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In the Meanders of Geopoetics

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Politics and Poetics of Space

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Geopoetics entered Polish literary studies via various routes, led by researchers representing diverse directions within the humanities looking to confirm their own scholarly intuitions, expectations toward literature and methodological tendencies. This revival of research on the forms of articulating space in literature resulted in the emergence of numerous, sometimes contradictory, concepts of geopoetics. As an attractive and extremely poignant term, it broke away from the poetic-philosophical base and drifted toward an interdisciplinary methodology allowing to explore various relationship between the experience of geographical space and its artistic expression. Thus, what is shared by all types of geopoetics is a reflection on the mutual relations between literature, art and geographical space.

Without broader references to the work of Kenneth White, but with due appreciation of the category he proposed, Elżbieta Rybicka included geopoetics into the Polish theoretical and methodological discourse. In *Geopoetyka. Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich* [*Geopoetics: Space and Place in Contemporary Literary Theory and Practice*], the author presents a coherent project, attributing geopoetics with a broad semantic range: geopoetics, she emphasizes, is an ambiguous notion which is a consequence of its poetical origins. From

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a range of definitions testifying to this ambiguity, Rybicka selects the one which is most precise, one which (I believe) opens the widest semantic field: “a study of the intellectual and sensual man-earth relation aimed at developing a harmonious cultural space”.¹ As Rybicka proceeds to methodically complete the outline of the thematic area covered by the presented definition, her theory acquires an anthropological character and becomes part of the discourse of cultural literary theory. Rybicka’s tools for the interpretation of literature articulating broadly conceived experiences of a specific geographical space constitute a methodological proposal to study the relations between literature and geography in the context of disciplines such as geoculturology, geocriticism, geopolitics and geohistory. Rybicka views geographical spaces as ambiguous texts carrying geographical, historical, cultural and anthropological meanings and is interested in the methods to interpret the literary representations of those spaces; methods which activate numerous intersecting discourses, thus impacting the dense network of mutual references which essentially shape a “harmonious cultural space”.

The concept of geopoetics proposed by Rybicka follows the tendency originated by Kazimierz Brakoniecki, who accentuates the differences between his own geopoetic literary practice and that of Kenneth White who highlights his fascination with pure geography and distances himself from history and historiography. While Brakoniecki stresses that, as a resident of Central Europe, he cannot “break free from the pressure of history,” White is fascinated by space in its prehistoric or ahistorical importance which he locates in the cosmological and geological shape of the territory. This is because the historical aspect of the place is entangled in a web of ideological, political, economic and social relations which include place in the geopolitical order. White is thus interested in the history of the earth which is readable from its geological shape, an idea well reflected in the theory of “textonique de la Terre” presented in one of his latest works.² The notion of textonics refers to the idea of tectonic movements of the Earth’s crust and to the theory of wandering continents; it also opposes the category of textualism, viewed by White as ultra-literary and reductive, reducing everything (including the entire Earth) to a text. Textonics is a process of continuous change of the Earth’s “text,” one which opens the human spirit to the ongoing, century-long transformations

1 Elżbieta Rybicka, *Geopoetyka. Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich* (Kraków: Znak, 2014), 64, after Kenneth White, *Poeta kosmograf*, trans. Kazimierz Brakoniecki (Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Biblioteczka Centrum Polsko-Francuskiego, 2010), 35.

2 Kenneth White, *Panorama géopoétique. Théorie d’une textonique de la Terre* (Editions de la Revue des Ressources : Lapoutroie, 2014), 107-108.

through which our planet continues to acquire new meanings. White listens to the speech of the landscape in the hope of hearing the primary voice of the earth and wants to touch the prehistoric space, or to locate traces of the original landscape, and to feel the eternal union of man with the cosmos. The poet experiences that, for instance, in Cornwall, while contemplating the steep sea-shores formed from green serpentine, covered with picturesque moors and floating mists, arousing awe and emotions and evoking the sense of the world's cosmic permanence.³

I would refer to the concepts proposed by Rybicka and Brakoniecki as anthropological; both the theoretical and methodological geopoetics outlined by Rybicka and its regional-poetic variety offered by Brakoniecki fit within the order of cultural literary theory. Their approach is complemented by the notion of autobiographical places introduced to Polish geopoetics by Małgorzata Czermińska who expands the conceptual frame of the discipline by adding the auto-geobiographical aspect.⁴ Proposals by these three scholars have become integrated consequently with the Polish theoretical thought and gained the status of a method which offers its own research tools, and a language for description of the literary phenomena which articulate the experience of a particular geographical space. The relations of literature, art and geography are an extremely interesting and important research area in the context of the interdisciplinary turn in the contemporary humanities: investigation of those relations resulted in the development of new subdisciplines in geography (i.e. humanist and cultural geography) and in literary studies (i.e. geopoetics, geocriticism, geoculturology and geoesthetics).⁵

In recent years, as a result of Rybicka's research, geopoetics has become in Poland a popular and intensively developed discipline. Edward Kasperski's

3 White presents his biocosmopoetic experiences in his autobiography, which he refers to as a geographic-intellectual journey. Kenneth White, *La carte de Guido. Un pèlerinage européen* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2011), 53.

4 Małgorzata Czermińska, „Miejsca autobiograficzne,” *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2011); see also Małgorzata Czermińska, „Słowo wstępne. Miejsca autobiograficzne Czesława Miłosza,” in *Czesław Miłosz „północna strona,”* ed. Małgorzata Czermińska and Katarzyna Szalewska (Gdańsk: Scholar, 2011).

5 Whose research methods focus on the broadly defined relation between geographical spaces and their representations in art and literature. See Bertrand Westphal, *La géocritique. Reel, fiction, espace* (Paris: Minuit, 2007); Wasilij Szczukin, *Mit szlacheckiego gniazda. Studium geokultuologiczne o klasycznej literaturze rosyjskiej*, trans. Bogusław Żytko (Kraków: Universitas, 2006); Elżbieta Rybicka, „Geopoetyka, geokrytyka, geokulturologia,” *Białostockie Studia Literaturoznawcze* 2 (2011); *Géosthétique* under the supervision of de Kantuta Quirós et Aliocha Imhoff (Dijon: Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Art de Dijon, 2014).

article, whose title suggests the initiation of geopoetics in the poetics of space, is thus somewhat surprising. Ignoring the founding texts of the geopoetic discourse and the work by the Polish researchers who adapted it to the native environment, the author proposes a concept of geopoetics completely detached from its philosophical and theoretical sources. Kasperski believes that the task of geopoetics is to “study in the works of literature, art and culture, spacial elements which are marked anthropomorphically”.⁶ He also adds that “in geopoetics, space is not identical either with physical space nor with geometric, geographic and cartographic space”.⁷ Consequently, “geo” appears to be a misleading ornamentation in Kasperski’s project: one simply cannot talk about geopoetics as detached from the experience of physical, geographical and cartographical space.

Viewing geopoetics as a discipline to investigate cultural forms of anthropomorphizing space (subordinated to man as its “host”), Kasperski adopts an anthropocentric attitude, as opposed to White who favors the humanities to be de-anthropocentrized. White views man not as the Earth’s “host,” but as a resident who poetically dwells in it, reading its poetry, listening to its music; in other words, experiencing the cosmological poetics of the universe. It is precisely this attitude, one completely unrelated to the anthropomorphization of space, is how White understands the lyrical and philosophical presence of man in the world.⁸

In *Geopoetyka. Związki literatury i środowiska* [*Geopoetics: The Relation between Literature and Environment*] Anna Kronenberg presents geopoetics as one of the “green” currents of the ecological turn. She notes that “in the framework of national research, geopoetics as a term had been stripped of several aspects which are of crucial importance to its founder, including the ecological tradition, connections between literature and the environment and man’s relationship with the Earth”.⁹ Kronenberg’s own proposal is founded on a rather superficial reading of White’s work, one which ignores the French texts (crucial to geopoetics) and places geopoetics in the context of disciplines stemming from the ecological turn, such as ecocriticism, ecophilosophy or ecofeminism. Thus, situating it within the ideological order, Kronenberg reduces the

6 Edward Kasperski, „Geopoetyka. Ku nowej poetyce przestrzeni – pierwszy krok w chmurach,” in *Geografia wyobrażona regionu. Literackie figury przestrzeni*, ed. Daniel Kalinowski, Adela Kuik-Kalinowska, Małgorzata Mikołajczak (Kraków: Universitas, 2014), 39.

7 Kasperski, 24.

8 White, *La carte de Guido. Un pèlerinage européen*, 211.

9 Anna Kronenberg, *Geopoetyka. Związki literatury i środowiska* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo UŁ, 2014), 33.

semantic field of the concept. Meanwhile, in the latest monograph devoted to White's work, one encompassing both his literary and academic works and essays, Christophe Roncato marginalizes the relationships between ecocriticism and geopoetics. Although he stresses that both disciplines posit a poetic inhabitation of the world, the task of geopoetics – according to White – is to combine theory and practice in a way where habitation becomes something more than a concept or idea.¹⁰

Simplifying the matter, Kronenberg relates geopoetics to the concept of nomadic subjects proposed by Rosi Braidotti and concludes that “giving subjectivity to the natural environment is a priority both for White and Braidotti.”¹¹ Formulations such as this invite a reflection on the adequacy of language as a tool for analysis and interpretation of the thematized phenomena. Kronenberg sets for geopoetics the task of “giving subjectivity to the natural environment,” while Kasperski tasks it with describing cultural “anthropomorphizations of space”. Thus both scholars, the former probably unintentionally, present an anthropocentric perspective of the Earth's host who “gives subjectivity” to the natural environment, placing himself or herself in the center as a point of reference. The problem of the adequacy of analytic language can be seen also in Kronenberg's interpretations of literary works. On the one hand, the author develops the concept of “green” reading and writing (seen as the result of the ecological turn in the literary studies), one based on “a new type of subjectivity” where the “subject is rooted in a particular place to speak from, draws power from its locality, body, gender, tradition, its relations to other people, animals and the natural environment”.¹² On the other hand, her practice of “green” reading is marked with the language of structural analysis, and following the declaration of reading texts for a new kind of subjectivity, categories such as the speaking subject sound anachronistic. When she defines the task of geopoetics as a search for “the relations between the speaking subject and the natural environment”¹³ (or writes about “the elements of the world becoming elements of the body of the lyrical subject”¹⁴), Kronenberg mixes two different philosophical and methodological orders. There is no place for disembodied, categorized subjects within the ecological

10 Christophe Roncato, *Kenneth White. Une œuvre-monde* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 202.

11 Kronenberg, *Geopoetyka*, 95.

12 *Ibid.*, 33.

13 *Ibid.*, 230.

14 *Ibid.*, 234.

discourse. The experience of locality, of a geographical and environmental tangibility, requires a language open to the corporeal and sensual experience of the writer and the reader.

We can thus undoubtedly speak of two versions of geopoetics: the anthropocentric one represented by Elżbieta Rybicka and the deanthropocentrized one, rooted in White. Anna Kronenberg's proposals seem to be located in the latter tradition, or at least they could be if a more careful editing process of *Geopoetyka. Związki literatury i środowiska* allowed the author's reflection to be conveyed with more precision. In her book, Kronenberg criticizes Rybicka's detachment from the basic context of geopoetics, namely the ecological tradition which she views as crucial to White's ideas. However, his more recent works (more recent than the ones referenced by Kronenberg) allow us to assume that White's interests revolve around man's geographical environment rather than the natural one. Importantly, his geopoetics is rooted in Bachelard's poetics of space where human imagination is shaped by space. It is physical matter that Bachelard believes to be imagination's efficient cause, noting also that a reflection on matter shapes open imagination.¹⁵ As a result, poetic image, rooted in the substantiality of the landscape, reflects the experience of inhabiting a territory. For White, geographical matter is a source of imagination determining our poetic dwelling in world.

Following Thoreau, White attaches great importance to the music of the landscape, such as the sounds of rain pattering on the windows, and learns to listen to the sounds of the earth and track the presence of geopoetic tonalities in musicians such as Ferruccio Busoni or John Cage. Intrigued, White quotes a passage from Busoni's letter, sent from the US in 1910, where Busoni seemed to define perfectly well what the music of the earth was by recalling a conversation with a Native American: the woman spoke of her tribe's need for a musical instrument constructed as a hole in the ground, with strings stretched across the opening. Busoni replied to the woman that such an instrument should be referred to as the voice of the earth and received an enthusiastic response from her.¹⁶

White's theory was also inspired by the work of Luigi Russolo, one of the first theorists of electronic music whose futurist manifesto *The Art of Noises* (1913) posits irregular vibrations, the sounds of wind and thunder, creeks and waterfalls, the cries of animals and the noise of the city as a remedy for the

15 Gaston Bachelard, *Wyobraźnia poetycka*, trans. Henryk Hudak, Anna Tatarkiewicz (Warszawa: PIW, 1975), 115.

16 Kenneth White, "The Music of the Landscape," in *The Wanderer and his Charts. Essays on Cultural Renewal*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004), 225.

boredom and banality of Western music. Using rhythms derived from nature, a kind of musical “ready-mades,” he calls for a renewal of contemporary music. White’s discussion of geopoetic tonalities in avant-garde music shows how the idea of geopoetics is understood in art.¹⁷

White’s essays are an account of his travels which, in the context of his philosophy, could be referred to as geopoetic journeys whose destination is to discover the “poetics of space”.¹⁸ This is the goal he sets for geopoetics, referring to the latter as the lyrical and philosophical aspect of our presence in the world, presence understood also as a lyrical dwelling in the world. Seen this way, presence in the world is realized through movement in space and a search for places where one can experience the cosmological poetics of the universe. To describe this phenomenon, White reinterprets Novalis’ and Whitman’s work on writing the earth, in other words, on beauty inscribed in geographical places and natural phenomena. Continuing their reflection, he sees poetry’s causative force in geographical and natural phenomena which, when read as metaphorical “texts” by man, may result in aesthetic experiences.

Anna Kronenberg charges Polish scholars of geopoetics with a misinterpretation of ideas crucial to White’s philosophy, having assumed that those ideas are related to ecology. However, the dispute over geopoetics, tied to the history of the term, is much older and has its roots in the theoretical literary turn which took place in France after 1968. As a term, “geopoetics” was first used by Michel Deguy in *Figurations*, published in 1969. Michel Collot notes that it emerged as a natural consequence of the change in the meaning of the literary work which involved abandoning the immanent concept of the latter as an autonomous creation, and a return to Friedrich Hölderlin’s famous formula of poetic dwelling in the world. This creative attitude, one expressing post-structural tendencies, was presented by the poets gathered around *L’Éphémère*. Collot stresses that setting new tasks for poetry understood as a manifestation of “being in the world” had to produce a neologism, “géo-poétique”. Deguy even suggested introducing the notion of “geo-poétique”, where the silent “h” was meant to emphasize a search for poetics capable of

17 Ibid., 226.

18 Texts such as Kenneth White *Le figure du Dehors* (Paris: Le Mot et Le Reste, 1982), *L’Esprit nomade* (Paris: Grasset, 1987), *L’itinéraire de Kenneth White* (Rennes: Bibliothèque municipale de Rennes, 1990), *Le Plateau de l’albatros: Introduction à la géopoétique* (Paris: Grasset, 1994), *The Wanderer and his Charts* (Edinburg: Polygon, 2004), *L’Ermitage de Brumes* (Paris: Dervy, 2005), *Poeta kosmograf*, trans. Krzysztof Brakoniecki (Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo: Centrum Polsko-Francuskie w Olsztynie, 2010), *La carte de Guido. Un pèlerinage européen*, White, “Panorama géopoétique”.

expressing the relationship between the human spirit and the physical space, and the task of dwelling in the world, viewed as an ethical responsibility for the world.¹⁹ Deguy's concept of geopoetics was based on the premise that "all logos is topological" and expresses the experience of the earth. He writes about the conviction that certain things and their arrangements, or certain places, created parables; that geo-logy could be understood the way astrology was, that a kind of "geo-poetics," learning the valleys of the earth, was possible just as it is possible to learn the figures of the thinkable, and that the metaphor or translation of being to the figures of thought was the name for "poetic" space.²⁰

Geological metaphors are abundant also in Deguy's poetry, which seems to suggest that a similar type of spatial imagination characterizes both creators of geopoetics. He describes, for instance, the man of furthest reaches, building a house where the plains meet the valley, crushed to a pulp by the alluvial and volcanic moraines, captured at the crossing of the moraines of clouds and moraines of forests, but reborn in the morning without hate toward sudden things but rather grateful to the mine and the typhoon, to the avalanche and the well caving in to devour him.²¹

Kenneth White refers neither to Deguy's poetry, nor to his theoretical work where the concept of geopoetics is founded on the linguistic theory of spatial metaphors. The Scottish poet "seized" the concept nine years later, notes Collot, significantly broadening its semantic field and moving toward the phenomenological definition of being in the world.

The simplest definition of geopoetics as proposed by White the wanderer, and at the same time one which opens the widest semantic fields, reads as follows: geopoetics begins when the body enters a space.²² White's poetic imagination is dominated by open space, the experience of which is articulated through several figures serving also as epistemological metaphors. White understands space as a challenge to explore, to follow each disappearing horizon. The notion of extravagance appeals to him due to its etymology: "extravagare"

19 Michel Collot "De la géopoétique," in *L'habiter dans sa poésie première. Actes du colloque de Cerisy-la-Salle*, ed. Augustin Berque, Alessia De Biase, Philippe Bonnin (Paris: Donner lieu, 2008), 314.

20 Collot, "De la géopoétique," 316. [Here adapted basing on the Polish translation from French by the author of the article - A.W.]

21 Michel Deguy, [*Nikt nie był nawiedzaczem...*], trans. Edward Stachura, in Edward Stachura, *Wiersze, poematy, piosenki, przekłady*, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1984), 389. [Based on the Polish translation - A.W.]

22 Collot, "De la géopoétique," 318.

means “to stray outside,” “wander off,” and it is the meaning the poet will use in his work. The figure of “outside” (*dehors*)²³ is of key importance to his spatial imagination: for White, discovery requires wandering away, going beyond, as is evidenced by all geographical discovery, often resulting from the explorer becoming lost in space. Consequently, his philosophy emerges from moving beyond the fenced and separate theories, beyond the enclosed area of the city toward the spaces of lands which open the thought. Roaming “outside” the known and described areas is extravagant in its nature as it always results in a discovery of the unusual. White’s poetics uses also other figures of the “beyond” reflecting the experience of a space that opens up, provokes reflection and invites discovery, figures such as white territory, margin, peripheries, littoral, horizon; in other words, figures of crossing borders and evoking openness to all periphery.

The essence of White’s geopoetics lies therefore in an exploration of poetics and poetry of space, realized through “poetic dwelling in the world” which requires an understanding of land-writing (Walt Whitman) and reading the world-text, listening to its music. White’s geopoetics emerges from several inspirations which can be expressed through popular but thought-opening adages: that there can be no culture without nature (Jean-Jacque Rousseau), that in wildness is the preservation of the world (Henry David Thoreau), that great poems of heaven and hell have been written but the great poem of earth remains to be written (Wallace Stevens); “if I have any taste, it is for hardly anything but earth and stones” (Arthur Rimbaud); “remain faithful to the earth” (Friedrich Nietzsche); “poetically man dwells in the world” (Friedrich Hölderlin); and meaning takes place through motion (Maurice Merleau-Ponty).

Its interdisciplinary character, able to reflect a holistic system of thinking about the relationship of man and the world, is an important aspect of White’s geopoetics. The poet draws inspiration from Alexander von Humboldt’s *Kosmos*, and in particular from Humboldt’s interest in geology, mineralogy, oceanography and landscape. Just like the von Humboldt brothers, White is fascinated by the comprehensive approach to the study of nature, and repeats after Wilhelm that poetry, science, philosophy and history are not separate from each other, but create a certain whole in the mind of a man who thus achieves the state of unity.²⁴

Alfred Korzybski’s theory about the confusion of the object and its representation in the process of cognition (expressed in the famous formula: the map is not the territory) was White’s other important and frequently

23 Kenneth White, *La Figure du dehors* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2014), 89-102.

24 White, *Poeta kosmograf*, 68.

referenced source of inspiration. Basing himself on its premises, White develops his own theory where the map is treated not as a representation of the world but as an invitation to cross the borders of the territory represented by the map, in the direction of what lies hidden under representation and remains, unknown, unusual, eccentric and wild. When he writes about uncharted territories (even in the age of google maps and google street), White has in mind the perpetual opportunity to explore phenomena such as wind direction, migrations of birds, clouds or smells.

His essays from *La carte de Guido. Un pèlerinage européen*,²⁵ from 2011, exemplify the kind of writing which White refers as intellectual and existential geography. Sketching a mental map of his life in transit, the narrator-cartographer gives his biography the shape of a map. In one of the essays (*Dernières nouvelles de Bruxelles*), White describes a visit to the Royal Library in Brussels where he retrieves a twelfth century manuscript entitled *Liber de variis historiis* – a treatise that is at once cosmographical, geographical, toponymic, historical, philosophical and poetic in character. Its author, Guido of Pisa, included in the work a unique map and White, like a medieval copyist, carefully redraws it in his notebook. The gesture of copying allows him to take possession of the medieval vision of the world, created with piety and aesthetic attention to every detail by the authors of the map. Found in the medieval manuscript, the map fascinates White because it conveys the experience of a “beautiful whole,” “a symphony of the world.” The Medieval manuscript, an example of holistic knowledge of the world expressed through the language of geography, history and poetry, seems to White to be a confirmation of the cosmological poetics of the universe. Old maps – geographic and artistic representations of the territory – reinforce in White the belief that the cartographers of old, sensitive to the poetic nature of the world, were in fact the first representatives of geopoetics. Referring to himself as a “poet-cosmographer” he believes that the goal of poetry is precisely to discover and describe the poetic dimension of the cosmos.

White is fascinated by space in its prehistoric and ahistorical sense, in other words, in its cosmological, geological and atmospheric aspects. He listens to the speech of the space, and particularly to the speech of the natural landscape which conveys the original voice of the world. In another essay, *Fumée bleue sur falaise blanche*, the poet describes his journey to Cornwall in search of the voice of the original landscape, one not entangled in the web of historical, political, economic and social relations. The experience of primordial space is brought by the observation of the coastline which fascinates the

25 See also Elżbieta Konończuk, „O poetyckim zamieszkiwaniu świata według Kennetha White’a,” *Białostockie Studia Literaturoznawcze* 2 (2011).

writer as a place where two elements meet. Similarly, watching the tall, black, rocky shore dripping with water, produces the impression of witnessing the emergence of rocks from the chaos.

Consequently, the speech of the landscape becomes the source of a deep experience which, following White, could be referred to as a “source experience,” an emotional reaction to the primordial beauty inscribed in a place. Experiencing the relations of man and universe, finding a deep connection to the space, becomes possible as a result of poetic intuition providing access to the “white world” or the “white territory”. Alluding to the ancient tradition of presenting northern and unknown areas on the map, the metaphor refers to the idea of exploring the pristine and peripheral spaces uncharted by the cartographers.

The theme of white territory returns in *Sur les Crêtes de l'Aurore*, also included in the autobiographical *La carte de Guido*, describing the author's journey to the Pyrenees, preceded by a study of a geomorphological map of the region. White often searches for the source of poetic inspiration in the geological nature of the place. Heading towards the white peaks of the mountain chain, he watches the theatre of forms and colors, and his imagination completes the spectacle with a visualization of millennia old geological processes: the formation of the rocks, the layering of calcium, dolomite and quartz deposits, the movement of tectonic plates and the geological movements which formed the mountains and gorges.

White understands geopoetics as a special poetics of experiencing geographical space, a poetics of experiencing the earth and the cosmos. As a “cosmopoet,” he believes the relations between poetry and geography to be a crucial element in the repertoire of the humanities which always tell the story of man's habitation of the world. White practices such lyrical dwelling not only by reading the landscape and interpreting the poetry and music of the land, but also by giving his work geographical forms.

His travels narrate what the poet himself talks about: the formation of deep bonds with space, labeled as *livres-itinéraire* (“book-routes” or “book trails”), constituting the kind of writing practice which Michel de Certeau refers to as “spatial stories,” understood as a record of practicing space.²⁶ De Certeau sees the very act of wandering as a creation of specific texts in space, or pedestrian speech acts,²⁷ and White's journeys and travels are precisely that, a kind of utterance.

26 Michel de Certeau, *Wynaleźć codzienność: sztuki działania*, trans. Katarzyna Thiel-Jańczuk (Kraków: WUJ 2008), 115-129.

27 de Certeau, *Wynaleźć*, 99-100.

His works are a record of spatial experience, which means that they make up a biography-map (or a bio-atlas) describing geographical, poetic, emotional and intellectual routes. A biography-map not only presents the space, but also invites one to practice it.²⁸

In his poetic (geopoetic) practice, in the attempts to access the essence of the geographical experience, White searches for a synthesis of the subject and the form, inspired by the experience of space. Consequently, he constitutes genres such as "world-poem," "river-poem" or "diamond-poem"²⁹ defined as follows: "a long river-poem where I gather the maximum number of elements, whose coherence resembles that of a water current. Or a diamond-poem, a piece of crystalline rock, a poem emerging from concentration"³⁰ *Les Archives du Littoral*, a river-poem which could be viewed as White's lyrical, intellectual and philosophical manifesto developing into a lecture, thus functions both as a poem and a geopoetic dissertation while *Handbook for the Diamond Country* contains several diamond-poems, each constituting a crystallized poetic whole and a record of a reflection-concentration³¹.

Spatially determined, White's imagination dictates not only his literary works and theoretical reflection, but also his organizational practice. Christophe Roncato notes that White took over from Whitman the metaphor of the archipelago in order to use it as a name for the network of spreading branches of the International Institute of Geopoetics whose presidency he passed to Régis Poulet in 2013. A dozen islands of the archipelago (Archipel de l'Institut international de géopoétique) spread around the world and

28 Mariusz Wilk's "trace-book," *Lotem gęsi* [By the Flight of Geese] may serve as a good example of practicing White's "biography-map". Wilk describes his journey to Labrador inspired by White's *The Blue Road* and following the poet's footsteps. Recounting his fascination with White's travels, Wilk confesses: "I took the first steps on his *Blue Road* in a small hotel bar in Sławkowska Street. From the first page, it was a complete immersion. When I came upon the sentence about wandering away as far as possible, to the limits of the self, until a territory is found where time transforms into space, where things emerge in their nakedness and the wind blows without a name, it was then when I knew that I have found another brother. [...] Wilk believed that in Labrador he would see his original face. "What I need the most is space, a great white breathing emptiness for ultimate meditation". He also searched for Labrador tribes, weary of nations and states. See Mariusz Wilk, *Lotem gęsi* (Warszawa: Noir sur Blanc: 2012), 12.

29 White, *Poeta kosmograf*, 34-35.

30 Ibid., 41-42. [this and the following footnote reference Polish translations of a selection of White's work from French – A.W.]

31 Ibid., 126.

referred to as a geopoetic Atelier³² are the result of the strategy of *archipelisation* (archipelagization) or *océanisation* (oceanization) outlined by White himself and adapted by the Institute: in the 2010 general report, the poet explains that what he has in mind is a dispersed and simultaneous influence in various disciplines and countries.³³ Rocanto adds: “geopoetics [...] does not stop before the doors of any Atelier, but spreads over the boundaries. Just look at its presence, more or less understandable on the Web, and its influence on various disciplines: geography, literature, architecture, the visual arts.”³⁴

Archipelagization refers to more than the institutional spread of the idea of geopoetics. The idea permeates many disciplines and discourses focused on various forms of articulating the experience of geographical space. Thus geopoetics, in the form of islands, has spread itself over numerous disciplines and discourses, not only enriching the anthropological, poetological, regional and ecocritical aspects of research in literary studies. A well-sounding and extremely spacious concept, applicable to all artistic records of man’s interaction with space, geopoetics has now entered for good the vocabulary of the contemporary humanities. Since as a field it has been formed based on a fragmentary reception of its creator’s work, we should speak rather of several geopoetics, the nature of which is often determined by frequently instrumental uses of various aspects of White’s thought. Meanwhile, the author of *The Blue Road* certainly deserves a more in-depth appreciation, especially as his theory is well rooted in the French tradition of research on spatial imagination lead by Gaston Bachelard and George Poulet, and very well known in Poland.

Translation: Anna Warso

32 Roncato presents the history of the Institute’s growth from the first atelier founded in Brussels in 1992, followed by Atelier géopoétique d’Aquitaine (1993), Scottish Centre for Geopoetics (1995), Atelier des deux rives de Tübingen, Centre géopoétique de Paris i Centre géopoétique de Belgrad (1996), Centre suisse de géopoétique (2004) – and Atelier italien opened in year 2012. See Roncato, *Kenneth White. Une œuvre-monde*, 206-208. [Here translated from Polish - A.W.]

33 Roncato, *Kenneth White*, 216. [Here translated from Polish – A.W.]

34 Ibid.