and the new theoretical proposition. Otherwise, it amounts to little more than a straightforward demand that we abandon our own lived experience and suspend our empirical knowledge through a sheer act of will, motivated by a vaguely progressive political intuition. Such a demand would obviously go against the basic tenets of any materialism. But the new materialists seem strangely averse to any attempts at describing this passage; indeed, one could be excused for seeing it as almost intentionally blurred.

Another, similar argument that would seek to productively criticise new materialisms on their own terms would question the space that a projected new materialist reader/interpreter seems to occupy in relation to the material aspects of a text. (The peculiarity of this position was already signalled by the fact that it allows us to perceive the text as split between the material and the non-material, as if we could observe this division from the outside.) Again, this line of criticism would question our ability to simply „step outside" of certain elements of our material experience. Take, for instance, those points or moments in the text whose meaning seems to elude us. New materialists call on us to actively appreciate these points not as moments of particular semantic density, so to speak, where we need to make an exceptional effort at interpreting and ultimately understanding the text, but as moments that we need to appreciate precisely in and for their apparent incomprehensibility. For Eileen Joy, for instance, the idea of „weird reading" is based on appreciating such moments for what they are:

> Nevertheless, works of literature are also unique events that possess a penumbra of effects that can never be fully rationalized nor instrumentalized, and there is no one set of relations within which the whole range of any one text's possible effects can be fully plumbed or measured. There is always something left over, some remainder, or some non-responsive item, that has to be left to the side of any schematic critique, and this is an occasion for every text's becoming-otherwise. (Joy 2013, 29)

It bears no argument that such „remainders" exist, i.e. that there are

many things in many works of literature that we can safely assume we'll never fully understand (either personally or even collectively, as „humanity"). What's potentially problematic is whether we can derive any practical conclusions from this fact. If we were to practice „weird reading,"for instance, we would need to appreciate these moments for what they are, or even work to preserve them; anything else would mean working actively against the material weirdness of the text. This means the best we can do is wilful ignorance; trying not to think too hard of the things we haven't yet understood. Even if we set aside the potential ethical and political implications of such a project, the question is: can such a state of wilful ignorance be achieved in practice?

And if we were to follow Bryant's advice, and focus on what the fictions *are* as well as what they are *about*, could we really do the former without constantly referring to our own understanding of a given fiction's meaning? In other words, if we have a certain idea of who Popeye is within the original work of fiction, can we accept that he is as much Popeye as someone else's interpretation of the same character?

One can already sense in these questions a possible connection to some of the arguments and observations historically discussed within the pragmatist tradition. But before we establish such a connection (and introduce a couple of fresh names and concepts), let's have a look at the very first paragraph of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's foreword to Iovino and Oppermann's anthology:

> A rock jumps. Every hiker has had the experience. The quiet woods or sweep of desert is empty and still when a snake that seemed a twig writhes, a skink that was bark scurries, leaves wriggle with insectile activity. This world coming to animal life reveals the elemental vibrancy already within green pine, arid sand, vagrant mist, and plodding hiker alike. When a toad that seemed a stone leaps into unexpected vivacity, its lively arc hints that rocks and toads share animacy, even if their movements unfold across vastly different temporalities. Just as the flitting hummingbird judges hiker and toad lithic in their stillness, a rock is within its properly geologic duration a wayfarer, a holder of stories of mountains that undulate and continents that journey the sea. The stone-like toad discloses its intimacy to toad-like stone. Both are part of a material world that challenges the organic bias of the adjective "alive." (Cohen 2014, ix)

New materialists seem to often privilege such anecdotal, pictorial moments in various ways; to use the new materialisms' own rhetoric, these are the moments of local indeterminacy, surprising meetings, unexpected intra-actions from which both the object and the subject trace

their roots. Here, a moment when a rock seemingly „transforms" into a toad is privileged from an epistemological point of view: it reveals something crucial about the nature of the world, the flows and ties that define our shared material reality.

But no such privilege is extended to the moment directly *after* that moment of surprise, that is, the moment when we realise that what happened was not a wondrous case of a pebble come to life, or an equally wondrous spontaneous transformation of a rock into an animal, but, in fact, a case of bad vision, a simple mistake. This epistemological moment is seemingly deprived of any material viability or legitimacy; indeed, it is not even spoken of. But isn't it the necessary conclusion to every such scenario: confronted with a shocking event, we try to explain (and this process is as much a part of our everyday material lives as anything else) what just happened and, provided the explanation is sufficiently satisfying, we get over our initial shock? For a split-second, we might have thought that rocks were indeed able to jump; but now that we know what really happened, it's not that we think the rock can *no longer* jump - we know that it could never have jumped in the first place. The sense of wonder is gone—or if it's still there, its reason is now altogether different.

Cohen calls on us to actively maintain the special status ascribed to the initial moment of surprise, to regain and maintain our own sense of wonder. But this would require us to cut out from our own experience another moment, the moment of realisation. In order to truly appreciate the material world, it seems, we need to forget what we otherwise know—this is what the new materialisms demand of us. This is also where the new materialisms in general, the new materialist literary criticism in particular, and the idea of „story-laden reenchantment" come together: in the call to stand outside of our own lived experience. Hardly, one could say, a materialist proposition.

There is, I believe, an approach to literary criticism that both solves the fundamental issues found in the new materialist project and opens up a way of thinking about literary criticism in a truly materialist—and yet very inclusive—manner. This approach, fundamentally anti-theoretical and anti-methodical, is sometimes known as the „strong" intentionalism , and is associated primarily with the work of Walter Benn Michaels.

6. Michaels, or a Polemic Stance Once Again

There is, I believe, an approach to literary criticism that both solves the fundamental issues found in the new materialist project and opens up a way of thinking about literary criticism in a truly materialist—and yet very inclusive—manner. This approach, fundamentally anti-theoretical and anti-methodical, is sometimes known as the „strong" intentionalism[2],

2 In the original essay, Michaels and Knapp use the name „intentionalism"

and is associated primarily with the work of Walter Benn Michaels. It was established in the early 1980s by Michaels and Steven Knapp in a series of articles, the most well-known of which remains *Against Theory* (Knapp & Michaels 1982). These articles have since served as a foundation for an anti-capitalist and, specifically, anti-neoliberal project of political and cultural criticism, developed by Michaels in books such as *The Shape of the Signifier* (2004), *The Trouble with Diversity* (2006) and, most recently, the photography-focused *The Beauty of a Social Problem* (2015).

Against Theory, as well as Michaels' work in general, is at the same time well-known and often misunderstood. Thus a brief reconstruction of the relevant parts of his argument seems in order.

On an institutional level, Michaels' (and Knapp's) writings sought to abolish literary theory as a field or a branch of studies—or, to be more precise, they aimed to reveal the fundamental impossibility of „theorising" things such as meaning and interpretation. There can be no theory of meaning, Michaels and Knapp said, because there can be no such „general account" of interpretation that may be said to have any practical conclusions—one that would allow us to establish the criteria for a valid interpretation in advance, that is, outside the context of a particular reading: „by ‚theory' we mean a special project in literary criticism: the attempt to govern interpretations of particular texts by appealing to an account of interpretation in general" (Knapp & Michaels 1982, 723). This means that there can also be no *method* of reading, no general instruction on how we *should* read in order to produce valid interpretations. At the end of the day, everyone reads and interprets in the same manner—even though some may deny it—and thus literary criticism may have no method.

We can see how from the very beginning Michaels' and Knapp's project bore a certain resemblance to materialism as understood by Jameson. *Against Theory*, and the articles that followed, provide us only with a set of *negative* tools, a way of „demystifying and de-idealising" such concepts as literature, meaning or interpretation. It does not offer a „new way" of reading texts; indeed, it openly claims that such a thing

in relation to „positive theorists," i.e. those who see the meaning as *dependent* on the author's intention. This is, of course, an inherently *theoretical* position, and it is explicitly opposed by Knapp and Michaels. In the following decades, however, the term „intentionalism" has been reused as a shorthand for an approach to literary studies proposed in *Against Theory*. I use the term „strong" intentionalism to differentiate between Michaels' original position and various later attempts at „softening" the radicalism of his initial argument; see e.g. Goldsworthy 2005.

is strictly impossible. The authors start their *A Reply to Our Critics* with an explicit statement that if their critics were right in their account of the „consequences" stemming from *Against Theory*, this „would already amount to a radical objection to an argument that explicitly denies having any consequences for the practice of literary criticism" (Knapp & Michaels 1983, 791). The only practical conclusions one can derive from their argument, they suggest, is entirely dependent on the institutional context—as long as literary theory exists, as long as people believe in the theoretical (or, should we say, idealist) illusion, the primary argument made in *Against Theory*' remains valid and indeed politically urgent. But it has no validity of its own, so to speak; it is solely polemic and negative—a criticism rather than a description of *how to do* criticism.

> Theory attempts to solve—or to celebrate the impossibility of solving—a set of familiar problems: the function of authorial intention, the status of literary language, the role of interpretive assumptions, and so on. We will not attempt to solve these problems, nor will we be concerned with tracing their history or surveying the range of arguments they have stimulated. In our view, the mistake on which all critical theory rests has been to imagine that these problems are real. In fact, we will claim such problems only seem real—and theory itself only seems possible or relevant—when theorists fail to recognize the fundamental inseparability of the elements involved (Knapp & Michaels, 723-724)

Like materialists, who insist on inseparability of material processes and various spheres of cultural, social and everyday life, Michaels and Knapp seek to remind us of the theory's inability to simply think up distinctions, contradictions and relationships where no such things exist or may exist.

However, by focusing on this negative aspect, on the superficial (yet, I believe, ultimately quite important) similarities between *Against Theory* and Jameson's understanding of materialism, we risk getting ahead of ourselves, or, rather, reading Michaels' and Knapp's original argument in reverse, starting with its institutional consequences rather than its ontological and epistemological basis. The anti-methodical side of their project is not, after all, its most controversial point; their account of meaning and interpretation is:

> The clearest example of the tendency to generate theoretical problems by splitting apart terms that are in fact inseparable is the persistent debate over the relation between authorial intention and the meaning of texts. Some theorists have claimed that valid interpretations can only be obtained through an appeal to authorial intentions. This assumption is shared by theorists who, denying

> the possibility of recovering authorial intentions, also deny the possibility of valid interpretations. But once it is seen that the meaning of a text is simply identical to the author's intended meaning, the project of grounding meaning in intention becomes incoherent. Since the project itself is incoherent, it can neither succeed nor fail; hence both theoretical attitudes toward intention are irrelevant. (Knapp & Michaels, 724)

The meaning and the author's intention are one and the same; they are not „identical" in the sense of one being extremely similar to the other, to the point of indistinguishability—rather, they are simply two names for the same thing. This is why it doesn't really matter whether one believes that meaning is independent (partly or totally) of the author's intention, or that meaning can be deciphered *through* the analysis of the author's intention; in both cases, one has already committed to seeing meaning and author's intention in terms of a link, or a relationship (be it a positive or a negative one) between two separate „things", and this is, Knapp and Michaels say, precisely the original sin of all theory.

But what about—we're doomed to ask if only for the fact that by now we've internalised most of theory's basic assumptions—such things as intentionless meaning, the meaning of the text itself, the meaning of the language-system, a reader's own meaning and so on? What about the common empirical observation that readers often disagree as to the fundamental meaning of the text, and in practice there is no one who could solve their arguments once and for all, no ultimate figure of interpretative authority?

Knapp and Michaels seek to explain the core of their argument through an illustrative example—an imagined everyday scenario—of the well-known „wave poem":

> Suppose that you're walking along a beach and you come upon a curious sequence of squiggles in the sand. You step back a few paces and notice that they spell out the following words:
>
> *A slumber did my spirit seal;*
> *I had no human fears:*
> *She seemed a thing that could not feel*
> *The touch of earthly years.*
>
> This would seem to be a good case of intentionless meaning: you recognize the writing as writing, you understand what the words mean, you may even identify them as constituting a rhymed poetic stanza—and all this without

knowing anything about the author and indeed without needing to connect the words to any notion of an author at all. You can do all these things without thinking of anyone's intention. But now suppose that, as you stand gazing at this pattern in the sand, a wave washes up and recedes, leaving in its wake (written below what you now realize was only the first stanza) the following words:

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

One might ask whether the question of intention still seems as irrelevant as it did seconds before. You will now, we suspect, feel compelled to explain what you have just seen. Are these marks mere accidents, produced by the mechanical operation of the waves on the sand (through some subtle and unprecedented process of erosion, percolation, etc.)? Or is the sea alive and striving to express its pantheistic faith? Or has Wordsworth, since his death, become a sort of genius of the shore who inhabits the waves and periodically inscribes on the sand his elegiac sentiments? You might go on extending the list of explanations indefinitely, but you would find, we think, that all the explanations fall into two categories. You will either be ascribing these marks to some agent capable of intentions (the living sea, the haunting Wordsworth, etc.), or you will count them as nonintentional effects of mechanical processes (erosion, percolation, etc.). But in the second case—where the marks now seem to be accidents—will they still seem to be words?

Clearly not. They will merely seem to resemble words. (Knapp & Michaels, 727-728)

This example allows Knapp and Michaels to establish a clear link between not only meaning and an (imagined, or posited) author, but between the author and the very identity of the text. In other words, the only reason why we can talk of texts and language, the only reason why we perceive text as text—or language as language—is that we posit an author behind every text, speech or utterance; and as soon as we no longer imagine an author behind them, we cease to perceive them as such:

As long as you thought the marks were poetry, you were assuming their intentional character. You had no idea who the author was, and this may have tricked you into thinking that positing an author was irrelevant to your ability

> to read the stanza. But in fact you had, without realizing it, already posited an author. It was only with the mysterious arrival of the second stanza that your tacit assumption (e.g., someone writing with a stick) was challenged and you realized that you had made one. Only now, when positing an author seems impossible, do you genuinely imagine the marks as authorless. But to deprive them of an author is to convert them into accidental likenesses of language. They are not, after all, an example of intentionless meaning; as soon as they become intentionless they become meaningless as well.
>
> The arrival of the second stanza made clear that what had seemed to be an example of intentionless language was either not intentionless or not language. The question was whether the marks counted as language; what determined the answer was a decision as to whether or not they were the product of an intentional agent. (Knapp & Michaels, 728)

From this single argument stem countless consequences, both philosophical as well as practical and political, of which at least a few seem hugely relevant in our discussion of materialism and literary criticism.

According to Michaels and Knapp, texts—including all of the fictional characters, spaces, events etc. within them; everything that constitutes their „content"—exist only as an expression of the author's intention. They are not autonomous or semi-autonomous or intersubjective, they are not „objects" in their own right; and the fact that they are being *interpreted* in various ways does not mean that they have alternative *meanings*, or that these meanings depend on the reader. In fact, the assumption that they do, although common in contemporary academia, stems from the theory's inability (or unwillingness) to distinguish between the epistemological and the ontological. Knapp and Michaels point this out perhaps most clearly in their criticism of deconstruction in *Against Theory 2*:

> In one sense the claim that intention cannot govern the scene of utterance seems to us correct. Even if, as we have argued, intention determines meaning, there can be no guarantee that the intended meaning will be understood. To say that the author cannot govern the scene of utterance is only to say that the author cannot enforce communication. A speaker or writer can always fail to communicate; misinterpretation is always possible. (Knapp & Michaels 1987, 61)

The plurality of interpretations, whose existence no one sane would try to put in doubt, does in no way imply a plurality of meanings, just like the fact that no one understands a certain text does not mean that it has no meaning. These are all essentially practical issues to do with communication—rather than ontological issues to do with the nature

of meaning. Contrary to what Derrida thought, the fact that a *single* text may have many different interpretations is actually a proof of exactly that— for if every reader was able to produce their own meaning, they would be in fact reading different texts (seeing as meaning is the only thing that lets us identify language as language).

In other words—to sum up the basic tenets of Knapp and Michaels' original argument—as soon as we recognise language as language, we posit (though not always consciously) some author, „an intentional agent," and some meaning, vague though our understanding of it may be. This doesn't necessarily mean that our interpretation is valid, or indeed that it ever *may* be entirely valid; it just means that we cannot „step outside" of our own belief that it is. Accounting for the fact that we may be wrong—questioning ourselves, confronting ourselves with new evidence, testing out various alternative hypotheses etc.—is vastly different from trying to suspend or circumvent our own beliefs through a theoretical operation. This is why, for Michaels, the issue of interpretation is one of belief. A true pragmatist understands that their knowledge on how various opinions and beliefs are shaped—e.g. that everyone, including themselves, is affected by various types of conscious and unconscious bias—does not allow them to occupy a position outside of their own particular beliefs, one from which they could *in practice see* all beliefs as essentially equal (as in, equally unfounded). The theory that reminds us that our beliefs (and our interpretations) are in principle no more or less founded than the beliefs (and interpretations) shared by other people, does in no way allow us to suspend what we believe in; the only way we can change our own beliefs is through practical means, rather than a sheer act of our theoretically—or politically—motivated will.

And such a suspension is exactly what the new materialist literary criticism would have us do. This is, after all, the essence of Levi Bryant's call to understand fictions in terms of „what they are" in addition to „what they are about," or Eileen Joy's implicit demand that we restrain ourselves from interpreting the texts we encounter in order to appreciate the weird „remainder" of the „chatter and noise." Or we could compare Knapp and Michaels' wave-poem to Cohen's toad-rock—his arbitrary privileging of the moment of surprise and uncertainty, his substitution of the epistemological (the observer's uncertainty as to whether they have in front of them a rock or a toad) for the ontological (the idea that the rock and the toad henceforth share a special bond) that stands in stark contrast to the clarity of the argument presented in *Against Theory*: that the reality neither shifts according to the ebbs and flows of our

thought, nor allows us to stand outside what we believe at any given moment. As soon as we know whether the wave-poem was a random occurrence or genuine writing—whether what we saw was a rock or a toad—there's no going back to that fleeting moment of wondrous contemplation. It's not that the reality is back to normal, it's that nothing has really happened in the first place; the lines in the sand were never truly a poem, and the toad was never truly a rock (or the other way round, obviously).

7. Huckleberry Finn, or Texts as Objects

But this is not the only way in which Michaels' criticism allows us to critically examine the basic tenets of the new materialist discourse on literature. He also reminds us of the importance of the distinction between objects and texts; between things that may be reduced to their physicality and those that base their very identity on having meaning. On the first page of *The Shape of the Signifier*, he famously discusses the curious case of the facsimile edition of Emily Dickinson's poetry:

> For the very idea of textuality depends upon the discrepancy between the text and its materiality, which is why two different copies of a book (two different material objects) may be said to be the same text. The text is understood to consist in certain crucial features (e.g., [and minimally] certain words in a certain order), and any object that reproduces those features (whatever they are thought to be) will reproduce the text. One way to criticize an edition, then, is to criticize it for failing to recognize and reproduce the crucial features, and some of Howe's criticisms of Johnson take this form. But her sense of Dickinson's poems as drawings and her commitment to the "physical immediacy" of them as objects involve a more radical critique, since insofar as the text is made identical to the "material object," it ceases to be something that could be edited and thus ceases to be a text at all. (Michaels 2004, 3)

This is why, while Michaels' stance is incompatible with the new materialist project, it still allows for a reading that pays particular attention to what the author intentionally does with the materiality of any given medium—or reading „for weirdness," we could say, as opposed to Joy's „weird reading." To paraphrase Michaels' remarks on the affective turn in literary studies: materiality matters insofar as it is supposed to matter; reading for materiality is just reading.

However, a world where all texts may be seen as objects, and vice

versa, is, according to Michaels, an essentially neoliberal one: the conflict- and ideology-based politics of class struggle have been replaced here by a non-politics of basically interchangable identities, or subject--positions, and no real challenge to the capitalist status quo is possible. But this line of argument from *The Shape of the Signifier* is well-known; what we should draw our attention to is the ease with which the new materialists convert texts into objects.

Levi Bryant, for instance, doesn't even seem to think it's necessary to provide a detailed account of a passage from object to text, or possible differences between the two; for him, the status of text as an object is self-evident: „The hypothesis of a virtual text behind or within manifest texts suggest that the text as such is independent of any of its manifestations, but also independent of its author or origin (after all, text is an object in its own right)" (Bryant 2010). Something similar happens in Eileen Joy's *You Are Here: a Manifesto*, where the analogy between a body and a text is offered as self-evident and not requiring proof: „The human body is itself a time capsule of all previous bodies, just as texts are time capsules of all previous writing, and the "junk"— whether junk-DNA or spilled ink in the margins, is always with us" (Joy 2012, 166). The example of „spilled ink" seems particularly interesting when we remember that the issue of the textual status of such „junk" is a starting point for *The Shape of the Signifier*. What Michaels points out is that things such as ink-stains can be only seen as parts of the text if we ascribe meaning to them, if we see them as intentional and not random. And indeed, in practice we tend to think of the author's manuscript and the finished copy of their book as two instances of the same *text*, even though it must be assumed that there are huge physical differences between the two, and many „junk-like" elements of the former don't ever make it into the latter.

The widespread assumption that texts are essentially objects seems to stem at least partly from the work of Graham Harman, specifically his essay *The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer: Object-Oriented Literary Criticism* (2012). As a rule of thumb, Harman—as well as many of those advocates of the object-oriented ontology who see it as a separate movement in philosophy and criticism, rather than just a part of larger spectrum associated with the „material turn"—offers a view of literature and art that's closer to Michaels' brand of intentionalism than most of the „new materialists"[3]. Harman's comments on Wimsatt and Beardsley's

3 Another example would be Timothy Morton, the author of *An Object--Oriented Defense of Poetry* (2012), who explicitly rejects any materialist label, but

notion of „intentional fallacy," for instance, seem quite close to, if less precise than, those articulated by Jennifer Ashton, another „strong" intentionalist critic associated with *Nonsite.org* (see Ashton 2011; Harman 2012, 201); and his comments on object-oriented ontology as a „countermethod" that would prevent us from „dissolving a text upward into its reading or downward into its cultural elements", and focus instead „on how it resists such dissolution," may almost seem like a fitting prelude to *Against Theory*.

Nonetheless, Harman quickly assumes that texts may be seen as essentially similar to objects (as understood within the framework of object-oriented ontology) and at no point challenges this assumption. Like Skiveren, he sees the fact that a work of literature is seemingly never fully understood as a proof of it being essentially *withdrawn* not only in relation to any particular interpretation, but meaning as such. In other words, he mistakes the epistemological for the ontological, and the impossibility of a perfect paraphrase for the lack of meaning, or, rather, for a textual „excess" that provides the text with an identity outside of its author's intention: „the autonomy and integrity of the object in no way implies the autonomy and integrity of our *access* to the object. The literary text runs deeper than any coherent meaning, and outruns the intentions of author and reader alike" (Harman 2012, 200). This is why he may compare a poem to a too— admittedly, not just any tool, but Heidegger's famous hammer:

> The object-oriented side of Brooks can be found in his hostility to paraphrase. A poem cannot be translated into literal prose statement: "All such formulations lead away from the center of the poem—not toward it." Any attempt to summarize the literal meaning of a poem inevitably becomes a long-winded effort, filled with qualifications and even metaphors, a lengthy detour that comes more and more to resemble the original poem itself. (...) The poem differs from any literal expression of its content just as Heidegger's hammer itself differs from any broken, perceived, or cognized hammer. It is not just that the poem or hammer usually acts as an unnoticed background that can then be focused on explicitly from time to time. Instead, the literal rendition of the poem is *never* the poem itself, which must exceed all interpretation in the form of a hidden surplus. (Harman 2012, 189)

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who seems to do so in relation to a specifically new materialist understanding of materialism, i.e. he assumes materialism to be simply idealism in reverse, and so opts for the term „realism" instead. The issue of the relationship between realism and materialism, important also to Graham and speculative realists in general, lies obviously outside the scope of this essay.

But this is a hasty comparison. Texts may resemble hammers in that Heidegger had presumably very limited access to both in his hut in the Black Forest, but there are important ontological differences between the two. We may use a hammer regardless of whether any part of our brain realises we're using it and whether we recognise it as a hammer—the same way a chair may be identified as a chair and used as a chair regardless of whether we know it represents a result of the carpenter's intention to actually build a chair. We can throw a rock through someone's window without paying any thought to the origins of either the rock or the window. But texts only exist as texts as long as they have a meaning, i.e., an author capable of having intentions; they don't „work" regardless of whether we recognise them for what they are, the way a hammer does. That's why they can be abstracted from any particular physical vehicle—something that hammers can't do. In the context of language, Harman's „hidden surplus" is thus nothing more than a meaning that we haven't yet understood.

But the eagerness to turn texts into objects—or objects into texts—is in no way limited to those who affiliate themselves to some extent with either speculative realism in general or Harman's object-oriented ontology in particular. Indeed, although Tobias Skiveren wants to see the focus on „recasting the materiality of the signifier as the materiality of the object" as the main criterion for differentiating between a speculative realist literary criticism and its „proper" new materialist counterpart (Skiveren 2018), the whole issue seems slightly more complicated than that, and the line dividing the two quickly becomes blurred. In *Weird Reading*, for instance, Eileen Joy starts by aligning her own position with that of speculative realism, only to then explicitly reference *Vibrant Matter* as a crucial influence: „I'm influenced by Jane Bennett's "vibrant" materialism in which objects, which could be texts, are seen to ‚act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own,' outside of human will and human design" (Joy 2013, 30). Although Bennett herself may emphasise, in her reply to Harman and Morton, the fact that texts constitute a very particular *type* of objects—that „there are also, it seems, some features of the text-body that are not shared or shared differentially by bodies that rely more heavily on smell and touch"—she seems to have no doubt that texts *are* essentially objects, or bodies: „like all bodies, these literary objects are affected by other bodies (...)" (Bennett 2012, 232). Here, the difference between speculative realists and new materialists „proper" may be of interest to those personally invested in either movement, but seen from the outside, these two seem to share many of the assumptions as to the

object-like nature of all texts.

The ease with which new materialists seem to convert objects into texts and vice versa, points to yet another contradiction within any potential project of a new materialist literary criticism —namely, its desire to preserve the notion of texts as separate entities *while* detaching them from the only thing that provides them with their separate identities, that is, meaning. When it comes to literature (and possibly art in general), new materialists like Joy and Bryant seem to want to have their ontological cookie and eat it too: deprive texts of their fixed identities, abolish the old boundaries and root fictions in the ever-undetermined flux of material life—but still inhabit a world where it's perfectly acceptable to talk about both particular texts and literature in general. Bryant, for instance, articulates this desire this in terms of „openness":

> The various strategies of humanist criticism—hermeneutic, biographical, historical, new historicist, psychoanalytic, Marxist, etc. –can all be seen as strategies for *closing* texts, for reducing the signal to noise ratio, by fixing meaning behind the entropic play of the text in its *polysemy*. What this style of criticism strives for is a crystallization of the fixation of the text. (Bryant 2011b)

We should thus strive, Bryant seems to suggest, to preserve texts *as texts*, while simultaneously leaving them „open" or „unfixed" in their "polysemy." But considering that texts exist only insofar as they are an expression of particular authorial intentions, this is obviously impossible. We can either discuss literature or indulge in an imagined textual "polysemy"—not both.

We could probably dismiss these parts of the new materialist project as a particularly outrageous case of wishful thinking, were it not for the fact that the stake is very explicitly political:

> Here I am reminded of debates surrounding "revisionist criticism" that took place in the 90s when I was still in High School. There the big scandal was that an English professor somewhere had argued that Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* was really an allegory for a socially repressed homosexual relationship between Huck and Jim. Among the humanists the sparks flew. "This could not possibly be what Twain meant! This is a travesty!" Similar things occurred with Shakespeare. Yet from the standpoint of object-oriented criticism, the question of whether Twain meant this is irrelevant. All that is relevant is that *Huckleberry Finn* has the power, the capacity, to construct or produce this sort of reading, allowing for the illumination of parallels between black oppression and homosexual oppression, allowing for us to broaden the notion of "queer" as representative of any anomalous or rogue part of a social situation that goes uncounted

> (...), allowing for the construction of heroic subjectivities such as we find in Huck and Jim (Bryant 2011b)

Of course, what this mode of criticism appreciates in practice, is not the „textual object's" autonomy—its ability to produce its own unexpected meanings—but the reader's ability to re-write the text so it fits a particular theoretical jargon, or a particular political purpose. When it comes to interpretation, there is no functional difference between interpretative constructivism/subjectivism - a belief that readers' produce meanings for the texts they read—and materialism „as literalism", i.e. one that attributes such production to the text itself. Michaels explains this in *The Shape of the Signifier*:

> The effort here has been to think through the question not only of what a text means but, even more fundamentally, fundamentally, of what the text is—of what is in it and what isn't, what counts as part of it and what doesn't—without the appeal to the author's intention. And the point is that if you do this, you find yourself committed not only to the materiality of the text but also, by way of that materiality, to the subject position of the reader. You find yourself committed to the materiality of the text because, if you don't think it matters whether the author of the text did or didn't intend the eighty-six blank pages to count as part of it, the mere fact that they are there must be dispositive. And you find yourself committed to the primacy of the subject position because the question about what's there will always turn out to be (this argument is made at length later) a question about what's there to you, a question about what you see. Once, in other words, the eighty-six pages count not because some author meant them to count but because they are there, in front of you, then everything that is there must also count—the table the pages are on, the room the table is in, the way the pages, the table, and the room make you feel. Why? Because all these things are part of your experience of the pages, and once we abjure interest in what the author intended (once we no longer care whether or not the author intended us to count the room the work of art is in as part of the work of art), we have no principled reason not to count everything that's part of our experience as part of the work.
>
> (...)
>
> So the argument, in miniature, is that if you think the intention of the author is what counts, then you don't think the subject position of the reader matters, but if you don't think the intention of the author is what counts, then the subject position of the reader will be the only thing that matters. (Michaels 2004, 10-11)

(New materialists seem to understand this functional interchange-

ability quite well; Joy's „weird reading" relies on distributing agency between the reader and the text itself, as if both operations were complimentary rather than contradictory: „the experience of narrative is also a rapprochement with a ‚persisting object' that uses humans as an activation device, a sort of on-switch. We might tentatively qualify literature as a 'quasi-object' that is neither entirely an object nor either fully a subject but is nevertheless in the world as a 'constructer of intersubjectivity'" [Joy 2012, 165]).

Bryant's example is very instructive in that it forces us to distinguish between the ostensibly progressive nature of a particular reading of *Huckleberry Finn* and the undemocratic and implicitly elitist theoretical position from which it stems and which it ultimately helps to reproduce. If *Huckleberry Finn* has no objective meaning and no fixed identity, then „the power, the capacity, to construct or produce" any reading must surely belong to the interpreter rather than the text itself. And considering that in practice we cannot escape meaning and interpretation, what really happens in Bryant's scenario is the empowerment not of the text itself, but of a particular type of reader: one who can manipulate the meaning for their own political purposes in a way that bears *some* resemblance to a valid interpretation, and also remains credible in the context of the current political hegemony (be it local or global). In other words, Bryant's vision seems to promote a type of a well-educated, possibly academic reader who's perfectly aware of what the text actually means, but has enough rhetorical skill to bend it to their particular political agenda *and* enjoys a position of authority that allows them to move within the established institutions with a certain degree of freedom. This is, obviously, nothing new—if anything, it only serves to remind that when it comes to literature, new materialists seem to frequently rely on some very post-structuralist ideas about reading, interpretation and meaning-production.

Meanwhile, accepting the basic tenets of Michaels' intentionalism doesn't solve, in and of itself, all our political problems; even if we all embraced *Against Theory* overnight, it wouldn't automatically bring in a new reality, abolish old hierarchies or introduce a new egalitarian society. Indeed, the point that Knapp and Michaels make is that no account of what interpretation is or does can ever do such a thing. We cannot circumvent our political arguments by developing a new literary theory. But Michaels' argument lays the groundwork for a critical debate that would be more inclusive, more democratic—and decisively more *political*—than the ones new materialisms have to offer: one where all sides, irrespective of their rhetorical skills, their relation to political

hegemony as well as their political support, could assert the importance of their interpretations based on a simple claim to truth. This, far from being a conservative or a reactionary proposition, is in fact a way of resisting the capitalist hegemony. In his last book, Michaels reframes this argument in terms of commodification and the art's ability to resist it:

> There are things the artist can't do. He can't determine the price at which it sells or the uses to which it's put; he can't control the effects it generates. And in an art that imagines itself to affirm matter and refuse form, both the impossibility and the irrelevance of this control are thematized, not to say celebrated. But, of course, the work of art can also have one thing that the commodity and sheer matter cannot. And that one thing— the only thing about the work of art that is not determined by its buyers, the only thing about it that belongs only to it, the only thing about it that's not reducible to the commodity it otherwise is—is its meaning. (Michaels 2015, 102-103)

Only now do we see that the allegedly egalitarian vision, offered by the new materialists in their discourse on language and literature, is based on a radical affirmation of commodity fetishism—an affirmation that serves to make invisible the very status of commodities, by ascribing to them precisely the single thing that could resist being transformed into a commodity. Theirs is a vision of a weird democracy where the line between citizens—as potential authors, able to speak their mind and argue about ideas—and commodities becomes intentionally blurred.

8. Wave-poem, or a Different Materialism

For all its declared negativity and polemic nature, Michaels' intentionalism achieves something that any new materialist literary criticism sets out to achieve, yet always seems to fail to achieve—it roots literature firmly in our shared material reality, putting all of its constituent elements on „the same ontological footing" (albeit in a way that's not necessarily satisfactory for those committed to a „story-laden reenchantment" of the world). And it does so in a way that does not exclude in advance a possibility of non-human or post-human authors or agents.

To understand this part of the argument, we must remember what Michaels and Knapp mean by the phrase „author's intention"—or, more precisely, what they *do not* mean by it. Firstly, „intention" does not mean here—and this is one of the most often misunderstood parts of the

original essay—a process that's necessarily conscious, rational etc. Secondly, „author" doesn't necessarily refer to any particular type of subjects.

> It might seem plausible to suppose that an identification of meaning with the author's intention provides theoretical support for the historian's sense of the value of such documents. While historical evidence of this kind might well be valuable, nothing in the claim that authorial intention is the necessary object of interpretation tells us that it is. In fact, nothing in the claim that authorial intention is the necessary object of interpretation tells us anything at all about what should count as evidence for determining the content of any particular intention. To think, for example, that only the poem and no other document should count as evidence of the poet's intention is just as consistent with the thesis that intention is necessary. Recognizing the inescapability of intention doesn't tell us which documents, if any, are the important ones. One could believe that all poetry in every language and every age was written by a universal muse and that therefore no information about any other person could be of any possible interpretive interest—and this too would not be incompatible with the necessity of intention. (Knapp & Michaels 1983, 796)

> In our view, the object of all reading is always the historical author's intention, even if the historical author is the universal muse. That's why we don't think it makes sense to choose historical intention—and why we don't think it's possible to choose any other kind of intention. (Knapp & Michaels 1983, 798)

There is nothing in *Against Theory* itself that would preclude us from asking whether animals (or robots, or corporations) are subjects capable of intentions. And whereas we can deduce Michaels' opinion on many of these issues from his other writings, *Against Theory* has something crucial to say about the very way in which we should approach the issues of non-human authorship. Tempting as it may be, there's no point in trying to answer these questions within the framework of literary theory (by referring to an account of meaning and interpretation); they need to be seen for what they are, as questions about subjects and subjectivity rather than texts and textuality.

The best example of how this approach works in practice may be Michaels' comments on psychoanalysis and the unconscious from *Gold Standard*:

> The discovery of the unconscious thus problematizes agency only to extend it, finding actions where only accidents had been. (Michaels 1987, 222)

> And here we find ourselves at the site of a certain rapprochement between the compulsion to gamble and the Freudian compulsion not to let chance count as chance: the effect of both is to make actions interesting by making them at least temporarily indeterminate. Freud (like Lawrence Selden) does this by extending the range of actions, transforming „slips" into the expression of unknown intentions. (Michaels 1987, 236)

The discovery of the unconscious transforms not our account of meaning (by substituting intentions for something else), but our knowledge of who the authors may be. Or, to put it in slightly blunt terms, psychoanalysis tells us that the unconscious is also capable of intentions. The range of possible authors is thus „extended" to include a larger part of our psyche.

Within the framework offered by Michaels, defending the idea of „storied matter" requires that its advocates point out specific intentional agents behind its "stories." In other words, you cannot simply wish post-humanist literature into being: you need to find post-human authors first. If, for instance, one proposes that we treat global pollution as a story (Iovino & Oppermann 2014, 8), one needs to prove that it indeed *is* a story—i.e. that it serves as a means of expression of an intention of a particular author—and not simply that it *could be seen* as a story if we took it out of the really existing context. If someone remains convinced that „the natural world is perfused with signs, meanings, and purposes which are material and which evolve" (Iovino & Oppermann 2014, 4), they need to point out who put those signs and meanings there—instead of pointing out that under certain circumstances, for a fleeting moment it *might seem as if* someone put them there. This both limits and liberates a potential discussion on non-human authors. What Michaels' criticism offers is a simple rejection of all attempts at solving the crucial issues of subjectivity and agency on the grounds of literary or cultural theory—we need to approach them in practice, using our common sense and practical everyday knowledge, as well as all the relevant tools from various research fields and disciplines; we cannot simply theorise these issues away. Reading the natural world *as if it had meaning* does not answer any of the important questions to do with non-human agency; treating the world around us *as if it was* story-laden says nothing about the forms of agency present in the natural world (or in things). No author has any more claim to „materiality" than any other; all texts are material, in that they express real intentions of existing authors; meanings exist independent of our interpretations—this is the literature's shared ontological footing that the new materialists have been looking for.

It's worth noting that although Michaels is a committed socialist—and a class-struggle socialist, rather than a ninety-nine-percenter, at that—he is, strictly speaking, no Marxist; he comes from a different, Anglo-American tradition of political radicalism and philosophical pragmatism. But his understanding of language nonetheless echoes the well--known remarks from *The German Ideology* on the social nature of all language:

> Language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men. Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me (Engels & Marx 1974, 51)

There is obviously a lot to unpack in this quote, and a detailed interpretation would require that we elaborate on the notions of consciousness, practice, and necessity, as they appear in Marx. But we don't need to go into detail in order to point out obvious similarities to Michaels' understanding of language and literature: that they exist only as a result of our need to communicate, always concrete, always already entangled in the web of social relations, and never as something to be observed from the outside.

9. Ending, or the Fight Continues

The issue of materialism—the very term materialism—is conspicuously absent from most of Michaels' writing. Where it appears, it is usually in the sense that's much closer to new materialisms than historical materialism: in *Our America*, Michaels comments on the „materialism" of William Carlos Williams' poetic, „its commitment to the idea that the poem's identity consists in its material features" (Michaels 1995, 83); in *The Shape of the Signifier*, it's Paul de Man, Michaels' arch-enemy, who earns the name of a materialist (Michaels 2004, 9). But in *The Beauty of a Social Problem*, we can see a subtle shift—Michaels still uses the term „materialism" to refer to what Eagleton would call its „postmodern" version, but now the exact term is „materialism-as-literalism", as if Michaels realised that the materialist label should not be conceded to his opponents that easily.

Of course, one shouldn't overestimate the importance of such largely academic labels; it could be even said that to approach criticism from a materialist perspective means exactly that— remembering that some

if not most things do not change simply because we put a certain label on them. Rather, what is interesting is precisely the reason for how two very different approaches to criticism may co-exist under the same name: in other words, how superficial similarities, reinforced by vague allusions to common sense or a certain political sensitivity, may be used to cover up more substantial differences to try and turn old enemies into very uneasy allies. As far as the specific issue of materialism is considered, this scenario is particularly interesting in the context of contemporary literary studies. Here, as I have tried to show, the materialist label is being used today to reproduce and reinforce the original sin of theory with all its political consequences, to push for an ever more „reenchanted" and alienating image of literature, art and reality, and to force categories such as meaning and interpretation even further into the background of the academic mainstream. The same label, however, may be of use in our efforts to resist, oppose and criticise this very process through the work of „demystification and de-idealisation." There is still much to fight for, and we should allow neither jumping rocks nor quantum physics to convince us otherwise.

Rather, what is interesting is precisely the reason for how two very different approaches to criticism may co-exist under the same name: in other words, how superficial similarities, reinforced by vague allusions to common sense or a certain political sensitivity, may be used to cover up more substantial differences to try and turn old enemies into very uneasy allies. As far as the specific issue of materialism is considered, this scenario is particularly interesting in the context of contemporary literary studies.

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Tytuł: Materializm jako intencjonalizm. O możliwości „nowomaterialistycznej" krytyki literackiej

Abstrakt: W artykule opieram się na pracach autorek i autorów związanych z tzw. „nowymi materializmami"/zwrotem materialistycznym, by odłowić z nich i porównać różne sposoby myślenia o „nowomaterialistycznej" krytyce literackiej/teorii literatury. Zestawiam następnie te projekty z bardziej tradycyjną perspektywą historyczno-materialistyczną - proponowaną choćby przez Fredrica Jamesona - żeby wskazać pewne zasadnicze różnice między takim podejściem do krytyki, które skupia się na tym, co w tekście rzekomo „prawdziwie" materialne, a krytyką podkreślającą zamiast tego materialny wymiar dzieła literackiego w ogóle (na każdym jego poziomie). Znana, często omawiana marksistowska opozycja między bazą i nadbudową pozwala wskazać jak owe dwa podejścia, pozornie zbieżne czy podobne, mogą w rzeczywistości reprezentować bardzo różne, sprzeczne wręcz szkoły myślenia i krytyki.

Moim celem nie jest przy tym krytykowanie nowych materialistów za nieumiejętność podtrzymania jakichś marksistowskich domgatów - chce raczej wskazać, że nominalne przywiązanie do materialności tekstu, połączone z pragnieniem stworzenia nowej metody lekturowej, prowadzić może do ustanowienia takiej perspektywy, która nawet na własnych zasadach nie jest w żaden sposób „materialistyczna".

Opierając się na uwagach Fredrica Jamesona o krytyce materialistycznej jako pracy „demistyfikacji i deidealizacji" raczej niż „pozytywnej" metodzie, przywołuję następnie prace Waltera Benna Michaelsa - jego projekt wydaje mi się przykładem takiej „negatywnej" krytyki materialistycznej, która, zamiast dostarczać nam nowych sposobów „uprawiania" interpretacji, pozwala raczej zwalczać przejawy idealizmu w myśleniu o literaturze.

Słowa kluczowe: materializm, idealizm, intencjonalizm, marksizm, krytyka literacka, baza, nadbudowa

Varia

IZABELA BRYJA

Obcy Albert Camus? Przechwycenie jako postkolonialna strategia pisania na przykładzie *Sprawy Meursaulta* Kamela Daouda

W oparciu o literaturę poświęconą kategorii przechwycenia autorka przeprowadza komparatystyczną analizę *Sprawy Meursaulta* Kamela Daouda oraz dzieł Alberta Camusa (zwłaszcza *Obcego* i *Upadku*). Teoria przechwycenia zrekonstruowana na podstawie pism Guy Deborda, Jacquesa Derridy oraz Judith Butler staje się podstawą dla interpretacji literatury postkolonialnej. Celem artykułu jest wskazanie przechwycenia jako jednej z postkolonialnych strategii tworzenia narracji. Według autorki jej istotą jest renegocjacja struktury kanonu i miejsca twórców wyłączonych – ze względu na ekonomiczne, polityczne i kulturowe uwarunkowania – z pełnego udziału w jego współtworzeniu. W pierwszej części artykułu autorka przedstawia podstawowe wyróżniki przechwycenia oraz struktury kanonu literackiego sformułowanej przez Davida Damroscha. Dalej przeanalizowane zostały dwie dialogujące ze sobą narracje literackie. Porównanie usankcjonowanej w kanonie opowieści o morderstwie i procesie Meursaulta Camusa oraz *Sprawy Meursaulta* Daouda ujawnia ścisłe związki między dwiema powieściami. W opowieści Daouda odwrócona została narracja o wydarzeniach – w książce dominuje perspektywa ofiary, której wyrazicielem

jest brat zabitego przez Meursaulta bezimiennego Araba. Przeprowadzona analiza prowadzi do wniosku, że przechwycenie utworu kanonicznego i jego rekontekstualizacja jest bardziej rewolucyjnym gestem pisarzy postkolonialnych, pragnących wynegocjować własne miejsce w obrębie kanonu, niż natywistyczne, utopijne odtwarzanie przedkolonialnej przeszłości. Wybór tej strategii pisania świadczy o autorskiej świadomości dwojakiego rodzaju: każda literatura jest iterowalna, a każda rewolucja jest tylko pozornym zerwaniem.

Słowa kluczowe: postkolonializm, przechwycenie, Kamel Daoud, kanon, Albert Camus.

Projekt rewolucyjnego gestu zerwania z kolonialnym doświadczeniem jest utopijny. Każda próba negocjacji z doznaniem przemocy wymusza powtórzenie zanegowanych form. Bunt i opór z konieczności powielają wpisane w struktury władzy pojęcia, wobec których się sprzeciwiają oraz przejmują te same słowa, wobec których się odwracają. Język, za pomocą którego stygmatyzuje się dyskursywne sposoby uprawomocniania przemocy, w myśl koncepcji „walczących słów" Judith Butler, nosi w sobie równocześnie krytyczny potencjał performatywności, pozwalający wprawić w ruch proces resygnifikacji, niemający początku i końca. Doświadczenie nie zostaje usunięte, ale przeobrażone. Butler pisze więc, że „słowa można cytować na przekór ich pierwotnym intencjom i skutecznie odwracać ich skutki" (Butler 2010, 23) oraz „niepodobna oczyścić język z jego traumatycznej resztki, nie sposób przepracować traumy inaczej niż poprzez żmudny wysiłek związany z kierowaniem biegiem jej powtórzeń" (Butler 2010, 50).

Strategia przepisywania kanonicznych dla literatury zachodnioeuropejskiej utworów stanowi chętnie podejmowaną przez twórców postkolonialnych próbę polemiki zarówno z samym kanonem oraz partykularnymi sposobami reprezentacji ludności natywnej, jak i z formami językowymi, które wytwarzają i podkreślają istnienie różnicy między skolonizowanymi a kolonizatorami, czy sposobami wprowadzenia dystansu między centrum a peryferiami. Przechwycenie cudzego języka i opowieści daje możliwość negocjacji własnego miejsca w ogólnoświatowej wymianie kulturowej zdeterminowanej przez kapitalizm. Każde przechwycenie – postkolonialne, feministyczne, estetyczne, formalne – jest działaniem wytwarzającym tożsamość, ponieważ podważa istniejącą władzę języka i pozwala jej znaczyć w nowej konfiguracji. Dla zaangażowanych teorii szczególnie ważne są próby zmiany rzeczywistości, układów społecznych i tożsamości (kobiety, dziecka, osoby nieheteronormatywnej, skolonizowanego, kolonizatora), a także ilościowych stosunków produkcji literackiej i kulturowej w ogóle. Stawka w przypadku przechwycenia kolonialnych wzorców jest wysoka, ponieważ – zgodnie z optyką Butler – akt mowy pozwala przepracować traumatyczne doświadczenia (Butler 2010, 52). Terapeutyczna właściwość pisarstwa polegałaby na zmienianiu sposobów odniesienia do pozostałości po kolonizatorze i budowaniu pozytywnych projektów tożsamościowych. Nie sugeruję, że kontekst pisarstwa postkolonialnego sprawia, że strategia literackiego przechwycenia funkcjonuje na zupełnie zmienionych warunkach, a inne sposoby pisania nie mogą negocjować władzy języka poprzez przejęcie cudzej mowy, ale – być może – każde pisarstwo, które podejmuje próbę podważenia relacji centrum – peryferia, włączenie

Każde przechwycenie – postkolonialne, feministyczne, estetyczne, formalne – jest działaniem wytwarzającym tożsamość, ponieważ podważa istniejącą władzę języka i pozwala jej znaczyć w nowej konfiguracji.

– wyłączenie, oryginał – kopia, lepsze – gorsze, znane – obce poprzez przechwycenie, przejmuje potencjał postkolonialny. Aby przywołać kilka przykładów najczęściej komentowanych literackich przechwyceń: John Maxwell Coetzee w powieści *Foe* przetworzył *Przypadki Robinsona Crusoe* Daniela Defoe, Aimé Césaire *Burzę* Williama Szekspira w *Une Tempête*, Kamel Daoud Obcego Alberta Camusa w *Sprawie Meursaulta*.

Przechwycenie jako forma negocjacji władzy

Stosunek między źródłem przechwycenia a samym przechwyceniem nie daje się w prosty sposób sproblematyzować. Nazwanie dzieła dialogującego z kanonem odpowiedzią na niego wprowadza je w hierarchiczną zależność, w której pozycja tekstu kanonicznego tylko się umacnia, ponieważ jako centrum staje się punktem wyjścia dla jakiejkolwiek narracji. Miejsce tekstu odpowiadającego podkreśla istnienie imperialistycznego, dominującego dyskursu, wobec którego dany utwór jest peryferyjny (Thieme 2001, 12). Relacje dwóch dzieł można zamiast dialogicznością charakteryzować raczej mnogością współwystępujących procesów. Natalia Palich proponuje dwa sposoby działania tej intertekstualnej relacji: „poziomu nieprawidłowych znaczących tekstu pierwotnego oraz zmiany optyki przyjętej przy podejmowanych w nim rozważaniach" (Palich 2012, 24). Przepisywanie kanonu może być według badaczki rodzajem rewizji bądź też zmiany perspektywy. Gesty przechwycenia mogą cechować się większym potencjałem performatywnym wobec tekstu pierwotnego niż dialogiczna odpowiedź. Przyjmują formy od negacji i oporu, przez różnicowanie i próbę poszerzenia centrum, aż po interpretacje tekstu źródłowego, (przy czym każda z wymienionych relacji dokonuje się w zasadzie za sprawą interpretacji).

Problem przechwytywania utworów (fr. *détournement*) sytuuje się w kontekście wielopoziomowej intertekstualności kultury i plagiatu, który wedle Guy Deborda stanowi naturalną konsekwencję postępu (Debord 2006, 137). Razem z Gilem J. Wolmanem wyróżnił on dwie podstawowe formy przechwyceń, których sens budowany jest w odniesieniu do nowego kontekstu dla przejętego elementu: przechwytywanie „pomniejsze" i „zwodnicze" (Debord 2010, 319). Pierwsze z nich polega na przejęciu elementu o samodzielnie niewielkim znaczeniu, drugie zaś stanowi zawłaszczenie elementu o większym znaczeniu i – za sprawą jego rekontekstualizacji – prowadzi do zmiany jego funkcji. Jak zauważają autorzy *Przechwytywania – instrukcji obsługi* obie kategorie w dłuższych utworach mogą się wzajemnie przeplatać. Ostatecznym celem dla sytu-

acjonistów staje się możliwość konstruowania samej sytuacji: „każdy będzie mógł swobodnie przechwytywać całe sytuacje poprzez zamierzone wprowadzanie zmian w determinujących je warunkach" (Debord 2010, 325). Autor *Społeczeństwa spektaklu* definiuje przechwycenie, wskazując na unieruchomienie cytatu poprzez jego alienację, wyjście poza obręb czasowych i przestrzennych relacji, w których uprzednio funkcjonował (a więc ahistoryczność) oraz antyideologiczny potencjał:

> Przechwytywanie to przeciwieństwo cytowania, powoływania się na teoretyczny autorytet, który ulega nieuchronnie zafałszowaniu z chwilą, gdy przekształca się w cytat: fragment wyrwany z kontekstu, unieruchomiony, oddzielony od swojej epoki – globalnego układu odniesienia – i od konkretnego stanowiska, trafnego lub błędnego, jakie zajmował względem tego odniesienia. Przechwytywanie jest płynnym językiem antyideologii. Przejawia się w komunikacji świadomej tego, że sama w sobie nie zawiera żadnej gwarancji, zwłaszcza ostatecznej. Przechwytywanie jest właśnie tym językiem, którego nie można potwierdzić przez odwołanie się do dawnych czy metakrytycznych twierdzeń. Przeciwnie, to jego wewnętrzna spójność i praktyczna skuteczność pozwalają wyłuskać jądro prawdy zawarte w dawnych twierdzeniach. Przechwytywanie opiera się tylko na własnej prawdzie jako krytyce teraźniejszej (Debord 2006, 138).

Debord zauważa, że przechwycenie zawsze oznacza akt przemocy na tekście wyjściowym, ponieważ obala jego porządek, podważa ontologiczną strukturę. Wyrwanie wypowiedzi z kontekstu jest równoznaczne z zafałszowaniem jej znaczeń. Jako takie zawsze prowadzi do resygnifikacji.

Resygnifikację jako immanentną właściwość każdej nowo powstałej wypowiedzi opisywał Jacques Derrida. W *Sygnaturze, zdarzeniu, kontekście* wskazuje na iterowalność – rozumianą jako nieusuwalną powtarzalność, cytatowość oraz istnienie kontekstów, które nie posiadają żadnego zakotwiczenia – jako warunek „normalnego" funkcjonowania tekstu (Derrida 2002, 399). Iterowalność pozwala na nieograniczone narastanie znaków: „każdy znak (…) może zostać *zacytowany* (wyróżnienie J.D.), umieszczony w cudzysłowie; tym samym może oderwać się od każdego kontekstu, który jest już dany, bez końca tworzyć nowe konteksty niemożliwe do wypełnienia" (Derrida 2002, 392). Iterowalność nie jest anormalnym stanem języka ani jego nieproduktywnym powtórzeniem, tylko samym warunkiem jego czytelności. Powtarzalność sprawia, że możliwe jest istnienie tekstu „pod absolutną nieobecność odbiorcy i wszelkich odbiorców" (Derrida 2002, 385) określanych empirycznie. Analogicznie, zniknięcie autora według Derridy nie sprawia, że zanika możliwość odczytania jego tekstów-znamion oraz ich iterowania. Jak

uważa autor *Marginesów filozofii* nie ma takiego utworu, który można by nazwać nieiterowalnym.

Wypowiedź performatywna przeciwstawia się dominującemu dyskursowi i może stać się sposobem na podważenie, a równocześnie uzyskanie władzy. Dimitar Vatsov[1] zauważa, że:

> władza performatywu tkwi w jego mocy ponownego wartościowania i zmiany tych pozycji, które powtarza i w których został już wcześniej umieszczony. Na poziomie podstawowym – mikropoziomie konkretnego działania – władza i ponowne wartościowanie są tym samym (Vatsov 2015, 233).

(Mikro)władza polega na zdolności wprowadzenia znaku w obręb nowej semantyki, czyli subwersywnego gestu oporu wobec dominujących, monolitycznych systemów. Vatsov stawia pytania o moc sprawczą podmiotów posługujących się performatywami. Dostrzega zdolność do wykroczenia poza mówienie o performatywie za pomocą kategorii subwersywności i oporu (czego najbardziej charakterystyczną formą są ironiczne i parodystyczne użycia języka) oraz jego potencjał jako suwerennego aktu ustanawiania rzeczywistości (Vatsov 2015, 235). Wylicza zastrzeżenia, jakie wiążą się z przyjęciem takiej perspektywy (jak konieczność pragmatycznego rozumienia pojęcia suwerenności czy wyjście poza metafizyczny naddatek znaczeń), ale zaznacza, że sama sprawczość działania wpisana w performatyw może być podstawą do traktowania go jako gestu suwerennego przekształcania stanu rzeczy.

Tekst przechwytujący kanoniczne dzieło odsłania własne źródła, wskazuje na kontekst i z tym kontekstem świadomie się związuje (w ramach niejednoznacznych relacji). Na poziomie formalnym powieści przepisujące kanoniczne narracje w wyrazisty sposób wskazują na przechwycony utwór. Ostatecznie jednak dochodzi do wytworzenia tego, co Derrida określa nowym kontekstem. Niemożliwość wyrugowania kontekstu znaku stanowi podstawę koncepcji pisarstwa Rolanda Barthesa – podkreśla on, że artysta jest wolny jedynie w momencie dokonywania wyboru spośród historycznego arsenału użyć języka i form literackich. Tworzenie – nawet w najbardziej rewolucyjnych i awangardowych odsłonach – „pozostaje jeszcze pełne wspomnień swoich uprzednich zastosowań" (Barthes 2009, 24). Autor *Przyjemności tekstu* uważa, że „słowa

1 Vatsov przytacza refleksje Butler na temat mikrowładzy, rozproszonej między performatywami i prezentowanej opozycyjnie względem makrowładzy (instytucji, państwa, prawa). Badacz przyrównuje je do Derridiańskiego ujęcia iterowalności i performatywu. W efekcie dociera do własnego stanowiska: zdolność do przechwycenia, podważenia zastanych struktur oznacza już uzyskanie władzy.

mają drugą pamięć, która w tajemniczy sposób trwa pośród nowych znaczeń" (Barthes 2009, 24). I chociaż mechanizmy działania owej pamięci języka działają według Barthesa jako niemalże mistyczne aksjomaty, oznaczają nieusuwalne trwanie historycznych znaczeń i użyć znaków. Pamięć znaku i jego nowe zastosowanie wchodzą w dialog, którego wynikiem może być negocjacja monolitycznych pojęć kanonu.

Pozycje zajmowane przez pisarki i pisarzy, konkretne utwory literackie w obrębie kanonu, czy sposoby jego formowania, a także sama struktura kanonu są negocjowalne. David Damrosch uważa, że w wyniku postkolonialnych przesunięć w obrębie dyskursu, można ukazać kanon jako trójpoziomową strukturę[2]. Składają się na niego: (1) *hiperkanon*, który jest miejscem dla uznanych, wielkich pisarzy, na stałe znajdujących miejsce w recepcji i nowych omówieniach interpretacyjnych (jak James Joyce, Marcel Proust, William Wordsworth), (2) *antykanon*, czyli grono twórców, którzy nie tworzą w znanych powszechnie językach, kontestują twórców kanonicznych lub sytuują się w obrębie zmarginalizowanej produkcji literackiej danego języka/narodu oraz (3) *kanon cieni* – usuniętych w cień pisarzy (jak Henry Hazlitt, John Galsworthy), zajmujących wcześniej pozycję w ramach *antykanonu* (Damrosch 2010, 370–371). Pozornie może się wydawać, że rozszerzenie struktury kanonu, którą kiedyś można było opisać poprzez dwa poziomy („wielkich" autorów i „pomniejszych" twórców) świadczy o jego demokratyzacji. Okazuje się jednak (co ujawnia chociażby statystyczna analiza Damroscha oparta na indeksie cytowań, zob. Damrosch 2010, 372), że – paradoksalnie – rola „wielkich" autorów została wzmocniona, a twórców „pomniejszych" zmarginalizowana. Klasykom literatury poświęca się zwłaszcza nowe omówienia feministyczne, queerowe, postkolonialne, genderowe, psychoanalityczne, czy nowomaterialistyczne, które rewidują dotychczasowe odczytania. Omawiany problem przepisywania utworu usytuowanego w ramach kanonu jest więc, zgodnie z terminologią zaproponowaną przez Damroscha, rewizją hiperkanonu poprzez antykanoniczne dzieła.

Rewizja ta, chociaż może się wydawać formą mało nowatorską i sil-

2 Rozważania nad kanonem Damrosch rozpoczyna od przywołania *Northon Anthology of World Masterpieces*, czyli antologii literatury światowej wydanej w 1956 roku (Damrosch 2010, 367). Składają się na nią dzieła siedemdziesięciu trzech autorów, wśród których nie ma ani jednej kobiety czy też twórcy spoza kulturalnego centrum (Europy, Ameryki Północnej, starożytnej Jerozolimy). Proces poszerzania recepcji o wykluczonych spoza refleksji historycznoliterackiej pisarki i pisarzy trwał kolejnych kilka dekad (co obrazują kolejne wydania omawianej antologii), lecz dysproporcja nie została zniesiona, a jedynie zmniejszona.

nie uwikłaną w intertekstualne relacje z kanonicznymi utworami, pozwala wytwarzać nowe znaczenia i resygnifikować znaczenia zastałe. Nie stanowi więc jedynie odpowiedzi na narracje kanoniczne. Całkowitą negację pozostałości po kolonizatorze w okresie dekolonizacji (zwłaszcza dokonywanej przez rewolucję) można utożsamić z literacką strategią natywizmu. Jak ukazała historia i teoria literatury postkolonialnej, natywistyczne próby dotarcia do tradycji przedkolonialnych społeczeństw okazały się projektem w dużej mierze etnograficznym a nie tożsamościowotwórczym. Utopijność oddzielenia historii przed- i pokolonialnej podważała zasadność całkowitej negacji traumatycznego doświadczenia. Natywistyczna produkcja kulturowa pozostawała też najczęściej poza światowym obiegiem i nie wytwarzała performatywnego potencjału. Stąd utwory literackie o subwersywnym charakterze, pozornie mniej niezależne, poprzez odwrócenie porządku opowieści, wprowadzają nowy punkt widzenia.

Odwrócenie porządku opowieści

Sprawa Mersaulta (oryg. *Meursault, contre-enquête*, tj, 'Meursault, kontrdochodzenie') Daouda to jedna z najbardziej wyrazistych reprezentacji literackiej strategii przepisywania. Narrator powieści Harun opowiada o własnym życiu podporządkowanym morderstwu Meursaulta nieznanemu z imienia słuchaczowi, który na podstawie zebranych informacji chce napisać rozprawę doktorską. Literackie fikcje i przechwycenia zyskują w powieści status jednej z możliwych narracji o prawdziwych wydarzeniach, narracji w której zapomina się imię ofiary, a zbrodniarz zyskuje nieśmiertelność. Centrum opowieści stanowi próba rekonstrukcji śmierci brata Haruna – Musy – który został w powieści Camusa nazwany „Arabem", pozbawiony imienia i pochodzenia. Harun prowadzi wespół z matką prywatne dochodzenie, aby odnaleźć mordercę, ciało bliskiego, i plażę, na której pozbawiono go życia. Obsesyjne próby przywrócenia tożsamości bratu, ciążenie ku tajemnicy śmierci i absurdowi istnienia oraz obserwacja matczynej, perwersyjnej przyjemności rozpamiętywania żałoby sprawiają, że Harun nie potrafi uwolnić się od figury zamordowanego brata, dopóki sam w symbolicznym akcie zbrodni nie uśmierci przypadkowej ofiary – Francuza chroniącego się na przydomowym podwórzu w trakcie dekolonizacji Algierii.

W debiutanckiej powieści, nagrodzonej Prix des Cinq Continents oraz Nagrodą Goncourtów, algierski prozaik i dziennikarz podstawą przechwycenia czyni *Obcego* Camusa, chociaż można dostrzec także

elementy przejęte z innych dzieł Noblisty – strukturę narracyjną spowiedzi[3] (*Upadek*), przepełniony pogardą i obrzydzeniem opis Oranu jako poczwary, inferna[4] (*Dżuma*) oraz zarys egzystencjalistycznej postawy bohatera[5] (*Mit Syzyfa*). Intertekstualność budowana jest także w odniesieniu do mitycznych opowieści, szczególnie tych wywodzących się z religijnych narracji islamu oraz chrześcijaństwa.

Przypowieść o Kainie i Ablu staje się dla Haruna fundamentalną

3 Na bliskość *Sprawy Meursaulta* i *Upadku* wskazywali Maciej Kałuża i Ron Srigley, podkreślając recepcyjną nieobecność związków tych dwóch powieści (Kałuża 2018, 55). Srigley wskazywał, że narracja budowana przez Haruna jest paralelna do opowieści Jeana-Baptiste'a Clamenca: jest rodzajem spowiedzi, wyznania czynionego w stronę bezimiennego słuchacza w barze. Sam autor *Sprawy Meursaulta* wskazywał na związki własnej powieści z *Upadkiem*, które manifestują się głównie poprzez religijną tematykę dzieła (Daoud 2016, 128). Religia jest u Daouda strukturą ograniczającą, której nasilenie w muzułmańskiej społeczności doprowadza do aktów niezrozumienia i krytyki, zamknięcia na tajemnicę świata (jako że religia proponuje już gotową wizję, za którą można walczyć), ograniczenia wolności (w powieści jej znakiem są zwłaszcza głośne i żarliwe modlitwy wykrzykiwane przez sąsiada oraz brak wolności i świadomości własnego ciała kobiet, które uczone są własną cielesność traktować jako grzech).

4 Opisy budzącego odrazę miasta nawracają w powieści stanowiąc swego rodzaju refren. Harun nie odtwarza topografii Oranu, ale często powraca do obrazów miasta, które epatują metaforyką cielesności i seksualności (miasto rozkłada nogi ku morzu i jest symbolem płodności rozumianej jako forma rozwiązłości bardziej niż produktywności), przeludnienia i zamknięcia w przestrzeni (Oran jako więzienie między górami a morzem) oraz metaforyki infernalnej (dzielnice miasta zostają przedstawione jako kolejne piekielne kręgi). Najbardziej przepełniony obrzydzeniem i nienawiścią jest opis Oranu w kończącym powieść monologu Haruna: „wydawało mi się, że groteskowa stolica, która wywala na wierzch swoje bebechy, jest najgorszą zniewagą dla tej nieukaranej zbrodni. Miliony Meursaultów piętrzących się na sobie, zamkniętych między brudną plażą a górą, otumanionych zbrodnią i snem, szturchających się nawzajem z braku miejsca. Boże, jak ja nienawidzę tego miasta, tych okropnych odgłosów przeżuwania, zapachów zepsutych warzyw i zjełczałej oliwy! Ono ma nie zatokę, lecz szczękę." (Daoud 2015, 148–149).

5 Problemy tożsamościowe Haruna wynikają przede wszystkim z niemożności uwolnienia się od historii brata, oddzielenia własnej egzystencji od rytuału żałoby. Podczas jednej z wizyt na cmentarzu Al-Kattar, podczas której razem z matką odwiedzali pusty grób Musy, niespełna dziesięcioletni narrator relacjonuje swoje przywrócenie życiu: „to tam obudziłem się do życia, wierz mi. Tam zrozumiałem, że mam prawo rozbłysnąć w świecie własnym płomieniem – tak, że mam prawo! – mimo mojej absurdalnej sytuacji, która polegała na tym, że musiałem pchać trupa na szczyt góry, zanim znów stoczy się w dół, i tak bez końca" (Daoud 2015, 56–57). Kamieniem wytaczanym przez Haruna na szczyt góry jest trup własnego brata, co – pomimo absurdalności sytuacji albo właśnie dzięki tej absurdalności – staje się podstawą do buntu.

narracją o zbrodni, rodzajem praźródła, w którym zbrodnia jest rozumiana jako akt nieuzasadnionej przemocy. W jej semantyce rudymentarną rolę odgrywa ustanowienie dwóch archetypicznych ról związanych z morderstwem – zabójcy oraz ofiary – uosabiających napięcie między władzą, siłą a uległością. Kain jest Mersaultem, a Meursault w powieści Daouda jest wyraźnie wskazanym *pars pro toto* wszystkich kolonizatorów (Daoud 2015, 43). Mit założycielski dla przemocy, za który uznana zostaje starotestamentowa przypowieść, przejmowany jest przez kolejne utwory literackie, w których kluczowa staje się kwestia relacji międzyludzkich oraz człowieczeństwa (Daoud 2016, 131). Algierczyk wskazuje na związki biblijnej opowieści o zbrodni z *Przypadkami Robinsona Crusoe* Daniela Defoe: „wydaje mi się, że mit Kaina i Abla to to samo, co Robinson i Piętaszek. Jest to mit fundamentalny: co zrobić z drugim człowiekiem? Pogrzebać go, zabić, nawrócić, ucywilizować?" (Daoud 2016, 132).

Meursault dokonuje podwójnego gestu negacji względem Musy – pierwszym jest pozbawienie życia, oddanie śmiertelnych strzałów na oblanej słońcem plaży, a drugim pozbawienie imienia, gest dyskursywnej przemocy. Język staje się polem umacniającym hierarchiczną zależność, a równocześnie potencjalnym nośnikiem rewolucyjnej możliwości.

Wiele nawiązań do *Przypadków…* można znaleźć także w debiucie Daouda. Jednym z najważniejszych jest możność nazywania i narzucania języka Piętaszkowi rozumiana jako wyraz cywilizacyjnej dominacji Robinsona nad dzikim. Harun zauważa, że zamiast Arabem Meursault powinien był nazwać zamordowanego mężczyznę Czternastkiem, ponieważ to o tej godzinie zastrzelił Musę (Daoud 2015, 11). Nadanie nazwy jest oznaką władzy, która potrafi powołać do istnienia, a równocześnie odebrać prawo do bycia[6], jak w *Obcym*: „kolonizator od wieków rozszerza swój stan posiadania, nadając nazwy temu, co sobie przywłaszcza, i odbierając je temu, co staje mu na przeszkodzie. Jeśli nazywa mojego brata Arabem, to aby go zabić" (Daoud 2015, 21). Meursault dokonuje podwójnego gestu negacji względem Musy – pierwszym jest pozbawienie życia, oddanie śmiertelnych strzałów na oblanej słońcem plaży, a drugim pozbawienie imienia, gest dyskursywnej przemocy. Język staje się polem umacniającym hierarchiczną zależność, a równocześnie potencjalnym nośnikiem rewolucyjnej możliwości.

Harun uczy się języka francuskiego „by opowiadać zamiast zmarłego"

6 Judith Butler zauważa, że proces nazywania może stać się opresywnie umocowanym aktem przeżywania, nadawania imienia niechcianego, jednakże, jak podkreśla badaczka, każdy akt nazywania odbywa się niezależnie od przedmiotu nazywania. Podmiot czynności nadającej bytowi kształt musi wcześniej sam zostać nazwany. Proces nazywania daje się więc oglądać jako nieustanny cykl nadawania mocy ustanawiania nazwy, poszerzania pola władzy. Butler uważa więc, że „każde wezwanie powołuje go (podmiot – IB) do bycia, lecz także cieszy się władzą, która ma swe źródła w strukturze wezwania, obdarzającego zarazem podatnością na zranienie i językową sprawczością" (Butler 2010, 41).

(Daoud 2015, 10) oraz uciec od przytłaczającej go mowy matki, opartej na zmyśleniach, powtórzeniach, improwizacji i patosie do możliwości wyrażania siebie w języku. Mimo że francuszczyzna jest językiem kolonizatora, daje Harunowi możliwość, aby „nazywać rzeczy i porządkować świat za pomocą własnych słów" (Daoud 2015, 47). Język jest nie tylko opresyjną strukturą, która sankcjonuje ustanawiane i manifestowane formy władzy, lecz także lekko uchyloną furtą, za którą możliwe jest resygnifikowanie uprzednich znaczeń, przechwycenie i opór. Hamza Karam Ally zauważa, że przepisanie *Obcego* koncentruje się na przywracaniu do życia – a więc bycia w języku, posiadania imienia – zamordowanego Musy: „ten prosty akt nazwania rozpoczyna uczłowieczanie Araba, wynosi go ponad prowincjonalną inność i zapomnienie" (Ally 2018, 260). Badacz zauważa, że strategia narracyjna powieści jest wskazówką dla niepodległych społeczeństw dotyczącą sposobów wykorzystywania kapitału pozostawionego przez kolonizatora. Harun deklaruje: „ze starego domu kolonizatorów kamień po kamieniu zbuduję swój dom, swój język. Słowa i wyrażenia zabójcy będą dla mnie jak *porzucona własność*" (Daoud 2015, 10). Performatywna zmiana wymaga więc uznania tego, co zastałe – przynajmniej w punkcie wyjścia – za potencjalnie użyteczne: język kolonizatora można przekształcić w „walczące słowa", topografię miasta można odmienić (choćby przez zmianę nazw ulic, dzielnic itd.) i przydać jej charakter przestrzeni oswojonej.

Narrator skupia swoją uwagę na problemach związanych z dekolonizacją. Wskazuje, że rewolucja była siłą napędową dla Algierczyków, jednak w momencie kiedy upragnione ideały zostały osiągnięte, nie zostały jeszcze wypracowane nowe wartości i stałe struktury organizacji społecznej i politycznej. Dlatego doszło do zastoju. Rewolucyjne dążenia do niezależności operowały językiem negacji rzeczywistości a nie konstrukcji – z braku pozytywnego programu być może wynika przejęcie religijnych aksjomatów i praw przez zdekolonizowaną Algierię. Narrator alienuje się wobec rewolucyjnego paradygmatu, nie bierze udziału w wyzwalaniu kraju mimo młodzieńczego wieku, czego nie mogą zrozumieć śledczy zajmujący się morderstwem dokonanym przez Haruna. Sądzenie go za samo morderstwo po okresie bezkarnego zabijania Francuzów wydaje się pułkownikowi śmieszne. Problem stanowi dzień, w którym go dokonano. Jak przekonuje narratora wojskowy, trzeba było zamordować Francuza przed piątym lipca 1962 roku, czyli dniem proklamacji niepodległości Algierii. To jedna z powieściowych sytuacji, w których Harun odczuwa swoją obcość. Kolejną płaszczyzną wyobcowania staje się wstręt do muzułmańskiej religii i modlitwy jako odpowiedzi na lęk przed absurdem. Do doświadczenia religijnego narrator

zbliża się najpełniej w kontakcie z ukochaną kobietą, przeczuwając znaczenie boskości. Harun wspomina: „Być może dawno temu mogłem dostrzec coś z boskiego porządku. To oblicze miało barwę słońca i płomień pożądania. Była to twarz Marjam" (Daoud 2015, 150). Znajomość z ukochaną Francuzką urywa się, nie dając bohaterowi możliwości spełnienia. W swoim wyobcowaniu Harun przypomina ostatecznie Meursaulta, który dystansuje się wobec religii, polityki, prawa i miłości.

Porządek opowieści zostaje odwrócony na kilka sposobów. Jeden z najbardziej wyrazistych znaków odwrócenia otwiera *Sprawę Meursaulta* – powieść zaczyna się od zdania „mama żyje do dziś"[7]. Zmienia się narrator i perspektywa narracji. Harun wypowiada się nie tylko w imieniu ofiary morderstwa, aby przejąć Camusowską narrację prowadzoną z punktu widzenia Meursaulta, lecz także w imieniu Algierczyków (tak jak kolonizatorzy zostali nazwani Meursaultami, tak Algierczyków można by nazwać Harunami bądź Musami). Zamienione zostają role kolonizatora i kolonizowanego. To kolonizowany staje się podmiotem odwracającym opowieść o dobrodziejstwie, dziejowej konieczności czy religijnym posłannictwie misyjnym kolonizatora, ukazując ich wątpliwą wartość jako argumentu uprawomocniającego kolonialną zależność. Harun zauważa, że w dzielnicy, którą zamieszkiwał „było się muzułmaninem, miało się imię, twarz i zwyczaje", kolonizatorzy byli natomiast postrzegani jako obcy, nazywani „rumimi" (Daoud 2015, 70). Perspektywa arabska podważa monolityczną hierarchię swojego i obcego, gorszego, który zlewa się w oglądzie kolonizatora w bezosobową masę „arabskości" czy „murzyńskości". Odwrócony został także sam kierunek opowiadania. To powoduje, że *Sprawa Meursaulta* zwraca się ku poszukiwaniom praźródeł, początku opowieści, odkrywanego w mitycznych strukturach. Harun objaśnia bezimiennemu słuchaczowi: „ta historia powinna być przepisana, w tym samym języku, ale od prawej strony do lewej" (Daoud 2015, 14), jak w arabskim sposobie notacji. Swoją opo-

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7 Inicjalne zdanie *Obcego* Camusa w polskim przekładzie brzmi „dzisiaj umarła mama" (Camus 2018, 5). Odwrócenie dokonało się więc przede wszystkim w relacjach: życie – śmierć, byt – niebyt, pamięć – niepamięć. To zmiana nieprzypadkowa: postkolonialne społeczeństwa pragną zaznaczyć swoją obecność, odzyskać głos, uczestniczyć w ogólnoświatowej wymianie kulturowej.

Poza rozpoczęciem, odwrócone zostało także zakończenie *Obcego*. Powieść Camusa kończy się zdaniem: „Aby wszystko się spełniło, abym poczuł się mniej samotny, pozostawało mi życzyć sobie, by w dniu egzekucji przyszło wielu widzów i by przyjęli mnie okrzykami nienawiści" (Camus 2018, 84). Daoud zamyka Sprawę Meursaulta zdaniem „Ja też chciałbym, żeby u mnie widzów było wielu i żeby ich nienawiść okazała się dzika" (Daoud 2015, 154).

wieść o powrocie do źródła przyrównuje do naszkicowanej ołówkiem ławicy łososi, które przemieszczają się pod prąd (Daoud 2015, 10).

Wytworzenie alternatywnej historii względem narracji przynależących do kanonu jest strategią bardziej otwartą na renegocjowanie pozostałości po językach i ideach kolonizatora niż skrajne formy negacji, które dążą do odtworzenia mitycznej kultury okresu przedkolonialnego. Narzucone dziedzictwo jest nieusuwalne, co w swoich utopijnych poszukiwaniach niezmąconej kultury pomijają natywiści, jednak pozostaje możliwość jego przechwycenia i przenicowania. Przejęcie nie tylko nie jest plagiatem, jak przekonywał Debord, ale każdorazowo ujawnia swój subwersywny potencjał. Pozwala utrwalone w języku opresywne dyskursy przemienić w „walczące słowa" i – w wyniku przepracowania traumy – nadać im nowe znaczenia.

Przechwycenie kanonicznego utworu literackiego przez pisarzy postkolonialnych, poza podważeniem partykularnych (językowych czy konceptualnych) sposobów reprezentacji ludności tubylczej, rozszczelnia samą strukturę kanonu, wprowadza – by posłużyć się pojęciem Damroscha – antykanoniczną kontrnarrację. Komparatysta przekonuje, że dzieła antykanoniczne po chwili usuwają się w cień, a ich potencjał nawiązania dialogu z tekstem o względnie stabilnej pozycji w strukturze kanonu jest stosunkowo nikły. Jest jednak za wcześnie, aby móc odnieść tę hipotezę do postkolonialnych utworów antykanonicznych – upłynęło zbyt mało lat od powstania postkolonialnych narracji przechwyceniowych (a nawet samej dekolonizacji poszczególnych nacji), by dało się zrewidować status tychże w obrębie „hiperkanonu".

Strategia przechwycenia pozwala pisarzom podważyć istniejący układ sił. Daoudowi udaje się odwrócić semantykę opowieści o Meursault: w centrum narracji znajduje się bezimienny w oryginalnej opowieści Arab, któremu przywraca się imię i tożsamość; głos zabiera skolonizowany, który przejmuje język kolonizatora (a także inne pozostałości po jego odejściu z Algieru, poczynając od domostwa) – francuski, aby móc poznać prawdę o morderstwie własnego brata; zmienia się podstawa oceny (nie)moralności Meursaulta: u Camusa zabójca jest sądzony za pozornie nieznaczące incydenty (papierosa, brak łez czy drzemkę w trakcie czuwania przy grobie matki), u Daouda Meursault jest oskarżony o morderstwo. O odebranie istnienia są też oskarżeni wszyscy, którzy przekazywali opowieść o zbrodniarzu i pozbawionym imienia Arabie. To milczenie przerywa Harun. W jego proteście pobrzmiewają jak echo mity fundujące europejski etos i literackie narracje wyjęte z kanonicznego piedestału.

Strategia przechwycenia opiera się na zatem na dwojakiego rodzaju

świadomości: niezbywalnego iterowania się tekstów literackich (intertekstualność, cytatowość, ironia i powtórzenie przestają być oznaką braku oryginalności tekstu: ocena utworu nie opiera się na kryterium nowatorstwa, a na sposobie, w jaki dzieło literackie przetwarza pierwotne formy kulturowe, nadając im nowe znaczenia) oraz pozorności rewolucyjnego gestu negacji, czyli przeświadczenia – wyniesionego niejednokrotnie z historycznych zjawisk związanych z procesami dekolonizacji – że negacja nigdy nie jest w stanie unieważnić uprzedniego stanu rzeczy. Z tej podwójnej wiedzy wyłania się świadoma własnych ograniczeń i możliwości literatura postkolonialna.

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Title: Is Albert Camus a stranger? *Détournement* as a postcolonial strategy of writing in Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation.*
Abstract: The author makes a comparative study of *The Meursault Investigation* by Kamel Daoud and Albert Camus' works (especially *The Stranger* and *The Fall*) based on the literature describing the category of *détournement*. The theoretical basis of

the notion of *détournement* is reconstructed from the works of Guy Debord, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler and it becomes the basic category in the interpretation of postcolonial literature. The main aim of the article is to highlight the importance of this category as one of the strategies of postcolonial writing. The author claims that the purpose of using interception in literature is to renegotiate the structure of the canon and position of writers excluded from its structure because of economic, political and cultural conditions. In the first part of the article, the author points out the essential differentiators of *détournement*. She introduces the formula of the structure of the literary canon created by David Damrosch. Next she analyses two literary narrations dialoguing with each other. Comparison of the canonical story about Meursault's murder and trial by Camus and *The Meursault Investigation* by Daoud reveals a strict relation between these novels. In Daoud's story, the narration is inverted—the perspective of a victim, which is expressed by the brother of nameless Arab, dominates in the book. The analysis ends with the conclusion that *détournement* of a canonical work, and its recontextualization, is a more revolutionary gesture, made by postcolonial writers, who want to renegotiate their position in the structure of the canon, compared to nativist, utopian reproduction of the precolonial past. The choice of this particular strategy of writing confirms the truth of two claims of which Daoud is aware (as evidenced in novel): first, that every literary work is iterable and, second, that every revolution is only an apparent renouncement.
Keywords: postcolonialism, *détournement*, Kamel Daoud, canon, Albert Camus.