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Trajectories of "Western Borderlands" Memory After 1989

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From Borderlands to Borderlands: the Dimensions of Return

The problem of naming arises amid cultural studies conducted after 1989 that focus on the space of (post) displacement and its literary representations, which address the issue of cultural "taming" of the western and northern territories incorporated into the Polish borders after the Potsdam Conference. We are directing our attention to a fundamental issue, however problematic, regarding difficulties with defining space (understood literally) that is undergoing an analytical process. Defining western and northern borderlands, adjoined to Poland after 1945, as "Recovered Territories," is seen today as an example of anachronism and axiologization, which follows the politics of memory created by the Polish People's Republic (PRL) stemming from the "myth of the Piast dynasty."¹ However, if the general postulate to rename (demythologize) this ephemeral land does not evoke any controversy, while the dominating proposal among the ones presented is to move towards

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1 See Halina Tumolska, *Mitologia Kresów Zachodnich w pamiętnikarstwie i beletryście polskiej (1945–2000)* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2007).

neutralizing that emotional charge, so far there has been no agreement as far as what should be the new "collective" name for spaces of (post)displacement. In academic and literary works, one can see – depending on the particular issue being stressed, as well as on the methodological perspective – a turn towards displaying primary features of spaces previously marginalized ("[Polish-German] borderlands"²), shifts from mythical designations towards historical ones ("the Polish post-Yalta Occident"³), or simply geographical ("Western Territories"⁴), as well as metonymies referencing studies of particularities and cultural representations regarding specific places or local realizations of the PRL's politics of memory (such as in the case of Gdańsk, Wrocław, the territory of Warmia, or Lubusz Land).⁵ That selection signals a variety of themes attached to the subject of displacement and all its branches. Reflection over these subjects becomes possible due to relatively new research initiatives as well as critical languages at our disposal (such as cultural studies, studies of memory, geo-poetics, or new regionalism). On the other hand, it seems to prove how difficult it might be to write a coherent, trans-regional history of displacement (an experience, which, after all, was trans-regional, transgressive and pivotal in shaping the post-war

2 See Kamila Gieba, "Od antygermańskiego przedmurza do pomostu ku Europie. O przemianach postaw wobec niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego w dyskursie regionów pogranicza (na wybranych przykładach)," in *Nowy regionalizm w badaniach literackich. Badawczy rekonesans i zarys perspektyw*, ed. Małgorzata Mikołajczak, Elżbieta Rybicka (Kraków: Universitas, 2012), 231-245; Arkadiusz Kalin, "Polsko-niemieckie pogranicza literackie: geopolityczne reorientacje w polskiej literaturze powojennej – rekonesans," in *Nowy regionalizm*, 209-231; Andrzej Sakson and Robert Traba, *Historia i pamięć polsko-niemieckiego pogranicza* (Olsztyn: Warmińska Purda, 2007).

3 See Joanna Szydłowska, *Narracje pojałtańskiego Okcydentu. Literatura polska wobec pogranicza na przykładzie Warmii i Mazur (1945-1989)* (Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo UWM, 2013).

4 See *Wspólne dziedzictwo? Ze studiów nad spuścizną kulturową na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych*, ed. Zbigniew Mazur (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2000); *Ziemie Zachodnie – historia i perspektywy*, ed. Wojciech Kucharski, Grzegorz Strauchold (Wrocław: Ośrodek „Pamięć i Przyszłość,” 2011).

5 See *Miejsce i tożsamość. Literatura lubuska w perspektywie poetyki przestrzeni i antropologii*, ed. Małgorzata Mikołajczak, Kamila Gieba, Marika Sobczak (Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, 2013); Małgorzata Mikołajczak, *Zbliżenia. Studia i szkice poświęcone literaturze lubuskiej* (Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, 2011); Hubert Orłowski, *Warmia z oddali. Odpominania* (Olsztyn: Borussia, 2000); Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, *Spotkania czasu z miejscem. Studia o pamięci i miastach* (Warszawa: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011), (specifically chapter VI: *Asymetrie pamięci: Gdańsk i Wrocław*).

demographic structure of the entire country⁶) fundamentally at the terminological level, all the while pointing to a larger issue:

Writing such book (a dictionary? a guide? a reportage? a novel?) seems as urgent as it is risky. It is urgent because we have tools and theories it requires: nomadism, post-colonialism, gender theories, new historicism, territorial reclamation, political turn, etc. It is risky because the catalogue of multi-genre, multi-language texts, which touch upon issues in various ways connected to the experience of displacement is endless.⁷

Without deciding at this point which of the options would be the most fitting if one were to try and write such a “utopian monograph,”⁸ I would like to merely stress one possible thread. While treating (post)settlement literature as a medium of cultural memory of post-war migration, I would like to highlight its entanglement in other traditions because it appears more important in 20th-century Polish culture in deciding the latter’s shape, ultimately posing questions about reasons and results. That is why I have decided to replace “Recovered Territories” with “Western Borderlands” in the title. However, before I can begin to explain the term’s usefulness in reflecting on the trajectory of contemporary cultural memory concerning the Western and Northern Territories, it is worthwhile to take a brief look at its history.

The term was popularized and became widespread during the inter-war period,⁹ and had its second rise to prominence in historiography and

6 See Piotr Eberhardt, *Przemieszczenia ludności na terytorium Polski spowodowane II wojną światową* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PAN, 2000).

7 Inga Iwasiów, “Hipoteza powieści neo-post-osiedleńczej,” in *Narracje migracyjne w literaturze polskiej XXI i XXII w.*, ed. Hanna Gosk (Kraków: Universitas, 2012), 210.

8 Ibid.

9 Few examples of phenomena surrounding literature: magazine “Kresy Zachodnie” published by the Association for Defense of Western Borderlands (Związek Obrony Kresów Zachodnich) (1921-1934) and the anthology: *Pisarze polscy Kresom Zachodnim*, ed. Bolesław Gorczyński, et al. (Warszawa: Association for Defense of Western Borderlands, 1925). As a side note, the term itself seems to be much older – it appears for the first time in a novel by Jan Zacharasiewicz *Na kresach. Powieść z naszych czasów w trzech częściach*: “Our Borderlands have changed. From Dnieper River and steppes of Ukraine they have moved to the Warta and Noteć rivers. Here is where we stand and fight for what is ours” – Jan Zacharasiewicz, *Na kresach. Powieść z naszych czasów w trzech częściach* (Lipsk: 1867), 335. In between the World Wars the term has been used primarily within the National Democracy circles as a counterpoint to Eastern Policy of Józef Piłsudski,

journalism¹⁰ in the 1990s. The effort to reclaim it for critical discourse in literature was undertaken by, among others, Halina Tumolska and Bogusław Bakula with their initial attempts at cataloguing prose works dedicated to the experience of migration. Bakula, in a text entitled "From Borderlands to Borderlands: A Postwar Migration Novel about the Western Borderlands"¹¹ explained his choice with the fact that in the case of northern and western territories, the "new reality had a borderland-like character for a period of time."¹² The argumentation at this juncture does not provoke much dissent: indeed, especially during the initial post-war years, one was faced with a borderland in the most fundamental, literal meaning of the word, synonymous to a border area of a specific geographical area.¹³ Moreover, the validity of using that term comes from the fact that those areas became inhabited, to a large extent, by populations coming from the pre-war, eastern provinces of the country, which in turn resulted in a natural transfer of traditions and customs, or a broadly understood *habitus* – a borderland's mentality to the west. Thus, the exchangeability of the term in question has to rest, Bakula continues to explain, on a simple relation between territorial losses and gains which occurred after 1945, transferring "old" cultural capital (weakened by the war) to a new place. Finally, by creating a particular typology of settlement-inspired texts (including several narrative archetypes such as western-style adventures, stories of veterans, romantic exploits, or utopian pioneers),¹⁴ Bakula signalsizes the problem of intertextual references to the so-called current of borderland literature as well. The latter, although the author himself does not suggest it

which has been promoted for economic reasons (an unquestionable profit for the "young Poland" and a retribution for Partitions) and social-cultural motives (pointing attention to struggles against *kulturkampf* and germanization taking place in the ex-Prussian territories).

10 See Zbigniew Rykiel, "Kresy zachodnie w Polsce," in *Kresy – pojęcie i rzeczywistość*, ed. Kwiryna Handke (Warszawa: Slawistyczny Ośrodek Wydawniczy, 1997), 207–228.

11 Bogusław Bakula, "Z Kresów na Kresy. Powojenna migracyjna powieść o kresach zachodnich," in *Bakula Antylatarnik oraz inne szkice literackie i publicystyczne* (Poznań: WiS, 2001).

12 Ibid., 68.

13 See <http://sjp.pwn.pl/szukaj/kresy>, accessed Septemeber 19, 2014. In his later text, Bakula writes about Borderland-like character as 1) multi-national; 2) multi-cultural; 3) settler-like, or even colonizing; 4) devastated; 5) fulfilling defensive functions; 6) Boundary-like; 7) forbidden and full of mysteries and secrets, dangerous. See Bogusław Bakula, "Między wygnaniem a kolonizacją. O kilku odmianach polskiej powieści migracyjnej w XX wieku (na skrótnym tle porównawczym)," in *Narracje migracyjne*, 167.

14 See Bakula, *Z Kresów*, 74.

directly, seems to constitute a kind of dictionary of “useful” terms and motives for describing realities of the recovered territories, which initially had “similar” characteristics at the beginning.¹⁵ Hence, one more interpretation of the “borderlands” emerges. They are understood as a point of reference in the analysis of settlement literature.

Despite the logic of this argumentation, I am willing to risk a statement that from a broader context of Poland’s culture of memory, building such analogies can create a sensation of inadequacy, and cause a cognitive dissonance. In short: the term “Western Borderlands,” mentioned at the beginning and characterized by the highest degree of re-axiologizing potential among listed terms, in my opinion, seems to fail the test of facing a discursive load associated with the “Borderlands” in the sphere of culture, or within the place it occupies in the writing process of Polish narratives. Treated as a matrix in the process of cultural reproduction, it loses its syntactical connectedness while simultaneously achieving the absolute, attaining an absolutizing value.¹⁶

While employing this term, I do not intend to forcefully claim the simple translatability of some borderland formula as a superior analytical category, or to prove its universal character when used to describe the phenomenon

15 Ibid. In one of the first, at this point “classic,” texts from the realm of Borderland studies, Eugeniusz Czaplewicz created a list of Borderland’s metonymies, among which he includes: exoticism, endangered boundary, school of bravery and chivalry, deep eternal forest, no man’s land, the kingdom of beautiful and proud Nature, folk elements, the meta-space of adventure, goal of a particular mission and organic work (economic outposts), “chopped off” limbs of a nation state’s organism, intense condensation of antagonisms, the front line of Christianity, places of memory (e.g. tombstones). Even though in earlier works of settler literature there were mentioningss of boundaries of socialism, fields of battle with elements of fascism and capitalism, labor heroes, eerie flat landscapes every now and then pierced by gothic towers, it was Gniezno and Grunwald that rose to the foreground of memory, and the “outpost” was no longer a farm, but a State Collective Farm and a factory. Functions of those elements of the world presented were close to those proposed by Czaplewicz. See Eugeniusz Czaplewicz, “Czym jest literatura kresowa?,” in *Kresy w literaturze*, ed. Eugeniusz Czaplewicz, Edward Kasperski (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1995), 15.

16 See Mieczysław Dąbrowski, “Kresy w perspektywie krytyki postkolonialnej,” *Porównania* 5 (2008); Jan Kieniewicz, *Ekspansja, kolonializm, cywilizacja* (Warszawa: DiG, 2008); Dariusz Skórczewski, “Melancholia dyskursu kresoznawczego,” in Dariusz Skórczewski, *Teoria-literatura-dyskurs. Pejzaż postkolonialny* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2013), *Kresy – dekonstrukcja*, ed. Krzysztof Trybuś, Jerzy Kałużny, Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryna (Poznań: Wydawnictwo PTPN, 2007); Robert Traba, “Kresy: miejsce pamięci w procesie reprodukcji kulturowej,” in *Polska Wschodnia i Orientalizm*, ed. Tomasz Zarycki (Warszawa: Scholar, 2013); Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą* (Kraków: Universitas, 2011).

of migration memory.¹⁷ An alternative term, "Western-Borderland-like," is useful primarily due to its ambivalent character. In its literal meaning, it refers to a geographical area, where a post-war settlement operation has been taking place. At the same time, however, it refers one back to its "Borderlands" specificity understood as proposed by Bakula. However, it could be seen as an antonym of a great tradition, based – as I have already mentioned – on similar narrative structures, but set in a completely different historical-social context, hence distorted and functioning similar to a funhouse mirror. Finally, "Western-Borderland-like" could be defined as a looped story about the original Borderlands, only written from a greater spatial distance (the subject resettled out West), as well as temporal (for example, from a perspective of a descendant of the displaced and brought up in the West). Within such twists of meanings, the juxtaposition of "Borderland-like" (with the entire trove of its cultural meanings) and "Western-Borderland-like" (with its spectral character: an amalgamation of, often contradictory, artificially generated meanings from the interwar period, and the period after 1945) seems to prove useful also when using guidelines and conclusions established in recent years within the critique circle of the so-called Borderlands discourse. I employ terms "Western Borderlands/Western Borderland-like" primarily to signalize the unintentional involvement of that literature in a dominating identity-memory discourse, which is being established by so-called Borderland nostalgia.¹⁸

The perspective assumed in this work is a result, firstly, of the fact that at the base of displacement experiences, there lies a loss of Borderlands understood not only as an element of the national *imaginarium*, but simply as an actual homeland. Although all the way up to 1989, there existed a specific "ban" on expressing opinions on the subject of "lost roots" and on the discomforts

17 Bogusław Hadaczek has provided such proof in his consecutive publications devoted to Borderland literature. He develops concepts of "symbiotic Borderland people" and "Borderlands of post-Yalta children" – concepts legitimate to a degree (which I talk about later on) – by classifying works of writers such as Zygmunt Trziszka or Henryk Panas (most colorful and vivid characters of post-war settler literature), and Paweł Huelle, Stefan Chwin or Kazimierz Brakoniecki (the most outstanding authors of the "small homeland" literature) as a direct continuation, or a "post-war outgrowth" of Borderland current. He explains that authors have been raised in "Borderland environment" and come from resettled families. While the biographical-familial key is correct to a certain degree, the thesis stating that against such points of departure the theme and context of their work (located in the space of "Recovered Territories") remain a secondary phenomenon, less important than "Borderland characters," becomes problematic. See Bolesław Hadaczek, *Historia literatury kresowej* (Kraków: Universitas, 2011), 365–400.

18 See Jan Sowa, "Zamiast zakończenia: Nostalgia, bohaterowie i miejsca pamięci rzeczywistości postkolonialnej," in *Fantomowe ciało króla*, 495–536.

(psychological, cultural, social, or economic) stemming from it, from forced relocations, it should be recognized as an inevitable biographical context that reflects on the structure of the memory of an individual, statistical repatriate. An asymmetrical relationship of “live memory,” cultural memory, as well as collective memory created by the discourse of the PRL has been based on the “mechanism of a phantom reality in the system of history monopolized by the ideology of a “socialist country”: everyone knew that the [former] Borderlands existed, but nobody spoke of them publically, or officially.”¹⁹ On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that the quality of being Borderland-like, understood as a mental, ideological, or narrative category has a crucial impact on the process and structure of collective memory of displacements, also in that phantom reality. What is more, one could risk stating that Borderlands’ discourse determines contemporary cultural memory. Bakula writes:

That [particular] literary and cultural myth has consumed the Polish imagination, trapped it and, in a certain sense, limited its willingness to explore the contemporary reality. The literature of the Borderlands that references migration, or stems from it directly, one that is nostalgic, trying to rebuild broken ties of tradition, has submerged Polish imagination in a peculiar utopia.²⁰

Longing for a lost place in the context of national migrations, which is of interest to me, appears to be a danger, since it demotivates us from investigating the situation on the ground, as well as critically rethinking of one’s own *de facto* post-migration condition. It often leads to becoming trapped in a retrospective bubble of imaginings and phantoms, or of expelling authentic experiences of the “displaced” subject outside of the narrative, and creating a kind of temporal gap in textual reconstructions of his or her fate (connected to growing up or assimilating in new cultural and political realities). The tendency to enclose oneself in retrospective utopias is aided by strongly ideologized realities of the contemporary literary field, which determine the shape of literature. That separate, idealized current in post-war prose constituted the official medium of memory of “repatriation,” and introduced the preferred vision of “Recovered Territories” into circulation. The experience of migration, in most cases, was forced into strict narrative schemes which had been subordinated to the rhetoric of profit, a return to the motherland, the

19 Traba, “Kresy: miejsce pamięci,” 157.

20 Bogusław Bakula, “Kolonialne i postkolonialne aspekty polskiego dyskursu kresoznawczego. (Zarys problematyki),” *Teksty Drugie* 6 (2006): 67.

legitimization of "Polishness" and "familiarity" of territories recovered after 1945 or, seen from a broader perspective, simple praising of the socialist order. That is what could explain, to a large extent, its fiasco as well: its accompanying argumentation had an ideological character, and not an emotional one.

(Non) memory, or the inability to create cultural memory of displacement, and resettlement, is directly connected to "Borderland longing," since it constitutes one of its elements. At a time when public discourse is lacking space to grieve at the right moment after an actual loss, the following stages of working through that historical trauma cannot take place. As a result, one could assume, in a slightly simplified manner, that the ideologization understood as an "emotional block" has resulted in transformation of grief into a particular kind of melancholy, in which the "resettled" subject:

keeps living in the world of simulacras, substitutes of reality, "necessary fictions," and cultivates the suffering coming from his impoverishment. That impoverishment, however, should be understood not so much as a physical loss of territory, but rather in terms of an individual and collective trauma of cultural disinheritance – as a [...] lack and ontological incompleteness, [a] painfully felt deprivation.²¹

In consequence, we are speaking of a meaningful shift: not so much about being attached to the lost object, but rather to a primary gesture of its loss.²² That is how one could characterize post-war "Borderland literature,"²³ creating a particular counter-discourse of Northern and Western Territories that connects with the year 1989.

Artificial Paradises: the "Western Borderlands" Camouflage

The regime change of 1989 was followed by the "unlocking" of memory and the end of censorship which provided a chance for correcting narratives of experience distorted by the official discourse of the passing epoch, as well as reworking through the above mentioned "trauma of cultural disinheritance." However, when one attempts to describe the transformation of memories of those individuals displaced after 1989, it appears as if they were emerging from a peculiar game of absence, from a multi-dimensional practice of

21 Skórczewski, *Teoria-literatura-dyskurs*, 129.

22 Ibid., 131. Compare Slavoj Žižek, "Melancholy and the Act," *Critical Inquiry* Summer 4/26 (2000): 660.

23 Skórczewski, *Teoria-literatura-dyskurs*.

camouflaging which constituted their very existence. In the following part of my essay, I would like to point our attention to three literary projects that have led not so much to memory's full unlocking, but rather to a specific form of paralysis representing literature's (post)displacement identity.

In the 1990s Borderlands literature became enriched by the prose works of writers born in the West (the second generation of migrants), those "post-Yalta children," who explored their family genealogies in their work (such as Włodzimierz Paźniewski, Stanisław Srokowski, Aleksander Jurewicz, Marek Ławrynowicz, Anna Bolecka, Piotr Szewc, et. al.), and for whom the trauma of resettlement became an irremovable element of their personal archive of memory and a kind of loop:

For those who had not undergone that specific kind of "displacement" in the form of being expelled from their "Borderland homeland" personally, the memory of it, stored within another memory, became a "displacement" experience in and of itself. Deprived of its original meaning marking those who personally experienced it, the memory transformed into an intersubjective sense of lack felt by the general population, becoming an element of the "Polish fate."²⁴

That situation brings about a particular imperative to the story, as stated by the narrator of *Lida*: "I knew that if I failed to utter that story of displacement, my life would be incomplete, it would have a shadow lurking – some unfinished business."²⁵ The problem, however, lies in the fact that the novel is merely (or maybe a s m u c h a s) a prologue and epilogue of the "story of displacement and resettlement." An adult narrator, brought up somewhere else, arrives in the land of his grandparents and starts to live through their fate, rotted not in their experience but in their text, from which emerges a vision of reality having very little to do (once again) with the current reality as well as social experience. Such a compensatory model of writing, of enclosing oneself in a well-known bubble of imaginations, constitutes a kind of camouflaging which is based on hiding behind family genealogies the sense of (one's own) deprivation, connected to growing up in a (post)displacement space.

Excluding the most contemporary prose devoted to the Borderlands written from the "western" perspective, which incidentally constitutes a separate notion of the history of Polish literature, I would like to take a closer look at the conceptual locus of "Borderlands" in literature inhabiting the Western

²⁴ Ibid., 129.

²⁵ Aleksander Jurewicz, *Lida* (Kraków: Zak, 2004), 17.

cultural landscape. Remedy for that post-memory loop was supposed to take the form of literature about "individual homelands,"²⁶ or – as Tadeusz Komendant would like it to be – the "literature of roots,"²⁷ which was an attempt at cleansing the "Western Borderlands" discourse of remnants from the PRL (P. Huelle, S. Chwin, A. Liskowacki, O. Tokarczuk, M. Sieniewicz, K. Brakoniecki, K. Czyżewski, and many others). It is assumed that these narratives, states Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, "point one's attention to their complex, multi-national and multi-cultural history. It is not a preservation of identity, but debating over it that is a foundation of memory practices in those regions today."²⁸ Focus on tracing inscriptions of otherness inscribed into western and northern spaces was supposed to bring back justice, and resuscitate the voice of the already absent host in these described spaces, as well as recreate their palimpsest structure. It was accompanied by a strong sense of duty for:

taking upon oneself the archeology of the place, as well as looking into traces left by the Other. From a broader social perspective, however, the fundamental stake at hand was the attempt at transforming the collective consciousness, of granting it a story, which would allow for "taming" and settling the space.²⁹

The whole effort was for "roots, which needed to be grown,"³⁰ for a story to be told not necessarily about exiles, but settlers. Paweł Huelle himself, in one of his early interviews, stated that the experience of his grandmother, who came to Gdańsk from Lviv, was "nothing more, or less, than a deep background,"³¹ but what he was interested in was a complex history of the space in which he grew up.

26 Literally "little homelands" in the original Polish.

27 See Tadeusz Komendant, "Czym była, czym mogła być literatura korzenna," *Tytuł 1* (1997); Robert Ostaszewski, "Lokalni hodowcy 'korzeni,'" *Dekada Literacka* 7/8 (2002): 41-51; Przemysław Czapliński, "Mapa, córka nostalgii," in Czapliński, *Wzniosłe tęsknoty. Nostalgie w prozie lat dziewięćdziesiątych* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001), 105-128; Czapliński, "Literatura małych ojczyzn – koniec i początek," in *Pisać poza rok 2000. Studia i szkice literackie*, ed. Andrzej Lam and Tomasz Wroczyński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2002), 110-127.

28 Saryusz-Wolska, *Spotkania*, 236.

29 Krzysztof Uniłowski, "«Małe ojczyzny» i co dalej? Krytyka, rewizje i nawiązania do nurtu z lat dziewięćdziesiątych," in *Kresy – dekonstrukcja*, 54.

30 *Ibid.*, 56.

31 Paweł Huelle, "Nigdy nie jechałem do Lwowa," *Tytuł 2* (1992): 37.

Krzysztof Uniłowski would write after many years, in the context of *Weiser Dawidek*, that “the literature of «individual homelands» is the bread and butter of Borderlands’ literature in 20th-century Polish prose.”³² One could risk a statement that the moment of breakthrough (and the “unlocking of memory” connected to it) not only liberated the language of the story from the censors’ do’s and don’ts, but caused a more problematic need for finding new language in general as well. The generation of “roots writers” – continuing Uniłowski’s line of thought – directed its search towards post-war literature of the Borderlands (both national and émigré), the accessibility of which constantly improved in the eighties. Even though it constituted more of a historical phenomenon at the time, it was not the chronology, but the reading experience that determined its popularity. The most important element of such camouflaged and repeated transfer of historical material would not be the concept of organic work or the Borderlands understood as a place of conflict for a strong collective identity, but rather the concept of an idealized, multicultural Borderlands created on the pages of post-war novels by authors such as Stanisław Vincenz, Jerzy Stempowski, Józef Wittlin, Andrzej Kuśniewicz, Andrzej Strykowski, Józef Mackiewicz, Andrzej Chciuka, Tadeusz Konwicki, Julian Strykowski or Zygmunt Haupt. Features characteristic for that literature can be found in “Western Borderlands” novels as well. In attempts to describe these new “artificial paradises,”³³ there sprang a vision of trans-ethnic dialogue, polyphony, hybridity, coexistence of competing values and hierarchies. Such a vision was also open to the voice of the Other who, in Levinasian manner, became a somewhat domesticated identity in a situation of “ambivalence, ambiguity, and volatility.”³⁴ The worlds of the past were “told with help of images and anecdotes,”³⁵ and finally characters and objects “lost their real, ontological status, and turn[ed] into signs, becoming nutrition[al] material for myth-creating processes.”³⁶ Practically, it equated to a return to a “brilliant epoch” of childhood with strong origin/genealogical themes underpinning family myths, initiating experiences motivated by encountering Otherness. The narrative was frequently told in the framework of a child’s biography (e.g. *Weiser Dawidek*, *Opowiadania na czas przeprowadzki*

32 Uniłowski, “Małe ojczyzny,” 54.

33 Marek Zaleski, “Naprzód w przeszłość,” in Marek Zaleski, *Formy pamięci* (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz/Terytoria, 2004), 179.

34 Dąbrowski, “Kresy w perspektywie,” 12–14.

35 Zaleski, “Naprzód w przeszłość,” 180.

36 Ibid.

by Paweł Huelle), or the perspective of the Other who had been excluded up to that point (e.g. *Hanneman* by Stefan Chwin or *Cukiernica pani Kirsch* by Artur Liskowacki).

If one were to search for the memory of displacement and resettlement in a vision of a world constructed in this way, one would realize there is very little of it left. From a rich repertoire of texts, it is enough to bring up Huelle's *Opowiadania na czas przeprowadzki*. The potential of the "moved" and "displaced" condition of the protagonists, already suggested in the title, does not seem to be used to its fullest extent, since one is talking about movement in time, rather than in space. Despite small, albeit persistent, signals of change in the geographical-historical order, traces of the past seem to dominate over the space, to dazzle, amaze, fascinate, and determine its overall character. It is visible already at the basic level of the interchangeability of proper names of the explored places. And so, in a story entitled *Winniczki, kahuze, deszcz* from this collection, which is about a family's attempts at fixing their budget with the father, the narrator, being fired (most likely for political reasons), a "retrospective" map of the immediate area is created: although Stolzenberg, Luftkurort Oliva, Nawitzweg, Glettkau and Langfuhr "morph" into Pohulanka Oliwa, Dolne Młyny in Brętów, Jelitkowo or Wrzeszcz, other names have remained "stronger than the war, displacement and fires, changing the way they sound only slightly, and [only] on the surface, like Ohra to Orunia, Brosen to Brzezno, or Schidlitz to Siedlce"; most importantly, however, the most "precious" names have survived in this manner, ones "which [have] lasted by their sound like old people who stick to long trodden paths."³⁷ The harmony between two realities – the one from the past, unlivd and German, revealed through a line of mediations (such as maps, photographs, books written in Shwabacher, overheard stories), and the present one, Polish, uninteresting, with piling existential problems – becomes unbalanced, favoring the former.

Another good metaphor pointing to a dislike towards the present can be found in adventures of a protagonist from a short story entitled *Stół* [*The Table*]. The piece of furniture from the title is a German kitchen relic, an axis of home space, and a remnant of the former tenant. The reception of the above-mentioned table oscillates between fascination with traces of a former German way of life, its quality and reliability, as well as disgust stemming from the fact that the table belonged, after all, to a "Nazi foe" (as the mother of the narrator used to say). That dislike leads to its ultimate destruction, and a search for something more appropriate and inherently "one's own." In the end, it turns out that all the stores in Gdańsk carry only triangle shaped tables, produced as

37 Paweł Huelle, *Opowiadania na czas przeprowadzki* (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz/Terytoria, 1999), 46.

a part of some unspecified six-year plan. Hence, the family remains without a table – the home's *axis mundi*. Only a trip to a mysterious carpenter in the Żuławny region allows them to replace the missing piece. It is Kaspar, a man-ghost, an Easterner who belongs to a different, old, and mythologized order; a man who is able to preserve the peace and family life of the narrator.³⁸ Rescue comes in the form of the past, and most often it was somebody else's past.

Finally, the last piece from the collection, entitled *Mina*, is one of the few stories in that volume where there appears a direct reference to displacement and resettlement (the protagonist Mina has moved to Gdańsk from her small town, most likely located somewhere in the Lower Silesia region). The topic of the post-Yalta migrations seems to be an exotic one, as if recalling a tale of far-away, mythical lands. The narrator listens closely to a story told by a woman about her childhood and home parts:

Mina's childhood, that distant time which the monologue dived into, as if to take a deep breath, was a far away and unknown land to me, even though Mina was born, and spent the first twenty years of her life in the same country as I did. A Silesian town, located close to the German border, emerged from her stories as an exotic island [...] She also spoke of Russians, a few thousand of them in town, and about a closed district, where Soviet soldiers lived with their families. [...] There was, however, much more that I didn't know about. A closed mine, immobile wheels of industrial elevators, or a settlement of Russian soldiers, where sounds of gunshots and harmonica, or choral singing, could be heard, were for me as distant as were the stories about Mont Hermon and the fallen angels.³⁹

Mina hides a secret within herself. She carries a traumatic experience on her shoulders (a rape which took place beside the Russian barracks). What is more, she is "surrounded by cold." She can feel it with her entire body, a cold which has existed from the very beginning almost.⁴⁰ Living with cruel, personal memories, she begins falling into insanity, and is locked up in a psychiatric hospital. One could say that her situation looks terrible and without any chance of improvement. The already adult narrator, who comes to visit her, observes the disintegration of her body and soul. She keeps coming back to him in his dreams, almost haunting him. In the latter part of the story,

38 See Saryusz-Wolska, *Spotkania*, 301.

39 Huelle, *Opowiadania*, 173–177.

40 Ibid., 174.

a citizen of Gdańsk, who is also locked up in that hospital, a "man with rakes," an old border patrolman awaiting his Angel who will save him from sin, starts to fascinate the narrator. He allegedly shot at a girl who tried to run across the border and flee from the country. Her body was never found, and the entire story, taken with a pinch of salt, begins to function almost as a biblical tale of guilt and punishment.

The story is kept in a strongly gnostic atmosphere, and is apparently based on the universal struggle between good and evil. However, in the context of the issue I am specifically interested in, Mina becomes a figure of Otherness from an "exotic island," recounting tales as removed as "Mount Hermon and the fallen angels," sustaining a sense of distance and highlighting the fact that the narrator does not identify with the heroin's experience. Even though the experiences of characters are deeply rooted in the space of resettlement – almost typical of it one could say – they begin to function like fairytales in this case. Historical elements evoke a different order of reality, constituting merely an excuse for undertaking a metaphysical tale: "It is not a case of personality; Huelle seems to be suggesting something more. It must be some dramatic principle of existing in the space of Borderlands – not so much a political, but rather an existential one."⁴¹ That universalizing frame marginalizes individual experience of the "world tainted with war,"⁴² the present time which runs on the rhythm of compulsive repetitions (Mina's sexual promiscuity), an enclosure within an entirely intimate landscape of one's own experience. Inability to cope with that experience eventually leads to madness. In order to avoid it, to prevent succumbing to the trauma deeply connected with the reality of war, as the narrator seems to be suggesting, it is safer to seek salvation in tales about the Other.

Risking simplification, one could assume that the plot of the stories mentioned above takes place somewhat outside of politics and history, turning the text into a gesture of negating the present. What is more, one could have an impression that the intimate, recollective, first-person perspective does not constitute a reversal of any particular, historical reality, but refers back to metaphysical insufficiencies, as well as to the only appearance of existence in general. As a result, it leads to an enclosure within a retrospective utopia of escaping from the present into a (quasi)modernist template, underpinned by a desire for an essential identity and mythologization of a multi-ethnic community of "denizens" (absent as such). On the one hand, one could assume these actions to be anachronistic against the challenges of the "new

41 Bakula, *Narracje migracyjne*, 176.

42 Ibid.

reality,” but on the other hand, one’s attention is caught by the popularity of that type of prose, leading to its trivialization. “If the ‘homeland’ constitutes one’s roots, if the city is a palimpsest of cultural memory, if the young hero undergoes initiation[,] the true problem of locality has been covered by clichés and banalities.”⁴³ One could say that the phenomenon takes place recurrently as the banality fulfills readers’ fancy and assumes an actual position in the process of creating the cultural memory of the region. That model of writing, framing oneself within that well-fitting banality, creates a vision of a multi-cultural reality based on pseudo-anthropological reflections. However, there is also a second type of camouflage spread between the already absent Other and the negation of the reality that defines the People’s Republic of Poland – a reality, which for many, defined childhood.

Finally, it is worthwhile to mention a work by Kazimierz Brakoniecki, as well as writers focused on Borussia. The work developed more or less at the same time as the literature of “individual homelands” and was considered to be one of its variants guided by yet another symbol with a Borderland pedigree – the Atlantis of the North. The symbol’s roots go back to the fascination with Miłosz’s concept of “homeland Europe”:

In the eighties, reading *Native Realm* by Miłosz became a discovery of Baltic Europe, which I later called the Atlantis of the North. And it was Miłosz [...] who became a patron of my poetry of lives, metaphysically concrete and synonymous with histories, with which I tried to universalize the local fate and place (*worldology*)... The cult of the individual homeland, or a cult of the metaphysics of space in *Native Realm*, which was supposed to be comprised of my province of Man (Olsztyn and its surrounding areas) as well, oriented one towards a non-antagonistic, dialogue-driven cultural vision of mutual presence, a mutual presence of peoples and nations, living and the dead, myths and symbols.⁴⁴

The poet from Olsztyn goes further, writing, “It is not about praising the home town regardless of its value, but about expressing man’s fate in his psycho-historical context.”⁴⁵ Attention is drawn, firstly, to the universalizing idiom, and secondly to the cult of the past, the specter of ancestors that

43 Elżbieta Rybicka, *Geopoetyka. Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich* (Kraków: Universitas, 2014), 335.

44 Kazimierz Brakoniecki, *Polak, Niemiec i Pan Bóg. Olsztyńskie szkice osobiste* (Olsztyn: Borussia, 2009), 51-52.

45 Ibid., 72.

determines the entire outlook on reality. "Memory became a main tool within the literature of people's roots, used not only to describe the lost world [...], but also to build a higher, epistemological order,"⁴⁶ Brakoniecki states elsewhere, and adds that the starting point for creating prose beyond the notion of individual homelands, as well as post-nostalgic prose should be realistic, and critical in its basic assumptions, and universalistic in its message. On the basis of several statements, the conclusion that comes to mind is that of individual-homeland authors retreating into aesthetic forms and popular clichés, and post-Borderland authors hiding in an emotional world of their grandparents (not their parents, which is telling!), or Prussians enclosing themselves in a particular kind of tombstone, in which every other step brings an almost paranoid, ethical reflection, and a generalizing metaphysical argumentation. Brakoniecki admits:

Yes, I am a melancholic, mystical atheist. I partake in an archaic cult of my ancestors, a cult of my/our dead, because I am dead myself already; I look at you from that side of a photograph, from a cloud, from that small Earth, from that apartment in Barczewo and Olsztyn, from that street in a world shrouded in memory and forgetting, which unglues from today's reality. I speak the Polish language of men killed and dead, who demanded from me to express their complaints for years, and so I finally fulfilled my mission and felt freed.⁴⁷

Even though those recalled words constitute a reaction to critical opinions on Brakoniecki's Prussian project, there is no irony in referring to the project itself (contrary to what one could have thought). It is a serious line of reasoning, proving the correctness of the proposed vision of a local community. From that vision emerges the last type of articulatory paralysis in the story about migrations that spans between the cult of ancestors and the "worldly," universalizing ethical approach.



All of the above mentioned cases point, in the first place, to a multilayered resistance to the Borderland template, unwillingly becoming language that is familiar and understandable, and only later guiding us towards the past. Worlds presented in the prose of origins, stemming from a nostalgic attitude,

46 Kazimierz Brakoniecki, *Prowincja człowieka* (Olsztyn: Borussia, 2004), 18.

47 Brakoniecki, *Polak*, 12.

were headed at a certain point, according to Przemysław Czapliński, “towards a complete restitution of the past, hence writing of it was guided by [...] a wish to meticulously replicate that past reality.”⁴⁸ Those narrative steps came from an ethical and nostalgic need, but also seemed to be fundamentally defined by melancholy and a desire for compensation. In restitutions themselves, resettlement experiences pertaining to the present become negative points of reference. One can see them almost as an impulse to retreat. Hence, turning “towards that distant and immediate past of a multinational Polish Republic does not seek any truth about that past, but rather an escape from the problems of the present.”⁴⁹

These hardships could be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it is not about “taming” or “un-remembering” the tale of the Other, but about:

a double bottom, often pushed aside in our culture. We “tame” not only the post-German character of the western parts of Poland, but also the cultural homogeneity of our country. Although coming from one of the most ethnically, religiously, linguistically and nationally diverse areas of Europe, we inhabit territory, which is extremely homogenous today. The trauma of that change has not been, as it seems, fully worked through in our culture, and some timid attempts at coping with it can be found under the veil of taming the “post-Germaness.”⁵⁰

Secondly, such a situation refers us back not only to the question of the social composition of our country that was lost after 1945, but also to events that took place later on, as well as results of those events, reflected directly on the condition of the generation’s identity; a generation raised in that “homogenized” Poland. Robert Ostaszewski described a search for a cut-to-fit, but ultimately only a replacement, identity as follows:

The entire literature of “individual homelands” is based on a dogmatic assumption (hence not requiring any proof) that a person should seek his or her permanent identity. Why there are so few individuals who attempt to discuss this notion? On the surface, one could think that there is nothing to ponder. It seems obvious that a well-grounded identity provides a cognitive and existential comfort, allows for reconciling with tradition and upholds memory. It is enough to take a look at novels from that genre

48 Czapliński, “Mapa,” 168.

49 Zaleski, “Naprzód w przeszłość,” 179.

50 Saryusz-Wolska, *Spotkania*, 287.

to observe that protagonists who do not bow in front of local chapels are most often unstable shreds of human beings, while later on, after rooting themselves firmly, they live in the paradise of certainty and stability. But it is a special kind of memory – a constructed one.⁵¹

These artificial worlds of "roots" literature have one more crucial task: to hide and censor the origin, or "the initial experience of uprooting, which the People's Republic of Poland [PRL] brought upon everyone after the war."⁵²

Shame: Beyond the Trauma of the "Loss of Borderlands"

To summarize and conclude, the literature concerning the "Western Borderlands," in the context of migration experiences, is based on multilayered strategies of camouflage, stretching between numerous borrowings from older traditions (e.g. the Borderland tradition), returns/repetitions to/of the grandparents' experience and a reconstruction of the perspective of the (local) Other, which amounts to a *de facto* exteriorization of the experience. Such polarization reveals a distinct dislike towards a narrative reflection on one's own experience, as well as on the experiences of the previous generation that took place during the PRL era. It seems that not only the trauma of displacement and resettlement (the trauma of loss), but also the trauma of life placed in a new reality cast a shadow on generational biographies and literary attempts at coping. Brakoniecki admits:

Born in the early fifties of the twentieth century, I belong to that typical post-Yalta generation, which has been filled with darkness and fears of a heavily bruised generation of parents and grandparents hurt by the war. That trauma could not be avoided, especially in the overtaken Western and Northern Territories, where we showed up by accident and not out of our free will, even though that's where we were born.⁵³

Simultaneously, such darkness and fears remain on the margins of his narrative, which receives markers of compensation in yet another sense as a result. One could risk posing a thesis that this self-exclusion has, as its

⁵¹ Ostaszewski, "Lokalni hodowcy korzeni," 41.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Brakoniecki, *Polak*, 30.

foundation, a denial of shame linked to growing up (functioning) in the “Recovered Territories” during the communist regime, which was recognized as the epoch of greyness, mediocrity, and monotony that is best exposed in the older narratives of the “Western Borderlands.” At the same time, however, that same shame is rooted deeply in the historical context. The remaining part of Brakoniecki’s statement is a good illustration:

And we, the children, a generation educated and diligently memorizing a vision of history and reality sponsored by the People’s Republic of Poland, we took part in that spectacle of creating emotional structures of collective memory, a new identity, social and national integration, believing in truths presented to us, which were enforced by personal and national experiences of the Second World War.⁵⁴

In yet another passage he adds:

I was born at the time of Stalin and Bierut, I was a child and a boy at the time of Gomułka, I was a student and I entered the adult life at the time of Gierek, and was done with my bruised youth during Jaruzelski’s regime, and that very list, today, looks like a veteran’s prayer. And I was neither a warrior, nor a veteran – only a man in despair.⁵⁵

About his father he wrote:

As the years passed, he grew full of admiration for the power held by PRL authorities, which he thanked for his social rise, a single-nationality state, peace, a stable job, and accessible health care. “If only they left us with Lviv, we wouldn’t have missed anything,” he used to tell his friends, while drinking vodka, “At least they set the situation straight with the Jews in the party.” Throughout his life he listened to Radio Free Europe, like most other Poles, who calmly went up the ladder of making their small careers, complaining about the Russians and long lines in the stores, smoothly adjusting to the authoritarian regime with its predictable system of references and dependencies, corruption,

54 Ibid., 33–37.

55 Ibid., 9.

banal theater of lies – everyone acting according to his own abilities and limits.⁵⁶

As we can see, the emotions accompanying the loss of individual homelands (in the parents' generation) became subdued, as the time went by, by the helplessness and despair that followed a "bruised youth," feelings which were made diffuse by passive co-participation in the socialist society, or simply put: by a conformist attitude, a "smooth adjustment to the authoritarian regime." All those elements gave rise, in turn, to the above-mentioned shame.

If we were to take a closer look at it, its presence in the generation of "post-Yalta children" stemmed from, in my opinion, two distinct factors. Firstly, from directly experiencing poverty, fear, violence (both physical and symbolic), as well as longing, a sense of temporariness and alienation, creating an atmosphere of the "family home"⁵⁷ – emotions which constituted an echo of war experiences taking place in the PRL reality, not seeming like a specifically interesting subject. That kind of reception of the world creates a dissonance between the world and a strong idea of the self in both the collective and individual sense, determined by deeply interiorized convictions about randomness, about being a "guest" penetrating other people's houses, involuntarily intruding into somebody else's privacy and history. We are speaking here about an unwarranted shame resulting from the feeling of humiliation, of being stuck in a situation of dependence on a socio-political system, family ties and the Other. It is shame resulting, to a great extent, from social norms that, in a given community, are considered proper and valued as positive, while impossible to be realized in the given historical circumstance.

This phenomenon in literature interests me personally, as do tendencies to make certain themes linked to the migratory experience absent. We could here mention an additional phenomenon described in the already-classic work of Norbert Elias – being "ashamed of shame."⁵⁸ Such feelings often

56 Ibid., 31-32.

57 Anna Wylegała, *Pamięć a przesiedlenia. Studium (nie)pamięci społecznej na przykładzie ukraińskiej Galicji i polskich "Ziem Odzyskanych"* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2014), 111-154. The author, relying on empirical evidence, mostly accounts of the displaced, describes thoroughly their circumstances during initial stages of adaptation. She highlights that fear, violence, poverty, as well as longing and sensation of temporality and alienation playing the most important part in the formation process of their new social reality.

58 Norbert Elias, *Przemiany obyczajów w cywilizacji Zachodu*, trans. Tadeusz Zabłudowski (Warszawa: PIW, 1980). See Gershen Kaufman, *Forbidden Fruits: Taboo and Tabooism in Culture* (Cambridge: Bowling Green, University Press, 1989).

become a taboo that one should consider, following Thomas Scheff, as a kind of triple spiral leading to the gradual removal of the “shameful” experience from one’s consciousness (or from the text).⁵⁹ Additionally, in the case of the excerpt quoted above, the category of ancestral shame⁶⁰ might come in handy as well. It is a category which, in its assumptions, is trans-generational and crisscrosses multiple and often distant experiences in which an individual did not participate in directly, but is aware of their consequences primarily by feeling ashamed.

Post-displacement and post-resettlement shame may be a “recognizable case, at least for a certain segment of a generation,” and a “highly specific” type of phenomenon, which Piotr Szenejch describes as follows, while talking about the art of tackling the experience of living in the PRL:

It is not only a private or intimate shame. It takes place not only during everyday “interactive rituals” between individuals (a phenomenon brilliantly explained by Goffman). Its sense cannot be exhausted by simply recognizing phenomena such as shame, embarrassment, or feelings of one’s worth as rooted in deep layers of a local cultural system (which would be pointed to by every anthropologist), social structure, economic relationships (explicated by sociologists researching emotions), history of changes in social conventions (described by Norbert Elias), or discourses shaping local sensibilities, history and culture. That extensive catalogue should be also expanded by a phantasmal geography – a perspective of global dependencies, past and present, as well as a reflection on ideas relating to it. One is concerned here with a certain magma of a social class and postcolonial shame, a careerist fear of being naïve, embarrassed for

59 Thomas J. Scheff, *Microsociology: Discourse, Emotion, and Social Structure* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990). Such actions are close to the phenomenon of bypassed shame which (according to Helen Lewis) is a form of questioning, and emerges at the moment when an individual desires to avoid shame even before he or she experiences it. “Bypassed shame is linked to experiencing painful feelings and, to a lesser extent, thinking about them” writes Elżbieta Czykwin. One could risk a parallel, and state that in case of resettlements, we are not only speaking about thinking, but also about writing. See Elżbieta Czykwin, “Konflikty małżeńskie w kontekście emocji wstydu,” *Wychowanie w Rodzinie* 5 (2012): 130. See Helen Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971), 194. On the subject of the low “visibility” of shame in society and culture which perceives shame as a sign of weakness or imperfection, see Thomas J. Scheff, “Shame and the Social Bond: A Sociological Theory,” in *Sociological Theory* 18 (2000): 85.

60 Elspeth Probyn, *Blush. Faces of Shame* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 107–129.

"civilizational delay," and finally with feelings of shame caused by members of one's tribe, marked by all kinds of shortcomings.⁶¹

From the perspective of geographic dependencies, phantasmal in character, into which the (post)displaced person becomes entangled, we can understand (using a postcolonial key) the helplessness felt against the realities of a system that is going away. Hence, we have the relationship of subduing oneself to the hegemonic discourse, and involuntary participating in practices related to it. In the context of a broader tradition, the attitude signalized above is close to the "poetics of a non-heroic acceptance of reality."⁶² According to Hanna Gosk, it is a tale that is fundamentally absent from the Polish national narrative, which follows the poetics of harm and sacrifice, or heroic resistance. The first one saturates the other one with shame, and takes away its voice, almost blasphemous in nature. As a result, it often leads to misrepresentation, introducing that non-heroic subject into a broad circle of victims (the above-quoted case of "despairing man"). Referencing Richard Rorty, Gosk observes that:

the most effective method of administering long lasting pain to men is to humiliate them by making things that they have considered of the utmost importance seem trivial, out-of-date and helpless. Allowing for something like that to happen causes (can cause) shame.⁶³

It seems that the thesis applies in the context of the displaced subject entangled, on the one hand, in communist discourse "bruising one's youth," while on the other, in family stories of "individual careers" tainted by the mark of poverty, the discomfort of inhabiting a space taken away from former occupants, or even a creeping resignation from a willingness to return to one's ancestral homeland on account of external "historical reasons." These are banal factors, but in the context of Poland's tradition of resisting what is "shameful," they strengthen the sense of helplessness, the attitude of "victimhood," more than that of "heroism" in the socio-political reality of the past. At a time when it became possible to recount experiences of displacement, stories underwent

61 Piotr Szenajch, "Sztuka wstydu," *Krytyka Polityczna* 31/32 (2013): 91.

62 Hanna Gosk, "(Nie)obecność opowieści o wstydzie w narracji losu polskiego," in *Kultura po przejściach. osoby z przeszłości. Polski dyskurs postzależnościowy – konteksty i perspektywy badawcze*, ed. Ryszard Nycz (Kraków: Universitas, 2011), 87.

63 Ibid. See Małgorzata Mikołajczak, "Upokorzenie jako parametr osadniczego losu w powieści neo-post-osiedleńczej i regionalnej literaturze osadniczej – dwa scenariusze," *Lamus* 1 (2014): 24–28.

auto-censorship, camouflaged in compensatory narratives about meeting the Other, multi-cultural communities, memories of a glorious past or the “inevitable” loss of eastern homelands. In short, turning one’s own experience into taboo was a turn towards pride, reversal of shame. It was also most certainly a turn towards a tradition of heroism, originating in the Borderlands.

Translation: Jan Pytalski