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# **Place, Memory, Literature (from the perspective of geopoetics).**

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### Place, Memory, Literature (from the perspective of geopoetics)

#### Trajectories of memory discourses

What is a common factor, shared between the historical and literary discourses of memory? After all, the fates of these discourses in the 20th century seem to be rather separate. While modern literature made the exploration of memory one of its most important themes, the humanities (including studies of history) forgot about it for many years.<sup>1</sup> In his thoughts on the contemporary state of interest in memory, Kerwin Lee Klein observes that up until the 1980s, memory as category was not present in social science dictionaries. When pondering over possible reasons for this shift, he mentions the rationalization and “disenchantment” of a modern, and still modernizing, world along with the professionalization of history as a scientific discipline.<sup>2</sup>

Things are different with literature. The same reasons (modernization, rationalization, and disenchantment) in some cases provoke an escape into the past and make private and cultural memory into the key terms for understanding man and art’s condition. Surprisingly, it does not happen exclusively with the works of high, elitist modernism of Marcel Proust or T.S. Eliot, but also takes place within avant-garde movements. It is enough to look at the Guillaume Apollinaire’s *Zone*, in which the subject is confronted with urban modernity, and as a result, retreats into private memory.

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<sup>1</sup> The exception will be interest in the question of collective memory displayed by Maurice Halbwachs and Aby Warburg.

<sup>2</sup> Klein, K.L. “On the Appearance of Memory in Historical Discourse” (trans. into Polish by M. Bańkowski), *Contexts* vol.3/4, 2003.

We can then move to the next stage of deepening and reformulating the discourse of memory in Polish literature. Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz will take up the polemic battle with the notion of the saving function, ascribed to memory in relation to art. The psychological prose of the interwar period (in the works of Maria Kuncewiczowa, Helena Boguszewska, and Zofia Nałkowska) uncovers the destructive character of mnemonic retrospection for singular identity,<sup>3</sup> and the archeology of memory in the prose of Leopold Buczkowski and Włodzimierz Odojewski,<sup>4</sup> reveals the unending reproduction of experienced trauma. In the prose of Andrzej Kuśniewicz, palimpsests and labyrinths of memory display the universe of possible worlds<sup>5</sup> and the literature of private fatherlands that nostalgically uncovers lost places, people, and times.<sup>6</sup>

It is worthwhile to note that in literary theory, as in other branches of the humanities (except for psychology), memory was not considered to be a problem worthy of separate investigation for many years. It would usually surface along with questions about interpretation. The work of Juliusz Kleiner, “The Role of Memory in the Reception of the Literary Work and Its Structure,” is an exception. Inspired by the Ingarden’s theory, his work interprets memory as an integral element of the presented world, precisely because “it is built to remind things remembered and not observed.”<sup>7</sup>

These diverging trajectories of historical and literary discourses about memory came closer in the 1970s, and they have only come closer in every decade that followed. The trend of talking about memory marked its presence in several spheres simultaneously. It could be spotted in the brisk career of autobiographies and testimonial literature, in the development of new forms of museum exhibitions and discussions over the new formulas of archivism, or debates over the politics of memory. It likewise emerged in lifestyles, increasingly marked by retro and old-school trends, along with literary theory and historical research.

The reasons behind memory’s extraordinary popularity have been described on multiple occasions. For Pierre Nora, memory’s return in France of the seventies was a reaction to prior modernization that swept away a “plethora of traditions, vistas, occupations, customs, and lifestyles.”<sup>8</sup> Another cause was the intellectual failure of Marxism – “end of the revolutionary idea, the strongest factor orienting historical

<sup>3</sup> See Rembowska-Pluciennik, M. “Memory Versus Identity: On the Example of Psychological Prose of the Interwar Period,” *Narration and Identity (II): Anthropological Problems of Literature*, edited by W. Bolecki and R. Nycz, Warsaw: 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Rembowska-Pluciennik, M. *Poetics and Anthropology: Włodzimierz Odojewski’s Podolski Cycle*, Cracow: 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Lebkowska, A. *Fiction as Possibility. Transformations of Prose in the 20th Century*, pp.143-170, Cracow: 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Among the most important works on the subject see Zaleski, M. *The Forms of Memory: On Representations of the Past in the Polish Contemporary Literature*, Warsaw: 1996; from the most recent publications see Kaczmarek, M. “The Narratology of Memory: Stanisław Vincenz Casus,” *Second Texts*, vol.5, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Kleiner, J. “The Role of Memory in the Reception of the Literary Work and Its Structure,” *Studies in Literary Theory*, Lublin: 1961. 79.

<sup>8</sup> Nora, P. “Time of Memory” (trans. by W. Dłuski), *Res Publica Nowa*, vol. 7, 2001. 37.

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time on the future, had to result in the quick transformation of the sense of the past.” Other reasons would be the radical acceleration of history and multi-layered and multi-directional decolonization of “minority memories.” Nora observes:

These minority memories are connected primarily with three types of decolonization: worldly decolonization that led to historical awareness and allowed for regaining/creation of society’s memory – before vegetating in the ethnological coma of colonial oppression; internal decolonization of sexual, social, religious and regional minorities...And finally, we reach the third type of decolonization, that was built on the rubble of twentieth century totalitarian, communist and Nazi regimes: ideological decolonization. It helped the freed nations to meet with their long-term, traditional memories which were confiscated, destroyed or manipulated by the regimes.<sup>9</sup>

Klein also adds a postmodern wish for a renewed “enchantment” of the world, a Freudian “return of the repressed” and a critique of history as science. He does so because memory from this perspective is usually treated as counter-history. The consequence of this last trend, an alternative positioned against a scientific approach toward the past, was a politicizing of the relation between the memory and history, and their clear ideological contrast.<sup>10</sup> Ewa Domańska observes:

History used to be described as an instrument of oppression and identified with the state, imperialism, scientism and anthropocentrism. Memory, on the other hand, used to be identified with fragmented and hybrid culture of the era of globalization, with the discourse of insurrection and re-vindication...it was treated as therapy and means of giving voice to those deprived of it by history.<sup>11</sup>

Can we explain the recent popularity of the question of memory in literature in a similar way? For the most part, the answer is yes, especially with respect to internal and ideological decolonization. After 1989, we stumbled upon more and more returns to the confiscated or oppressed memory of other nations, ethnic groups or minorities. That is precisely why it could be considered from the perspective of anti-history. However, not only the subject matter or the reasons for the return to the question of memory, but also psychoanalytic and philosophical inspirations are common for the present historical and literary discourse of memory. This resulted in a situation in which the dictionaries of the key terms for history and literary studies are virtually the same. Here, I mean terms, which formerly quoted Klein lists with overt irony and amazement: “Aura, *Jetztzeit*, messianism, trauma, mourning, sublimity, apocalypse, piece, identity, redemption, healing, catharsis, cure, testament, to testify, ritual, pietism, soul – this is not a language of a secular science.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 39, 41

<sup>10</sup> See Domańska, E. “Introduction: Memory, Ethics, and History,” *Memory, Ethics, and History: Anglo-American Theory of Historiography of the Nineties (Anthology of Translations)*, edited by E. Domańska, Poznań: 2006. 16.

<sup>11</sup> See Domańska, E. *Unconventional Histories: Reflections on the Past in New Humanities*, Poznań: 2006. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Klein, K.L. “On the Appearance of Memory...,” 53.

As an interdisciplinary category, memory turned out to be a wonderful “bridge” between historical and literary discourses, perhaps due to its individual, personal character. Singular, snapshot-like and unreliable memory is, after all, literature’s domain – as opposed to the objective vision of history. Among other things, this was proven by the crisis of the historical novel, replaced by broadly understood testimonial literature.<sup>13</sup>

The career of memory in literature has been accompanied by an increase of interest in literary studies and research, which points to one more issue worthy of mention. It is the fact that memory was never, and still is not, a literary category *sensu stricto*. Although Jan Kleiner attempted to legitimize it, his interpretation was focused more on the general mechanism of the creative act and work’s reception, and for that reason it is too general to be used as an interpretative tool. And so, the concepts of memory in psychology, sociology, and history are a natural point of reference for usage in literary studies. This can be observed particularly in current interest in the narratology of private memory and category of narrational identity – both drawing inspiration from psychology.

With a slight delay, compared to the interest in the category of individual memory, the relation between literature and collective and cultural memory has taken center stage, especially among German scholars inspired by the concepts of Aleida and Jan Assman. The key category, necessary for the dissemination of this particular current, was the category of a cultural memory distinguished from short-term communicational memory. The first is shaped by language, image, and ritual. According to Assman, cultural memory is historically variable and brings together a “set of reused texts, imaginings and rituals, characteristic to every community and epoch, through which it nurses, stabilizes and passes on the image of itself, shared collectively (usually, but not necessarily) knowledge of the past upon which the group bases awareness of its unity and specificity.”<sup>14</sup>

German researchers divided the area of possible relations between literature and memory into three fields: literature’s memory, memory in literature and literature as a medium of memory.<sup>15</sup> Kałużny observes that the first has a metaphorical character and relates to the intertextual dimension of literature, which “remembers” in this manner and reminds about its past, just like in Renate Lachmann concept. Other possible interpretations of literature’s memory point to its connection with collective

<sup>13</sup> On testimonial literature see Czerminińska, M. “Testimony, Mark, and Silence Against the Experiences of History,” *Present and Memory of the Past: Understanding of History in Polish Literature of 20th and 21st Century*, edited by H. Gosk and A. Zieniewicz, Warsaw: 2006; Delaperrière, M. “Testimony as a Literary Problem,” *Second Texts*, vol. 3, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Assman, J. “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity” (trans. by S. Dyroff and R. Żyteniec), *Borussia*, vol. 29, 2003. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Kałużny, J. “Category of the Collective Memory in Literary Studies,” *Contemporary Culture*, 87, vol. 3, 2007. The author reviews a German book entitled *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven* by Erll, A. and A. Nünning (Hg.), Berlin, New York: 2005.

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memory, highlighting the importance of canon, and the constructivist character of literary historiography for building collective identity.

The second problem area encompasses issues of representing memories and memory as such in literature – from metaphors, literary topos, to narrative strategies and genres. The third field deals with relatively new issues, connected to increasing awareness of literature’s media appeal. The question which comes to the foreground when discussing this area is concerned with how “already existing concepts, such as intertextuality, knowledge of topos, genre conventions, canonical character of literature and literary renditions of the memory processes can increase the effectiveness of media influence of literature within the culture of memory.”<sup>16</sup>

What therefore is memory in literature? It is both a motivation and a building block of the presented reality’s architecture (in other words, a literary concept) as well as an existential category conditioning individual identity and being-in-the-world (a concept from an anthropological dictionary). Finally, it is a medium of the past and a receptacle of collective memory (from a socio-cultural perspective).

Contemporary discourse on memory in literature (and literary studies) gains shape in the polemical or approbative relation toward new tendencies in the culture and politics of memory. The fundamental point of reference is the already mentioned trend of coming back to questions of memory. It can be seen in the retro trends of popular culture, in monumentalizing and turning memory into a museum artifact in institutional practices, or increasing awareness of memory’s “medialization” and the mediatization of memory.<sup>17</sup> Finally, it can be spotted in pathologies of collective memory, its blockades and manipulations. Literature can be parasitic on these trends – let the highly stylized prose of Jacek Dehnel serve as an example. It can also problematize them, pointing to mechanisms of production or attempts to hide.

And one more thing. The historical discourse about memory, despite all the hopes it raised, has already been criticized for its abuses of power. This is how Ewa Domańska summarized this stage:

It became clear relatively fast that beyond claims and the pretense of memory toward history, there are hidden traps. It was so, because memory became a discourse of power in the process of building the history of identity-groups (anti-history) and the practicing of memory discourse became increasingly recognized as “political correctness.” Memory underwent a processes of ideologizing and turned out to be as accessible (or even more so) as the history it criticized. This was a new kind of politics of memory that the authorities used in place of the old model.<sup>18</sup>

It is yet another place where trajectories of history and literature go their separate ways. The literary discourse of memory, in its nostalgic variation, was criticized only for its mythologizing and idealization of the past. Certain limitations and fal-

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>17</sup> Korzeniewski, B. “Medialization and Mediatization of Memory: Carriers of Memory and Their Role in Shaping the Memory of the Past,” *Contemporary Culture*, vol. 3, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Domańska, E. *Unconventional Histories*, 16-17.

sifications of how memory was represented have been reported as well. Finally, the mechanisms of memory fabrication in culture have been identified. At this point, it is worthwhile to turn our attention to one of the most recent examples: a literary-visual collage by Darek Foks and Zbigniew Libera entitled *What Is the Liaison Officer Doing?* For them, the critical historical context is the Warsaw Uprising Museum, as well as a seductive filtering of history in the media and martyrological vision of the past. Thanks to those factors, they are able to show the very mechanism of fabrication of highly attractive images of history in contemporary culture.

However, memory still seems to be a positive hero in our ongoing literary discourse on memory. The reason might be that Polish literary studies only recently started focusing on the artistic practices of minorities. Optimists could say that, where the politics of memory becomes too powerful, the chance for literature appears. Nevertheless, the chance is not always taken.

## Places hollowed out of memory

From among vast and expanding plethora of mnemonic issues, I will focus on the relation between memory and cultural space, as seen from the perspective of the geopoetics.<sup>19</sup> In other words, I am interested in the question of “places of memory” and literature – moving the stress from issues of autobiographical, private memory onto the collective field. I would also like to add, at the very beginning, that this particular essay is merely a reconnaissance sketch of the problem, a draft of few possibilities which demand a broader search.

We could point to Pierre Nora, a French historian, as responsible for spreading interest in the relation between the space and memory. The initial definition of *lieux de memoire* – “places of memory” – from 1974, which has evolved many times along with Nora’s evolving views on the role of memory and commemoration, is straightforward in its formulation:

It is about places, in the literal sense of the word, where certain communities – whatever they may be – nation, family, ethnic group, or a party – all keep their *souvenirs*, or recognize them as irremovable parts of their identity: topographical places, such as archives, libraries or museums; monument-places like actual monuments, cemeteries, pieces of architecture; symbolic sites of anniversaries, pilgrimages, commemorations; or functional places – societies, autobiographies, and textbooks.<sup>20</sup>

What is important is that places of memory can be understood and seen literally in their physical dimensions – like in the case of museums, cemeteries, or monuments. We can also understand them metaphorically. If the latter is the case, all symbolical practices present in the collective memory become places of memory, shaping group’s identity and image.

<sup>19</sup> I have written about geopoetics more extensively in a volume: *Cultural Theory of Literature: Main Terms and Issues*, edited by M.P. Markowski, R. Nycz, Cracow: 2006.

<sup>20</sup> After Szpociński, A. “Places of Memory,” *Borussia*, vol. 29, 2003. 21.

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Can Pierre Nora's ideas inspire literary scholars? And we do not mean illustrational applications, since they seem rather obvious. For centuries, places of memory have been the theme of and spatial motif presented in literature. It is enough to mention only a few: libraries, museums, cemeteries, cathedrals, parks, gardens, and cities. There exist separate descriptive traditions within the literary realm for some of these, each with their own topos. The motif of the cathedral has a particularly distinctive and rich history, which proves, according to Małgorzata Czermińska, the deep submergence of Europe into cultural memory.<sup>21</sup>

However, in order to find other answers, not merely illustrations of Nora's concept, we should think about the status of "places of memory" in literature.

As I have mentioned, the memory of places and places of memory are amongst the most highly esteemed themes in the literature (both fiction and non-fiction) of recent years, and particularly within the boundaries of the literature of borderlands. Within that narrower framework, certain rules applying to any discussion about the language and the poetics of the places of memory have been developed, starting with names and attachment to the geographical toponymy, through a variety of spatial metaphors of memory, descriptions and plots derived from cultural vistas, including narrative strategies and the introduction of characteristic figures of the subject as a witness or archivist.<sup>22</sup> These issues cannot be reduced merely to the sphere of rhetorics and poetics and its contemporary realizations lead further to ethical concepts of literature as a place of memory, proving the inevitable involvement with ideology and power, and making us aware of the interdependency of history, geography, and collective memory.

However, that is not all. Reading a large collection of texts from the pool of contemporary literature, such as *Umschlagplatz* by Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, *Concert of the Great Bear* by Jerzy Limon, *Dukla, A Place* and *All Souls' Day* by Andrzej Stasiuk, *Streets of Szczecin* and *Farewell to the City* by Artur Liskowacki, or *A Particularly Long Litany* by Hanna Krall, proves that it is not places of memory that tend to be the most inflammatory, but rather places that are hollowed out of memory itself. *Umschlagplatz*, Arnsztajn's tenement house in Lublin, an empty lot after the Orthodox church was moved to a heritage park, anonymous graves in Beskid Niski, the streets and houses of Sopot seen as empty shells – all are signs of an amnesia of collective memory.

This erosion of memory is a starting point. It is a challenge for speculation, imagination, fiction, as well as reconstruction on the basis of the archival sources. Every one of the above mentioned writers makes a writerly and creational gesture

<sup>21</sup> See Czermińska, M. *Gothic and Writers*, Gdańsk: 2005.

<sup>22</sup> *Nota bene* one can speak about about poetics of memory in general in the literary discourse. See Kaczmarek M. "On the Prose of Memory (outline of the issue)" in the collection *Man and Time: Essays on the Contemporary Literature*, edited by E. Dąbrowska and A. Pryszczewska-Kozłub, Opole: 2002; Grochowski G. "Poetics of Memory," *Memory and Text: Cognitive and Cultural Aspects*, edited by T. Dobrzyńska and R. Kuncheva, Sofia: 2005.

when confronted with the places hollowed out of memory. The narrator of *A Place* partially imagines and partially digs deep in his memory, when recreating the history of an Orthodox church. In a similar fashion, the narrator of the *Concert of the Great Bear*, a book meant to be an anti-history, introduces fairytale legends and fictional stories as a legitimate part of his street's story. Hanna Krall, although close to achieving a documentary angle, not only combs through archives and talks to witnesses of the history of the Arnsztajn's tenement house, but also, in a way characteristic of her writing, creates fiction based on what is probable.

This is one pole of this particular writing – a literary one. The other one turns toward documentation, geography, and matter. Memory and imagination need a material trace of the past. Hanna Krall talks about it in the following manner: “It is important to be able to touch the things, to know that what you're describing happened right where you stand. There are old walls in the tenement house, old handles, a chimney, floors, gates, stairs that were used by Czchowicz... Mundane, everyday routines became a requiem, elegiac memory.”<sup>23</sup> From the matter of the Orthodox Church – thickness of logs, shape of the nails – the narrator of *A Place* builds a history of a building of the church.

This close connection between the writerly gesture and material character of the place proves that a place and literature need each other. Space hollowed out of memory regains its history and past (even if only imagined sometimes) and literature becomes anchored in geography and history.

Nonetheless, the erosion of memory is a challenge not exclusively for a writerly, literary gesture. In other words, the creative force of literature is not the goal in itself, but merely one of the dimensions of those small topographies of history. In literary representations of places of memory – places hollowed out of that memory – the goal is not only to document, preserve and to archive the past, but to create a dialog or an argument, and sometimes and open conflict with history and tradition. And so, the aim is not commemoration, but reanimation, provocation, opening old wounds, and stimulating the transmission of values endangered by institutional closure. Waclaw Berent was acutely aware of the twofold role of archiving places – like the library – and threats coming from institutionalizing memory. In his letter to the director of the National Library, Stefan Vrtel-Wierczyński, answering the latter's request for a manuscript of his *Alive Stones*, observed with a note of melancholy:

It is hard for me to believe in the usefulness of a manuscript of an ancient work, published many times already. What is more, how many works, highly praised in their time, do not survive the test of time, or die quietly in a nursing home of libraries as a material for dissection, conducted under the banner of Polish studies? Thought itself terrifies me! I wish to kindly request of your honor to order my manuscript be buried in the deepest tomb of yours, where it will undergo the aforementioned test....And to those very first researchers

<sup>23</sup> “History of Meeting With a Tenement House: A Conversation With Hanna Krall,” *Scriptores*, vol. 30, 2007. (Originally published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 12, 2005)

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under your supervision I wish, above anything else, to be able to establish themselves within their vaults filled with finest treasures of our literary tradition, under their own roof...<sup>24</sup>

Tomb, vault, dissection table – modernist metaphors of Berent in a very suggestive manner tie in with the debate over the “dead” archive and one that is “alive.”

The image of a library in *Ozimina* proves how important, for Berent, the role of the places of memory in transmission of history remains. Once again, it is not about the description of the space, but about a debate with Polish history, presented not discursively, but as a result of the confrontation of diverging points of view. Berent’s library is a labyrinth, a tomb, a tannery – the residuum of the leftovers of spirituality – a smoldering bonfire. The narrator of *Ozimina* does not provide the key to the unequivocal interpretation of the past and the reader does not know with whom to side. The task chosen by Berent himself and imposed on his historical-biographical writing – “to reanimate the logos of history” – is translated in this particular case into a dynamic representation of the place of memory. No conventional allegory exhausts its ambiguity. What is characteristic, the register of volumes in possession of the novel library of Nieman’s includes works from beyond the strict literary canon, works printed on the fringes (or borderland): “the rarest *rakowskie*, *oliwskie brzeskie*, *drohomilskie*, *mohylowskie* prints, coming from all the corners and borderlands of Polish Commonwealth, where there used to be a printing presses and now goats feast, or hives of dark human establishments prevail.”<sup>25</sup>

This objection against the institutionalization of places of memory is still present today. The narrator of *A Place*, a novel about an Orthodox church moved to a heritage park, states: “I’m not a lover of ruins. But the vision of a renovated temple, standing between other houses, along with different artifacts, taken out of their time and place, is tainted with the the fault of one-dimensionality. Scientists who study insects’ limbs<sup>26</sup> will debate over Russian and Latin influence on friezes and representations.” (35)

Places of memory in literary discourse are not only a “mnemo-technical pretext” for a journey deep into the private or collective past. These are not merely a narrational and fictional trigger, which releases literary strategies. The experience of a place of memory can initiate a task for a collective memory. The most prominent example would be, most likely, *Umschlagplatz* by Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz. The narrator attempting to reconstruct the space of Holocaust, is not motivated by the need to learn. He states clearly: “There are very few places like this one, on this entire planet. One could say that this is the only one of its kind. We surround it, we live around it – it’s a place in the heart of Warsaw. We should think about what

<sup>24</sup> Berent, W. “To the Directorate of the National Library”, *Dispersed Writings. Letters*, introduction, editing and critical commentary R. Nycz, W. Bolecki, Cracow: 1992. 583.

<sup>25</sup> Berent, W. *Ozimina*, edited by M. Głowiński, Wrocław: 1974. 153. More on the library in *Ozimina* I have written in the book *Form of the Labyrinth in Polish Prose of the 20th Century*, Cracow: 2000.

<sup>26</sup> reference to Czesław Miłosz [from translator]

it means to us...I think about the future. What does it mean for the Polish life, for Polish spirituality?"<sup>27</sup>

Also, Andrzej Stasiuk, on the occasion of visiting Lemkos' war cemeteries, established after the battle of Gorlice on All Saints Day, talks about places of memory becoming a task and a certain responsibility. The same scene appears in both descriptions:

And so I arrive. I light the candles and read out the names written in the Cyrillic alphabet. After all, it is the only way we can prevent somebody from dying entirely and forever – by saying his name without knowing his face...

On most of the graves there are no plaques with names left. Some cemeteries are barely recognizable – shadows of themselves. But even on those newly renovated ones people are buried nameless. Only in the archives of Vienna and Cracow one can find the names: Antoni Nemeč, Franciszek Kladnik, Jan Schweriger, Mateus Cepus, Gottlieb Kyselka, Artur Böhm, Leib Issman, Sandor Szasz, Josef Dymeček, Jan Kocanda, Adolf Angst, Emil Husejnagić, Hakija Juki, Tadeusz Michalski, Petro Santoni, Batto Delazer, Andre Stefanëië, Feliks Conti, Hatko Podlegar...<sup>28</sup>

Dukla is also a place that imposes the duty of remembering. "Dukla as memento," says the narrator, and an empty space after the temple from *Stories of Galicia*.

What is important – all the mentioned works are not attempting to build a social utopia, they do not create any communal myth, or an illusion of intercultural reconciliation. The skepticism is visible particularly in Hanna Krall's work, which with a hint of irony or even protest, openly doubts contemporary initiatives by the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Center from Lublin. This important institution, for years now, has sought to bring back the memory of Jewish culture and the Holocaust to Lublin. However, in Krall's mind, these are merely formal gestures: "The theater is looking for a form that, following Aristotle, through evoking sympathy and fear, leads us to catharsis... Theater does not want to believe that there will be no catharsis, that it must, just like Maria Janion, 'live with overabundance of pain, with the sense of irrevocable loss and mourning, which can never end.'"<sup>29</sup> Krall's judgement does not need to be a fair one, nonetheless she acutely observes, just like Pierre Nora, that the contemporary hypertrophy of commemorating can be a superficial attempt at cleansing, trying to transpose the issue of memory from the community onto an institution. We could repeat the statement of James E. Young concerning monuments: "Once we have shaped the memory into a form of a monument, we feel partially released from the duty of remembering. By taking on themselves the role of ones cultivating the memory, monuments seem to free spectators from the burden of memory."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Rymkiewicz, J.M. *Umschlagplatz*, Paris: 1988. 11.

<sup>28</sup> Stasiuk, A. *Fado*, Wołowiec: 2006. 114, 117.

<sup>29</sup> Krall, H. *Particularly Long Litany*, Cracow: 2004. 121. <http://www.ain.org.pl>

<sup>30</sup> Young, J.E. "Memory and Counter-Memory: In Search of Social Aesthetics of Holocaust Monuments," *Literatura na Świecie*, vol. 1-2, 2004.

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In these examples, we can observe that the experience of a place hollowed out of memory can become the beginning of a new literary project, in which the literature itself becomes a “live archive,” a “place of memory” that is designed to transmit the forgotten past.

## Toponymies, heterotopias and the Cratylan myth

Toponymies hold a special place in the literature of the places of memory. The name and the memory of the past hidden in that name seem to be one of the key elements of the contemporary discourse of the memory of places. Its role is not limited to spatial localization (even though these precise localizations in contemporary prose would deserve a separate study). Toponymy can sometimes hide a rudiment of the small topography of history. Let me provide an example from an essay by Artur Daniel Lisowacki, published in the collection *Farewell to the City and Other Essays From Memory*:

The first house in Szczecin. Chopin street. Not long ago it used to be a German street: Wussower Strasse. The road to Wussow – suburban, half-rural town. First Polonized, rather naively, to Waśów. Later, with more linguistic sense, to: Osów, Osowo. Chopin's: music of languages, foreign. Old Slavic buzz: Polish *osa* [wasp] and slavic *wuesā*.<sup>31</sup>

This literary etymology of Lisowacki shows how the name hides a historical micro-topography. Toponymy has a multi-layered, palimpsest-like, multi-lingual construction – just like the memory and cultural space to which it refers. What is more, Lisowacki embeds biographical elements into the topography of history. This essay, one could claim, is a spatialized biography, an inscription of these standard, artist's biographical markers – of his life and work – on the space and history of the city.

A name, however, can undergo the process of becoming symbolic just as often. Lisowacki makes this process of toponymy becoming symbolic a compositional axis and driving force of his essays, especially in *Streets of Szczecin*. One more example from Stasiuk's prose, who reveals this process of the name acquiring a symbolic meaning, at the same time confirming and metaphorically developing the concept of toponymy as a place of memory

According to dictionary, “dukła” means “small mine shaft created for conducting research, deposits search, ventilation, or for primitive mining.” All seems correct. My way is primitive. It calls to mind random drilling. It could be conducted anywhere. It wouldn't make any difference anyway, since the world is round. Just like memory, which starts at a point, and then gets tangled up with its layers and starts ranging further and further... finally, it consumes us and becomes our end...<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Lisowacki, A.D. “German Street, Copper Street,” *Farewell to the City and Other Essays From Memory*, Szczecin: 2002, 63. Similar etymologies fulfill another collection of essays by Lisowacki: *Streets of Szczecin*.

<sup>32</sup> Stasiuk, A. *Dukła*, Czarne Press: 1997, 42.

The name is the break leading to deposits of memory, it is a spring of the private memory and at the same time, in the context of the whole story, of the cultural memory of the place. However, along those mnemonic semantics, the relation with actual, real geography of the place and its history on the map of Poland presents itself as crucially important. Dukla is situated on the site of old drilling zones, prospect sites for oil.

Roland Barthes also talks about the relation between toponymies and memory. On the margins of his reading of Proust, he notices that the name has “the ability to summon (since you can endlessly refer to the essence contained in the uttered name), the ability to go deeper (since the name can be developed just like memory is being developed). The name is a way of reminding.”<sup>33</sup> He goes on, asking for what Proust needed his names. And the explanation is characteristic of contemporary discourse. Barthes claims that Proust’s toponymies are not markers, but signs performing poetic and polysemic functions.

Within the literary discourse on the places of memory this poetic and symbolic function is, of course, extremely important. But it seems like the toponymies tend oscillate between the two poles of geopoetics – geography and poetics – *between anchorage in locality and the very production of this locality*.

Toponymy in literature creates two problems: questions concerning the representation (more precisely, its suspension) and the problem located in a slightly different area, yet still connected with representation. The reappearing motif of renaming places is an act of symbolic violence, and the battle is fought for and through means of representation. That is why toponymy becomes a visible, and hence, key instrument of authorities. Not only history belongs to the victors, but also the map and territory. Jerzy Limon thematizes this power of appropriation when following the history of post-war Sopot:

Taking off the plaques with old names of the streets and replacing them with the new ones became an administrative act of sealing the retrieval of the city. It was a retrieval understood not only in material terms, seen as regaining control over a cluster of real estate. It indicated a sanctioned erasure of memory, with replacing or substitution even, of the city’s history. The name was scrubbed and a new one was written over the old one. And that is how the palimpsests of history have been created, which in this part of the world is a relatively common phenomenon. Every time, the winners write their history anew and wish to guarantee its permanence with new signs... There is no doubt that the names of the streets constitute an important element of the city’s semantics. They have always been, and always will be, the signs of history. And in this particular case, they are a part of a new history into which the city have been included. Names were becoming the elements of city’s iconosphere. City would fall from one tome to the next...<sup>34</sup>

Limon underlines that the incorporation of an annexed space has a linguistic character, but language, becoming a tool of symbolic violence, is subjected to the politics of representation, which confiscates memory and genealogy of the place.

<sup>33</sup> Barthes, R. “Proust: Appellations and Names,” *Readings*, Warsaw: 2001. 46.

<sup>34</sup> Limon, J. *Concert of the Great Bear: Cantata for One Street, Seven Stars, and Two Voices*, Warsaw: 1999. 116, 117.

# Anthropology in Literary Studies

The multi-dimensionality of toponymies, its opening for the spatial and temporal, literary and political, private and public parameters suggests to locating them next to heterotopies, as defined by Foucault. Let us remember that for Michel Foucault one of the rules of heterotopology is a marriage of the multiple and contradictory: “Heterotopy can compare in one real place (*lieu*) multiple spaces, a variety of places (*emplacements*), which are not compatible with each other.”<sup>35</sup> What is more, Foucault claims that the heterotopies are in reality heterochronies, built of layering times. Works presented here seem to be exactly that – literary heterotopies with multi-layered pasts.

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What is the role literature toward the places of memory? I sought to highlight the fact that the discourse of literary memory does not limit itself to commemoration. Literature is a vessel of historical memory because of its material, linguistic, and symbolic shape. But its role is one of the archive. I will repeat after Berent – it is interested not in *logos*, but in a live *bios* of history. That is why literature which thematizes, interprets, reconstructs, fabricates, or mythologizes the places of memory – both fictional and real – becomes not only a topography of history, but also a form of discussion with the past, present, and future.

Secondly, literature of the places of memory and oblivion reveals a tendency, that we could call, following Robert Trąba of *Borussia* circle, “the polyphony of memory.” It is about something relatively obvious – the fact that contemporary collective culture and identity are not homogenous. They do not speak in the same voice and do not possess the same memory. Literature which reanimates places of memory is one of the voices included in this polyphony – a voice of local memory, confiscated, and mutilated.

Thirdly, literature not only talks about places of memory, but itself becomes a “place of memory.” This metaphor could be understood in two ways. We could read it from the intertextual perspective, following Wolfgang Iser: “Storing of bits and pieces teared out from other texts should be understood as an attempt to save the past from its ultimate doom. The puzzle composed of scraps of cultural heritage prevents the catastrophe of forgetfulness. That is how intertextuality creates a blueprint of cultural memory.”<sup>36</sup> Alternatively, literature could be interpreted as a “place of memory” from the perspective of the ethical commitment of reminding us of what has been forgotten and repressed.

Finally, did literature, in exploring the relation between places and memory, bring anything of value into the reflection on space? It certainly testifies to the observations and thesis about the geographical involvement of literature and culture, its dependency from not only historical, but also local variables. This involvement,

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, M. “Other Spaces,” *Second Texts*, vol. 6, 2005. 122.

<sup>36</sup> Iser, W. “What Is the Anthropology of Literature? Difference Between Fictions That Explain And Discover,” *Second Texts*, vol. 5, 2006.

of course, is not in one direction, but has an obvious chiasmatic character. It also stresses its poetic, creational, and constructivist potential, within geopoetics, or the ways of representing the space. Literary topographies of history belong to imaginative geography on the one hand, creating symbolic spatial imaginariums, and on the other, dealing with geography on its local level.

The literature of places of memory locates itself in a third dimension – between memory and oblivion, between a phantomatic and imagined space, and a physical space of geography.

*Translation: Jan Pytalski*