



ALEKSANDRA KUNCE

BEING AT HOME IN A PLACE
THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOCALNESS

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PREFACE

The project of the philosophy of localness and home stems from the need to develop a research path in order to radically complement and transform the existing understanding of space with a complex analysis of philosophy and anthropology of a place. A complex cultural interpretation of a place – a region, identity of a place, axiological and metaphysical foundations of a community, cultural experience – is crucial for me. Searching for a place, rootedness and home in space requires combining cultural orders of thought and experience – to create a research path which would be sensitive to time and place, cultural and historical depth. Revealing the potential of past also became a call for responsible interference in a place.

Undeniably, “old topographies” – as Dariusz Czaja indicates – have been relocated and destabilized.¹ When we look at the story which comments but also produces the world, we will notice the movement of a place shift: Marc Augé’s *non-lieux*, Pierre Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*, Stijn Reijnders’s *lieux d’imagination*, Michel Foucault’s *hétérotopie*.² It is complemented by a list of displacements: dystopia, atopia, utopia, eutopia, etc. We repose

¹ D. Czaja, ‘Nie-miejsca. Przybliżenia, rewizje,’ in: *Inne przestrzenie, inne miejsca. Mapy i terytoria*, ed. and foreword by D. Czaja, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2013, p. 8.

² See: M. Augé, *Nie-miejsca. Wprowadzenie do antropologii hipernowoczesności*, trans. R. Chymkowski, introduction by W. J. Burszta, Warszawa: PWN, 2011; M. Foucault, ‘O innych przestrzeniach. Heterotopie,’ trans. M. Żakowski, *Kultura Popularna*, no. 2, 2006; S. Reijnders, *Places of the Imagination: Media, Tourism, Culture*. Farnham–Burlington: Ashgate, 2011; *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1–4, ed. P. Nora, transl. and ed. D.P. Jordan, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006–2011.

a question about components of identity, about the central and the peripheral, the established and the spontaneous, the old and the new, the present and the virtual. However, our stories about “loosening a place” are not able to cover its meanings. Yet, they can effectively cover the philosophy of locating oneself. I want to look at space in the perspective of a place in order to reintroduce the concern for the experience of a cultural place into the experimental space.

We face the challenge of building responsibility for the common good. It is very important to reverse the negative trend of perceiving the public and the common as belonging to nobody. This seems particularly needed in perceiving the phenomenon of grassroots social activity, the proverbial taking matters into one’s own hands, realising the impact on the immediate environment and, consequently, the quality of life. Development of a renewed perspective on a place also is profitable in terms of research. It leads to the study of place in terms of cultural rootedness, revealing anthropology and aesthetics of “designed places,” transformation of thinking about place or development of research path emphasising the importance of thinking about a place and the necessity to reflect upon one’s own location.

*

Directing my reflection in such a way let me concentrate on revealing the experience of a place and the concept of a man, leading me to rethinking our location and being at home. The proposed inclusion of localness, stemming not only from the recognition of the power of a place but also from the affirmation of the local idea, leads to the concept of a local man, finding in it the life-giving energy “supporting” the world and co-creating a particular *ars bene vivendi*. Ennoblement of a peripheral path and a located view is performed in retreat from the global and anti-local “nowhere,” “everywhere,” “anywhere,” but also in retreat from familiarity. Dynamically understood figure of localness, extracted from stagnation or from a sealed fortress, becomes close

to the image of rough sea. Along with localness which keeps our attention on home, on the surroundings, comes the knowledge that the reason of the stubborn focusing on the local is to have strength to confront the infinite, unheard and limitless. Thus, the home thinking directs us towards the indefinite and provides us with simple knowledge that in the realm of home we deal with the infinite and indefinite. In the realm of a local man one could find the power to create a renewing bond with the world and a valid story about a place.

The home thinking leads to oikology, which is perceived as a reflection on home being the domain of both privacy (*oikos*) and a community (*polis*), and as such becoming an expression of concern. Oikology in this understanding leads not only to metaphorical recognition of the home content but also to revealing experience, and through the latter – spiritual, emotional and intellectual capacity, as well as traces of events, relations and an authentic encounter with another human being. Oikology is about making an effort to return, even with the knowledge that the ancient and distinct homesteads are gone.

Thus, located reflections were derived from the need to attentively listen to the connection between a man and a place, which can be a little bit solemnly called a good act of servitude, service (in/for) a place. A local man together with cultural experience belying the philosophy of localness and the story of a place were in the centre of my reflection. What could the idea of localness be? Is one able to travel without the idea of home? Does a local man have the power to create the world? These and other questions were developed in my further reflections on a located man and resulted from a sense of crisis of locating oneself and a lack of thorough reworking of the idea of being at home in experience. It was underlined with the hope to recognize intricate connections between a man and a place, which would let me extract the idea of localness from a simplified image of the familiar, archaic, monolithic and closed. By transforming the thinking about localness and a local man I wanted to “loosen”

the contemporary ennoblement of losing roots, mobility and a global cultural route. The affirmation, as a gesture confirming the importance of locating a man, was underlined with the hope to overcome mythicized separation between a nomad and a settler. Because a place, with its stratified density of experiences, weaves together the unrooted and the external with the bonded and the familiar.

*

While working on the monograph I was constantly pondering upon revealing the connection between the ideas of place, localness and home. For this purpose I conducted research in numerous places, trying to demonstrate the effects of this work on scientific conferences or in publications which demonstrated a portion of the research. Then, already at the stage of creating the monograph, the portions were either omitted or expanded, deepened and complemented by theoretical interpretation. Some fragments have been changed, placed in new text joins and supplemented with new fragments.

The monograph contains reflections divided into seven parts. The first part *Towards the Philosophy of Localness* is a theoretical interpretation of the idea of localness being developed as a broad and affirmative concept defining the humans' way according to the teaching of a place. This part stems from the need to trace a creative power in what is only seemingly passive, stiffened, separate. A local man is demonstrated in the power to create bonds with the world and a valid story of a place. The next part *Being at Home on the Border: The Silesian History of Place and Things* introduces into the understanding of local space as world space because it is a place which is the beginning of determining oneself as an individual and as a part of a community – there is *Jedermann* in a local man. Silesian Görlitz, together with the experience of wandering and stories of those who lost home, enables reflection on localness in the proximity of home and migration. In the part *The Transgression*

of History and the Desire for Nature: The Value of a Derelict Park I focus on the experience of existence developed by a local man, which is formulated on the very margins of the world. The reflection is focused on a fallen landscape design of the former Fazaniec park in Silesia. The next part *The Narrative of the Cultural Border and the Silesian Philosophy of Home* is focused on the description of the borders and the problem of the dialectics of oppression and border protection. Where could one search for new ways of narrating the border, ones that would not only constitute a novelty but affect the realm of relations? The reflection leads to the Silesian narrative of home. The part *An Insight into a Post-Industrial Place* is focused on the post-industrial place which is more than just design. The post-factory teaches us to understand we are attached to the ground and offers us such a journey which is perhaps a passage to the heart of darkness. It also inscribes our existence in the larger event of dwelling. *The Philosophy of Localness and the Arts* combines thinking about a city with thinking about a metaphysical community, home and localness, which directs to the description of cultural practice in Barcelona, but also to the reflection upon a local metropolis. The last part *University and the Idea of Place* is an interpretation of the idea of the university at the intersection of the world and home. The main aim of this part is to describe problems of autonomy, location, and connection with regions. The explanation of the idea of wonder leads to the consideration of an important role of university as an independent and autonomous place in our common space.

The monograph is completed by photographs which do not fulfil a decorative function but constitute an integral part together with the word, thus becoming a text being analysed and interpreted. Both the word and the image are used to reveal local space which locates us in points of experience, thus making us responsible for a located gesture, embodied word and tangible movement. Reflection on a located man leads to the developed idea of localness where, like in a broad thought, we can find again the proximity of the furthest, because paradoxically the closest, things.

TOWARDS THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOCALNESS

THE LOCAL MAN AND THE POWER OF WORLD MAKING

The combination of will and power in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche unveils the imperative of making. *Der Wille zur Macht* makes us take life as a challenge, struggle, and transcendence of that which is already there, for where is life there is also the will to power.¹ The power of making and self-overcoming brings forth an incessant growth. Krzysztof Michalski, combining life understood as a flame with the idea of eternity, says: “Life, the will to power, the effort that overcomes all that has been accumulated around by the recurrence of moments, the continuity of time, which shaped me the way I am; Michalski, not Maczalski – the effort that at the same time makes me standing on the eternal plane.”² The will to power leads us to the space which is open up to the interconnections of desires, power, energy, growth, fire, and affirmation. At the same

¹ F. Nietzsche, ‘Life is will to power,’ in: idem, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, ed. W. Kaufmann, New York: Random House, 1968, pp. 341–365; F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*, trans. A. del Caro, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 88–89.

² K. Michalski, *Plomień wieczności. Eseje o myślach Fryderyka Nietzschego*, Kraków: Znak, 2007, p. 178.

time, it becomes part of the old European foundation related to the idea binding the human; the world – viewed as the space for our deeds, the making, endurance, possibility, as well as God. Both in thinking and experiencing the post-Nietzschean as well as pre-Nietzschean Europe is marked with life and affirmation of that which lies in creative power.

Now it is time for our turn from the too omnipotent Nietzschean interconnection of the creator with the self-overcoming of one's weaknesses and of that which has been hitherto insurmountable. It is time to leave behind the cultural correlation between the subversive creation and the spectacular changes of the world and mental revolutions. Depriving the idea of power of its uncontrollable momentum and force let us focus on that which is the power of endurance and resilience. However provocative it may seem toward the Nietzschean reluctance to permanence and inertia, let us turn toward that which is ephemerally lasting, off the way, and withdrawn from the worldly life, that is, toward the local man.

Can we expect to find the power of making on the side of the idea of localness? In order to answer this question, we have to voice certain reservations and shifts. While searching for the philosophy of localness – let us add, the one that does not restrain from the metaphysics of experience – one has to cleanse thinking from the inventory, political, and folk patterns. The formation of the opposition of “local – global” has already delved into the academic and social discourse to such extent that it requires a considerable effort to perceive in the idea of localness and the local man more than village, open-air ethnographic museum, the little, rudimentary, simple, indirect, isolated, constant, and settled. However, it is necessary to liberate the dynamics of localness and, simultaneously not to evoke sentimental longing for the hermetic, settled, and isolated local communities that create mere notions of the past.

Thus, we would not quest for the power of world making in the idea of a man as a herd animal, which seems to strengthen the “familiar” life only. We still remember what Doreen Massey has

distinctly stated, namely, the communal isolation hinders fearful practices of life,³ hence the affirmation of that which is crampy and locked would certainly occur dubious. However, at the same time, we would not like to succumb to an oversimplified knowledge, which demonstrates the disappearance of localness within the media images by virtue of global ownership. The dissolution of the idea of localness has been declared too early, and it became wrongly perceived as a mere outcome of the global changes or as the “ethnic images” community at play in the global politics or marketing, as Arjun Appadurai would like to think.⁴

Our too easy agreement with the “places lost in the world” that now are merely “returning in images,” as we can see in Hans Belting’s writings.⁵ The human being related to existence and the power of making is not only “a place of images,”⁶ yet such a view is suggested by a strong visual culture. The local views, intensified and multiplied in the virtual world, are the outcome of the visually-oriented culture; however, they still cannot replace experience and deplete the philosophy of localness. “The world grasped as a picture” is an emblem of the modern times, as it is depicted by Martin Heidegger.⁷ Nonetheless, the statement that the media have transformed the localness into the setting for a produced identity – as it is maintained by Appadurai⁸ – seems to be a misinterpretation. On the part of the concept of localness, there remains the power of

³ D. Massey, ‘The Conceptualisation of Place,’ in: *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures, and Globalization*, eds. D. Massey, P. Jess, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Open University, 1995.

⁴ A. Appadurai, *Nowoczesność bez granic. Kulturowe wymiary globalizacji*, transl. and foreword by Z. Pucek, Kraków: Universitas, 2005, p. 97.

⁵ H. Belting, *Antropologia obrazu. Szkice do nauki o obrazie*, trans. M. Bryl, Kraków: Universitas, 2007, p. 77.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 70.

⁷ M. Heidegger, ‘Die Zeit des Weltbildes (Vortrag 1938),’ in: idem, *Holzwege*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1950, pp. 89–90; M. Heidegger, ‘The Age of the World Picture,’ in: *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, transl. and foreword by W. Lovitt, New York, London: Garland Publishing, 1977, pp. 67–68.

⁸ A. Appadurai, *Nowoczesność bez granic*, op. cit., pp. 62–75.

making the philosophy of life and, no matter how metaphysically it sounds, the power of sustaining the world.

On our way to the local man and the philosophy of localness, we keep a considerable distance when glancing at the exaggerated eulogy of the scenery, as well as at cosmopolitan frames offering an educational project of transcending one's own place and time in the name of something we do not entirely know, neither understand – which is discussed in J. Nicholas Entrikin's argument.⁹ “Between” as well as “trans” have already fulfilled our everyday life; however, they have not replaced the local placement of man. James Clifford's comment that nowadays, the question “Where are you from?” is no longer as significant as “Where are you between?”¹⁰ seems striking, yet it is not enough rooted in the experience of a place. Due to the time of travelling, today's “dwelling” has become more important than it was at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Undoubtedly, “the old topographies” have become dispersed and unstable, as Dariusz Czaja explains.¹¹ When we take a look at the story commenting upon as well as creating the world, we can observe the movement of “shifting” places: Marc Augé's *non-lieux*, Pierre Nora's *lieux de memoire*, Stjin Reijnders's *lieux d'imagination*, Michel Foucault's *hétérotopie*.¹² It is joined by a number of shifts and dispossessions: dystopia, utopia,

⁹ J.N. Entrikin, ‘Political Community, Identity, and Cosmopolitan Place,’ in: *Europe without Borders. Remapping Territory, Citizenship, and Identity in a Transnational Age*, eds. M. Berezin and M. Schain, Baltimore–London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

¹⁰ J. Clifford, *Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 37.

¹¹ D. Czaja, ‘Nie-miejsca. Przybliżenia, rewizje,’ in: *Inne przestrzenie, inne miejsca. Mapy i terytoria*, ed. and foreword by D. Czaja, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2013, p. 8.

¹² See: M. Augé, *Nie-miejsca. Wprowadzenie do antropologii hipernowoczesności*, trans. R. Chymkowski, introduction by W.J. Burszta, Warszawa: PWN, 2011; M. Foucault, ‘O innych przestrzeniach. Heterotopie,’ trans. M. Żakowski, *Kultura Popularna*, no. 2, 2006; S. Reijnders, *Places of the Imagination: Media, Tourism, Culture*. Farnham–Burlington: Ashgate, 2011; *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1–4, ed. P. Nora, transl. and ed. D.P. Jordan, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006–2011.

eutopia, atopia, etc.¹³ Hence we repeat the same question about the components of identity, the central and the peripheral, the recognized and the spontaneous, the old and the new, the present and the virtual. However, these stories are not able to veil the sense of place. Yet, they can certainly blur the philosophy of localness.

Paradoxically, a much desired opening of space and a “worldly” philosophy of life can be guaranteed by powerful places, that is, those that are rooted and distinct on the map of the nearby communities – distinctive yet hospitable places. The media and global experiences enter the local space but they do not program them, for the cultural order as well as spiritual communities cannot be easily constrained to interchangeable social practices. Temporary and fluid social ties of a group, inter- and trans-longings are not enough when the old (seemingly a little archaic when thought in terms of an idea) community of the territory and fate commences to vibrate. The political scene shows that not only are we liberated from such communities, but we can even expect their revival.

The philosophy of localness becomes an imperative that does not let us neglect the power of the place, and, what is more – it makes us perceive in the local man a revitalizing energy that “sustains the world” and makes a specific *ars bene vivendi*. By elevating the peripheral path and place-bound view, we locate ourselves in contradistinction to the non-local or antilocal “from nowhere,” “wherever from,” “anyplace.” A dynamically viewed idea of localness, extracted out of the depths of stagnation, primal source or hermetically sealed fortress, becomes close in meaning to the Nietzschean image of the sea. The localness, which holds our focus on the house and on that which is nearby, involves the lore which explains us that the reason for holding close to the local and its environs, namely, it empowers us to confront the infinite, the unknown, and the borderless. In this way, “the household

¹³ See: a companion dealing with the thoughts on place in literary practice: E. Rybicka, *Geopoetyka. Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich*, Kraków: Universitas, 2014.

philosophy” paves the way for the non-defined, and thus it brings forth simple knowledge that the household also unveils itself the infinite and the non-definable.

The local man is empowered to build ties with the world and bring forth a story about a place. What then are those ties that enable the local man to sustain the world?

REPETITION

AND THE “FLAME OF LIFE” / “FLAME OF LOCALNESS”

The local man experiences life while being at the same time a beholder of the world. Life is the only theory. It is good to think – “without thinking,” with no overload of theses, neither evidence. Localness lays the grounds for the act of thinking “without thinking.” We live in a place and this place remains our everyday thinking. The local man is the one who belongs in. He/she learns how to carry this belonging with no negligence to it, and – moreover – he/she does not make it feel like a burden. As Fernando Pessoa writes, “to explicate means not to believe.”¹⁴ Therefore, the local man does not destroy his/her faith but takes up life with due solemnity. The local man does not explain much so as not to quell the “here and now.” He/she is like a townswoman on Johannes Vermeer’s paintings, the one holding a balance or pouring milk from a water jug. In this way, simple pieces of advice are implemented.

Ars vivendi, surfacing from the depths of the experience of localness, is like a piece of advice taken from the *Herbal Book* by Sándor Márai, which tells us to maintain tranquil existence, “very attentively, to perceive with equal strength the world and ourselves,

¹⁴ F. Pessoa, *Księga niepokoju spisana przez Bernarda Soaresa, pomocnika księgowego w Lizbonie*, trans. M. Lipszyc, introduction by R. Zenith, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Lokator, 2013, p. 197.

our mind and our emotions, human intentions and our relationship with the universe.”¹⁵ The local man fears the surplus of words and hysterical gestures, he/she avoids acting hysterically. Each enraptured act obscures the risk of disintegration of things. There always hides a temptation to abandon one’s home. For some people self-restraint may be a choice, for others, a mere acceptance of fate according to the rules “as always,” “like it should be.” There is no dramatic difference between a “choice” and an “acceptance of fate,” as eulogists of conscious and creative participation in culture used to believe. From the point of view of the metaphysics of life, we are subject to the power of the world surrounding us, as we are to simple matters. Be it out of choice or acceptance – indeed, we are subject to a place. Localness means the philosophy of place that is experienced daily. Neither is it a eulogy of the separation of man, his/her freedom, and a place, nor it is not suspicious of the corporeal nature of man, for it is tangible – “its touch reaches out the truth of the world.”

The local man leads as simple a life as the words of a prayer. With no eccentricity, best when lived in tranquility. He/she lives in the particular. He/she is accurate, when locking his/her home, arranging flowers in a flower pot or slicing bread. The local man keeps working humbly and does it for the reiteration and detail. He/she expresses himself/herself by adding nothing. He/she walks to the same places, rests under the same tree, or on the same square he/she watches that which is flowing yet remains the same, but ultimately changes. The idea of living in a place – carefully confirmed and cultivated day after day – unveils itself as the recurring “other.” Life is, to some extent, one’s quest for a place. However, this quest should be devoid of frantic searching for and making oneself up. After all, it is a place that finds us. Following the idea of localness, it can be said that we keep looking for what in the end finds us. A place is not a reward, nor a punishment. It is not a transaction, for in the idea of belonging, there are no business deals, neither any

¹⁵ S. Márai, *Księga ziół*, trans. F. Netz, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2008, p. 9.

reciprocity. We sustain a place, taking on the responsibility of the space that we got a chance to get. The power of making a place is based on the sustenance of the idea of localness.

Localness loves reiterations. Like Marie Luise Kaschnitz, people like the calm feeling when choosing the same known path, along the same river, across the same bridge, or walk towards the same hill.¹⁶ We understand the constant nature of things. The local man is spun from the Nietzschean spirit of eternal return. He/she serves the moment which forever returns. The same is different, as Gilles Deleuze wrote: “The Identical does not return.”¹⁷ Does it mean that repetition and a meticulous localness conceal creative tranquility and equally creative idea of change, brought by the otherness of “the same”? Yet anthropology brings forth a more pernicious suspicion, that is, the local man is at the same time the one who is able to turn into a flame and beloved detail both the recurrent and the repetition. He/she can burn the world in the name of the idea of localness to which he/she is subdued. War, confinement, dislike for the other, encapsulation with fears – all lie within the philosophy of localness. Each house can turn into a bunker, as Józef Tischner said: “A house turns into a stronghold, a grand castle, a fortress. It no longer serves living but to towering over the lands surrounding it and people dwelling these lands. Such construction is to arouse fear. It is not a house, for now it is a warning and a threat.”¹⁸

However, the “flame of localness” rather favors the will to repeat and strengthen the world, not the will to destroy. The local man chooses at the same time both coexistence with others, and seclusion in time-space. What keeps him/her from dissolving in the masses is his/her individual relation with his/her environs. A place

¹⁶ M.L. Kaschnitz, *Miejsca*, trans. E. Sicińska, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1978, p. 171.

¹⁷ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 41.

¹⁸ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu. Wprowadzenie*, Paris: Éditions du Dialogue 1990, p. 198.

makes us humbly accept the time – the place was before us and it will last after we have departed. It is like perambulating the Heideggerian field-path, yet in the movement of the repetition of things. *Der Feldweg* is the interpretation of joining the bygone with the yet to come. It is wisdom, the experience of proximity that also safeguards the openness.¹⁹ *Feldwege* (familiar country lanes that save the openness), as well as *Holzwege*²⁰ (paths in the woods, overgrown with weeds, ending in thick bushes, saving that which is concealed), unveil themselves in the contemplative thinking as the pattern of being viewed as a path. Ultimately, it is the vicinity that un-conceals the paths, being itself on the side of “un-concealment.”²¹

The local space, which connects the repeated experience of life, conceals other spaces. Pessoa wrote that he thought there was no other landscape except for the woods, since the woods concealed all other views, and it was enough for us living there, and for others, as life was a unanimous wander on the dying earth.²² This account could go on to say that no other landscape stretches in front of the local man, for his/her suffering and his/her fate is to be found right there, at home. Life is lived fully “here and there.” Other views often are imaginary visions that evolve on the paths of cognition of things. In the end, they bring forth a realization of a simple thought that this life is enough, for there is no other one, and there never really was any. There was a mere precariously stoked delusion. Localness is both violent and unhurried. We leave it, fatigued with its further clarifications and loyalty, yet we tend to return to it, for ultimately we always wander with the idea of home held deeply in our mind – even when departing it. “The man and his/her home is a subtle unity,”

¹⁹ M. Heidegger, ‘Polna droga,’ trans. J. and M. Żelaźni, *Colloquia Communia*, no. 4–5, 1983, pp. 89–92.

²⁰ See: M. Heidegger, *Holzwege*, op. cit.

²¹ M. Heidegger, *W drodze do języka*, trans. J. Mizera, Kraków: Baran and Suszczyński, 2000, p. 146.

²² F. Pessoa, *Księga niepokoju*, op. cit., p. 321.

Dariusz Kulas writes.²³ Life encompasses that which is nearby. However, we have to bear in mind that localness thus understood holds the sounds of the universe.

EPHEMERAL AND CONSTANT THINGS: MEDITATION ON THE LOSS OF PLACES AND THINGS

Is the local man a pillar of the permanence of things? The local man cannot easily formulate the eulogy of change. He/she will not put forth theories, and thus he/she will not put forth a theory of impermanence and ephemeral nature of things. Nonetheless, it is the local man who experiences the world that is passing. Clinging to life and regular activities, attachment to familiar places, in a simple way reveal the fact that all that has been so carefully cultivated slowly withers away. Childhood grows dim with each touch of things surrounding us. A place is further away with each look. The world surrounding us turns into a museum, testifying emptiness. Home and bonds disappear. The place becomes blurred. What remains is faith in the local world and faithful endurance in one's place, as the only possible being there. Never can localness be so palpable but when experiencing the loss of things, places, deeds, words, flora, fauna or people. This is our daily loss that happens incessantly, day by day.

The local view is a meditation on the loss of places and things. It comes as a medieval shocking question about where has everyone gone to, everyone that used to fill the world, which was so evocatively expressed in François Villon's lament.²⁴ This lament tends to recur by means of the philosophy of localness. In the local experience, there is recurrence and ephemeral nature

²³ D. Kulas, 'Dom – to, co istotne,' *Anthropos?* no. 6–17, 2011, p. 60.

²⁴ F. Villon, *Wielki Testament*, trans. T. Boy-Żeleński, Warszawa: PIW, 1982, lines: 329–356, 367–384.

deriving from the Biblical *Ecclesiastes*: “One generation departs and another generation comes, but the world forever stays” (Koh 1, 4). “What has been, that will be; what has been done, that will be done. Nothing is new under the sun!” (Koh 1, 9). The local idea, storing the knowledge that “all was vanity and a chase after wind” (Koh 2, 11), at the same time stores the joy of that which is right now. It wants us to succumb to the flow of things, as there is time for all things. Immersed in recollections the local man experiences impermanence and misery, he/she makes an attempt to touch the gravity of a place. A story of impermanence is spun around him/her. It is his/her service to a place, the one we come to and the one we depart. Kaschnitz has noted such a recollection: “There we sat on the white sand and observed the Baltic Sea, and then we wandered on from east to west along the whole Vistula Spit between the Vistula Lagoon and the Baltic Sea. There stood a house, sunk in dunes and abandoned as a skeleton. We showed it to our child. We also showed a smokehouse to our child [...]. Who lives there now, in those several houses perched on the ridges of dunes? There once used to wander professors of a university in Königsberg, who, by the way, undressed tossed themselves on the waves.”²⁵ Those stories express the human humility to a place. The loss of places, people, things, is an irrefutable evidence of our gradual disappearance.

However, this loss becomes somehow the foundations for the permanence of things. In *Schmargendorfer Tagebuch* (*Schmargendorf Diaries*) by Reiner Maria Rilke we find such a note: “For if people and relations are unforeseeable and change unceasingly, then, are not things the only constant point of reference?”²⁶ Moreover, it is complimented with the note: “It is things that last, our lives flow.”²⁷

The combination of permanence and ephemeral nature of things is pertinent to the philosophy of localness. The local man

²⁵ M.L. Kaschnitz, *Miejsca*, op. cit., p. 71.

²⁶ R.M. Rilke, *Dziennik schmargendorfski*, trans. T. Ososiński, Warszawa: Sic!, 2013, p. 193.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 80.

takes care of things nearby, and thus fends against death. He/she creates the world of things that become the beholders of the lives of men, their deeds, and places they dwell in. When the local man stops gathering things and finally gets rid of them, he/she experiences the reverse of the im(permanent) world. In a similar vein, Rilke explained that we do not enrich ourselves by grasping things in our hands, for things should flow through our hands as a thought through a “festive gate we cross in order to return home.” Our hands should not constrain things like a coffin.²⁸ Solemn thought on things that flow through our hands like through a gate leading home constitutes an oikological remark. In it we find, however pompously it may sound, the power of world making. The path to one’s domestication goes through living among things, experiencing the permanence of things, and finally through one’s acceptance of loss possessions – even of oneself.

Taking good care of things and clearing the house off handy things is closely linked with the philosophy of localness. The palpable presence of a place disappears along with us, and with the charm of objects. Tadeusz Ślawek expresses this idea while interpreting Henry David Thoreau – a man cleaned off everything reveals him/herself as “dis-connected from objects.”²⁹ We are being be-littled, as are places, although they remain as space for others. The experience of be-littling forms a good interpretation of place.

THE CRACK AND RADICAL OPENING: HOW TO BE AT HOME

Into the centre of the Christian world, there enters Buddhist experience. We are and we are not, we experience the river of life, we breathe in myriads of beings – placed locally we leave

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 35.

²⁹ T. Ślawek, *Ujmować. Henry David Thoreau i wspólnota świata*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2009, p. 346.

off thinking about Oneself. We pass ourselves just like we pass thinking of permanence of things. All we ever were and we can ever become, all we never were and will never be – is the eulogy of the philosophy of place. The local man, clinging to the idea of endurance, approaching it like the lighthouse, is at the same time the admirer of a moment and reflections on impermanence.

The experience of localness which serves the purpose of sustaining the world by formulating the philosophy of place, brings forth the concern to lose that which is interpersonal – to “leave some room” in a place, not to stack a place with too many things, not to leave too strong a testimony of oneself. That which is empty is pertinent to peace and distance within the interpersonal. The relation to nature and local neighbourhood enables the loosening of ties.

We come to realize that this kind of knowledge gives us relief and that we should live in a place with tender care yet with attachment not stronger than necessary. We exist in relation to the natural order of things – there is the sky, the earth, wind, mountains, water, trees. Along with his admiration for the experience of landscape and daily life Rilke noted down that a place makes “a land of learning,” and in this way constitutes real education and journey, which equips people after years of learning with what they have lived through, and gives them “images for everything.”³⁰ This is expressed in his awe at the fact that one can “speak like landscape, by way of the clouds, winds and sunsets [...]”³¹

We experience this locally by taking roots in the landscape that is there for us while is not ours. It belongs to us by not belonging. This bizarre law of belonging with no act of ownership makes us see that which is incomprehensible. The disquiet in the surrounding landscape and friendship comprise a great theme of Nietzsche's works. Caves, raging seas, mountain tops, clear streams, and fresh air, all come to form the room for friendship. Zarathustra flees

³⁰ R.M. Rilke, *Dziennik schmargendorfski*, op. cit., pp. 138–139.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 139.

from the masses, retreats into the mountain cave and summits, flees from musty smell of fairs into solitude, where a strong breeze blows.³² Zarathustra makes a place for himself amongst nature, but he does so by the act of uprootedness. In the distance he desires renewal and growth. The master bemoans the loss of his place – we shall remember that the Nietzschean call, seldom referred to in the humanities: “Woe to him who does not have a homeland” (*Weh dem, der keine Heimat hat!*).³³ The loosening of ties, detachment, and touching upon the incomprehensible is, to some extent, a petrifying renewal of the image of a place. Having experienced the localness in this opening to the incomprehensible we no longer yearn for the stunted local story about the charm of the cuisine, the specificity of wedding customs or traditional costume. The local philosophy of life is searched out in the isthmus to the infinite. A place sustains this radical opening. It foretells an unforeseen tranquillity, welfare, mystery, and “worldliness,” which is joined with the rupture and wound, which cannot be erased at once. Pessoa writes: “Yet at the end of Rua Dos Douradores there is the universe, as well. God also guards this place so as the mystery of life is found here.”³⁴ Place and emptiness interweave each other. “The Ganges River flows though Rua Dos Douradores, too.”³⁵ The philosophy of localness – through guarding the trifles, loyal love of a place, and a permanent order of things – guards the dark as well.

In localness the world exists – cosmos (κόσμος) and chaos (χάος), beginning and end. In a place the metaphysics of death comes to surface. Life, Michalski writes, “is permeated by death,”³⁶ it is like a volcano burning with “an undying fire that can devour all that seems to be permanent in life, accomplished, set once and

³² F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, op. cit., p. 149.

³³ F. Nietzsche, ‘Vereinsamt,’ in: idem, *Heiterkeit, güldene. Gedichte*, Ausgew. und hrsg. von J. Prossliner, München: Dt. Taschenbuch-Verl., 2003, p. 25.

³⁴ F. Pessoa, *Księga niepokoju*, op. cit., p. 379.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 347.

³⁶ K. Michalski, *Plomień wieczności*, op. cit., p. 127.

for good, all sense and all subject of knowledge.”³⁷ However, this life towards death unveils itself in a certain place, especially when the locus takes us off the familiar trajectories. It is in a place that an abyss, cliff, and end. All that is precipitous and inestimable encounters us in that which has been (not enough) familiarised. The Derridean *chora* (χώρα), which “is *neither* this *nor* that or that it is *both* this and that,”³⁸ would itself be similar in understanding this abyss. Nonetheless, the philosophy of localness would defend an overview that it is in a place where the unfamiliar and the unseen presides. By developing a local idea the local man puts forth a task for the contemporary world – life should not be an escape from that which infinite and dark. Place directs towards this.

The philosophy of localness would not support an instrumental vision of man’s activities, it would not form a useful plan of social happiness. Localness is no isle of the blessed. To have a house means to have a house that can be lost in any moment. Andrzej Stasiuk noted that: “The neighbourhood shows signs of decay, house by house, as if my life was diminished. For what will happen with us when all the places we have been to will finally disappear? We will have to invent them anew, and from this time on our old life will turn into invention, a plaything of memory, and nothing more.”³⁹ A loss of home unveils the reverse of a place. Tischner poignantly wrote that each house ultimately teaches a loss. Along with the decay of a house, there unfolds the “horizon of transcendence,”⁴⁰ for an abandoned house “leaves in a man a blurry imprint – a concept of another house, the house that is immune to fire, to disloyalty – a house of truth.”⁴¹ The philosophy of localness teaches how to be at home, yet with the view of that which is

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ J. Derrida, *Chora*, trans. M. Gołębiewska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR, 1999, p. 10.

³⁹ A. Stasiuk, *Nie ma ekspresów przy żółtych drogach*, Wołowiec: Czarne, 2013, p. 131.

⁴⁰ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, op. cit., p. 189.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

unnamed and incomprehensible. The intimate home space and the touch of a place itself strengthen the mystery of the indeterminate. The unimaginable lurks behind the threshold, in the attic, in the basement, behind the window, the wardrobe, behind the doors – just by the side of that which is known. Bachelard, Márai, and Tischner knew about it. One's own space smells of and attracts by what is undefined. One's own space frightens us and thus brings forth – along with the Tischnerian question "Is there anything more fragile than home?"⁴² – fragile knowledge that our beginning and end happen in a place.

Place lies between a petrifying invention and a real order of things. It does not cease to be a disquieting experience, albeit it brings forth an unsettling question, that is, "What is there beyond place?" A place takes us beyond ourselves, toward petrifying questions that Hasidic Jews defined as the ones that open up on the way to cognition and finally lead to the most dangerous question, which – as we read in *The Fiftieth Gate* by Baruch of Mesbiz – "did not raise before any man."⁴³ For Hasidic Jews faith is their liberation from abyss. Faith does not take the human beyond a place, instead, it teaches how we should act, here and in this place, so as to see the light of the hidden life of God,⁴⁴ as Martin Buber explains. The local man would sustain the world by clinging to an idea of a place, for it is what stops man. A place, through storing deep anxiety, at the same time offers liberation.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 188.

⁴³ Baruch of Mesbiz, *Pięćdziesiąta brama*, in: M. Buber, *Opowieści chasydów*, transl. and epilogue by P. Hertz, Poznań–Warszawa: W drodze, 2005, p. 113.

⁴⁴ M. Buber, *Droga człowieka według nauczania chasydów*, trans. G. Zlatkes, Warszawa: Cyklady, 2004, p. 45.

SIMPLICITY AND *OIKOS*: A SENSE OF FINDING ONE'S PLACE ANEW

A place stores a metaphysical fear, which becomes our fear. It saves us from committing arbitrary acts. It destroys arbitrariness and saves liberty, for a place bears its “flame.” It arouses desires only to destroy them. It teaches a return to simple things and saves them for us. Thanks to a place the man is no longer so miserable. Our “self” is too little if only it is palpable. Jean-François Lyotard was right to have feared that nowadays “a self does not amount to much.”⁴⁵ A place does not impoverish but endows him or her with a trait. It takes him or her out of mediocrity and shapelessness. The local man becomes a definite man and gains cultural character. One can demand responsibility from such a man. A story of the local man stores creative life, for it is one of many narratives that cannot be denied a touch of fluid reality, which was a postulate put forth in the Diltheyan humanities as *Geisteswissenschaften*⁴⁶ – sciences on the spirit should touch upon life. A local story becomes human. A man is defined by his/her environs, where he/she lives. A place we dwell in becomes a part of who we are – the world exists in us. With no family house, no childhood ground, all pretends to be something or someone else. The local man thinks more acutely as all is for him or her more rooted in a place – each gesture and movement unveils him or her, which makes him/her reliable.

The philosophy of localness undoubtedly would be a toil that we make in order to regain a lost road home. It would be a necessary endeavour to overcome uselessness and oblivion. Also it would be more – an arduous and artificial (because cultural) revival of a simplicity of home as being “in a place.” One needs

⁴⁵ J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/lyotard.htm>

⁴⁶ See: W. Dilthey, ‘Rozumienie »nauk o duchu«,’ trans. K. Krzemieniowa, in: Z. Kuderowicz, *Dilthey*, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1987, pp. 186–190.

to be able to return home where he/she will no longer weave his/her way. This yearn for simplicity is felt by a soldier coming home. Erich Maria Remarque illustrated it in the description of Graebner's returning home.⁴⁷ When he gets back from the front, he wants that which exists as if "primeavally" – home. Even if there is no order found, because the world in him and beyond has radically changed and estranged, and war annihilates returns and households, the simplicity of home (even a lost one) is not gone. An idea of a home, grounded on darkness, a lurking other, remains.

Localness is like childhood. We keep on living and do not think about it, we live the way we can. Let us refer to Hasidic Jews once again, who advise to invent neither a place nor oneself, for we are "where we are," as Buber writes.⁴⁸ A lesson to remember is the following: a place should be taken by man such as it is. A child's life runs without deliberating upon oneself or the terrain, and he/she naturally knows where his/her playground is. Fights for "my own" ground are those fought in a Nietzschean flame. The child does not divagate for he/she clings to life. *Divagatio* is wandering, *divagari* (wander, go astray) does not serve thinking about a house and a place. The local man lives simply, off the road, with no complaining, which does not mean that local life is not permeated by a flame.

A local idea is reflected in such simplicity. It is put to a trial in a moment of wander, abandonment, leaving. "Home is a special condition of wandering,"⁴⁹ Sławek writes. A natural order of things relished by man are thoughts of vast spaces and freedom of expression. It often leads to fancying other places on earth: anti-, trans-, inter-, multi-, post-. Thanks to an uprooting thought we see in a strange and unfamiliar way. We flee from a place in fear of its power. We mock communities. Ridiculing the yearning for community and sensing social fear therein, we tend to develop

⁴⁷ E.M. Remarque, *Czas życia i czas śmierci*, trans. J. Stroynowski, Poznań: Rebis, 2002, p. 66.

⁴⁸ M. Buber, *Droga człowieka*, op. cit., pp. 43–48.

⁴⁹ T. Sławek, *Ujmować. Henry David Thoreau*, op. cit., p. 33.

aversion to oikology, because *oikos* petrifies us; it is a radical question that demands an equally radical answer given by one's life. We fear a distinctive place like Jean-Luc Nancy, who would like to see this idea as a return to thinking of archaic community, yearning of the West and fears that instilled in the course of loss of community, brotherhood or friendship.⁵⁰ However, oikology emerges from the working out of those fears of the humanities and a sense of finding one's place anew. Friendship with a place is lively. Place is that which we leave behind and return to. One could say that only when we come to discover the strange in us, which Julia Kristeva referred to as "be[ing] a stranger to oneself,"⁵¹ does it become possible to recover the place dynamics. Nonetheless, when left at this point, it would lead to estrangement and uprootedness, rather than to undertaking it anew. Oikology does not fear the idea of *Heimat*, which we can find in Johann Gottfried Herder's ponderings upon ties, sense of belonging, folk character, and nation (though Herder wrote about the concepts of *Volksgeist* and *Nationalgeist*), and culture that shapes the man.⁵² As Peter Blickle claims, continuing Herder's thought, *Heimat* is that which is expressed in the "idea of belonging" and "being at home."⁵³ Oikology does not cling too firmly to the idea of a strong nation, for it is much closer to one's individual fate ties with the land, which José Ortega y Gasset wrote about.⁵⁴ The experience of the unfamiliar needs the philosophy of place so as not to succumb to the mythologies of the local herd nor the non-community deprived of its roots.

⁵⁰ J.-L. Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. P. Connor and others, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 10.

⁵¹ J. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. L. S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 1.

⁵² J.G. Herder, *Myśli o filozofii dziejów*, trans. J. Gałęcki, foreword by E. Adler, Warszawa: PWN, 1962, p. 388.

⁵³ P. Blickle, *Heimat. A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland*, New York: Camden House, 2002, p. 54.

⁵⁴ J. Ortega y Gasset, *Po co wracamy do filozofii?*, trans. E. Burska, M. Iwińska, A. Jancewicz, foreword by S. Cichowicz, Warszawa: Spacja, 1992, pp. 25–39.

We can perceive a place like a philosopher – thoughtfully, in a distinguished way, seriously, essentially. We can view it like a pilgrim or like an eremite, the one fleeing from it, retreating into a desert to find there a “place without a place.” The simple look occurs in a moment when we look without complaining, like a child. We live in a place “anew,” when we free ourselves from views, preconceptions, the world’s habits, collections of places, conclusions that we accumulate in our lifetime, theses that came to replace us. A new “ignorance” of a place that simply is there, as well as in a new non-seeing that which is visible, lies one’s sense of home as the world, an experience of a totality captured in a fragment. A being that does not divagate unveils the most genuine philosophy of life. Boredom, indifference, involvement, a repetition of a feuding life in a place, a flame – as many experiences as needed.

FAMILIARITY AS A FALL: TOWARDS THAT WHICH IS UNKNOWN AND IMPERMEABLE

What we fear is not a local idea, but its pernicious transformation when it transmutes into a cult of familiarity. At this time, the making of the world is replaced with stagnation or a propaganda war for the right to isolate one’s herd from the others. A herd man always is a fallen man, unable to take neither life as a flame, nor the making of the world. Such a man does not develop a lonesome being in a place, and therefore he/she does not lean towards the local idea, which rests on the loosening of ties and on that which we have named as leaving “some place” in a place. Such man is characterized by his/her reluctance in stepping out the threshold of his/her house, as he/she is fearful of the intrinsic evil of “others.” Such a man does not want to discover anything, neither does he/she want to look deeper, for his/her life is not permeated with any metaphysical longing, which Michalski described, that “it does not refer to anything that belongs to the world I know, the world

that is my home,” the longing that by being infinite “transcends all things.”⁵⁵ The native man, the one who does not yearn, rapaciously clings to what is his/her own. Such man disperses in the herd, needs noise and hubbub of voices, and fears a lonesome life and freedom. The local man despises the philosophy of localness, which hides danger, loss, and nihilism. Such a man asks no questions. The familiarity is like an obstreperous whirl of a spectacular community, for it is on its side where a faint-hearted and mediocre being remains, which made Nietzsche alarmed.

Simplifying the local idea to a primitive story about “one’s own” makes us develop a carapace, but we lose the power of making. A thought deprived of the experience of the crack and precipice within that which is domestic, with no breath, no distance to the world and oneself excludes the philosophy of localness. Cultivating the localness, we form a distorted image of ourselves, and simultaneously, we eliminate the dynamics and difference. With no irony, there can be no locality.

We should remember that localness is a call to openness, not to locking the door. The local man does not learn how to loathe the world, as much as he/she does not learn how to neglect the power of a place. Neither does the local man learn to despise himself/herself, therefore, despite frequent beliefs, it is not easy for such a man to transplant his/her disgust or abhorrence to other worlds. Such a man loathes both excitement about the vision of a global world and about the vision of the frightening strangers. The local man disdains familiarity as well as the carefree eulogy of the non-rooted existence entwined by strangeness. The philosophy of localness thinks more than useful thinking is able to solve. It renders the apologia for daily life as well as for saving the man feasible. Amidst the localness the man unveils himself/herself through a place. Immediate landscape and well-known town paths lead a man even further, beyond a place – towards that which is unknown and impermeable.

⁵⁵ K. Michalski, *Plomień wieczności*, op. cit., pp. 131–132.

The local man, driven by this “infinite yearning,” does not constrain himself/herself in his/her history, neither does he/she cling to his/her familiarity and caustic frames of memory, for cultivating memory of one’s ancestors renders us false aristocrats, Rilke said.⁵⁶ Emil Cioran asserted that “history is that which needs to be transcended.”⁵⁷ Reconstructing history is like reconstructing life, instead of experiencing it. Our ancestors are not a burden to us that demands to be in memory’s display case. In a well-defined localness a man is like a persona from Rilke: “This is why every true man must feel as first; [...] his forefathers and ancestors, from whom he receives culture and strength, inclinations and talents, are contemporary to his soul and act within him, not ahead of him.”⁵⁸ If there is anything that could save the concept of history, it is its only reference to a radical life of “here and now,” which can be found in the concept of Ortega y Gasset, who interconnects history with the knowledge of radical reality, that is, of “my life,” with the present moment.⁵⁹ “The past is me, it is my life.”⁶⁰ Localness is therefore a life lived “here and now.” All in all, the local man is not one among other protagonists of a cultural narrative. He/she triumphs.

A DETAIL INSTEAD OF A FICTION OF LIFE: THE TANGIBLE WORLD

A “trick” of high life disperses within localness. Márai writes: “I always avoided social life and all its global or professional.”⁶¹ Localness already is a world in such a way that it is a world,

⁵⁶ R.M. Rilke, *Dziennik schmargendorfski*, op. cit., p. 29.

⁵⁷ E. Cioran, *Na szczytach rozpaczy*, trans. I. Kania, Warszawa: Aletheia, 2007, p. 139.

⁵⁸ R.M. Rilke, *Dziennik schmargendorfski*, op. cit., p. 30.

⁵⁹ J. Ortega y Gasset, *Po co wracamy do filozofii?*, op. cit., p. 199.

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

⁶¹ S. Márai, *Księga ziół*, op. cit., p. 20.

existential experience of being in a place; it opens the world instead of constraining it. It avoids the surface and clamorous refinement – in a locally placed man the fiction of fame, politics, and theory all wither away. The world fades in the face of gravity of daily and simple things. The local man does not live up to the promise of splendour and fake nature of high life. What is domestic is not a fiction; we do not want more than we can get. The art of life should not be a “trick” and exaggeration. Thoreau knew about it. He appreciated the place, non-fictional life, and keeping the distance, because distance is a condition of one’s affinity for a place. Thoreau claimed that “a singular luxury” was to “talk across the pond to a companion on the opposite side.”⁶² That which is interpersonal, needs the unsealing of a place. Living off the road and wandering, Thoreau lived in a place, together with the earth, rocks, water, air, the sky, and animals. He watched nature with rigorous discipline and meticulous attention that only a friend can afford. The master served community while staying distanced. The place gradually became more spacious until it finally transmuted into space again. Undoubtedly, Thoreau remains a master of distanced friendship with a place and with community in the background. Sławek, in his analyses of Thoreau’s thoughts, writes: “For a community in order to function, each of its members needs to be sensitive to experience bare existence that precedes all explanation and commentaries.”⁶³

The philosophy of localness would be a narration outdistanced from the communal as well as anti-communal spirit. To some extent, it is an ability to distance oneself and resign. A contemplation of bare existence goes without exaltation. The local man is resignation. He/she is a sensible being close to the truth that he/she will never be what he/she will not be anyway. Hence a local vision of man does not reveal an abstract man, but any time it is a specific man.

⁶² H.D. Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, New York: Random House Inc. The Modern Library, 1950, p. 128.

⁶³ T. Sławek, *Ujmować. Henry David Thoreau*, op. cit., p. 19.

We live locally, beyond any universal story. There has to be flesh and blood unity, a tension of a place, a feeling of irreversibility. "You will not get away your fate and place." Márai would tell you "Listen to your homeland only."⁶⁴ It is an ineluctable necessity. "You are where are supposed to be," "You are in a place." Let us recall Hasidic Jews once again, who – as Buber puts it – affirmed the streets of their hometown, because without them it would not be possible to reach the divine: "The streets in our hometown were so illuminated as the divine ways."⁶⁵ There are no other, alternative places. In his references to kabbalists, Kordower among others, Gershom Scholem claimed that in order to step into the upper worlds one does not have to abandon a place, "for 'where you are, all other worlds are there with you.'"⁶⁶ There is no spiritual world beyond a place. A place is an endeavour. To undertake it, is not easy.

A place is guarded by a swift glance and touch. The subtlest gesture means something. Where there is an experience of particular suffering and a particular man, a story of totality, system, monolith, fade away. In a grand style, Emmanuel Lévinas affirmed the infinite, the total, the transcendent, in order to save a repeatable encounter and value of that which is singular.⁶⁷ However, Lévinas's story, guarding a radical difference does not guard the particular as a distinctive cultural point; it deliberately goes beyond the frames of ethnos. A thought that ennobles localness cannot easily neglect the power of context and the corporeal nature of man, for our spiritual rootedness in a place is too palpable. Nevertheless, it has respect for an unrepeatable life and a moment, which becomes an event in an encounter story of the man. A local thought affirms a detail by saving that which is fragile. Even if we transcend the

⁶⁴ S. Márai, *Księga ziół*, op. cit., p. 150.

⁶⁵ M. Buber, *Droga człowieka*, op. cit., p. 45.

⁶⁶ G. Scholem, *Kabala i jej symbolika*, trans. R. Wojnakowski, Warszawa: Aletheia, 2014, p. 177.

⁶⁷ Cf. E. Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l'extériorité*, La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986, p. 47.

physicality of encounter in a place and head for intangible space of common virtuality, we will realize that there comes the nostalgia for what is particular and singular. Anne Friedberg writes: “Despite my own wild technophilia, I developed a reactionary nostalgia for the fixity and simplicity of a single-window view.”⁶⁸ It was not the Cosmic Man who broke his knee, stumbling over a stone on an August evening, in one place and not any other. This could have been done by a particular man, in a particular place, even if he were a traveler flitting through places in a more or less distinct way. A point in space-time “touches” us. We strengthen the world, locally. We pose existential questions, locally. We experience joy and suffering, locally – always in a determined point in space-time. We build houses locally, which we leave or destroy. Strange wanderers unveil the sense of local order of things. Thanks to them we know that localness is closer than we could ever think, we, the eulogists of travels, movement, and change. We dwell locally, pompously, and meekly, nobly or desperately, affirmatively or withdrawn.

The tangible world is reachable in a place. In thinking about a place, searching it, finding it or finally in dearth of a place, there is implicit our experience of common liminal loneliness. A place we discover along with individual experience and a power of a detail becomes a step into that which is truly worldly. By living in a place we interfere in the world.

Truly worldly and common is the experience of man’s loneliness in the face of death. But does not a place prepare us for death, refreshed from time to time and visited by that which is equally unfamiliar and close, and summing up/re-examining space to Jacob struggling with an angel? A place, as resignation and retreat, as well as involvement, finally leads to asceticism. It excludes a senseless activity. It saves the act of creation as an arduous act of sustaining the world. Our movement and lasting are equally arduous acts.

⁶⁸ A. Friedberg, *The Virtual Window. From Alberti to Microsoft*, Cambridge, MA, London, England: The MIT Press, 2012, p. 444.

AN ABYSMAL THOUGHT AS A PLACED THOUGHT: AN ENNOBLEMENT OF LIFE

We find it difficult to distinguish between what localness tells us from what the global media story tells us to think. Trust in the birth of mobile, cosmopolitan mass of tourists, TV viewers, gastarbeiters, which transforms locality as in the concept of Daniel Dayan,⁶⁹ would not comprise the credo of the philosophy of localness. One can share anxiety concerning cosmopolitan concealment but we find it hard to joyfully declare the mobility of the world, since according the researchers of social processes, global mobility means global ostracism and a mythology of the wealthy world. *Oikos* makes us guard a place as our home, so that we will not go away too far, for we need to return. Even if we are physically far away from our home, we cannot form our own identity by imitating others. Ultimately, the way of *doxa* of the global world does not question a place. *Episteme* of a place is the metaphysical truth, a clear view that we experience the world in a place. It saves us from a brief and spectacular look, overused in modern humanities, about a wonder world of mobility, insurmountable choices, unending paths, common social communication. It is true that globalization produces popular images that we consume. As Morley says, globalization transforms local spaces, since in “here” it introduces the pressure of that which is distant in space.⁷⁰ Glocalization would thence allow for a combination of two orders of thought: we do what is resultant to the globalization processes in a unique way. An assumption that we locally do what is a general trend and law, would lead to a life subject to a greater master, greater god, greater homeland, and greater developmental or market tendencies. There is no greater home, nor is there a smaller home,

⁶⁹ D. Dayan, ‘Media and Diasporas,’ in: *TV and Common Knowledge*, ed. J. Gripsrud, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 19.

⁷⁰ D. Morley, *Przestrzeń domu. Media, mobilność i tożsamość*, trans. J. Mach, Warszawa: NCK, 2011, p. 32.

like there is neither greater nor smaller homeland. Home is home. It is somewhere. The advent of the global man, sensitive to local realizations, is impressive; however, it is devoid of anthropological gravity. Even when dreaming of ourselves as travelers participating in goods and services of the entire world, or – in a broader sense – supporting ideas and lifestyles worldwide, we still belong to a particular point on time-space. One cannot exist beyond a place. There is always a point in space-time that affirms our location. Journeys between Tokyo, New York, or Gdańsk will not change it.

Traversing the world, the most uprooted global and transcultural wanderers, drag their own local habits and, what is more, a local metaphysics of place. Our backpacks and suitcases are very local. Morley, pondering upon the content of immigrants' suitcases, discovered that they are packed with things that are hopelessly domestic.⁷¹ The philosophy of localness would stress the domesticity of thinking, at the same time neglecting a global narrative and faith in system solutions. It would be immersed in a living space. A place is that which we got a chance to get, which we do not always want and can take up. Care for *oikos*, if filled with the words of Wilk, would be paved with experience that it is at home, where “all tropes begin and come together – in the end,” and that a house – like the house at Oniego – “is an endless trope.”⁷²

Fetishizing globalization, we forgot the simple, the fragile. We would not like to think that the philosophy of localness can be a Nietzschean abysmal thought, which guards both metaphysical anxiety and radical opening to that which is unencompassable, and which develops an infinite longing. At the same time, it is hard to comprehend that the abysmal local idea brings salvation, making the man placed and keeping him or her directed to life, so that the trajectory of “here” – “everywhere” – “nowhere” – “somewhere” was metaphysically interpreted, rather than instrumentally. We are “local”; we are for the place; and we are marked with the

⁷¹ Ibidem, pp. 62–66.

⁷² M. Wilk, *Dom włóczęgi*. Warszawa: Noir sur Blanc, 2014, p. 125.

specificity of a place, a particular detail, corporeality. However, this localness seems to be too surreptitious to become a spectacular anthropological story. What is intimate and immediate is genuine when read as existential experience.

The local idea is a stimulus to guard the attentive thought, focused on a place; however, it seems that this withdrawn story of a place possesses a power of making the world. Like Archimedean firm spot, the local idea offers support to earth as *Lebensphilosophie*. Instead of the global and the unplaced that is unfavourable to man, there is a tangible place.

The philosophy of localness – a thought understood as abysmal, radical, protecting metaphysical anxiety and salvation, would be such an ennoblement of life.

BEING AT HOME ON THE BORDER: THE SILESIAN HISTORY OF PLACE AND THINGS

Can't we rethink our sense of place? Is it not possible for a sense of place to be progressive; not self-closing and defensive, but outward-looking? A sense of place which is adequate to this era of time-space compression? To begin with, there are some questions to be asked about time-space compression itself. Who is it that experiences it, and how? Do we all benefit and suffer from it in the same way?

Doreen Massey, *A Global Sense of Place*

All or most communities have diasporic dimensions (moments, tactics, practices, articulations).

James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*

THE BORDER AREA AS A DISTURBED LAND

To live on the border means to experience a sort of home that is not obvious and simple to name. It is a home built in cooperation with others.¹ The borderland makes us familiar with the fact that

¹ For the cultural and social problems of understanding of borderland see: *Frontiers and Borderlands: Anthropological Perspectives*, eds. M. Rösler, T. Wendl, Bruxelles, Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien: Lang, 1999;

individual ways of living elude the stories told by politicians, as well as historical diagnoses. To the borderland mind the border becomes a vast space that undermines the oppressive effects of administrative divisions. The border, which is not a straight line but a thalloid body undifferentiated into parts, teaches detachment and distance from smooth national, religious or cultural identifications. The ground of territory and identity is rough; thus people conditioned by the border experience ever since childhood are unwilling to go into an interpretative slide that results in the making of unequivocal and total identities of individuals and communities. The border area is a disturbed land. Children growing up on the border are already old at the moment of their birth. They know too much about the anxiety of a human being to simply join the happy chorus and sing along with society, nation or state. They understand particularity without grasping the arrogance of the centre that they nevertheless learn to accept. They recognize the power of the experience of things that surround a human being since the latter express the borderland condition better than words kept on the ideological leash. On the border words mean very little.

Here we should direct our attention to the town Görlitz, situated on the administrative map of Germany. What we can find here is cultural care about extracting things from the dead past, that is, from the ideologically immobilized collective memory. It is an ultimate Silesian town on the west frontier, manifestly borderline, which provides the space for cultural contact between Lusatia and Silesia. It is a Silesian bulwark, broken in 1945 into two parts, Polish (Zgorzelec) and German (Görlitz). It is a place that has been subject to much ideologizing due to the post-1945 Soviet reorganization of this part of the world, but is also dangerously susceptible to contemporary ideological processes, being located at the border of the political realms of Poland and Germany. The

Borderlands. Ethnographic Approaches to Security, Power, and Identity, eds. H. Donnan and T.M. Wilson, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: University Press of America, 2010; D. Berdahl, *Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

mechanisms of power tend to suppress the perception of the town as a space of experience. Görlitz, a town administratively connected to Saxony and historically gravitating toward Lusatia and Silesia, is quintessentially particular. And the sense of particularity is ungraspable by any kind of national synthesis.

The civic space is grounded in signs, and it is therefore easily decoded by tourists. The main orientation points are: the Holy Sepulchre (Heiliges Grab) built as a copy of Christ's Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the remains of St Nicholas' Church (Nikolaikirche), the Holy Trinity Church (Dreifaltigkeitskirche), St Peter and Paul's Church (Pfarrkirche St. Peter und Paul), medieval fortifications, the town hall, and some modern buildings such as the department store called Straßburg-Passage. Another landmark is the synagogue building: Görlitz is also about the memory of Jews that used to contribute to the making of the civic space, yet were forced to flee in 1933 or were later killed in concentration camps. In order to attend to the experience of things, we will however need still another structure, that of the 1526 Schönhof building, which is at present the site of the Silesian Museum (Schlesisches Museum).

The Silesian Museum has existed in the building for a few years only, due to the ideological portrayal of the Silesian region after 1945. There were plans to organize the museum here as early as the 1970s, yet the project for its installation was finally inaugurated with a small exhibition in 2001 and completed in 2006, when the permanent exhibition devoted to Silesian culture was opened to the public. Naturally, very soon there was tension to be noticed between the Lusatian Museum in the Polish part of the town and the Silesian Museum in the German part, a tension now skilfully translated into cooperation. However, the very confusion created by the names of the museums and their confrontational quality lays bare the burden of identity formation on the border, as well as the problem of manifesting the idea of the Silesian separateness which tends to elude simple national self-definitions.

Let us now have a look at the exhibition organized by the Silesian Museum which is one of the few displays fully covering both Upper

and Lower Silesia. It is a multi-narrative story in which there is a sense of temporal and spacial locatedness, as well as a sense of the uniqueness of Silesian history, seen in cultural rather than administrative terms, and therefore not ascribable simply to the Polish, Czech, or German state. It is not a question of the alleged totality and completeness of the exhibition as there is no such thing – to quote Theodor Adorno's dictum, "the whole is the false."² It is more a question of the expansiveness of thinking that recalls individual fates and isolated experiences, at the same time placing them in the larger context of the global experience of wandering, war, loss of roots and search for identity in the idea of the borderland home.

The permanent exhibition at the museum, localized in the sixteenth-century chambers, documents the history of Silesia (on display: china, furniture, paintings, clocks, knick-knacks, books of the duchy and the parish, books of townspeople, prayer books, letters, various documents, maps, lists, catalogues, photographs, voting cards, propaganda posters, audio and visual records, press cuttings, portraits of dukes, portraits of writers and scientists, including Silesian Nobel Prize winners).³ The division into periods of time, together with maps of regions and personal data, is what allows the visitor to connect individual fates to things, territory, communities and semiotic distribution.

Most importantly, the museum sets apart special areas documenting mere existential experience, which is rendered by words, pictures, things and infinitely ramifying interpersonal relations. The network of these relations brings to light spiritual culture as presiding over personal ties. Every little item refers further to the context of various images, but also to some fragmentary narratives that arise at the intersection of the stories told by the historian, anthropologist, moralist, politician, enthusiast, archivist, town guardian, passer-by or artist. Simple everyday stories coexist

² T.W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Reflections on a Damaged Life*, London and New York: Verso Book, 2005, p. 50.

³ I would like to thank Dr. Markus Bauer, Director of Schlesisches Museum zu Görlitz, who kindly allowed me to access all the materials and to photograph them.

here with the stories circulated by the media and those of marked social importance. Individual and communal ties are shown as a problem related not only to identity but also morality.

THE IDEA OF HOME AS A RADICAL ABANDONMENT

In addition, the message of permanent exhibitions is further reinforced by temporary displays. One of them was an exhibition open to the public from 21 May 2011 to 25 March 2012, entitled *Paths into the Unknown (Lebenswege ins Ungewisse)*. It documented the ways of living of the Görlitz/Zgorzelec inhabitants from 1933 until the present (the curator: Martina Pietsch).⁴ The screens installed in the rooms displayed the faces of exiled people (see pic. 1). People banished, expelled, exiled, expatriated, displaced... – the contemporary discourse sets in motion an aseptic language that is secretly governed by politics.

The individual fates of people banished from the territory of Silesia in 1945, but also of those driven out of their land on the Polish Eastern frontier after the Second World War and sent subsequently to Silesia, make up the community of exiles. On the screens, however, we can also observe the faces of newcomers to Silesia, construed in accordance with the past ideology as the “promised” or “recovered” land, from all other regions such as Mazowsze (central Poland), Małopolska (southern Poland) and Podlasie (eastern Poland), due to the processes of political reshuffling of people in the post-war years. At the same time, it is possible to spot on the screens the faces of Greeks and Macedonians, supporters of the communist guerrilla forces, whose coming to Lower Silesia from Greece in 1949 was part of socialist state policy. Migratory movements and the grand narrative of

⁴ See: *Lebenswege ins Ungewisse / Drogi w nieznane. Görlitz–Zgorzelec 1933–2011*, Hrsg. M. Pietsch, Zgorzelec: Stiftung Schlesisches Museum zu Görlitz, 2011.



Pic. 1. The exhibition: “Paths into the Unknown (Lebenswege ins Ungewisse),” from 21 May 2011 to 25 March 2012. Schlesisches Museum zu Görlitz (A. Kunce).

history become reduced here to individual stories told by each of the persons involved: through words, pictures and documents. The faces of speakers seem to come to life on the screens every minute. However, once the voice coming from the loudspeakers breaks off, a human face on one of the screens stops moving. For a brief moment the face of the wanderer freezes. Then the storytelling is picked up by another voice, and the face of another migrant comes to life on the next screen. The faces sometimes look at each other, sometimes they are placed alongside, or in opposition to one another, or one behind the other. They may be looking at the viewers or turn towards some other space, perhaps a lost one. The voices do not overlap. It can be said that the interlocutors listen to each other, but they do not cut in on one another. The grand history has not heard their individual voices. Their monologues cannot be combined. If there is a common

link between them, it is only the space and common fate of the exiled, banished, expatriated or, at best, displaced people, ones that have lost their home and existential anchoring. The experience has made them indifferent to one another's suffering, incapable of understanding each other, and, more often than not, mutual enemies. It is only a matter of time that they have become able to discern their common fate within the same "foreign" territory.

It would be appropriate to consciously employ here the politically troublesome term "expelled" for cultural reasons, and not because of some short-term political goals or (equally political) legal complexities of the notion. People who are banished, forced to leave, fleeing from some danger, regardless of the territory they are leaving and of the one they are directed to, have a sense of abandonment, loneliness and expulsion. An expelled person, if only viewed from the cultural, and not political, perspective, means something very simple – a human being deprived of his/her home as a result of the arrogance of those in power. It does not matter whether the power in question belongs to the state, religion, political coalition, tribe, nation or community.

The notion of the expelled (German *Vertriebene*), imbued with meaning by cultural thinking, and not by political debate, which is a debate about claims and compensation, or about the respective rights of winners and losers in war, refers to a basic experience.⁵ It is a moral gesture to recognize the right of a community to select a metaphor it wishes to employ in its self-description. It is similarly a moral gesture to recognize the right of an individual to self-determination. This does not mean that we should no longer be wary of the ideological uses of identity metaphors. Yet there is no reason to deny somebody's right to employ a metaphor that perhaps best captures their existential commitment. That is why, in the cultural sense, the expelled are those who have faced the

⁵ Compare the status of the expelled person under the German law, in: *Gesetz über die Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge* (Bundesvertriebenengesetz – BVFG) – 19.05.1953, BGBl. I S. 201.

necessity of abandoning their home. And the sense of abandonment was so radical that it has made them refer to the old notion of being driven out of place. It is a strong metaphor, but it is as radical to drive people out of their homes in Stanisławów, Breslau, Liberia or Palestine. The conclusions of international conferences and treaties seem to be of marginal importance when contrasted with cultural thinking and the moral right of an individual to self-determination.

However trivial it may seem, what we would like to move on to now does not have to be depreciating. Let us turn to the folk tale. The experience of expulsion, described in folk tales, is only seemingly divergent from the description sanctified in culture, written down in the Torah, and recognized as the archetypal record of the expulsion of Jews from their land. It may seem that the folk tale is not really a powerful account of events in comparison with Biblical stories. Yet it is important for an anthropologist to bring up the experience narrated in folk tales in all seriousness. A folk tale of great significance to European culture is *Hänsel und Gretel* by Wilhelm Karl and Jacob Ludwig Grimm, published in 1857 as part of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* collection. Its narrative may be interesting to psychoanalysts, but also to educators.⁶ Bruno Bettelheim has pointed to the psychotherapeutic quality of the folk tale whose role is to allow the child to experience the world, to articulate tensions, to confront the problems of everyday living, to give vent to emotion and to overcome obstacles.⁷ If we view the German folk tale not only from the psychological, but also the cultural angle, other elements are also worth highlighting: the moment of the children being abandoned and the lonely walk of the sister and brother through the forest, the necessity of mustering up the courage to live on their own and to overcome all difficulties. It is thought-provoking to observe the tensions arising in the

⁶ Cf. *The Grimm Brothers' Children's and Household Tales (Grimms' Fairy Tales)* compiled, translated, and classified by D.L. Ashliman, <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html> [date of access: 12.12.2014].

⁷ Cf. B. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books, 2010.

parent-child relationship (the father confronting his children), in the relation of kinship (the stepmother versus stepchildren), in the opposition of sexes (brother and sister, mother and father), as well as the juxtaposition of poverty and luxury (hunger and satiety, the gingerbread cottage), the experience of otherness and wildness (consumption of human meat, the figure of the witch), the ritual of passage (lone journey), and the return to culture (the restored order of things, home-coming and renewed family relations).

The moment of expulsion does not afford any opportunity to learn, since history does not teach anything. What it recalls and persistently repeats is only that there is a grave danger on the threshold of home. The idea of home embraces not only the way out but also the notion of radical abandonment. Each home involves a potential threat of expulsion; it may even teach how to chase away the other. And being expelled, deprived of home is always experienced in terms of loneliness, sometimes accompanied by a sense of kinship with those who share the same lot: we are those who have been marked by exile. The individual experience of abandonment and expulsion from home does not translate into a simple lesson on how to be self-sufficient. It rather makes one acutely aware of the fact that the foundation of home is prone to erosion and that it may soon cease to exist. Expulsion, together with a loss of home, is not only about losing what appeals to the senses, the unique taste and smell of home; expulsion is rather the very moment that the idea of being at home starts to sprout. The experience of exile gives rise to thinking in terms of home and home-coming. Krzysztof Czyżewski, while travelling with Tomas Venclova from Sejny (a town in north-eastern Poland) to Nida in Lithuania across the territory of the former East Prussia, has come to understand that “it is not exile that defines the land at the beginning of the twenty-first century (...). The land is expecting return.”⁸ Viewed from the perspective of ordinary people rather than

⁸ K. Czyżewski, *Miłosz – tkanka łączna*, Chorzów: Wydawnictwo Medeia, 2014, p. 161.

politicians, the borderland longs for home-coming and thus refuses to freeze in the martyrological account of wrongs and feuds. This supports the previously discovered anthropological rule that it is the expelled that stick to the idea of home since they know its price. Those who remain rooted, on the contrary, do not feel they need to wrestle with it.

If there is something definitive of Silesia, it is the clear and deeply sensed wrestling with the idea of the borderland home. The “wrestling” part should be stressed here as the Silesian experience is both about a sense of loss and fostering a need to rethink home. Taking root in, and returning to, the idea of being at home on the border, however problematic after 1945, is what resounds in each and every act of wandering, every casual conversation, every social construction, every aesthetic and philosophical judgement. Most of all, it reverberates in the philosophy of the local which is being developed by the territory and the experience of things.

THE SAVED COAT

The permanent exhibition at the Silesian Museum in Görlitz has a different focus. It stresses the idea of Silesia, while the particularity of the place is construed here as the power of borderland territory, of the experience of community with the land, of the spiritual kinship of those being at home, and of the commitment to the aesthetic, ethical and cognitive idea. Therefore, the display forefronts the combination of Silesian experiences and the idea of common belonging to the territory as a spiritual entity.

Let us stop for a moment in Schlesiisches Museum and have a look at the first item exhibited: it is an artefact in the form of a winter coat which is placed securely in a glass cuboid (see pic. 2).

Pressing the button starts the performance. Told both in German and in Polish, it is the story of a man who leaves his home in Lower Silesia in 1945, together with all other people expelled at

that time. What we listen to is a story about some coat. In addition, a museum description placed on the glass case, as usual sparing of words, tells us that it is a winter Karakul fur coat from the Polish village Warta Bolesławiecka, made around 1910. From the story told we also learn that the owner of the coat did not want to go and that he only left home once the Soviet soldiers began to shoot. Furthermore, we get to know that the purchase of the garment beforehand was of some importance to the man: it was the coat he finally decided to take with him as a handy item that could protect its owner and survive hardship. It was a question



Pic. 2. A Winter Coat. The Permanent Exhibition. Schlesisches Museum zu Görlitz, 2011 (A. Kuncce).

of quickly choosing the most useful item of clothing considering the season of the year and possibility of danger, which seems to be the common lot of all those evicted, fleeing from persecution, expelled and displaced. The coat was the only thing that the man managed to save from among his belongings. Both the voice and the writing, in the two languages “native” to the region, inform us that for many years the coat remained the only connection the man had with his home. Then he donated it to the museum.

The coat, placed in the museum glass showcase, has lost its aura of private belonging. It has become semiotized in an aesthetic, and perhaps also ideological, manner. What we are, however, interested in is that the coat has also become more spacious in the cultural sense. Now, as a museum exhibit, it embraces the thousands of Silesian coats made of mink, Karacul, or wool that the expelled people took with themselves on their journey. But its meaning also extends to thousands of other coats that the people who have been driven out of their homes and chased ruthlessly away drag along – coats more or less splendid, yet always the only ones, desperately needed. The winter coat in the showcase is no longer reducible to a mere function since it is now a real presence that stands for the metaphysics of exile. The coat is intimately connected to the experience of wandering, to the fate of family members, to a sense of the loss of foundation, to the absence of home and, finally, to the reconciliation with one’s destiny and humility in overcoming difficulties on the way. The community of experience of twentieth-century exiles becomes real in cultural terms insofar as it is part of the local narrative. Among the syntheses and social mechanisms we do not look for what is a most touching, palpable and excruciating presence. Systems work to make things appear self-evident and conspicuous. And this is not enough. Therefore, to reveal the particularity of things is to follow, point by point, what is simultaneously similar, due to its being part of community, and irreducibly individual. It is to focus on what is securely fixed in its being at home, even though it may be at the same time marked by wandering and unimaginable alienation.

The story of the coat, whose owner is known to us by name and surname, by the place of living and names of his family members, by the route of his wandering, is not just a mere nostalgic narrative or martyrological record. It is what points to the local. Beyond the coat there is a locus, a tangible presence of a certain locality.

A KEY THAT LEADS TO THE IDEA OF HOME

A key is a simple item that leads to the idea of home (see pic. 3).



Pic. 3. House Keys. Schlesisches Museum zu Görlitz, 2011 (A. Kunce).

Keys lead “to” the house/home that opens in front of us. When we say “house keys” or “keys to the house,” the term indicates not only the hope of return and the presence of still “the same” home, but also, as Hölderlin would emphatically phrase it, that every act of home-coming simultaneously means going back to the period of childhood.

[...]

This is the ground I was born in, the ground of my home,
 What you are looking for hurries to meet you here.
 And a travelled man stands like a son in a din
 Of waves at the gate, staring and seeking names
 Fair enough for you, in songs, and calling you blessed
 Lindau, one of the land's welcoming doors that lead us
 Out where the distances promise so much, where the
 Wonders are, where God's wild animal, the Rhine,
 Breakneck out of the heights comes down to the levels
 And the valley with a shout shows from among the rocks –
 To enter there and to stride the bright mountains towards Como
 Or follow the daylight down the length of the open lake.
 But I am led in at that door on a sacred way
 Home on familiar roads under blossoming trees
 To visit the land and the lovely vales of the Neckar,
 The woods, the green sanctum, oaks and the tranquil
 Birches and beeches together in a company where
 Among hills a place lovingly captures me.

(F. Hölderlin, *Homecoming*)⁹

It can be said that the phrase “house keys” embraces the notion of childlike simplicity. Yet keys are also needed to lock the house, in order to leave it behind. When we move away from home, it is as if we know all of it could be lost at any time. It is as if we had, at the back of our minds, the whole difficult process

⁹ F. Hölderlin, *Selected Poems*, trans. D. Constantine, Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books Ltd., 1996, p. 42.

of departing, going away and abandoning home. After all, the dynamic of the child's life is tantamount to its oscillation between the call "to go home" and the warning "not to go away from home" too far. The movement "back home," even if it does not entail the guarantee of permanence, safety or certainty, may at least denote good repeatability. The phrase "back home" quenches the yearning for the stability of things.

There is a direct link between thinking and acting in the direction of, or "back" home and "away from" home. That is why keys are both necessary to open and lock the house. We need to leave home and lock the door in order to save it in a sense, to save its notion. We need to go back home and open it to find it is empty and lost to us. We need the rules warning us "not to go away from home" too far and ordering us "to go back home," "to be at home."

The house keys placed in the showcase are the property of those who lost their homes in Silesia in 1945 and, on being forced into exodus, took them along. Keys are a strange possession. Some people locked their houses, others left them open, attentive to the settlement propaganda of the new state authorities who wished to populate the "recovered territories" (what in Polish has been termed "*Ziemie Odzyskane*"). This rhetorical formula has become an efficient instrument for ordering the world, making it transparent to many, and a legitimate social policy when it comes to political feuds. The homes of exiles have been involved in the alarming ritual of the division of post-German spoils. Although their connection to Silesian territories had been established for ages, after the war the exiled people were soon recognized as enemies on administrative grounds and simply identified with the German state. As such, they were made to contribute to the working of the mechanism of guilt and to the process of re-charting maps after the Second World War. Their locus or locality was undermined. Every time there is a situation of exile and wandering, a simple outcome of the decision of a state or a group of states, it makes non-existent the wealth of experience and common history

of the region, community and individuals. Thinking in terms of state policies is not compatible with local thinking.

This sad shift in meaning is evident in the historical experience of the communities living on the Polish Eastern frontier. The eviction from home, the expulsion from the villages and towns of Eastern voivodeships, or provinces of the Second Republic of Poland, such as the voivodeships of Wilno, Nowogródek, Stanisławów, Tarnopol, Wołyń, and Lwów, was part of the mechanism of pillage and compensation that worked by displacing the people expelled to other homes “recovered” then in Silesia. Quite similarly, it was a question of migrating under coercion, yet the compensation offered was a little different. The people driven out of Silesia stayed in transitory camps first, and then they had to start their lives anew by erecting a new home. The division of profits and losses as well as the distribution of a sense of righteousness and blame was however different. Winners take all, in the political sense. In the cultural sense, no one is in the right. The keys to the local home were included in the ritual of forced expatriation. Wherever there is a single person forced to abandon home and forbidden for ever to come back, not just to his or her place of living but also to the local territory, the culture as a whole falls into decline. Each culture involved, whether German or Polish or Russian, is in disgrace. And it is equally disgraceful for every cultural locality willing to “purify” the population on its “own” territory and attempting to expel strangers from what is supposedly “its” home. We should bear in mind that places such Rwanda, Liberia, Lwów, Stanisławów, Berlin, Breslau, Schreiberhau, Gleiwitz, Sarajevo, Palestine, are not light years away.

The key, as an anthropological artefact, is connected with the “here,” but also with the “nowhere/everywhere.” To have keys to the house that one is not going to come back to, means to wrestle with the very idea of home, to live there a little bit, perhaps in a furtive manner, for a moment, beyond political and administrative realms. The moment of donating the keys to the

museum, which is frequently done by descendants and heirs, is a caesura of cognition. From then on the loss turns into a cultural narrative that can be unemotionally repeated. And the individual experience becomes a communal myth which is more often than not open to ideologization.

Let us note one more aspect of museum keys. The keys in the showcase are palpably present because they are heavy. A bunch of keys is what we do not part company with so easily: we do not leave them anywhere casually, but we have to find a place for them at home, in a coat, in a bag, or in a pocket. This palpability makes us feel we are physically burdened with the keys we carry around. Keys are always something we can lose. And the loss of home renders the keys truly homeless: in their company our homelessness or attempts at finding a new home become similarly palpable. Fortunately, the expelled people did not have electronic locks that affect our contemporary image of home. The absence of physical weight is what too often makes our minds wander and renders our home temporary. An electronic lock involves memory, but it does so only for a purpose, in order not to forget the code. The utilitarian notion of memory is weak in contrast with eminent cultural myths. What we need is a sensuous entity – a weighty individual key that sustains the working of memory and points to a place.

HIS HOME WAS IN SILESIA

We are afraid of some exhibits such as a mask since it stands for much ideological work and the artificiality of art. The mask, together with the whole notion of a masquerade, seems to be far removed from individual experience. Therefore, while having a look at the next exhibit, the mask of Gerhart Hauptmann (see pic. 4), let us immediately move on to the sphere of experience, pointing out that it is another item full of tension.



Pic. 4. The Mask of Gerhart Hauptmann. The Permanent Exhibition. Schlesisches Museum zu Görlitz, 2011 (A. Kuncce).

As a matter of fact, it is possible to narrate the experience of particularity and the borderland by reference to the Hauptmann family's relationship with Silesia. The Hauptmann brothers, enjoying pride of place in the annals of literary history (due in particular to the Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Gerhart Hauptmann in 1912, and also because of the symbolic works of his brother Carl), are first and foremost people who focused on thinking locally in the course of their lives. An important trace of their attitude can be found in their homes in Schreiberhau (Szklarska Poręba in Polish) and Agnetendorf (Jagniątków in Polish), which, though dilapidated after the war, have recently been restored and recovered for the collective memory of Lower Silesia. These houses, open to everyone and located off the beaten track, hosted an intellectual elite of the time. Scholars, artists, theologians, or naturalists appeared in their surroundings. Gerhart Hauptmann

himself, born in what was then Ober Salzbrunn (the current Polish name is Szczawno-Zdrój), where his father ran a hotel, travelled a lot visiting Silesian towns, cities such as Berlin and also other countries, Switzerland, Italy and Spain. For some time he lived in Berlin, from where, however, he moved with his wife Marie Thienemann to Schreiberhau. In 1904 he got married again and lived variously in Agnetendorf, Berlin and the village Kloster on the island of Hiddensee. His home was however Silesia.

His brother Carl Hauptmann, attached to Silesia throughout his life, was buried in Schreiberhau in 1921. His poetry, short stories, novels and symbolic dramas earned him an important place in German literature. Yet Silesia clearly reverberated in his works. Carl often wrote in the Silesian dialect. His philosophical meditations revolved around the idea of a spiritual place that he came to experience in the Riesengebirge Mountains (Krkonoše in Czech, Karkonosze in Polish, Riesengebirge in German, Riesageberge in Silesian German or Giant Mountains in English); hence the notion of the Spirit of the Mountains he introduced and paid tribute to all his life. The concept, which can be regarded as deeply affirmative of the local, is intertwined with the ideas of God, human being, nature and spirituality.

And now let us go back to the story of the mask placed in the glass showcase in the Görlitz museum. Pressing the button on the side of the case starts the story of the writer's final years. The voice resounding in the museum room informs us that soon after the war, in the midst of forced displacements, there comes the moment of abandoning property. At that time Gerhart Hauptmann was terminally ill. The date of his departure was planned in consultation with the writer, who is a friend of the Soviet officer and a celebrity in intellectual circles. A special train was supposed to take Hauptmann, together with his family and belongings, to Berlin and Dresden. Hauptmann was very upset about this and, while he was preparing for the journey, his disease reaches its final stages. We learn from the story that Hauptmann died while still in his house in Jagniątków (formerly Agnetendorf). Terminally ill,

and regaining consciousness for a moment, he asked: “Am I still at home?” The information provided by the museum voice comes from the biography by Gerhart Pohl, who dwelled on the anthropological significance of the writer’s question.¹⁰ The Nobel Prize winner dies on 6th June 1946 in Jagniątków, in Silesia. After his death his body was dressed in a Franciscan habit. His wife did not consent to his burial on the spot, and before she decided to take the corpse on the special train to Berlin, a death mask was made of Hauptmann’s face, still at home. The body of the writer was then buried in the village Kloster on the island of Hiddensee.

We are aware of the mythologization of everyday living in which a theatrical prop such as a mask plays a fundamental role. The question of power, political games “over the coffin,” as well as tensions behind the transport of personal belongings following resettlement in 1946 – constitute another story about the operating of the new authorities that are about to make themselves at home in Silesia. The cultural significance of death taking place at home and the homeless wandering of a dead body is undeniable. What is more important, however, is the way Hauptmann would patiently stick to the idea of home construed as a locus close to the Spirit of the Mountains, close to the people and one’s own space. The writer’s journeys across European countries served to reinforce his sense of being at home. He travelled around the world, which made his experience complete and strengthened his roots, as well as images of friendship, the notion of writing, the belief in science or affirmation of nature. Situating the Hauptmann brothers “at home” on the border, away from cultural centres and off the beaten track, where it existed through the complex interplay of ideas, made the world take root in a specific place: Silesia. It is a story about the power of the place.

¹⁰ See: G. Pohl, *Gerhart Hauptmann and Silesia: A Report on the German Dramatist’s Last Days in His Occupied Homeland*, trans. W.I. Morgan, introduction by E. Funke, Grand Forks: University of North Dakota Press, 1962.

BEHIND THE GRASS, BLANKET, BENCH AND BOOK THERE IS A WHOLE METAPHYSICS OF EXPERIENCE

The place is what is also played out in mundane experience. It exists alongside things. The particularity of Görlitz is not closed in the museum. Were it so, the town would be no more than a sign. Günter Grass quite rightly pointed out that the moment of parting means growth: it translates into an awareness that one should know how and when to leave.¹¹ Things that are culturally significant need to be left and abandoned at some point, something that also applies to thinking. The power of particularity lies in the local experience. The town whose historical stigma is migration has to struggle in the present with the alienating quality of its local spirituality, at the same time directing its attention to particularity in a simple sense, construed as a common preference for some style of living, for a way of spending time and expressing boredom, or for leisure activities in the urban space. We wish to refer here to a trivial image of people resting in the park, and this is done on purpose (see pic. 5). It is advisable to tone down the pomp and solemnity of stories about things.

A similar image of people having a rest on the green could be found in Paris or Wien, yet the rest in Görlitz has a local dimension. Behind the grass, blanket, bench and book there is a whole metaphysics of experience. It is about the curious gravitation of the place near the border, in the proximity of places of quite recent Polish-German conflicts, places of not so distant trade and smuggling routes, as well as of the post-war history of people expelled from the territory of Silesia. A rest in the old park in the vicinity of the Lusatian Neisse has its gravity in terms of localization. And it is beneficial, making the fossilized realms of memory come to life again. It undermines old thinking

¹¹ G. Grass, *Przy obieraniu cebuli*, trans. S. Błaut, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Oskar, 2007, p. 223.



Pic. 5. Park in Görlitz, 2011 (A. Kuncce).

and renews the borderland experience, but at the same time it does not cease pointing to a place.

Therefore, this kind of casual resting on the civic green, devoid of symbols and items of national importance, brings in fact a breeze of Silesian identity, tired of the burden of political actions. It is a relief from political noise that we welcome and readily embrace. Finally, it is local living on the border, in spite of ideology. The truly global living of a human being, which stems from the rediscovery of local roots.

THE TRANSGRESSION OF HISTORY AND THE DESIRE FOR NATURE: THE VALUE OF A DERELICT PARK

FAZANIEC: A BORDER PARK

A local human being lives and constructs his or her life off the beaten track, adjusting to the variety of transformative processes going on in nature and culture. Let us now attend to such a marginal and forlorn landscape formation that has undergone transformation and resembles a necropolis now: a derelict park. The initial questions that we have to discuss facing the spatially extinct phenomenon are the following: first, a pragmatic question: why do we tend to visit derelict parks? Second, an equally utilitarian but more specific question: why do people in Silesia visit derelict parks? Third, a fundamental question: what is the philosophy of the park that has become defunct? Fourth, a pedagogical and existential question: what does the derelict park teach and how does it affect the formation of our being?

In mid-nineteenth century Count Hans Ulrich von Schaffgotsch, a man of merit in Silesia,¹ founded a private park, Fazaniec, which had a position on the border. It was located in Upper Silesia

¹ For more information on the Schaffgotsch family and their contribution to the development of Silesia see: A. Kuzio-Podrucki, *Schaffgotschowie. Zmienne losy śląskiej arystokracji*, Bytom: Oficyna Monos, 2007.

between Szombierki (called Schomberg then, since 1945 a district of Bytom), Bobrek (Bytom) and Orzegów (or Orzegow, since 1959 a district of Ruda Śląska).² The park was situated in the German space, and in 1922, after the partition of Silesia between Germany and Poland by the Council of the Ambassadors, it was to be found on the German side of the border yet close to Polish Orzegów. The name Fazaniec is derived from the German word Fasan, which means “pheasant”: the park took his name from the pheasantry that existed here until 1928. The location of the park was connected with the fact that there was not enough space to found a pheasantry and establish a park of a proper size around the Neo-Renaissance palace designed by Feller and erected in Szombierki by Karol Godula in the years 1841–1845. Therefore, Hans Ulrich von Schaffgotsch, the husband of the heiress of Karol Godula’s fortune – Joanna Gryzik von Schaffgotsch, decided to found the park a bit further on, in the grove of trees. The palace survived the second world war and was only demolished by Soviet soldiers in February 1945. The park itself was spared as it was far removed and did not look grand enough to serve the ideology. Even earlier, though, it ceased to be a private place to be cherished only by the Schaffgotsch family, as it was handed over to the commune council in 1933, thus becoming the property of the local community. It was then reorganized: walking paths were laid out,

² The complex history of Silesia, its geography and the region’s constantly shifting boundaries are well documented among others in the following books: H. Kramarz, *Oberschlesien. Land der europäischen Mitte*, Dülmen/Westfalen: Lauermann, 1981; P. Greiner, *Plany i weduty miast Górnego Śląska do końca XVIII wieku*, vol. 1, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 2000; K. Fuchs, *Schlesiens Industrie: Eine historische Skizze*, München: Verlag Delp, 1968; *Górnślązacy w XX wieku / Oberschlesier im 20. Jahrhundert*, texts S. Bieniasz, B. Szczech, eds. R. Budnik, S. Bieniasz, trans. P. Żwak, Gliwice: Dom Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, 1998.

On the history of Bytom see for example: *Bytomskie zabytki*, ed. J. Drabina, Bytom: Towarzystwo Miłośników Bytomia, 2004; J. Drabina, C. Czerwiński, P. Nadolski, *Bytom na starych planach i pocztówkach*, Bytom–Katowice: Muzeum Górnośląskie w Bytomiu i Towarzystwo Miłośników Bytomia, 1995; *Bytom powojenny 1945–2000 we wspomnieniach i na fotografii*, ed. J. Drabina, Bytom: Towarzystwo Miłośników Bytomia, 2002.

together with wooden shelters, tables for playing cards and chess, and children's playgrounds. At the same time a wooden bower was constructed to provide protection from the rain.³ Even though the public celebrations were held here as early as the years before the first world war, the park still remained wild to some extent: it was possible to come across hares, partridges, foxes, deer, boars and other kinds of game on its territory.

Fazaniec was a park established on the outskirts of the world, at a far remove from the town centre of Beuthen/Bytom, which had its own respectable parks and swimming pools, such as Park Miejski (Municipal Park) or Park Ludowy (Popular Park). Its environment was constituted by the workers' housing estates, middle-class tenement houses, churches, an iron plant and a mine, a Neo-Renaissance palace, a town hall, as well as shops, health centres and schools, but it was all away from the park. Fazaniec always existed at a certain remove from the life of the community, and it required some genuine effort to get there as the park was situated on the border between different worlds (see pic. 6–7).



Pic. 6. Fazaniec in the 1940s.

³ Cf. J. Larich, *Sto lat kościoła i parafii pw. Najświętszego Serca Pana Jezusa w Bytomiu Szombierkach (1905–2005)*, Opole: Wydawnictwo Świętego Krzyża, 2005.



Pic. 7. Fazaniec in the 1940s.

It was half wild, surrounded by fields, groves of trees, parts of the forest, and people's houses, with deer, pheasants and lush vegetation. Following the partition of Silesia in 1922, it became quite literally a border park, one located along the state boundary of Poland and Germany which cut across social orderings and violated people's notions of the common space. The boundary was evil because it was too literal, parcelling out the Silesian land. After 1945, when Silesia was annexed to the Polish state, the park still remained on the border, but no longer construed in political terms. This time it was situated on the border because it was far away, neighbouring on the unsafe and unfamiliar. Currently the park, covering 45,5 acres, is bordered from the north by allotment gardens, from the east by a housing estate in Szombierki, and from the south and south-west by fields, meadows, ponds, dirt roads, paths and groves of trees (see pic. 8–9).



Pic. 8. Fazaniec 2010 (A. Kunce).



Pic. 9. Fazaniec 2010 (A. Kunce).

Since 2015, intensive revitalization works have been taking place in the park, which consist of: renovation of walking paths, strengthening of the banks of the stream, building bridges, creating new alleys and cultivating vegetation (see pic. 10–12). Unfortunately, it is accompanied by cutting down old trees. Currently, the park is also adjacent to the new housing development.



Pic. 10. Fazaniec 2019 (A. Kunce).



Pic. 11. Fazaniec 2019 (A. Kunce).



Pic. 12. Fazaniec 2019 (A. Kunce).

Bordering on Ruda Śląska and Bytom, it is a park that in the minds of the inhabitants is far away, located somewhere between fields, in the borderland. It was conceived as far removed and peripheral, and it was utilized with that reference. Due to the succession of historical events, especially after the invasion of the Soviet army in January 1945 and the imposition of a different order in political, mental, social, architectural and moral terms, the park was destined to dilapidate. It came to a standstill. It was one of the many achievements of the Silesian people with a German background that were purposefully consigned to oblivion in post-war Poland by mere dismissive treatment. Vandalized, forgotten and neglected, though also at times grotesquely brought to life by school students and their activities or the idea of a swimming pool on its outskirts, it has ceased to signify anything. The fact, however, has not affected its character, leaving intact the spirit of the place, which amounts to its far removed and isolated position.

The question thus remains: what is the anthropology of a derelict park? Does it reveal anything about the relationship of the human being and nature undergoing radical transformation?

BEYOND REPRESENTATION AND NOSTALGIA: THE PARK AND ITS WILDNESS

Parks are established according to a plan. There is a clear intention behind their formation and existence: to tame the landscape, to make it regular, peaceful, safe and predictable, an idea that is sometimes taken to extremes. A park becomes then a caricature of the human fear of nature, a strange anxiety located in the city. It documents excessive human pride based on the belief that nature can be shaped by cutting leaves, selecting bushes, marking out clear paths, pruning buds, controlling the harmonious distribution of colours or the average distance between trees or the density of vegetation so that it is not bothersome. Nature, tamed in accordance with the plan, is not to disturb and annoy the strollers.

And yet, not all the parks are meticulously planned and maintained in sterility day after day. What is bad to people is often good to parks. Political boundaries, especially those that violently intrude upon people's lives, may be beneficial to parks, on condition that the latter are not vandalized in the meantime. State borders are somehow instrumental in bringing the trimmed parks back to nature by unwittingly forgetting them and ignoring stylized human-made forms in order to deal with the grand matters of History. There are more urgent questions to confront, those of wars, armistices, divisions of spoils, migrations and propaganda, than the existence of a non-ideological park that stands no chance of powering the patriotic imagination. Fazaniec has never been imagined as a site of strolling that has the potential to be politically mythologized. As a result, it has remained what it is: a park on the outskirts, a forlorn place, resembling a necropolis, and miraculously spared by History. Situated on an ever shifting border, it has never been the centre of attention. And it may never be a glamorous place in the future since it does not glitter. It is not surrounded by a metropolis, even though the history of the nearby town Bytom (called variously Beuthen in Oberschlesien / Bitum / Bithomia /

Bithum / Bethania) can be traced back to the thirteenth century. The park has remained wild and rough, lacking stylization in the English vein, deprived of the aura of nostalgia, non-sentimental, and removed from anything and anyone. Today it has been restored to nature, ruthlessly exorcised from the place in the past. It is still possible to come across pheasants, deer, wild boars, adders and hares here. The park is particularly often frequented by birds due to its silence and isolation from the hustle and bustle of the town and because of its overgrown woodland scenery.

IN THE SPIRIT OF A GAME PARK, WITHOUT ANY FUSS: A VIOLENT CLASH

A park is a distant relative of game parks, or those special gardens that once provided an enclosed or marked out area used for hunting or animal breeding. The landscape was shaped there only gently, as the originators strove to maintain the natural quality of the place. Does Fazaniec resemble game parks with their stag and roe deer, elk and European bison populations that were kept in the vicinity of castles or on the outskirts of towns? Those parks also had bowers for leisure and clearly marked out paths that were supposed to facilitate the observation of animals. There seems to be a common notion of nature at stake which is, on the one hand, securely tamed, while on the other hand it remains pretty wild, even though it is very close to human residence. The castles invite a suggestion of wildness and blood, associated with hunting. There is, however, yet another connotation that game parks bring: that of the strangeness and freakishness of the menagerie that was intended to puzzle visitors with their unusual animals, untypical of the place and climate, such as leopards and lions. Fazaniec did not connote this kind of strangeness as it only included pheasants and game: animals that had always been linked with Silesia. It was also situated in the proximity of the palace but without any “fuss”

about the latter. One could sense here a faint presence of the game park in the pond, animals, paths, bowers and shelters. The place has never aspired, though, to become a stylized and fanciful construction of nature that is endowed with an Island populated by rabbits or exotic lions kept in cages and birds in aviaries.

This is because Fazaniec is an urban park, conceived as part of the urban space, even though it has remained wild to some extent. It enjoys the liberty of a huge garden with both walking paths and game. What the idea of game parks of the past also brings to mind is a tradition of decorative gardens that succeeded them and the concomitant expansiveness of Baroque thinking. The eighteenth-century art of gardening in the English vein, intent on highlighting “naturalness”⁴ through its distribution of ponds, bridges, stylized ruins, lush vegetation, an air of mystery and Gothicism, affirmed the need for a stylization of wilderness and gave rise to the sense of the uncanny. Its human-made steep rocks, caves, waterfalls and grottos exceeded the efforts of the founders of ducal gardens, as Anthony Ashley Cooper indicated.⁵ Fazaniec stems from the similar notion of highlighting the natural qualities of the place such as hills and shapes but it does not aspire to the sentimental and picturesque character of the likes of Prior Park Landscape Garden, designed by the poet Alexander Pope and the gardener Capability Brown. Fazaniec possesses no tricky cascades or Gothic temples. It is both truly wild and urban, though its wildness is differently conceived.

Fazaniec preserves the memory of urbanizing thinking that helped to mark the park out within the cluster of municipalities which were the landmarks in the Silesian industrial area. Does it however also embrace the experience of strollers parading up and down in the natural environment made to fit their minds? Fazaniec

⁴ Cf. P. Hobhouse, *Historia ogrodów*, trans. B. Mierzejewska, E. Romkowska, Warszawa: Akady, 2005; L. Majdecki, *Historia ogrodów*, Warszawa: PWN, 2007, vol. 1–2.

⁵ A.A. Cooper (3rd Earl of Shaftesbury), *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times. With the Addition of a Letter Concerning Design*, Oxford 1732 [digitalized 2007, <https://books.google.pl>], p. 184.

is too wild to serve as a stylized garden and a place of the strollers' parade. It has nothing to do with the culture of the *flâneur*, even though it remains thoroughly urban. The park is Silesian because of the violent clash of the town, factory, forest, wooded squares, ponds and streams that sustains it: a clash between the natural and violently wild space with its lush vegetation, and the Silesian architecture with its favourite forms: robust tenement houses, red-brick housing estates designed for workers, grand Art Nouveau, Neo-Gothic and modernist edifices, tall chimneys, coalmine shafts, and sumptuous town squares. The character of the park stems from this confrontation.

DAMPNESS, DARKNESS, UNEASY FEELINGS: NOT QUITE A PARK

Fazaniec, as a derelict park, is situated on the border and margin of history. It has no mind-boggling structure and no distinct borders; its beginnings and ends are not marked with clear points. It has no fence and carries on until it transforms into fields and housing estates but it still remains part of the space in-between towns. We cannot clearly define the moment we cross the boundary of the park, leaving the territory which does not belong to it but we know when we finally find ourselves within its bounds, and similarly we know when we have left it. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write that it is vital for philosophy to be embraced by what is not philosophical, which is also the case with art and science.⁶ The same goes for the park. In Fazaniec what is not yet a park empowers the park space. Fazaniec has a varied geography: it is formed by two gorges in the V-shape. The bottom of each gorge is filled by a stream; both streams flow into the pond. The pond

⁶ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Co to jest filozofia?* trans. P. Pieniążek, Gdańsk: Słowo/ Obraz Terytoria, 2000, pp. 241–242.

is the closest area to the park as it is something that precedes or concludes it, that marks its introduction or perhaps its ending at the point where the smooth transition from the park to the urban space takes place. Gorges are overgrown with bushes and trees, and separated from the pond with the wood and an extensive meadow. The trees include oaks, maples, sycamores, lindens, European ashes and hornbeams, black alders, locust trees, beeches and poplars.

The two deep gorges, non-geometricized vegetation and streams make the park gloomy. It is not a walking area but one which is dark, wild, covered with thick shrubs and overgrown in places; one can discern here some traces of human activity aimed at ordering the park, such as felling trees, clearing paths, collecting withered leaves, strengthening the stream banks or installing nesting boxes for birds, but they are not effective. The sense of not-quiteness is further reinforced by a scant number of benches, a playground which is hardly developed and looked after, numerous dark recesses, slopes of gorges used for downhill cycling and sledging, unmarked routes for joggers and cyclists, unlimited, extensive areas for dog walking, as well as the presence of impenetrable spaces, inaccessible to people and providing shelter to boars, hares or foxes. This not-quite-a-park is located at the limit of our attempts at ordering nature, as there are no signs of the latter's subjugation. Instead, the park is dominated by mosquitoes, damp and darkness, which produces an uneasy feeling. The atmosphere of envioning fields, woods and mines, the urban landscape of Silesia, the aristocratic Silesian architecture in the form of palaces, the folk architecture of Silesian peasants – all that has contributed to the making of this indefinite park space which will probably never be impressive or used for the strollers' leisure. Its gloominess can be ascribed not only to the presence of nearby fields, ponds, and woods, but also to the urbanizing projects behind mines and steel plants, as well as to its being overshadowed by the Bytom edifices of the opera house, theatre, prison, and court, as well as town squares, churches, Polish bunkers, border buildings, and railway or tram flyovers in the distance.

A HUMAN BEING VULNERABLE TO THE FALL: SOCIAL AND NATURAL AFFECTS

Fazaniec is not a purified place, nor is it an enclave. It is not supposed to bring respite after a busy day or liberate from anything that restricts one's enjoyment of life. Instead, it provides an instance of good being on the outskirts, one that bears the stamp of a violent confrontation with nature, of desperate attempts at reconciling work and industry with the land, of the clash with history as state-sponsored violence, of ethnic divisions among family members, of uncertain criteria of belonging, and of an unclear distinction between civilization and urbanization on the one hand, and woods, fields, and uncultivated nature on the other. It is a place situated between contradictory human experiences: while we develop a yearning to arrange things neatly and to control the space around so that we are protected against the intrusion of history, what we have to face from time to time is a sudden intervention of all social "affects" in our life: those connected with ethos, history, ideology, mythology of the place, or culture. We may also be affected by natural forces: by what is unpredictable and incomprehensible, what evades us and cannot be measured, and what always strikes us as a natural disaster, a catastrophe, a sign of the hostility of nature. Sándor Márai, describing his walk along the river, narrated his own experience of the clash of contradictory forces latent in the peaceful environment which he felt to be hiding some "monstrous drives" of life and destruction that a human being had to live with.⁷ We could say, using the comparative perspective, that his account perfectly fits the Silesian condition. The suspension between contradictory forces translates into an experience that fuses the cold calculation of thinking and the passion of living.

⁷ S. Márai, *Niebo i ziemia*, trans. F. Netz, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2011, p. 64.

An idea of a human being vulnerable to the fall means in Silesia that a human being is vulnerable to affects and tormented by passions to the extent that he or she becomes indifferent and humble, feeling subjected to the vagaries of Nature, History, Ethnos and Divinity. It is no use fighting against the affects. One can do no more than to mobilize all his or her inner strength to stay close. It means desperately striving to stick to the border where wildness, reason, humbleness, necessity and peace of mind do not combine to yield a comforting story but instead teach a lesson of living precisely in the border condition. Both Despair and Delight have pride of place in the not-quite-a-park that Fazaniec is.

THE TRANSGRESSION OF HISTORY AND THE DESIRE FOR NATURE

The park is a by-product of history. It is at the same time a victory over time. Friedrich Nietzsche, discussing the pros and cons of a worldview informed by history, was troubled by its adverse effect on life.⁸ To transcend history means not to believe in the neutral succession of facts and to recognize, in the way Nietzsche does, the power of *facta ficta*, the fictional character of facts. We are those that create the images of history and those that experience it. But there is also another idea behind: transcending history involves getting rid of the burden of time conceived as a straight line by which we are enslaved and to which we subject our self-interpretation, our view of the community and our lived world. We can refer here to Emil Cioran's recommendation to transcend history which occurs at a moment when the past, present and future cease to signify⁹ and the most important relation in the

⁸ F. Nietzsche, 'O pożytkach i szkodliwości historii dla życia,' in: F. Nietzsche, *Niewczesne rozważania*, trans. M. Łukasiewicz, Kraków: Znak, 1996.

⁹ E. Cioran, *Na szczytach rozpacz*, trans. I. Kania, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Aletheia, 2007, p. 140.

world becomes that of the human being and eternity.¹⁰ The horizon of Cioran's thinking was defined by the notion of the world driven to the extremes of despair: living creatures come into being in the world that, in his view, does not deserve to have anything breathing with its air. In Silesia such an outburst of despair would be unthinkable. Silesia is made up of both wildness and Enlightenment, nature and machine. If there is a community of thinking, it can be found in the similar sense of the decline of historical knowledge. It boils down to the idea that even the overcoming of history does not bring any relief. We still keep on trying to overcome it. Nietzsche would say that we gain the upper hand not by transcending knowledge and experience but by enduring the tension of the struggle. In Silesia a human being is located close to the tension that has to be endured.

This thought translates into the admiration for what is beyond history and beyond the human. Cioran wrote that those who had learned the essence of being human wanted to become anything but a human.¹¹ Cioran's desire to experience the very being of nature on a daily basis – be it flowers, weeds, thorns, trees, algae, singing or crowing birds, migratory or resident birds, wild or tame animals – also constitutes the Silesian dream. Zbigniew Kadłubek elaborated upon the idea of the grand Silesian treatise he was dreaming about, one that would be composed of “the pure substance of existence” and based on the scent of herbs, colours of nature, trees, clouds, flowers, insects, and precious stones.¹² The treatise, the author wrote, would have the potential to connect with and transform into the actual living.¹³

The urbanized and industrialized Silesian space, construed as the product of the Enlightenment in most accounts, has in fact always been a song of praise to nature. This is best evidenced by the existence of a derelict park. The wild in the park – the

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 140.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 144.

¹² Z. Kadłubek, *Listy z Rzymu*, Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka, 2008, pp. 47–48.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 49.

wild in Silesia – the wild in the human being – is an alternative route to follow within the space of reason. It gives rise to the ability to feel the pulsating rhythms of the world not outside but within ourselves. But the sensation is only clear in the place which is as distinct as a derelict park. One has to contemplate and withstand the experience of Silesia in fatalistic, mystical, bourgeois and industrial terms, in order to understand the power of nature that manifests itself in local people's lives.

Nature is treated here as land and earth – into which one glances, into which one descends, which is brought up onto the surface, whose resources are used to heat homes and which powers the great Silesian machinery. Second, nature means looking up at the sky – as a blue counterpoint to the earth and homes, iron plants, and mines, or as the seat of the divine, of what is besides the earth and accompanies people. Third, nature is understood as the air – that allows one to breath, that needs to be cleaned with care, that has to be appreciated because it is scarce. Fourth, there is nature as water – which cuts across the land and forms a natural border to various places, literally saving the heavily industrial world. Fifth, nature means the green space of woods, fields, parks, squares and groves in the vicinity of factories – which is what makes Silesia spacious and mysterious. In the park we are struck by the inevitability of the Silesian attitude towards nature and eternity.

LIVED AND FRUITFUL EXPERIENCE: WHERE CULTURE MEANS VERY LITTLE

A park which is not sentimental enough, which does not provide an impressive *Paradestraße*, does not allow one to relish experience. It is instead about a sudden and intensive sensation: it stuns us with irregularity, with the absence of leisure when we move around, pursuing curiously designed paths, with the blurred boundary

between what belongs to the park and what does not, with the changeability of directions, or with the architectonic project whose principles are difficult to determine. The park is not a space that would make it possible to bring harmony and order into the chaotic processes of experiencing. But still, the park enables inner growth. Being there is fruitful in that it allows us, as Cioran put it, to fuse our impressions into the flame which gives rise to intense and complex spiritual experience.¹⁴ This is how the park should be construed, as what provides us with the complex spiritual substance which is a real presence.

And yet, Fazaniec has never tempted one with the excess of life. Instead, it has pointed to the tension that restrains excess and the ecstatic moment in action, causing one to withdraw. It was characterized by a far-from-obvious rhythm of living. The park was a case for the chaos of history, as the latter never turned out to be a straight line of succession of facts and their consequences. It made one aware of the horror of loneliness and the danger of collective obsessions when what the horde wanted was an unequivocal sense of ideological belonging to a community that was too closely tied together and had the capacity for control. Finally, the park led one to consider how uncertain culture was: to experience its presence is at the same time to experience its limit and to find out that one is abandoned by culture. A human being finds him- or herself beyond culture. It is a painful realization, which shows that culture matters very little.

A derelict and abandoned park, no longer draped in elaborate clothing, is what blocks the power of culture. It is instead open to another power that is welling up: one that does not derive from culture but resonates with unknown rhythms, coming from what is individual, fragile, unsystematic, out of tune with the established patterns of behaviour. The praise of fragility and the belief in individuality obviously do not translate into the stabilization of our uncertain condition. They do not give a sense of secure legitimization.

¹⁴ E. Cioran, *Na szczytach rozpaczy*, op. cit., p. 6.

Living on the margin, staying within the forgotten park, being located in its vicinity – these choices do not let us become lyrical. Lyricism is easy to embrace and understand, and thus easily measured. Instead, a dilapidating park causes the past experience to disintegrate. Its alarming significance is its position beyond culture. One perhaps finds unnerving its roughness, irregular shape, lack of literal meaning, the uncomfortable insight into the relation between an individual and community, an uneasy fit between a human being and landscape, and a lack of correspondence between words and things and lived experience. The park, by leading us beyond culture, makes us approach that which is other, not civilized enough, wild and forever barbaric. It makes different identities merge: we are at the same time the Romans, Europeans, Silesians, and barbarians, aliens, culprits, victims, people with no name and identity, Everyone or No-one. Silesia, by celebrating Everyone's uniqueness, draws strength from this kind of multiplicity. Thus, every abandoned and derelict park teaches us a lesson, providing the opportunity to move about at our own pace, to confront the paths and orders of knowledge that are not regular and rigid, and to chart one's own ways within the realm of experience.

The value of a derelict park derives from the fact that it has welcomed back its barbarity, and the notion of the return has to be understood in the Nietzschean vein, as recreating and creating something anew at this very moment and in eternity. What we learn from the depth of cultural wisdom is that culture is never final and as such it cannot serve as the only human abode. It becomes both everyone's and no-one's, whereas a good space is what is never familiar enough, what is strange and barbaric because it speaks to us in a mumbling and indistinct way. One has to remember that the word barbarian connotes being genuine and violent. In Cioran's words, what is barbaric boils down to blood, frankness, and flame.¹⁵ The park ruthlessly exposes the confrontation between a human being and nature but also a strange

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 10.

liaison between them. It uncovers the weakness of human power over the subjugated nature but it also points to the illusion behind the “ecological balance” narrative. On the whole, the park seeks to restrain the social aspirations of a human being. It curbs the human as the constructor, creator, master, and manager of Nature, but also as its alleged sister or brother.

In the end, any time we traverse the park, in our traversing there is a notion of the decline of culture in the background, as well as the anticipated death of ourselves and of all those that came before and will come after us, and the demise of anything that has come into being as a result of cultural effort and that will pass away, leaving behind its trace. The park attests to a strange liaison of the human being and nature. It is not possible to narrate in plain words what the sense of mutual belonging is all about, but also, paradoxically, the sense of un-belonging. It is a liaison without the promise of equality and congruence. It is not based on the just distribution of goods. Our fellowship with the space is questionable to a high extent, as it is never clearly stated and charged with high expectations of mutuality and hope for the community that will never come. The park offers a lesson which says that everything that has a form will become formless, every shape anticipates shapelessness, and every single structure betrays its amorphousness, to be finally be devoured by the whirl of chaos. The space explodes with confusion, which is here a vital force. The lesson of the park is however also to stay stoically calm in the face of the violence of nature. Derelict parks make it abundantly clear.

SILESIA EX MACHINA – SILESIA EX NATURA: WONDER AND MADNESS

The park does not bring forth any sort of boredom. One cannot be bored here due to the lush vegetation, a sense of uncertainty, and the presence of pheasants, boars, and dark recesses which make

one constantly tense in existential terms. The park puts forward an idea that life is highly problematic. It is not just an agreeable landscape, nor is it a source of melancholy and sadness. Fazaniec stems from the effort at creating something and as such it has required, and still does, an effort to create. If it is also about dilapidation and the confrontation between nature and culture, it points to existential experience. It provokes a number of questions: Is there something like wonder at mere being? Can thinking be reduced to the very root of existence? Can one actually tear off the superficial layer of culture and knowledge? Fazaniec does not lead us to live a bare existence or to become intoxicated with the essential elements of living; at most, it lets us arrive at the basic stage of wonder at the presence of culture and nature within ourselves, and face the imminent change that portends decline. The awareness of the latter provokes amazement.

Yet the park that has no room for boredom, strollers' leisure and melancholic contemplation breeds also madness. It stems from the deepest uncertainty and lack of knowledge as to what constitutes both ourselves and the environment inhabited by the inconceivable. What is inconceivable? One can easily enumerate: pheasants, Silesia and its urbanizing project, emptiness in the park, different wars that have shaped the space: German, Soviet, Polish, Prussian, and Czech ones, an eternally lasting and ever-changing nature, necessity and fate affecting individual lives and connecting them to collective ideologies, as well as to the spatial determinants such as natural resources, parks, fields, woods, commercial routes, convents and manors. *Silesia ex machina* and *Silesia ex natura* overlap. Learning the lesson the park offers may lead to ultimate spiritual purification.

The roots of metaphysics, as Cioran put it, are as tangled as the roots of our existence.¹⁶ The metaphysics of the park that seems to be aimed at unearthing roots leads to the staggering realization that both natural and cultural roots, like mystical roots, are not

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 73.

conceivable at all. In the park our fundamental knowledge must be exploded. The park astonishes us by depriving us of roots. But strangely enough, this kind of rootlessness does not breed despair. Traversing wild parks is about keeping close to, and withstanding, great contradictions and incomprehensible antinomies, accepting a dangerous quality of lively spiritual life that blurs the familiar distinction between what is and what will be, between individual and communal phenomena.

In his *History of Eternity* Jorge Luis Borges described the evening he spent wandering in Barracas, where, steering clear of wide alleys and sticking to peripheral streets, he came across hidden foundations of a house. The author was struck by the poverty and lack of transformation of the public space for the last thirty years; this was the reason why he wrote he felt dead, like an observer of the world that had come to understand the meaning of the word eternity which was perhaps forever silent and absent.¹⁷ Borges's apologia for eternity is an important element of human thinking because the world needs something that lasts and eternally returns. But the meaning of the story does not only stem from its correspondence to the Nietzschean notion of eternal recurrence or the praise of eternity in Marcus Aurelius, or even the teachings of Plotinus who held that nothing passed away in the world as things were able to persist forever. The story refers first and foremost to the experience of one's own particularity in what constitutes the eternal experience of the world. It is a question of the participation of an individual in what is generic and universal. It means that a single person is present in every human fate, without the division into the past, present and future. He/she lives in the absolute present that encompasses everything. The idea may sound astonishing; however, it cannot be subsumed under the category of mystical experience. Marcus Aurelius is right when he

¹⁷ J. L. Borges, *Historia wieczności*, trans. A. Elbanowski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Prószyński i S-ka, 1995, pp. 33–35.

writes in his meditations that whoever sees the present moment has seen everything from eternity to eternity.¹⁸

A similar notion can be found in *The Book of Disquiet* by Fernando Pessoa, who elaborates on the idea of being local and subjected to the place and time; in his view the human lot is to live under the blue silent sky, fulfilling one's ritual obligations, until one ceases to exist.¹⁹ *Jedermann* makes a connection between necessity, the passage of time and the course of events. But he or she also recognizes the local dimension. Pessoa's suggestion that a human being is always local and subjected to something else is worth remembering. A human is subjected to the local because he or she belongs to the space nearby and is governed by it. To be subjected to the space is to accept the fate of those that came before us and those that will follow. Perhaps the experience of *Jedermann* can only be fully embraced at the local level.

That is why each time I walk around the derelict park called Fazaniec I do it as Everyone: as Count Schaffgotsch, wondering at the antinomies of Silesia, a region both rational and wild; as his wife Joanna, née Gryzik, an heiress to Karol Godula's huge fortune, who must have known how fortunate things in Silesia may turn out; as numerous middle-class people: clerks, watchmakers, salesmen, doctors, engineers, who traversed the space and probably wondered how much freedom nature enjoyed in the park situated in the enlightened Silesia; as miners and steelworkers who came here with their families in order to experience nature in the vicinity of their homes and workplaces and to take a short break from the routine of work; and as children whose imagination must have worked hard to adjust to the space of the park which was not wild enough. I walk through the park as a Prussian soldier and Prussian burgher, as a Silesian insurgent, as a Polish or German

¹⁸ M. Aureliusz, *Rozmyślenia*, trans. M. Reiter, Warszawa: Helion, 1997, Book 6:37, p. 67.

¹⁹ See: F. Pessoa, *Księga niepokoju spisana przez Bernarda Soaresa, pomocnika księgowego w Lizbonie*, trans. M. Lipszyc, introduction by R. Zenith, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Lokator, 2013, p. 164.

expert on nationalist propaganda (such people, however, rarely frequented parks because they were slaves to their time and current historical events), as a Polish, German or Silesian neighbour, as a Soviet soldier who felt alien in the land he despised and wished to destroy, as a newcomer from Kresy, a borderland in the east, as newcomers from various parts of Poland who found themselves here by accident or on purpose, with the will to implement the migratory and ideological project of the communist country which wanted to displace people to a variety of places so that they put down roots elsewhere. I walk through the park as a Silesian grandpa and grandma, as a baron and count, as a pianist and policeman, as a mother and father, as a widow and orphan, as Tante Agnes, as an allotment owner, as a cyclist, runner or dog walker.

Traversing a dilapidating park, we remember Villon's lament for what was once full of glamour and splendour but had to pass away. We bewail everyone, including those that ruined the world with their activity, those that were indifferent, those that simply passed by and those that kept it going by their vigour. Walking through the park, we repeat the lament of Ecclesiastes, illustrating vanity with every step. The park that evokes wonder must also terrify, and the terror is not a stylized emotion. We are enraptured and amazed by the park's barbarity, and stunned by the spontaneous growth of vegetation which recalls the pulsating of life. The park does not offer respite after the day's work in the town. It fails to keep the promise of a good relationship between social and natural forces. It transmutes the present by making it reverberate with the past, things impossible to grasp and eluding words. It stays in touch with what is historical, eternal and beyond cognition.

The park shows that we do not need spaces that are polished and smooth, or systematic orders of knowledge. It makes us aware of the simple but alarming fact that we live in the plain environment, focused on what is little and fragile. It may be surprising that we are so willing to spend time in the vicinity of a derelict park, which suggests the Romantic habit of mooning about the Gothic ruins and imagining the reality in a stylized

way. To stay within the bounds of a dilapidating park is to watch uneasily, and with much difficulty, the evidence of one's own pending decline, of the imminent collapse of the civilization, of the inevitable demise of parks, architectonic projects, languages and illusory identity narratives. In the vicinity of a derelict park we inscribe our thinking in the dynamic process of life and merge our experience with its unpredictable movement. We tend to forget this act of reconciliation afterwards but we come back to it any time we walk around the extinct park space.

The park can take both fullness and emptiness as the starting point for its further development. Staying in the border park means being located on the margins and limits of the world and life. It gives rise to a sense of powerlessness, isolation from the social space and time, being beyond culture, as well as climbing the heights of subjective and individual experience. It lets us transcend common understanding and the bounds of time and space. In the park life is somehow arrested. We learn from the park that what life offers us is a sense that nothing more can be expected. But to our astonishment it is an insight that cannot be fully integrated into our life: we have to go back to the park and repeat the experience so that it remains vivid.

We are paradoxically fond of keeping close to the derelict park as a source of power that disturbs our knowledge and undermines the roots of our living.

THE NARRATIVE OF THE CULTURAL BORDER AND THE SILESIAN PHILOSOPHY OF HOME

BORDERS:

IN THE DIALECTIC OF PROTECTION AND OPPRESSION

Meditating on the border is crucial to the humanities inasmuch as their task is to consider the boundaries of genres, languages and discourses, the boundaries of cognition and understanding, the processes of displacement and erasure of communal borders, as well as the most disturbing notion of borders or limits – those of the human being and corresponding ethic. There is no denying that the cultural boundaries and borders erected by ethnic thinking have become one of the basic figures of reflection in the field of social anthropology.

It is therefore essential to pose a question of what can be expected from the current narrative of the cultural border. Can something new be still contributed to the description of the borders? Where could one search for new ways of narrating the border, ones that would not only constitute a novelty but also affect the realm of relations?

The presence of borders and boundaries in the cultural narrative has long been taken for granted. Without paying attention to borders, anthropology could not have conceived of the world in

terms of distinct cultures, separated from one another and placed at a distance on the mental map. The world of cultures was thus viewed once as differentiated into structural organizations linked only by the universal logical structure of the human mind, as Claude Lévi-Strauss liked to put it.¹ Even earlier it had been represented as a realm made up of cultural circles with distinctly marked boundaries, which found its best expression in the conceptions of Fritz Graebner or Bernhard Ankermann.² It was also symbolically construed as a world of separate cultural systems, an image powered and sustained by the philosophy implicit in Bronislaw Malinowski's³ or Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown's respective methods.⁴ It is a world that we have become familiar with reading maps handed down to us by anthropologists who used to draw neat divisions between the territories of different tribes, as was done by Fredrik Barth in his map of peoples inhabiting the north of Pakistan.⁵ Finally, it is an image of the world that needs boundaries for the mere purpose of documenting cultural diversity, as evidenced by Clifford Geertz's early works.⁶ Clearly, the world of cultures could not have come into existence without reference to the figure of the border.

There is however not escaping the fact that anthropology has long worked to mythologize the condition of separation, as

¹ C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. C. Jacobson and B.G. Schoepf, New York: Basic Books, 1963; C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. G. Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966.

² A. Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 47–60.

³ B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1984.

⁴ A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islander*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

⁵ F. Barth, *Features of Person and Society in Swat: Collected Essays on Pathans. Selected Essays of Fredrik Barth*, London: Routledge & Kegan Pau, 1981, vol. 2, p. 10.

⁶ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 1973; C. Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981.

has repeatedly been pointed out by postcolonial theorists.⁷ It has mythologized the hierarchy of cultures by sketching typologies and drawing maps of clans, tribes, castes and nations.⁸ But the mythologizing project was often incompatible with the intuitive boundaries drawn by local native communities or the colonial authorities. On the one hand, the anthropological image of the world worked to erase alien borders imposed by colonial divisions by highlighting the significance of tribal boundaries which went across the political organization of the world. On the other hand, the anthropological view helped to strengthen colonial borders by promoting the category of the tribe (one capable of uniting scattered groups of people) instead of that of the clan (as clans were too differentiated and difficult to translate into the terms of European and American thinking on nation and state). Postcolonial criticism is however an insufficient tool to explore the subject in its depth.

This is because underlying the processes of differentiation and enclosure is a powerful human need to become separated from the other, to distance oneself from what is alien and mark the distinction in space, to secure one's possession and consolidate territorial power. And the power is clearly buttressed not only by psychological and biological ties but also by cultural relations. A human being is a resident of the local space, and the fact makes him or her constantly produce new boundaries. One can wonder, as Barth does, whether the boundary replaces existing differences and identities or whether it actually contributes to their making.⁹

⁷ E. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon, 1978; R.J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction*, London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001; M.-R. Trouillot, 'Anthropology and the Savage Slot. The Poetics and Politics of Otherness,' in: *Recapturing Anthropology. Working in the Present*, ed. R. Fox, Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991, pp. 17–44.

⁸ D. Scott, 'Criticism and Culture: Theory and Post-Colonial Claims on Anthropological Disciplinarity,' *Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 12, issue 4, 1992, pp. 371–94.

⁹ F. Barth, 'Introduction,' in: *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, ed. F. Barth, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969, pp. 32–33.

Perhaps it is the case that every boundary is drawn much too hastily and a little bit prematurely. The imperative to differentiate and enclose is however universally present.

From that perspective the world can be perceived as a ceaseless **production** of boundaries which struggle for what is in-between and work to create a caesura just in order to evade the spectre of monotony. The production work is a basic human capability. Good boundaries naturally search for ways of marking the space by reverting to geographical features such as mountains, rivers and the ocean which do not allow human beings to dissolve in homogeneity and secure their condition of being rooted in the familiar and unique. At the same time, boundaries are drawn in the name of the unity of those that are brought together as a community of being situated “on the same side of the border.”¹⁰ The act of drawing boundaries contributes to the symbolic violence implicit in the subjugation and control of territories, people and ways of thinking. Borders are tantamount to **power**, to put it in Michel Foucault’s manner.¹¹ Borders serve the purposes of conquest, Michel de Certeau wrote, since it is the one in power who divides and separates, his or her certitude stemming from the evidence of the **map**.¹²

The border is in the service of total violence that unifies territories and manages the imposed unity. The main function of the border is exercising control. Even more, the very processes of shaping space and exercising the power of authority assume there is a certain **geometry and stereometry of borders**. A human being produces borderline forms reflecting his or her style of thinking – forms which are simple in terms of their structure and yet complicated as far as the spaces established on both sides of the border are concerned. To rethink a geometry of borders

¹⁰ Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, pp. 92–111; 151–152.

¹¹ M. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Other Writings 1977–1984*, ed. L.D. Kritzman, London: Routledge, 1990.

¹² M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S.F. Rendall, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 120–121.

is to rethink a geometry of one's own thinking about the human world. There is something like a geometry of the universal and a geometry of the local, but, admittedly, they hardly ever get into contact with each other.

The world viewed as a production of boundaries calls for something more. Indeed, it can be seen as capable of **producing ever more porous boundaries** and erasing demarcation lines for the sake of the fluidity of living. The question remains which cultural boundaries are beneficial and close to the human being – perhaps the ones whose porousness is not destructive and which are hardly noticeable instead of being an instrument of oppression. The second question concerns the nature of boundaries – which of them are anchored in oppression that gives rise to acts of their questioning and dismantling in the practices of living? The problem of the border caught in **the dialectic of protection and oppression** is not sufficiently tackled by the current anthropological narrative as it goes beyond the latter's framework, spilling over into social and ethical discourses. Culture is constantly oscillating between a sense of familiarity and safety, and a strong tendency to erect walls, entrenchments and entanglements. It seems that the need to rethink the dialectic of protection and oppression is particularly pronounced today on account of an unceasing influx of refugees, mass economic migration, numerous conflicts over the existing borders, campaigns of hostility aimed at protecting native populations from immigrants, and the overall difficulty in organizing solidarity actions based on ethical bonds.

Let us now focus upon the contemporary thinking on the border in the cultural narrative. What does it embrace? Which thematic strands does it weave together?

The cultural border or boundary emerges as an important figure in the following areas of theory and social practice:

1. **The rhetoric of the border** – the ideology and language of the border: Us vs. Them, one's folk vs. the others, and the rules of dissolving the borders. The significance of the border: what does

it communicate? How does it work to produce difference? What kind of bonds does it create? What divisions and misunderstandings does it bring? How does it strengthen or blur identity?

2. **The border as a matter of concern to the collective mythologies of a community.** Actions that stem from these mythologies assume the appearance of struggle, efforts at maintaining power, expansion, notions of recovery, or nationalist symbolism, but they also feature civilizational concern over the limits of “our civilization” construed as the human world. The concern also poses a question of a good, or favourable boundary as a caesura in time and space, or a division in social geometry. At the same time, it extends to the problem of rites of passage, or any kind of maturity, secret society or shamanic initiation that helps to legitimize an act of transgression with the community’s consent and enables the oscillation between what is human and what is inhuman.

3. **The social negotiation of borders** – a process of redefining and establishing differences between oneself and the others, and a confrontation of individual choices with collective reasons. An important problem here is **a negation of boundaries**, resulting from the affirmation of one’s lack of roots and a sense of freedom to proceed in space. It also amounts to a negation of borders as what sets a limit to individual liberty and invalidates free choice. The affirmation of **the dissolution of borders** points to the persistence of various manifestations of fluidity: notions introduced by multi-, inter-, cross-, or trans-. A border is not a line and it cannot be tantamount to an enclosed area. The precision of boundaries is what is currently losing ground. We tend to enumerate the beneficiaries or culprits of the situation in one breath: the Internet, a largely economic design of modern times, a corporational rather than national make-up of the world, social mobility and migration, post-national and multi-ethnic ways of contemporary living, and individual identity choices. These phenomena amount to the praise of crossings, intersections and couplings. They are also about

redefining the former ethnic boundaries (in the ancient sense of *ethnos* as race, religion, territory, language, kinship and mythic background) which are to be replaced by **new boundaries**, those of the sex and gender, sexuality, everyday practices and styles of living. What we can observe is thus a growth of subtle differences in place of old ethnic or racial boundaries.

4. **The decline of the anthropological rhetoric** – one that used to produce classifications, typologies, and distinctions, that used to draw patterns of culture and cultural boundaries, and that, as a result, yielded static images of cultures and subcultures, or national and regional cultures. It is also a decline of all strategies defined by the ideology of hierarchizing and subordinating cultures. Finally, it is a demise of the style of thinking based on the clear-cut distinction between the project of *Kulturwissenschaft*, cultural studies, and that of *Naturwissenschaft*, or sciences, and intent on separating two distinct methodologies in their striving to describe the limits of what is understood and known. The border is also involved in the question of progress and transgression in medicine and in the biological attempt at redefining the parameters of humanity.

5. **Border as an ethical commitment** – a commitment to engage with the Other. Once reconsidered, a border emerges as a call to transform social practices. The ethical understanding of the border leads to the realization that beyond the boundaries that were supposed to separate us, there is a possibility of communication based on the reference to the idea of human unity and longing for a community grounded in ethics. Due to frequent incidents of separation, for instance for ethnic reasons, one can develop sensitivity to the question of the other and a need for hospitality towards the other, as we become conscious of the same limits of our being and of our own cultural temporariness. Rethinking the border's capability to produce bonds – which becomes possible through acts of their questioning or recognizing the benefits of separation – is a major task facing the contemporary discourse on culture.

THOUGHT AND ACTION: THE REALM OF BONDS

Let us repeat the question now: what could be expected from the current discussion of the border? Where are we to search for new ways of narrating the border, ones that would not only constitute a novelty but also affect the realm of relations?

We should expect the border narratives to be at the same time responsible cultural practices that constitute as such **a formula capable of redefining a human being** and his or her communal commitments. A responsible narrative is able to shape interpersonal relationships in ethical terms. Viewing a human being from the local perspective may bring forth two palpable consequences. The first is that the description of the world should simultaneously be a strategy for shaping sensible human relations. It seems to be of much importance to the local thinking because what we strive to create with words is at the same time a contribution to the making of the world close to us. The second consequence is that the narrative should readily translate into action. The notion of cultural activity and the formula of socially engaged anthropology or cultural discourse that is capable of transforming everyday practices is a promising step forward.

An intellectual gesture should equal an ethical gesture, one that entails intervention in reality. It should affect and transform the image of the world and concomitant social practices in the way that will make them conducive to mutual understanding. Such an idea leads to a realization that the anthropological and cultural narrative that is favourably disposed towards the others and results in their welfare is always an **educational project**. What is more, it is a project that is locally experienced and implemented. The description of the borders is supposed not only to yield a certain view of the world but also to create **a realm of bonds** that we are not yet able to imagine at the moment of creating. The narrative has to be lived: it is to serve the practices of living. **Thought should**

translate into action, one that prompts us to trace affinities, as well as positive differences.

Therefore, the border narratives that recur within the space of culture and politics should be read not just as another instance of story-telling but as a dynamic and suggestive attempt to search for the human being in the experience of vulnerability over against what is systematic, official and enclosed. Developing a “good narrative” in intellectual terms means making sure that the story of the border is not about drawing an extensive map with neatly divided territories; instead, its task is to trace individual **microhistories and microexperiences**. Significantly, the common human experience can be found in the fragility and tiredness of a single human as he or she is seen crossing the border, arrested at or hunted over the border, on the move or building a home along or on the border. This ethical dimension needs to be stressed: the mythologies of wandering developed by communities are mostly hyperbolic, yet an individual experience of being on the way is microscopic and vulnerable. The border shows our human experience as deeply fragile. Culture is an expression of fragility, as all things human are fragile by definition: this is a crucial lesson learned from the border.

In this way, a border in the “good narrative” is reframed so that it gives rise to a call for the transformation of everyday practices on both sides of the border, at many points of the border, and even of the border within ourselves. It means recognizing the fact that borderline thinking begins on the border but extends even further and we must constantly remind ourselves of the fragility and tiredness of a human being who is both dominated and **defeated** by the borders. It is however also about recognizing these borders as a good local caesura without which a human being would be threatened by the unification with the Same. **Favourable borders** keep a human being on the good and beneficial side of living, exercising positive authority in the realm of human meanings. The wrong way of subjecting to the power of the border produces identities that are violently hyperbolized, with the emphasis placed

not on the difference but on the unity and self-identity of what is one's own. Such borders produce monoliths and wholes: they result in totalization and homogeneity.

The latter notion of the border is best exemplified by the infamous wall that is still a favourite construction of power erected as a protection against newcomers and has re-emerged in recent years in Hungary, on the border with Serbia, or in Israel, on the border with Jordan. A wall reinstates fighting. It is a simple construction that gives rise to incidents of cruelty on both sides of the border. The act of erecting a wall is a gesture towards designing future structures of social terrorism. The problem is however that the construction of the wall becomes a necessity as there seems to be no way to communicate with the other and a sense of safety and peace has long been disturbed. As the narrative about the community and its hope for the communication with and respect for the others has failed, what remains is only a wall as a sensible way of separating enemies and assuring one's own safety. It is a short-term policy that has no future. Still, not building a wall would be an equally desperate attempt to hold on to the utopian view of relating cultures in the world where people no longer wish to relate to each other.

An equally monstrous exemplification of the border is provided by refugee camps that are marked by enclosure. In the refugee camp the politically terrified and oppressed is transformed into a controlled mass of powerlessness. There is no longer any notion of culture or place: here means nowhere, to be controlled by the centre managing political territories. It would however be naïve to think that the lack of control over the powerless and rejected group of people, no longer constituting a community, does not pose any threat to other localities situated beyond the border that need to be shielded. In the refugee camp what is prioritized is mere politics.

The border narrative is threatened not just by difference and displacement, and certainly not by a series of subtle differentiations, but by the idea of unity and violent opposition that is aggressive

in its scheme of clear-cut distinctions: either identity or difference, either one or many.

It must be remembered that the story of the border we tell extends to borderline practices in the realm of culture. Each narrative and social practice that is capable of producing and sustaining boundaries turns into an educational project. The question remains **how to find the golden mean between different ways of functionalizing borders, favourable and oppressive ones**. The clue can be found in keeping memory of all possible aspects of borders. It would be a memory of power abuse connected with the borders but also a memory of their good role as a caesura capable of situating us “somewhere there.” Borders accumulate a memory of the geometry and mental space but also an experience of being a winner or loser. At each point of the border, whether it is a trivial or violent part of the story, one can witness the capacity to turn into either the most monstrous form or the most friendly way of limiting space possible. It is no wonder that what gets coupled in the border are both protection and oppression, subjection and freedom, or, last but not least, humility and pride. The experience of oneself and the other on the border is always about the threat constantly posed to the human being. Each and every border makes manifest a communal experience of humility. It is where a human being gets exposed in his or her fragile locality.

THE SILESIAN NARRATIVE OF HOME: A BORDERLAND IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Silesia is the idea of at-homeness, practised every day. Silesia is a borderland in Central Europe now located mostly in Poland, with small parts in the Czech Republic and Germany, whose cultural and political history was influenced by various traditions. Things have never been easy here: never just one language, one fitting national label, one history, or one identity. Home has been spelled

out into so many individual households: aristocratic, middle-class, working-class, peasant houses;¹³ those in the city and in the country; those in the centre and on the periphery; homes less and the least national; those whose sympathies leaned towards Bohemia, Germany or Poland and those of an altogether separate experience (in the sense of Silesian separateness); those marked by multiplicity, within one family able to place, side by side, two or even three languages, intertwining religions in a similar way as well. But all these homes emerged by the virtue of the one shared place.¹⁴ They were Silesian, not nondescript.

Owing to their experience of the border, such homes were becoming more or less frontier-like, as Silesia has been about the complex experience of the boundary brought about by a well-demarcated place. That is the reason for the affirmation of being on the borderline or next to it, as a boundary protects the domestic territory and comes close to the experience of human frailty. Whatever is frail must be strengthened by the fortitude of home, the attachment to the landscape, but also by reaching out towards all those located beyond the border. Place becomes characteristic as such, and care for one's home turns into an imperative. In Silesia people find themselves as subjects of their homes, irrespective of their social differences, being situated in a given historical moment, or relocations (displacements, migration, exile). Home that is so much more than just a building is related to the ideological and geographical territory. Silesia has created a singular religion of the domestic: you live in a place, together with it, next to it, and sometimes beside it, or despite it, but you never lose it from sight. Without home, "one is lost"; without emplacement

¹³ Cf. P. Greiner, *Plany i weduty miast Górnego Śląska do końca XVIII wieku*, vol. 1, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 2000; A. Kuzio-Podrucki, *Schaffgotschowie. Zmienne losy śląskiej arystokracji*, Bytom: Oficyna Monos, 2007.

¹⁴ Cf. *Górnoślązacy w XX wieku / Oberschlesier im 20. Jahrhundert*, texts S. Bieniasz, B. Szczech, eds. R. Budnik, S. Bieniasz, trans. P. Żwak, Gliwice: Dom Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, 1998; K. Fuchs, *Schlesiens Industrie: Eine historische Skizze*, München: Verlag Delp, 1968; H. Kramarz, *Oberschlesien. Land der europäischen Mitte*, Dülmen/Westfalen: Laumann, 1981.

one can fall into the hubris of unrootedness and independence instead of practising humility and performing service in one place. The teaching provided by the Silesian home and implemented throughout the ages, whether in Görlitz (Zgorzelec), Tarnowskie Góry (Tarnowitz), Pszczyna (Pless), Gliwice (Gleiwitz), Racibórz (Ratibor) or Wrocław (Breslau), has been straightforward: “we are where we are supposed to be.” We travel, wander, get tossed around and displaced, but everywhere we go, we are accompanied by our idea of place. People shaped by the idea of Silesia live in Frankfurt, Katowice, Essen or Opava. Frontier people are simultaneously people of the place, and therefore they find it difficult to become familiar with the binary thinking that opposes a wanderer and a settled person, for what they experience is a sense of interconnectedness: we move out and in, wander around but also perfect the myth of settledness. The border goes across minds, separates people, places families in diverse corners of history, sometimes establishing a friendly connection between the domestic territory and whatever is outside, but it also moves people out of their houses, oftentimes greedily intervening in their interpersonal relationships. More than that, it establishes in the most peculiar of ways bonds among those who are displaced, who have moved or resettled, while installing an emptiness in their midst. We might point to anthropology of experience here, and say that the Silesian home displays “emptiness,” and does not disclose too much.

SILESIA: HOME IN TRANSLATION

Oikology is an idea that binds *oikos* (home) and *logos* (knowledge, reason, word, idea), but it also involves something else, that which is in-between: a correspondence between the two which all at once is also distance, care and desire.¹⁵ Because of that, oikology

¹⁵ Cf. T. Ślawek, A. Kunc, Z. Kadłubek, *Oikologia. Nauka o domu*, Katowice: SIW, 2013.

situates the point of sharpness “a little further.” Emptiness and fissures provide the background for oikology as the knowledge of home, or perhaps knowledge by home that home prepares for us. We are those who have left home, and worked through the benefits and failures of rootedness and uprooting. We are those who look from afar so that things might become clearer, but also more acutely felt, as a lack, a gap, a fall. The home – our own home, understood as our neighbourhood, region, community, perhaps Europe, and finally as the world – will always have cracks and maybe even darkness within.

The Silesian home has always been a home in translation. What helps in understanding the phenomenon is the dispersed museums, whose very names allude to Silesia: Muzeum Górnośląskie in Bytom (The Museum of Upper Silesia, previously Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum), Muzeum Śląskie (The Silesian Museum) in Katowice, Schlesisches Museum (The Silesian Museum) in Görlitz, Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum (The Upper Silesian Museum) in Ratingen, Haus Schlesien (The Silesian House) in Königswinter, Slezské zemské muzeum (The Museum of the Silesian Land) in Opava, Železniční muzeum moravskoslezské (Moravian-Silesian Railway Museum) in Ostrava, Muzeum Śląska Opolskiego (The Museum of Opole Silesia), Muzeum Śląska Cieszyńskiego (The Museum of Cieszyn Silesia), as well as Schlesisches Museum der Bildenden Künste in Breslau (The Silesian Museum for Visual Arts) and Schlesisches Museum für Kunstgewerbe und Altertümer in Breslau (The Silesian Museum of Craft and Antiques), which were both shut down in 1945. They have become a way of working through the Silesian home, once whatever had been lost became lost forever, and once the transparent home had become an opaque territory. Estrangement and distance connect thinking with experiencing. In Silesia one can communicate with others through one’s own sense of at-homeness, and the language as such does not matter, be it Polish, German, Czech or Silesian. One engages with one’s sense of at-homeness, but what creeps into that conversation is deferment. After all, the at-homeness that has been practised in

Silesia for ages comes from the outside to supplant human beings. Settled and absorbed in that quiet conversation, one relinquishes the noisy course of culture, placing oneself out of the way, as one wants to take the effort to understand “home” from a distance, with no gusto, most of the time imperceptibly and within limits.

Unhurried and undemanding, the relationship of the idea of home with the concept of place leads us to the margins. In Silesia home is recognised as what is in the margins, be it the margins of the world, periphery of discourse, or whatever is off the official course of culture, out of the way of the promoted mobility of people and objects, but also away from the propaganda of stability and familiarity. Silesian oikology encourages us to take a few steps back, to loosen the bounds of functional thinking and slow down the rash exercise of practising “home.” It is not about practical thinking, and neither is it a set of instructions for using home.

SILESIA:

THE IMPERATIVE OF A RETURN TO THE PLACE

If the humanities are rediscovering themselves nowadays in the idea of at-homeness, they should pay attention to the Silesian experience of home. After the whimsical fascination with unrootedness and homelessness of thought and the apotheosis of lightness and dislocation, the domesticated humanities are becoming a challenge again, imbuing with gravity our words, actions and fortunes that are all emplaced, because we all belong to discrete points in the space-time continuum, even if we do sing the praises of movement. Emplacement reaches us when we are settled and when we wander, owing to the fact that we are born somewhere and we also die somewhere. What does come easy in Silesia is the experience of the relatedness of movement and stasis. The idea of place is broad: we wander around and then return to the notion of place that we have never really abandoned. Or

perhaps it is more honest to say that we return to the place that has never allowed us to abandon it. The Silesian idea that place is necessary makes us work through the notion of home, continually taking the side of the domestic and the domestic bonds, even when we speak of their loosening and loss.

The knowledge dispensed by the Silesian home would be simple: it is an imperative of a return to the idea of home. This means that one cannot be out of place, a place that one would not be able to return to, even if that return were purely imaginary. We need this realisation as a signpost also pointing to the fact that what hovers over the idea of home – any home, yours, and mine – is a premonition of an end. Silesia has been through this so many times, experiencing both an end and a new beginning, undertaking the effort of coming back, even when accompanied by the knowledge that the places of days past are gone and that you cannot simply return to previous times. Those who find their place in Silesia have had their experience of the Silesian being-on-the-borderline and keeping watch over home in History; precisely because of the inescapability of time they go to the pains of living the place that has already been sentenced to perish away. Everything dies. Therefore, we return.

Silesian at-homeness on the spot eludes states and nations. Once one or the other storm of history has ended, home will be unfalteringly upheld in the movement that means return. This smacks of the Nietzschean eternal return of things, whereby the momentary and the eternal are tied together, as the linear order is destroyed.¹⁶ When all things return, the idea of home as the home of being returns as well. The force of thinking (of) home is inescapable, but in Silesia it returns as an imperative: we are the ones that build and ruin houses, and we are also the ones that move them. Our lot is to repeat that experience. Destruction and decay exist in the service of the metaphysics of reconstruction,

¹⁶ F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*, trans. A. Del Caro, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 128.

renewal, patching up and sustaining the household. Nietzschean “sameness” that returns, Gilles Deleuze would add, as what is “always different,” would be the knowledge of the impossibility of return of the things that are literally the same.¹⁷ This bind of eternity and the “now” is of significance for home.

When we speak of the “product” that is the Silesian home or the understanding of the Silesian at-homeness, we have to remember that we refer to the space that in the seventeenth century was called “the eye of the world” and “Europe’s emerald” (Silesia was praised thus by the poet Heinrich Mühlpfort in the verse that reads “Ocellus Orbis, & Smaragdus Europae,” in a funeral elegy for George William, who died in 1675).¹⁸ At the same time the very same Silesia was turning into a dangerous heritage that required systematic annihilation after 1945. What had been the experience of architectural luxury and civilising power taking the shape of urban and industrial development (the magnate families of Donnersmarck, Ballestrem, Schaffgotsch, Hochberg and Hohenlohe, industrialists such as Friedrich von Reden, Karol Godula and Franz von Winckler), the strength of theosophical, philosophical, literary and scientific thought (for the sake of example let us mention just the names of Jacob Böhme, Joseph von Eichendorff, Gerhart and Carl Hauptmann, Horst Bienek, Otto Stern and Kurt Adler) was also the experience of land degraded both industrially and manually.

Such a conjunction renders living in the service of the return of things a simple and ordinary task. The imperative of a return to the place that eludes our cognitive understanding is something that repeats itself over and over again. We perpetuate in our experience the return to the things closest to us. What comes back before and after our times is the idea of home; and it repeats itself in a form

¹⁷ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 41.

¹⁸ See: H. Mühlpfort, *Heinrici Mühlpforti Poemata*. Neudruck der Ausgabe Breslau und Frankfurt am Main 1686, herausgegeben und eingeleitet von L. Claren und J. Huber, Frankfurt am Main: Keip, 1991.

that is identical, but different. It will return as the road that we take to go back “to” our home, as well as to get “away” or “out of” it. We will repeat thinking in terms of home even when we escape from it. We will relive the experience of filling home with our presence only to remove ourselves from it. We will go on destroying and building houses, perform the wandering and the pilgrimage.

Care for the home is the care for the self that is continuously evolving in the face of the return of things. It reappears together with the necessity of citing François Villon’s lamentation¹⁹ and the quotes from Ecclesiastes. The narrative of passing away in the service of the return of things does not fall silent at home. The movement of creation, destruction and return seems to be an ever-renewing experience of emplacement, as well as of a subjection to the flow of life that is intertwined with the feeling of being transported by life and the eternal return of things.

SILESIA: THE SPIRITUAL PLACE

In the face of equalisation and uniformisation, but also of the excessive, often xenophobic attachment to the familiar, it is worth recalling the Silesian understanding of home. Silesian oikology brings forth *oikos* in experience and in thought, without glorifying the limitations of bunkers or the endlessness of open space. By allowing thought to take a new root in the notion of place, oikology draws attention to home as a task that lies ahead of men. It renews thinking about the discipline of the household, but not of dictatorship. Without the fissures that somewhat unhinge the house, there would be no dwelling. When, in his 1951 lecture *Bauen Wohnen Denken*, Martin Heidegger calls for a new investigation of the relationship between dwelling and building,

¹⁹ F. Villon, *Wielki Testament*, trans. T. Boy-Żeleński, Warszawa: PIW, 1982, lines: 329–356, 367–384.

this call corresponds with the Silesian assertion of home that is repeated on a daily basis. Owing to the fact that he realised the connectedness of care (*colere, cultura*) and building (*aedificare*), Heidegger discovered or rediscovered the essence of dwelling.²⁰

We mention Heidegger's admonition because the repeatedly renewed call of the Silesian home connects being, place and dwelling, somewhat contrarily to the whimsical narrative of nomads. However, nomads are not as unconstrained, nor are homes as static as one thinks. If we are coming back home, again and anew – especially after glorifying the nomadic and unrooted being “everywhere and nowhere,” working through the fascination with the idea of global, pan-human and unfixed communities – it means that we are renewing the *gravitas* of home. Home then becomes the most intimate space of gravity delineating future travel trajectories and preserving the density of experiences of at-homeness. Still, it also means that our discovery of home preserves the fissures and the loosening of ties; that it conceals a warning against the excessive covering (up) of what is human as well as an admonition against the irresponsible annihilation of things intimate. To insist upon renewing home entails a return to the uncomplicatedness of domestic thinking. This renewed task is a challenge for our transient time. What stands on the side of such hope is not a global home, but locality in itself, neighbourliness, and the concrete character of space and time. The idea of the local encompasses our attachment to place, landscape, things, community and separateness of fate, as well as singularity of culture and our metaphysical at-homeness in this particular take on time, space, necessity, contingency, order of things, etc. Home is not sunk in shapeless magma.

Silesia notes the strength of the spiritual place that lingers on and endures, even when strained; the cultural sense of attachment to oneself that is impossible to erase in enforced or self-willed

²⁰ M. Heidegger, ‘Bauen Wohnen Denken (1951),’ in: M. Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910–1976, Band 7, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000, p. 149.

movement of peoples and individuals; the rootedness that is stronger than any sociopolitical order. The Silesian narrative of the strength of place returns to us as a challenge that becomes the more relevant, the more we grapple with the insufficiency of the biological and political storylines. It throws at the merry(less) figure of the nomad a question that lands at his feet like logs: are you really so certain that home has so easily let you out into the world? That it has simply left you, or let go of you so lightly? The simplicity of the domestic is recovered among the Silesian experiences of the domestic, and may become a call for preserving home. It is an oikological creed: "And yet we are on the side of home." Against all odds.

"KAJ MY TO SOM?" ("WHERE ARE WE?")

If one stands on the side of home, that means that home is revealed as a value. A place is spread ahead, and a return to it is within the realm of possibility. This realm may be understood as the Nietzschean watery expanse that lies wide open to us.²¹ The Silesian realm of possibility becomes just like the tempestuous sea: an invitation to return. But the moment it becomes what it is "worth," it turns into an imperative. One has to return. As an uncanny "where?," home leads us beyond what is certain and does not promise an eternal vigil. Still, it does not cease to be an emplaced "somewhere." "Exactly here," "somewhere here," and not "there": place appears as "somewhere" that is important to us, for it is where it is "worth" it.

"Where?" can also arouse fear,²² as Tadeusz Sławek has demonstrated. "Where?" introduces anxiety for oneself and the place, expropriating it from the position of privileged duration.²³ "Where?"

²¹ F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, op. cit., p. 36.

²² J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2012, p. 558.

²³ T. Sławek, 'Gdzie?,' in: T. Sławek, A. Kunc, Z. Kadłubek, *Oikologia. Nauka o domu*, op. cit., p. 28.

basks in the shadow of “nothing.” We should ask about the way in which “where?” is unearthed in Silesia.

If we followed this path, we would find in this question only (or as much as) the breath of God’s repeatedly grave address to Adam in Genesis: “Where are you?” We would find Hasidic thinkers and philosophers of dialogue that dwelled on it. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig all resonate in the discovery of that disturbing inquest which forms an invitation to take upon oneself human life understood as a journey.²⁴ The shock caused by such an unusual question about “YOU” will be enough for the “I” to discover itself.²⁵ It is an indication of great significance for us. Silesian oikology laments the “where?” of the place that people have already questioned, just as it grieves for the future “where?” of other places, in which one has to see home. Where is this “somewhere” for people, what will wandering be in the name of “whereness”? Will it find its fulfilment “somewhere”? Aleksander Nawarecki dramatically words his concern for emplacement in Silesian: “Kaj my to som?” (Where are we?), and provides the simplest answer: “My som tukej” (We are here).²⁶ The question needs place, because people need emplacement.

Anxiety is supposed to lead us onto the right course, helping us to take upon ourselves the life and place that has been given to us. But even the most whimsical “wherever” carries within it the weight of emplacement. Silesian oikology then warns us against

²⁴ Cf. Shneur Zalman of Liadi [Szneur Zalman z Ladów], ‘Gdzie jesteś?’, in: M. Buber, *Opowieści chasydów*, trans. P. Hertz, Poznań–Warszawa: W drodze, 2005, p. 173; M. Buber, *Droga człowieka według nauczania chasydów*, trans. G. Zlatkes, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Cyklady, 2004, p. 13; F. Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften II: Der Stern der Erlösung*, Haag: Nijhoff, 1976, pp. 195–196.

²⁵ Cf. J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu. Wprowadzenie*, Paris: Éditions du Dialogue, 1990, p. 79.

²⁶ A. Nawarecki, ‘Kaj my to som?’, in: „*My som tukej*.” *Kilka szkiców o przeszerzeniach Śląska*, ed. W. Kalaga, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2004, pp. 9–21.

succumbing to the excessive desire for imbuing the question of whereness with terror, as our task is to find the road back home. Once “somewhere” or “wherever” become renewed by our “here, here I am,” they start being emplaced. Without leading us too far away, they allow us to come back home. What stands behind the question of “where?” that dislocates home and attachment is the care for the tangible “somewhere.”

Emplacement in the “exactly here” becomes the experience of tangibility of things, but it is also a touch of the eternal. At home the world stops. It freezes, even though everything around changes all the time. What opens up at home, where time stands still, in one place, is the space of neighbourliness. Place opens itself up as a way in to “somewhere.” Oikological reflection in Silesia would then provide an invitation to opening place, once it has become a space again.

SILESIA:

THE RECOVERY OF DOMESTIC GRAVITY

To think home, to think in terms of home, to experience home: these tasks permeate the attempts to domesticate the world and to bring the world within home. Derived from Silesian experiences, oikology would then form an invitation to take a few steps backwards in reflecting and experiencing home, as well as to broaden one’s thinking by making a few steps to the side or by coming to a halt. At the same time, however, it would comprise an invitation to engage in a movement forward or, finally, into a radial movement that emanates in all directions, binding whatever retreats and comes closer, goes out and returns, is accelerated or slowed down, past and future, central and peripheral. There is no room for oppositions or binaries of sense here: only for the obverse and the reverse, a presence side by side, with one another, together. Built up and intertwined, interruption and withdrawal are necessary for

recovering oikological thinking, in which the house reappears as a value. A departure from acts of expansion and spectacular events, as well as a retreat from excessive attachment to familiarity, are needed so that we can unhinge our experience of home. Home can be found only in the margins of both our self-attachment as well as on the sidelines of our carefree diagnosis of the liberating lack of rootedness. Marginal thinking, liberated and undemanding, binds itself with the care of emplacement.

By touching the Silesian narrative of home, people become people in the margins, seeing the world, including themselves, from close-up and yet from afar. They are people of both distance and proximity. The vast perspective from which you can behold things, individuals, values and the sky is fused with the precision of the microscopic diagnosis of things that escape the attention of others. An act of seeing things is not vague, but becomes singular and clear. It is as if the work of a watchmaker were fused with the perspective of a theologian or an astronomer, but also with the skill and courage of a sailor. People in the margins have already relinquished a demanding attitude towards the world and are satisfied with questions that have no immediate answers. What is enough is a silence that comes instead of the noisy dispute that we so hastily call a dialogue. A withdrawal means the recovery of domestic gravity, but also the joy of loosening the ties with the world and oneself. Already liberated from ourselves, free from societal aspirations, we gaze at the place that has befallen us.

In a sense, the story of the Silesian home could be about a return to the lightness of the childlike way of looking at the world, including home itself. Such a way of looking explodes the existing order of things, destroys established schemas and liberates life. It is Nietzschean chaos incarnated. And here we touch the mystery of the conjunction, to which Silesian oikology can lead us. Home is: it begins and crumbles before our eyes; it becomes tangible and intangible; it eludes us and imposes its presence onto us. It is intimate and distant at the same time. It is the embodiment of opacity, but also of simplicity. The child

immediately understands the call “Come home!” The Silesian “Do dōm!” has a metaphysical tenor and terror to it.

Out of the combination of countless details – gestures, words, the symphony of colours and fragrances, glances, silences, ordering of things, network of paths and the height of neighbouring buildings; the shape of doorways, windows and thresholds; the aesthetic sense and the symbolic emplacement of detail; the surrounding greenery, humans, animals and the landscape; fragmentary thoughts and traces of writing – one can extract home. It cannot be measured. It is the longing for the future. It is always already a premonition of the inevitable end. Even in the most cheerful moments of experiencing home, the Silesian everyday life carries gravity within, evoking the End.

Surrounded by the idea of home, we are experiencing the abjection characteristic of existential experience. It is both frightening and ordinary, which makes us indifferent to a continuous reflection on it. In Silesia people become indifferent to their own abjection by losing attachment to the narcissistic habit of looking at oneself and one’s possessions, and by abandoning interest in the past (from which no one sensible wants to learn anymore); they stand by the idea of home instead. This experience does not overpower them, but on the contrary, makes them affirm and renew their home.

SILESIA:

EXPERIENCE OF THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE

The Silesian home is rugged. As a space, it is perfectly curved and impossible to comprehend in flat terms: it is not a regular figure, or a line segment, or a smooth surface, or an autarkic, independent structure. Our knowledge of home is met with resistance from its rough surface. As the reality of experience, home is rough and does not fall into a sweet-sounding tune: it involves suffering and love, attachment and exile, rootedness and loss, glamour and poverty,

ownership and the lack thereof, membership and homelessness, safety and fear, order and ruin. The experience of at-homeness is not smoothed out or strictly demarcated. It is full of nooks and corners, ambiguities, vague connotations and multiple names. The poverty of language is all the more noticeable when we compare it with the abundance of the sensual experience, the intensity of images, bodily memory, the domestic weight of time passing, the rhythm of daily life, the strength of the experience of space. This particular curvature of the Silesian home makes the domestic elude us, as if it were moving away from a straight line in order to send us forth into infinite trajectories. Home is a never-ending interaction of what is human and what goes beyond humanity – beyond our imagination, our surroundings, our human way of experiencing things, beyond our interpretation, and beyond our space and time.

Silesia teaches us that we have to get used to the unpredictable movement that is our lot and that is involuntarily, outside or above us; it forces us into subjection so that we no longer hold the rudder firmly in our hands. Home lives in us. We are, after all, drafted to create home in the movement of attraction, connection, disconnection, merging and destruction. We become subordinate to the disproportionate forces that permeate home. We work through the forces of attraction and weightlessness. Home defies coherent stories of physical or social body, revealing areas of spiritual density and thinning that are inconceivable to us. The Silesian home means both euphoria and decline. The self-limitation of knowledge to which home brings us allows us to harness our ability to understand and predict things, while constantly presenting us with infinite trajectories, infinite stories and infinite experiences of space.

The Silesian home conceals intriguing thinking. On the one hand, there is the immensity of the sky, curiosity, as well as universal values, and on the other that interruption, coming to a stop in one place, the security of home, and the limited, finite act of holding onto what is known. Infinite trajectories that burgeon

out of home and then intersect with other homes, tying them with other spaces, require adjustments – and these are provided by the humility taught by home, for it is home that patiently subdues the arrogance of cognition and restrains the naïve rush to expand power and to strengthen oneself in the world. In the experience of home we find a lesson in governance of that which can open and close things at the same time. In this sense, the Silesian home renews the discipline of life. We move away in order to get closer to what is essential. The Silesian narrative of home, the unique Silesian oikology, brings us closer to renewing our discipline of life.

THE RETURNING QUESTION OF THE SILESIAN OIKOLOGY

Finally, let us return once again to the disciplining question that the Silesian oikology throws, like logs, at the feet of the (un)happy nomad: are you really so certain that home has so easily let you out into the world? That it has simply left you, or let go of you so lightly?

AN INSIGHT INTO A POST-INDUSTRIAL PLACE

What is a post-industrial place?

A PLACE WHOSE EXISTENCE IS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH THE IDEA OF DWELLING

By striving to take root, we do not wish to celebrate shapeless space; we are instead willing to identify it as a place and home, even if it seems to be evading our attempt at positioning. To focus on the post-industrial *place*, and not space, is to locate it in the context of oikology, a unique way of knowing that treats the *oikos*, home, as a task and commitment confronting a human being. This oikological knowledge allows us to think again in terms of the gravity and discipline behind the idea of a place as home without toying with the notion of dictatorship or ill-conceived familiarity. There would be no dwelling without the fissures and gaps that make home discontinuous and open. When Martin Heidegger in his 1951 lecture calls for the re-examination of the relationship between dwelling and building, he makes a case for a greater recognition of home: “To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word *bauen*, which says that man *is* insofar as he *dwells*, this word *bauen* however

also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine.”¹

This admonition is phrased at a far remove from the dominant narrative of utility; instead, it highlights fissures, cracks and whatever undermines the sense of homeliness. By pointing to the connection between the activity of taking care (*colere*, *cultura*) and erecting an edifice (*aedificare*), it leads to the discovery or rediscovery of the essence of dwelling: “Man’s relation to locations, and through locations to spaces, inheres in his dwelling.”²

The Heideggerian conclusion that “[mortals] *must ever learn to dwell*”³ should be conceived as an ever repeated call that has already become distorted. The distortion is especially significant with respect to the experience of a place as home, and even more so with respect to the experience of a place which has become distanced by the very use of “post-,” as in the case with a post-industrial place. Our dwelling, no longer offering permanent residence, being in fact more of temporary abode, remains a commitment that binds being, place, home and taking root.

In this investigation of the meanings of “post-,” the oikological mind would find some hope for the imminent return of the experience of emplacement and the notion of home. This is an immense task for our restless, information-laden and cybernetic times: to discover anew the importance of our attachment to a place which is not just a visible and palpable material scene but a complex reality which unfolds in us as an attachment to the landscape, to things in our environment, to the experience of the communal and private ways of being, to the unique quality of culture and to the metaphysics of our inhabiting and embodying concrete notions of time and space, necessity and contingency, essence of things, freedom and commitment and so on.

¹ M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. and introduction by A. Hofstadter, New York: Harper Perennial 2001, p. 145.

² Ibidem, p. 155.

³ Ibidem, p. 159.

A PLACE THAT HAS BEEN HIT BY A SANDSTORM

A sense of living in the post-industrial times marked by the presence of the services that make us live among other people is the reason why, as Daniel Bell puts it, we “live more and more outside nature, and less and less with machinery and things.”⁴ At stake in retreating from this position is something much more profound – the restoration of the experience and uneasy knowledge related to the post-industrial place. Former factories, mines, steel plants, commodity exchanges and goods stations appear both to lure and bother us. They have been converted into something else: a museum, a heritage park, an art gallery, a café, a meadow, a path on the tourist trail, a golf course, a loft apartment, a terrain redesigned for sports or other cultural activities, or a lost-in-space and abandoned monument of industrial architecture (see pic. 13–38). It looks as if a sandstorm had surged through, burying the place together with the previous experience of a human mass who once lived there in the disciplined way by humbly following the rhythm of work and rest within the allotted time and striving to persist, endowed with a sense of responsibility for the communal work, and with an understanding of the need for planned solutions and routine activities being performed with high precision, day in day out.

Business and military empires are based on the sense of service and devotion. There is also a lot of suffering behind them, yet the story of a plant has never been that of individual fulfilment translatable into self-congratulation. Fulfilling one’s duties was closely connected to the sense of communal being of those who had come to the centres of civilization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to factories, steel plants and mines, in order to experience the urban way of living, its freedom and prosperity – though defined otherwise than today. Fulfilling one’s obligation

⁴ D. Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, New York: Basic Books, 1976/1978, p. 148.



Pic. 13. Bilbao 2017 (A. Kuncce).



Pic 14. Bilbao 2017 (A. Kuncce).

was ultimately understood as the service in the place and for the place, a notion extended to include one's plant, home, environment, landscape and region. This obligation, due to politics and capital management, sometimes turned into slave labour for the property owner, family, state or ideology, but these larger references were somehow less significant than the everyday commitment to the place and home, to what was immediate and close at hand.

Owing to the addition of the "post-," post-industrial places have been restored from social oblivion. After the sandstorm has surged through, after the hustle and bustle of factories has long been silenced, after the former rhythm of the place has all been forgotten, the stumps of the previous life-experience are starting to protrude from post-industrial places. And these are the places that always remain bruised and inert, even though they seem to flourish again with tourist life and impress us with their design, as in Essen, Ostrava or Zabrze. Strolling through the new lustrous museums and tacky shopping centres, built on the territories of former large industrial facilities, one may ponder for a moment how easy it is to reach their hidden substratum, which is the sense of an end, also an end to being-at-home. Are we thus destined to view a mere spectacle of posthumous existence, following the end of what was once so carefully raised and cultivated? Or can the post-industrial places be inhabited anew?

A PLACE THAT HAS TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO A SYMBOL

To make a post-industrial place inhabitable again, what is needed is a distanced look at and renewed experience of the factory – if we allow the notion to encompass not only former production and steel plants, but also mines, railway, goods station, and commodity exchanges: all the areas that once contributed to the making of the industrial epoch in our history. It is thus essential



Pic. 15. Bilbao 2017 (A. Kuncce).



Pic. 16. Bilbao 2017 (A. Kuncce).

to render the former factory symbolic, to relate to the idea anew, to regain the sense of being part of something great again. Scattered somewhere in space, strolling around, encountering or passing other people, in passages and flows, we discover again that what invigorates our being is the gravity of the place. Having replaced the gravity of things with immaterial services, knowledge and information, we suddenly realize that we are in need of a palpable material scene.

The loss of a machine means a painful loss of the sense of materiality. We always gravitate towards some place even if it seems to be evanescent, ever moving or flowing. We need the force of gravitation. In this way we feel that we again keep our feet on the ground. The post-factory, construed as the space of a former factory that has been subject to material, functional and experiential transformation, would be such a place that brings to us back a lost sense of gravity. It does so not just by redescribing and redefining the former plant – which may not be serious enough – but by bringing the place back to our experience, by recovering its palpable presence in that it makes us repeat some movements, put our feet on the very ground, touch the machines, fill the space with our activity and inhabit anew the idea that we have just called into being. The post-factory is an already transformed experience that still pervades us and an idea that we wish to relate to in order to make it inhabitable.

As Juhani Pallasmaa reminds us, architecture locates us in space and time by operating at a human scale: “It domesticates limitless space and endless time to be tolerated, inhabited and understood by humankind.”⁵ In relation to the architecture of houses or cathedrals we have no difficulty in connecting the form of a building to a sense of home. Yet we may have more difficulty with reference to the spatial coordinates of former factories, despite their sometimes elaborate functional designs. It may seem that

⁵ J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and the Senses*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2005, p. 17.



Pic. 17. Giszowiec 2017 (A. Kunce).



Pic. 18. Hornické muzeum Příbram 2016 (A. Kunce).

their purpose was not to make us feel at home, as they were mainly aimed at producing profit. If we have a closer look, though, we will observe that behind the operation of factories there was a notion of connecting a human being to a place, which found its expression in the fit between the architecture and the place, in the activity of shaping the environing space of working-class residential areas and public buildings used every day by the local community (such as railway stations, schools, hospitals, department stores, post-offices, shops, gardens, parks, restaurants, inns, bath houses and laundries), but also in sharing the responsibility for the place bestowed upon people geographically and historically by shaping the common way of living, the place's cultural imaginary and its repertoire of aesthetic and moral values. The factory is not just about architecture and urban planning, it is a complex cultural reality that is able to produce motion, to usher in new behaviour and thinking, to impose meanings, to establish social relationships, to connect and separate people, things and localities, and to introduce some principles of coexistence, or the art of living, by teaching the discipline of staying in the place. The factory embraces people and binds them to itself even though they may be dimly aware of this overarching framework.

We turn to the post-factory having undergone an essential transformation which has removed us from the industrial experience. We make an effort to forge a bond with what is distant and even already alien to us. We perceive the post-factory not just as an area which has been subject to ongoing erosion but also as a factor in redeeming our sense of being-at-home in space and time at the moment when our home and our memory are at risk. The post-factory allows us to understand who we are to escape the formlessness of the incessant flow of reality and its evanescence. Wandering around the space of a former factory, present experiences mingle with past images, photographs, family stories, press reports and radio broadcasts. In the post-factory memory and imagination have been coupled. Reminiscences and evocations, acts of creating and conjuring up the past constantly contribute to the erection



Pic. 19. The Silesian Museum in Katowice erected on the site of the former Katowice coalmine, Katowice 2017 (A. Kunce).

of this immense place which is filled with our presence but also maintained by the mighty framework of a former plant. There is no possibility of unfounded experience here. In the post-factory we find a solid foundation by looking into the depths.

A PLACE WHERE WE LOOK INTO THE DEPTHS OF EXPERIENCE – ONLY TO FIND OUT THAT WE ARE IN THE FAMILIAR POST-INDUSTRIAL EUROPE

There are many useful activities that stem from penetrating the depths of experience – one of them consists in following the Industrial Monuments Route, which documents the culture of industrial heritage and creates links between monuments, values, industrial art and the art of living. The Industrial Monuments Route in the Silesian province was the only such route in Central and Eastern Europe to become, in 2010, part of the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH).⁶ This tourist and cultural trail connects industrial facilities associated with the industrial heritage and is a well-recognized tourist brand, as its originators write on the project's official website.⁷ It presents the facilities related to mining and steel industry, power and textile industry, railroading, telecommunications, water management and food industry. Former industrial facilities very often amount to real works of art, like the 1806 metallurgical buildings of Königshütte (Royal Steel Plant), where the elements of Gothic style can easily be spotted and which, as Henryk Waniek puts it, could be assumed to be a palace or abbey were it not for the smoke. The same applies to other

⁶ <http://www.erih.net>. Currently the European route is made up of eighteen regional trails (one in Austria, eleven in Germany, one in Holland, one in Spain, three in Great Britain, and one in Poland – Upper Silesia). The European trail includes 1410 post-industrial facilities, with 74 located in Poland [information obtained on July 14, 2017].

⁷ <http://www.zabytkitechniki.pl/Pokaz/27320/opis-szlaku> [accessed April 10, 2017].



Pic. 20. The Warszawa II Shaft of the former Katowice coalmine, currently the Silesian Museum, Katowice 2016 (A. Kuncce).



Pic. 21. The Silesian Museum in Katowice erected on the site of the former Katowice coalmine, Katowice 2017 (A. Kuncce).

industrial facilities to be observed on the photographs featuring landscape views of Silesia produced throughout the nineteenth century by the Rieden & Knippel lithographic company in Schmiedeberg (currently Kowary): “Steel plants, mines and other facilities were all modelled on medieval strongholds or temples.”⁸

The trips recommended as part of the Industrial Monuments Route, which help people rediscover post-industrial places in Tarnowskie Góry,⁹ Bytom or Gliwice, are aimed at raising the inhabitants’ and visitors’ awareness of the richness and variety of the region but also at expanding their receptivity to the civilizational and ethical values behind the industrial places. Referring to another such place, Liverpool, similarly based on the foundation of industrial revolution, Erik Bichard wrote that it is vital to pay attention to “the innovative way in which Liverpool has used its legacy of culture and celebration to help visitors and its own population rediscover the value of the city.”¹⁰ From our perspective, however, something more important and deeper is at stake – the narrative of the city becomes transcended by the story of the region and home, one that is truly receptive to cultural values.

Looking at the recommendations offered by the Route we can for example choose the 68-kilometre trail by following in the footsteps of two eminent architects, the cousins Emil and George Zillmann, who carried out most of their projects in Upper Silesia. The route includes: the District Disability Health Care Unit in Rokitnica (established in 1902–1904, since 1948 part of the Silesian Medical Academy), the buildings of two mines based in Gliwice:

⁸ H. Waniek, ‘Rozszarpany krajobraz,’ *Fabryka Silesia*, no. 3 (5), 2013, p. 11.

⁹ In 2017, 28 facilities in Tarnowskie Góry were included in the UNESCO’s World Heritage List – these are lead, silver and zinc mines together with the underground water management system in Tarnowskie Góry. Post-industrial buildings of Tarnowskie Góry joined the UNESCO sites of the Royal Salt Mine in Wieliczka (entry in 1978) and in Bochnia (entry in 2013).

¹⁰ E. Bichard, ‘Liverpool: Case Study,’ in: *Remaking Post-Industrial Cities: Lessons from North-America and Europe*, ed. Donald K. Carter, New York & London: Routledge, 2016, p. 152.



Pic. 22. The Silesian Museum in Katowice erected on the site of the former Katowice coalmine, Katowice 2017 (A. Kuncce).

Sośnica and KWK Gliwice, the latter also housing the Branch of the Artistic Casting Museum, the workers' housing estate called Giszowiec, a unique settlement combining a town and a garden (built in 1906–1910 for the workers of the Georg von Giesecke's Erben mining company) and Nikiszowiec (a housing estate established in 1908–1919, with unique redbrick blocks of flats surrounding inner courtyards and connected to each other by batten plates). By visiting them, we develop a sense of being subjects of the cultural territory which exists for us, but also for other people, those who lived before us and those who will succeed us.

Another travel recommendation of the Route is equally interesting in terms of its complex layering of time and space. What the less-than-7-kilometre trail unfolds before our eyes is a set of industrial gems in Zabrze. The first stop on the way is the Guido Historic Coalmine, founded in 1855 by Count Guido Henckel von Donnersmarck and including the deepest underground post-office in Europe, 3 kilometres of underground excavation areas and passages, a restaurant and performance and concert hall, all located 320 metres underground, and the possibility to experience the mine as a rough, dark and silent place 355 metres below the ground level. The second stop *en route* is Zabrze Museum of Coal Mining, located in the former office of the county administration which houses an eighteenth-century water drainage system, the only one preserved complete in Europe. The last part of the journey is a visit to the Municipal Botanical Garden established in 1938, and to the Maciej Shaft which prides itself on the still operating and more than 70-year-old powered winding machine.

In this way we have found ourselves in the centre of civilization and its strategy of taking roots. Still more, we are now located in the centre of the familiar post-industrial Europe: it is enough to have a look around. The projects aimed at the revitalization of old water and paper mills in the Italian province of Salerno; the idea of building a housing estate in the old Ford factory in Bucharest; the conversion of the former textile warehouses, together with cotton and corn exchange buildings, into the docking



Pic. 23. Silesia City Center erected on the site of the former Gottwald coalmine, Katowice 2017 (A. Kunce).



Pic. 24. Nikiszowiec 2017 (A. Kunce).

and transport centre in Manchester; the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao which has adapted old industrial areas for its purposes; the Silesian Museum in Katowice erected on the site of the former Katowice coalmine; the complete regeneration of the former mine and coking plant within the Zollverein industrial complex in Essen; the revitalization of the world's oldest glassworks in Harrachov together with the brewery set up on the spot; several well-considered adjustments of the Guido Historic Coalmine or the Silver Mine and Black Trout Adit in Tarnowskie Góry to the needs of tourists; interesting projects of making unused mines available to visitors in the Březové Hory district (Příbram) or in the Landek Park complex in Ostrava (Petřkovice); the adaptation of the Wieliczka Salt Mine for tourist purposes; the project of developing the post-industrial areas of former Norblin's plants in Warsaw; the conversion of Karol Scheibler's spinning mill in Łódź into loft apartments; the Rye Mill in Szamotuły (near Poznań) which has been converted into a family residence; the project of arranging lofts in the former paper mill buildings in Wrocław; the planned revitalization of the Powiśle heat and power plant facilities in Warsaw; the planned adaptation of the brewery in Wrzeszcz; the planned adaptation of the brewery in Cracow for commercial and residential purposes; the reconstruction of Peterson's mill in Bydgoszcz for residential purposes; the adaptation of the weaving mill in Zielona Góra; the project of establishing the Wzorcownia showroom in Wrocław, transforming the space of the former pottery factory into the facilities for shopping, commerce and recreation; the revitalization of the former Julia Mine in Wałbrzych by establishing the Old Mine Centre for Research and Art; the adaptation of the former boiler room in Gliwice or the lamp room in Bytom for residential purposes; the planned conversion of the former china factory in Katowice into a technology park – this is just a handful of examples of recent post-industrial design and artwork. As evidenced by these initiatives, there seems to be a distinct community of experience in Europe as the continent of post-industrial regions.



Pic. 25. The Wilson Shaft, Katowice 2017 (A. Kunce).



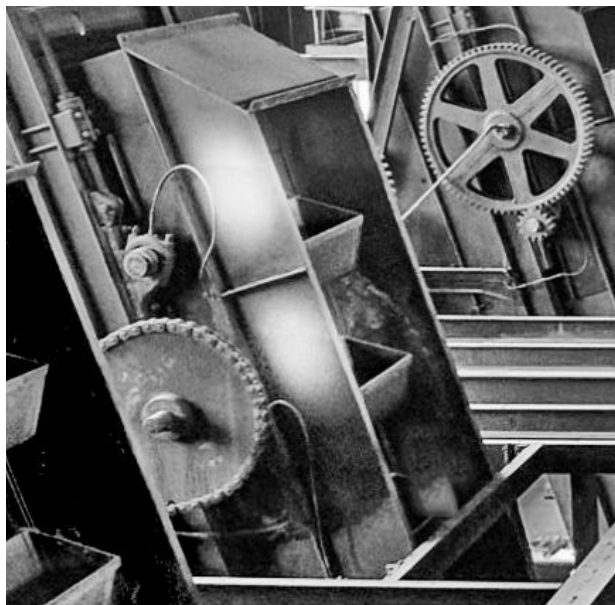
Pic. 26. The Wilson Shaft, Katowice 2017 (A. Kunce).

A PLACE WHERE WE FALL AGAIN INTO THE EYE OF THE STORM

Due to its specific nature, by partaking in post-industrial experience we can be again thrown into the eye of the storm, into the epicentre of destruction of space, things, activities and human selves. We can experience the upheaval which causes the destruction of the order of civilization, breaks things apart, exhausts and throws a human being into the realm of the inexplicable. Such crises usually go unacknowledged since the basic principle of everyday living is being immersed in existence without giving it too much thought. Still, an insight into the post-industrial place makes us come back from the here-and-now to there-and-then, even to the point of approaching what disturbs the linear flow of time and binds the present to eternity – as in the Nietzschean “eternal recurrence of all things.”¹¹ With our own selves we repeat the gesture of calling the industrial world into being and of establishing plants, the effort to keep the production going and to maintain the harsh routine of everyday living, but we also repeat the process of destruction, of the world coming to a standstill. The eye of the storm invades us and disengages us from our daily life; in this way, it binds us to those who came before and humbly, by choice or necessity, served the needs of the place, to be finally defeated. We are continually being defeated by this combination of life and death, work and solitude that has given rise to the community; the rest is a facade of the factory which should not mislead us.

In the post-industrial place we rarely find any neat narrative for ourselves, even though it is without much difficulty that we produce narratives for advertising and political purposes. Still, while being close to the place in existential terms, we come across silence instead of a coherent story. In this sense, a post-industrial place is a cold and tenacious environment, indifferent to our grief

¹¹ F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*, trans. A. Del Caro, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 178.



Pic. 27. Ruhr Museum UNESCO – Welterbe Zollverein, Essen 2016
(A. Kuncce).



Pic. 28. Ruhr Museum UNESCO – Welterbe Zollverein, Essen 2016
(A. Kuncce).

and longing. It constitutes a silent mass of impenetrable substance. It declines to disclose much of its essence, or what it discloses is the very act of closure. Instead, it makes us cherish the ruin, the remains and the darkness it leaves behind. It rings and buzzes with the unknown. And yet, it may become a new home. A post-industrial place prepares the ground for the experience that is about to teach us a hard lesson: we patiently build something day after day, creating communities and erecting industrial edifices, keeping the world going with our work, only to learn that all we have made is about to vanish into thin air, and the stage of destruction is itself going to be devoured by the processes of living. In the shadow of the former factories there looms the wisdom of the Book of Ecclesiastes or François Villon's lamentations.

A PLACE WHERE WE EXIST "ONE AFTER ANOTHER"

A post-industrial place which has again become animated, regaining its peculiarity due to the establishment of a new art gallery or an education institution, provides a sort of a morality story. It teaches us about the imminent decline of things, people and factories but, at the same time, it offers a prospect of future regeneration. The future existence is not just about "making things happen" and "having fun" in the place which used to connect life and death through hard work. Instead of merely providing the venue for consumption, entertainment or carefree aesthetic display, the place itself should be subject to radical transformation which will bring it to light anew by emphasizing the value of many people existing in one place, one person after another, succeeding previous generations and giving place to whoever comes next. In this way, the post-factory gives rise to an uncanny exchange of experiences. Our emotions, experiences, responses and stories are imposed on the place, which is grasped already in its post-dimension. And the other way round: the place undergoing



Pic. 29. The Old Brewery, Poznań 2016 (A. Kuncce).



Pic. 30. The Maciej Shaft, Zabrze 2017 (A. Kuncce).

post-industrial transformation stimulates our thoughts and actions by intertwining them with its own history and spatial organization. The post-industrial place, properly construed, makes us conceive of ourselves as human beings in existential terms. Our bodies appear there to substitute the countless bodies of those who, prior to us, filled and co-shaped the place with their presence, marking it with sweat, fatigue, and memory of repeated sequences of gestures, perhaps also stigmatization, exhaustion and injury. To put it in Pallasmaa's words, architecture connects us with the dead.¹² To recall the argument of the theoretician and practitioner of the field, not only does architecture make us experience ourselves in the urban space, but it makes us confront the city with our bodies: it is thus the city that exists through our bodily location and embodied experience, not the other way round.¹³

What we are concerned here with is however the connection to a place that transcends the urban spatial organization. The place connects us with the dead in the most poignant way: it is what moves us truly and deeply. In the post-factory the bodily dimension is highly significant. Everything here is related to the actual movement in space and observation of what is going on in the place: listening to the noise in the background, touching the surface of machines, floors and walls, and detecting the smells of the factory (there are differently localized smells, those of home, harbour, perfumery, confectioner's shop – and the factory also has their own). The factory is an area dominated by smell, touch, sight and hearing: it is a realm of sensual and intellectual imagination. We are told to take precautions, to move along the marked routes, to take a train, to follow the instructions of mining experts, to put on a protective helmet, to duck the head in some situations, and so on.

¹² J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and the Senses*, op. cit., p. 52.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 40.



Pic. 31. Sklárna Harrachov (currently Glassworks and Mickrobrewery Novosad & Son Harrachov), Harrachov 2017 (A. Kunce).



Pic. 32. Guido Coal Mine, Zabrze 2019 (A. Kunce).

The post-factory, so fragmentarily experienced, has to be imagined even further. The visitor's body no longer needs the same expertise and alertness to danger as was necessitated of the body of a former factory worker, but it still feels an inner compulsion to humbly follow the discipline, even in the partial way it is required within the post-industrial space. The post-factory is exceptional in that it binds our corporeality to those who came before us. We are thus made to retrace their steps in order to reflect on the community of time and place. The post-factory becomes our common reality and not just a mere chimera. In this sense, the place that makes us realize that we exist "one after another" marks a return to the notion of home.

The sense of space that the post-factory projects and imposes upon us reinforces our subjectivity, producing a feeling we would be devoid of substance and meaning without it. The post-factory also projects the sense of space onto our urban experience of time and space, as if we were lacking in the power of expression. What we come to post-industrial places for is not their obvious benefits: a theatre performance, shopping, a museum exhibition, educational workshops, wine tasting, a sports event or a music concert 300 metres below the ground level. Instead, we come to experience the hidden post-industrial quality consisting in the originary knowledge of home and universal evanescence, one that disturbs us and leads us beyond ourselves towards the unknown and inexplicable. What is the purpose of living one after another and fulfilling our obligation of staying in the place and for the place? What aim does it serve? Where does the disturbing element come from? The thoughtful way of existence in the post-industrial place always implies a sort of journey to the origin. We visit such places as we visit homes but also cemeteries. The visits are celebrated as something extraordinary, respecting the distance that has arisen between us and the site. The journey to post-industrial places, which is very often a hazardous exploration of those mysterious areas and facilities, becomes a sort of pilgrimage to what is inconceivable within our own abode.



Pic. 33. Guido Coal Mine, Zabrze 2019 (A. Kunce).



Pic. 34. Guido Coal Mine, Zabrze 2019 (A. Kunce).

A PLACE WHERE THE WORK HAS COME TO A STANDSTILL

The work which comes to a standstill means an end to the standard order of existence. Everything goes silent – a system of work which is sometimes over-exploitative and at other times simply aimed at unearthing the best part of the human being or matching the rhythm of a human life which is in need of being endowed with its individual form and value. It is not always the case that work leads to utter devastation so accurately captured in the picture of the industrial Coketown in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*. A human being whose life used to be defined as that of a worker in the local community, has suddenly been thrown into the existence at the end of time. The space and time that previously drew the contours of reality, its values and the self-evident sequence of events, have become marked by a loss. As a result, the human sense of loss is imposed upon the space and time which are left void, without work and "people of good work," announcing demise and distance. The place is now constituted by acoustic and visual roughness. It is indeed poignant to visit a former forge in the mine which is immersed in complete silence or to see an unused winding machine, once contributing to the industrial symphony of sounds which resounded across the European landscapes. This sense of loss, as well as the sense of belonging to the industrial heritage, are further reflected in the project aimed at recording and storing the sounds of work and everyday life, undertaken by major European museums (such as the Museum of Labour in Norrköping, Museum of Municipal Engineering in Cracow, Technical Museum of Slovenia in Ljubljana, Westphalian Museum of Industry in Dortmund, La Fonderie: Brussels Museum of Industry and Labour, Finnish Labour Museum Werstas in Tampere).¹⁴ The loss

¹⁴ On the museum project see <http://www.mim.krakow.pl/work-with-sounds> [accessed 10.07.2017].



Pic. 35. Guido Coal Mine, Zabrze 2019 (A. Kunce).



Pic. 36. The Railway Station Ruda Śląska Chebzie, 2019 (A. Kunce).

is, however, even more powerfully sensed in the experience of visiting an old factory immersed in total silence.

The former factory shafts, once towering majestically over the surroundings and seen from afar by visitors, were like medieval cathedrals: they somehow sanctified the space and provided directions to wanderers seeking food and welfare. Today an alienated former mine shaft tentatively overlooks the urban environment, which is instead dominated and defined by glass skyscrapers housing offices and apartments. Yet these lonely factory buildings, water towers or shafts are what still lure us from afar like holy towers directing ever new groups of pilgrims who set off on a journey for some other purposes. A water tower attracts us because it is a disturbing presence, radiating its metaphysical aura all over the place. It is part of a closed architectural system, impenetrable to observers due to the loss of its experiential quality, but still inviting a glance from afar. The time and space of such places need to be brought to light again. The end of a factory, the end of a machine and the end of the cultural order they belong to seems to be the last stage of the post-place's existence, one curiously capable of being transformed into something new and living. Yet this living is differently conceived: framed by a critical distance, irony and even playful attitudes on the one hand, and by the real desire to take root in the place again on the other.

It is thus simply wrong to reduce the post-place to the leisurely exploitation of history, a place marked by consumption, enjoyment and simulated activity. A caricature of a factory is no more than a caricature of real life. A post-factory should not be a parody of industrial and cultural power that has irrevocably been lost. The sense of loss stems from the replacement of former gravity by mere entertainment or naïve environmental narratives. In the latter case, an exclusive concern with the environmental transformation of a post-industrial place is a waste of its potential. From the perspective of cultural anthropology, it is not sufficient to come up with notions such as the SynergiCity which highly appreciate what is insignificant, harmless, fragile, healthy, green and communally



Pic. 37. Lubicz Brewery, Kraków 2018 (A. Kunce).



Pic 38. The Zinc Spoil Heap – Mount Antonia, Ruda Śląska Wirek 2019 (A. Kunce).

shared, leading up to courageous projects of social transformation.¹⁵ We cannot be content with the mere transformation of post-industrial cities undertaken with the environmental synergy in mind, directing our attention to sustainable development, green urban projects or innovative economy where pure air, green commons, restricted traffic or small, environmentally-friendly industry are used as arguments to support the idea of transformation. It should be stressed that such activity is also vital, yet the place can only be constructed and raised from within.

The “post-” should instead be able to rewrite the gravity of the place and to become a powerful gesture in space, connecting what is nowadays only superficial with what is hidden deep underneath and constitutes an expansive underground foundation of the city. Today’s post-industrial ever-growing cities owe their magnitude and distance to unused mines because the latter delineate a horizon line which does not overlap with the contours of office and apartment buildings or meadows. The three-dimensionality of the “post-” does not allow us to forget about the genuine foundation of the city. It is only after one has lost an old place that one can open his or her mind to the place again. The place that has ceased to be conceived in functional terms can be related to anew, which makes people aware of the relationship and belonging to what has so far gone unnoticed or been belittled. In the post-place we discover again the tension between the myth of the place and that of the factory, between our *Heimweh* and our acute sense of alienation. The old factories, with their trust in machines, in what is tangible and permanent and what yields concrete results, do not seem to correspond to the current cybernetic times and their passing fads. Still, the lonely production halls or machines made shiny again appear to power the place with new energy. What at first glance appears inessential and useless, fills the place with new essence.

¹⁵ R. Florida, ‘Conclusion,’ in: *SynergiCity: Reinventing the Postindustrial City*, ed. P.H. Kapp and P.J. Armstrong, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012, pp. 171–182.

A PLACE WHERE WE BECOME RESPECTFUL OF THE ORDER AND FOUNDATION OF THINGS

The former system of duties imposed by a factory on a human being not just to exploit but to save him or her in a sense, to make him or her useful, was replaced by a new obligation, that of being committed to stay in one place. A mine or a steel plant may have disappeared but the old and new inhabitants of the place are still there to guard it and take care of its gravity and symbolism. As Reiner Maria Rilke wrote in 1906 in one of the letters to Clara Westhoff: “Lou thinks one has no right to choose between duties and to shirk the immediate and natural ones (...).”¹⁶ In the post-industrial place, which strives to change former factories into new spaces open to everyone and easily convertible into the space of experimentation, exhibition or education, this commitment is particularly felt and lived. We are always where we are supposed to be. We do not want to depreciate our point of reference and support. Even if the factory is hidden behind the shopping centre, its presence is still detectable in some little graphic signs, single artefacts like machines, the layout of forms in space, and the remains of walls or remnant buildings. We are thus still in the right position to claim our heritage.

The ruins of the old factory tend to have an ever wider impact: the old plant radiates its influence as a powerful centre that emanates its light in all directions and at the same time shapes the rhythm of cultural space. It is a source of mixed origin, combining spirituality and matter, power and subtlety, permanence and degradation. A post-factory unleashes waves that spread around and dynamize the space, not just in architectural but also communal terms. It is still something metaphysical, nurturing the relationship between a human being and a place, between a sense

¹⁶ R.M. Rilke, ‘A Letter to Clara Rilke, Villa Discopoli, Capri, Monday, December 17, 1906,’ in: *Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke 1892–1910*, trans. J.B. Greene and M.D. Herter Norton, New York: Norton, 1949, available at: https://archive.org/stream/lettersofrainerm030932mbp/lettersofrainerm030932mbp_djvu.txt [accessed 02.09.17].

of necessity and individual ways of living, or work and meaning. Bringing to light the potential of such places is an obligation that materializes most naturally, simply and immediately. It manifests itself as a commitment and loyalty to the location. In other words, a post-industrial place is what affects and transforms our bonds.

A post-factory requires respect. We may no longer face any danger or risk our lives when we walk down the former labour routes but the breath of the past is still detectable here. We thus feel the need to be respectful of the order that the factory once established by fusing the rhythm of work with the rhythm of peoples' lives and nature. The sense of respect makes the post-factory both close and distant at the same time. This is the reason why, while visiting the post-industrial place, we only use marked paths and observe the rules even though they are a mere substitute for the former system of norms, rules and regulations once governing big factories. The factories of old used to subjugate human beings, subordinating their volatile and deficient existence to the overarching order whose task was to coordinate the countless elements of the system and to protect people against their inclinations, unstable behaviour and dangerous emotions. We are weak and fragile in our confrontation with nature; therefore, we are in need of discipline, hierarchy, and a clear set of requirements, specifying the beginning and end of work, its stages and procedures. What is vital is the whole art of planning, management, control and performing of tasks, but also the art of maintaining the mechanism, its conservation, repair and renewal.

Furthermore, what is essential is time, or our patient and humble waiting for the completion of subsequent stages and for the end product that the whole team is working on: we are in need of precision and repeatability, day after day. If there are clearly marked routes, their purpose is not to let people drift away from them. The post-factory instils in us a sense of admiration for the magnitude of the past. Even though it went largely unnoticed when the place was teeming with life and work, the post-factory exists now free and useless as if it was a work of art on display, delighting us with its beauty.

A PLACE WHERE DEEP SUFFERING BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER

The post-industrial landscape should be approached with the metaphor of a scar and similar tropes: with the notions of marking, scarring, mangling, and being terrified by what has been left. This is the narrative offered by Anna Storm, when she writes that the scars on the post-industrial landscape refer to complex pasts where the reality of loss, wound and fear coexists with that of survival, resilience and courage.¹⁷ This image, combining memory, experience, and economic and political projects, can most easily be applied to the Chernobyl disaster and its scarred landscape – one that recalls loss and the twilight of utopia and that is the quintessence of suffering.¹⁸

However, in tracing the suffering that binds a human being to a place as a complex reality where people and their experience are placed at the very centre, we have to trust the anthropological as that which is able to highlight both individuality and community, together with the notion of staying humbly in the place, of listening attentively to what is around and of inhabiting the world. We should again listen to Rilke, who in his *Notes on the Melody of Things*, while describing the gathering of relatives at the deathbed of a family member, points to their indifference and confusion which is followed by suffering that unites them: “Their words pass each other by, knowing nothing of each other. Their hands miss each other at first, in the confusion. – Until the pain behind them broadens out. They sit down, sink their foreheads, and say nothing. It rustles above them like a forest. They are close to each other, as never before.”¹⁹ And the author adds that most people

¹⁷ A. Storm, *Post-Industrial Landscape Scars*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 1.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 82.

¹⁹ R.M. Rilke, *Notes on the Melody of Things*, xix, <https://pen.org/notes-on-the-melody-of-things/> [accessed 15.10.2017].

listen only to the fragments of a melody in the background or are only starting to listen attentively because “They are like trees that have forgotten their roots and now think that the rustling of their branches is their power and their life.”²⁰ The silent understanding of subtle connections between people is not just an emotionally charged moment that becomes inscribed in memory but one that leads to the realization of a deeper attachment to the place, a sense of being connected to what was before and what is still to come in the future. The silence arising in the face of the unspeakable is accompanied by a sense of obligation to the place that scorns abundant expression and focuses instead on the very living.

The post-industrial place is thus about listening attentively to the melody of space and time that does not merely belong to what is visibly present and useful, but one that treats human beings, to quote Rilke’s phrase again, as “initiates of life.”²¹ The post-industrial place has the power of a waterfall: it strikes us with its roaring noise and energy. By accumulating the layers of thought and action, it throws a human being into the very heart of home-making. A lonely tower of the former mine shaft, former post-industrial ponds filled up with soil, as well as a dazzling neon light which encourages us to visit a place that is no longer what it used to be, are all parts of the powerful force that immerses us in the locality, close to the roots and the notion of home-making. United in the suffering which stems from the loss of the old shape of the place, we slowly proceed to conceive of it as a rooted centre, still emanating the power to bring the world into being, to create the environment around us ever anew and to constitute the local community of those who keep the world going, in its rhythms of life and death.

²⁰ Ibidem, xx.

²¹ Ibidem, xxi.

A PLACE THAT HAS BECOME A GARDEN OF SORTS

The factories that have come to a standstill harbour a memory of the great industrial times which have produced not only mass labour, mass projects of modernization of life, mass daily technical improvements and mass transformations of cities, but also mass displacements, mass movements in time and space and mass human beings. The losses and gains of the mass developments are what we seem to have already recovered from and expiated. In the urban space, especially in the proximity of the factories that have been the driving force of the city's life, one longs for gardens. At the end of the day, what one longs for is the Eden, whose image lies at the core of our attachment to the garden as a figure of paradise and bliss.²² The city has defined the function of parks and garden in terms of tailoring nature in the urban environment to human needs.²³ We feel safe in contact with nature in the park or garden because it is where wildness has been transformed into leisure with a little bit of anxiety. The urban environment shapes the relationship between the home, the green and a sense of safety so as to reduce the element of struggle and to construe nature as capable of surprising us with a nice view such as a stream or a picturesque ruin. It makes it possible for us to expand the notion of the city as a gathering of people, things and events, without abandoning the place. As Rilke observes, what makes cities big is not so much a gathering of people, animals and things, as gardens and the human experience of loneliness.

The city equals accumulation. A factory may seem to be far removed from the notion of the garden, yet it is a vast space in the city that tears the urban texture apart by introducing what is empty, non-presentable, and enveloped in smoke and fog. It is a territory of the real where everything is palpable and one can observe the

²² Cf. J. Delumeau, *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition*, New York: Continuum, 1995.

²³ Cf. P. Hobhouse, *The Story of Gardening*, London: Penguin Company, 2002; L. Majdecki, *Historia ogrodów*, vol. 1–2, Warszawa: PWN, 2007.

impact of work on the surroundings. The factory rambles and produces smoke. It appears to be a separate realm of life which powers the mechanism of the city and its rhythm. The post-factory, on the other hand, remains as real, even though it may be less expansive, no longer separated by a solid wall, sometimes found repulsive as a ruin, sometimes fascinating due to its new formula of exploitation, and at times changed beyond recognition after architectonic transformation. It is a vast area within the city that can be accessed and explored. The transformation it has undergone has somehow softened its contours, shaping it like a park to provide leisure opportunities to the inhabitants and offer various surprises, as well as the noise of new entertainment or education centres.

Most importantly, however, the post-factory is like a garden in that it keeps an empty space within the city. The space cannot be filled up and covered: there are seams of previous activity and signs of former existence everywhere. Moreover, just like the garden, the post-factory requires cultivation of what is empty. It plays an important role in the excessively urbanized space by helping to loosen its dense structure. It affirms the city's identity without infringing on its freedom and momentum for growth. It still remains a landmark not just in spatial but also existential terms, fostering the urban art of living. The post-factory provides the scenery to human loneliness which, in Rilke's words, is one of the characteristics of life in the city. In the place which cherishes the empty, we keep establishing gardens that are then filled up by ourselves, our experiences and events.

A PLACE IN FRAGMENTS WHERE LIFE IS AGAIN BUSTLING WITH EVENTS

In the post-industrial places the space is being inscribed again with events: exhibitions, a steam machine which is in operation again or a railroad restored to its working order. What used to be

a petrified form is now being converted into a new event in the seemingly casual fashion – yet it is just pretence of the lack of solemnity. Even though the former carefully scheduled rhythms of the machines' operation are no longer part of the long-term strategy of production, a new life is introduced in the nearly defunct space. The post-factory is about the re-awakening of power where events, people and things are made important again, even if they are now subordinated to the philosophy of the fragment, once chronological continuity, the layout of functions, systemic plans and the poetics of the whole have all fallen into ruin. Moreover, the fragmentary nature of the place has spilled over into human life, memory, a sense of community and even a notion of eternity, making them fragmentary too. The post-factory no longer needs to produce anything: it has become split and will ever since function as a place and a quote at the same time, pervaded by a sense of distance. It comes to us from afar, revealing its beauty and magnitude.

The post-factory does no longer serve its former masters, or functions. It has distanced itself from the old politics and history. It has also shaken off the hysteria of productivity and speed. Without the impetus of the past and the oppression of the empire, usually erected on the bodies of victims, it is now engaged in everyday life where the violence of the powerful industrial plant has been replaced by curiosity. Deprived of its previous utilitarian aspect, the post-factory has become an open form. And yet, due to its connection to the place where it is located, to the earth and region, to the people living there, it cannot cease to be an event. There is still something in the factory that is alive, that stops the machines, that illuminates the place which soon is plunged into darkness again. The noise that was caused by visitors turns into silence in a little while. Everything here is a fragment that refers us back to the infinite – be it endless work, interrupted life, or an unfinished narrative. The post-industrial place looks forward to infinity and, by repeating events, draws our attention to the origin and depths of time.

A PLACE WHICH IS MORE THAN JUST DESIGN

Design practices present in our culture are conventionally associated with architecture, clothing, computer graphics, interior design, consumer goods, items, games and so on, but also with the making of military equipment, plant machinery or transport vehicles. They have become highly influential in disseminating ideas, values, patterns of behaviour and ways of juxtaposing things.

Design is closely intertwined with the history of humankind; in Charlotte and Peter Fiell's words, an object created by a human being is already a designed item, and by applying it we come to experience the world.²⁴ Design involves both the planning stage and material effect of human creation. It is derived from the Latin verb *designare* (meaning "to designate, ponder and choose") and, as the authors explain, even though it referred to the making of artistic patterns or building plans until the seventeenth century, in most cases designers carefully balanced the artistic and technical aspects of work.

This coupling may be of interest to us insofar as it may lead us to examine different representations of the difficult relationship between art and technology, as well as artistic versus utilitarian elements of human work, by tipping the scales in favour of one of them. However, what is here more significant in anthropological terms is that design can actually transform the place, revitalize its image and formulate its future novel conception by defining new functions, new users, new meanings, new activities, new lifestyles, new ways of looking at an old place, and new notions of one's location. But it is not just about design shaping our awareness: what is at stake is the realization that the idea of a place is prior to the gesture of the designer and practitioner of culture, that thinking precedes "thinging." To make sure that this is the case, not only do we need to find out how to address the connection between technology and art, or the utilitarian and the artistic, in a non-conventional way,

²⁴ Cf. Ch. and P. Fiell, *The Story of Design*, London: Goodman Fiell, 2013.

but also to focus on and bring to light the very experience of the place. Anthropologically conceived, design should be more than just a way of combining artistry and functionality, or beauty and ergonomics. It should seek to marry purposefulness and faith in the existence of a masterpiece – also in the machine-made objects, and to view the trust in the democratization of reality as underlying the production of beauty for the masses. Finally, it should foster faith in “better” solutions. From the anthropological point of view, the word “better” means something different from what the designer has conceived and planned; “better” does not indicate more resourceful, sophisticated and functional, but deeper in its way of thinking which consciously revolves around the place and its quotidian existence and remains rooted in “homely” values.

Design may give a new lease of life to the place by turning towards the depth, to what constitutes the place’s identity and has perhaps been forgotten. In this sense, it may be able to revive and transform old values by turning them into a stimulus to develop a new, rejuvenated way of thinking. We can similarly treat design with reference to the rhythm of living or rules of composing image, decorating, distributing features, establishing connections, and so on. The spectacular and well-planned design in the urban space was able to thoroughly transform the Basque Bilbao (Bilbo in the native language) by locating the city in the network of events, providing a boost to the enterprise of building the metropolis with a flourish and engraving itself in the social and scholarly memory as the “Bilbao effect.”²⁵ The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, designed by Frank O. Gehry, remains a point focalizing our ideas of the centre, one that sends the waves of transformation further on. Still, it is essential to point out that transformation and revitalization projects embrace a number of social and cultural spheres of the city and the region and thus cannot be reduced to this single gesture made by the architect in space.

²⁵ Cf. J. Alayo, G. Henry, and B. Plaza, ‘Bilbao: Case Study,’ in: *Remaking Post-Industrial Cities: Lessons from North-America and Europe*, ed. D.K. Carter, New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2016, pp. 142–152.

If design is treated as a mere artifice or trick of art, it remains a spectacle showing off the designer's skills, which has nothing to do with the place in a broad sense – with a region conceived as a realm of cultural thinking, with a local community, with its particular space- and time-conditioned understanding of a human being, with the contextual notion of time or freedom, with the local attachment to a specific rhythm of living and so on. It is only a flash that can dazzle us as a single phenomenon or offend us with its incongruity. The design of post-industrial places should direct us back to the ways of taking root in the place, to what is basic and has perhaps been squandered in memory. Its task is to give the place a new lease of life by reintroducing order or to push it in a totally new direction; however, this should always be done with the cultural knowledge of the place in mind.

In the story of the spectacular success of the Bilbao project, we often neglect the role of a local context, that of the country of Basques with its distinct set of values, style of living and other elements of identity, with its peculiar understanding of time and space, with its notion of sedentary and nomadic life, or of the relationship between individuality and commonality, or of the readiness to change what can be changed and reluctance to alter what is truly essential. Foreign design may work miracles for the place, like the Derridean graft in which the alien interferes with the homely,²⁶ but it is only the case, we could add, when “home” is a well-conceived construction and not just some watered-down waste substance. Revitalization projects will only then translate into a social and commercial success when they are able to strengthen what is vital to the place and local community. Otherwise, they may breed problems. It is obviously worthwhile to examine the stories of the transformation of post-industrial cities such as Rotterdam, Turin, Essen, Buffalo, Detroit, Milwaukee,

²⁶ J. Derrida, ‘Fors: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok,’ trans. B. Johnson, in: N. Abraham & M. Torok, *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, trans. N. Rand, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1986, p. XXV.

Pittsburgh and New Orleans;²⁷ but the lesson they teach us should be complemented by an anthropological observation which most often evades the scholars discussing the places. The relationship of a human being and a place cannot be reduced to the analysis carried out within social and economic parameters or with regard to the ways of stimulating artistic and tourist activity.

Post-industrial design cannot mean violence to the place or a sophisticated mechanism capable of taming its powers. In design we should be able to perceive the contours of home, an essential task awaiting a human being. The old factory, which abounded in architectonic details, ornamental patterns, sophisticated plans, monumental gates, dazzling bas-reliefs, well-designed towers, doors and windows, was itself an embodiment of design, not just in its reference to the Neo-Gothic style but in the attempt to illustrate the relationship between the human, place, power and authority. The story of classical physics and its basic categories such as work, power, force, mass, charge, path, trajectory, time, heat, energy, potential and motion, velocity, momentum, acceleration, pressure, vibration, wave, intensity, voltage, resistance and so on, was translated here into the narrative of a multitude of dynamic, magnetic, electrical, electromagnetic or thermodynamic laws governing culture. The design of former factories was not just an aesthetic product but an integral philosophical and cultural story which placed a “handy human,” *Homo habilis*, in the very centre, together with the power (s)he possessed to couple nature and culture.

The post-factory has to be attentive to this design of thought. For its task is to find a way back home by demonstrating unthought-of relations between humans and landscape or between people and things, and by uncovering unexpected distance in what constitutes human environment and neighbourhood. Good design is about posing questions about the place. It does not show everything in detail because a well-designed place should not provide us with a finished picture, or it does not trigger any activity. It should instead confront

²⁷ See the chart representing the analysis of post-industrial cities in: *Remaking Post-Industrial Cities: Lessons from North-America and Europe*, op. cit.

us with the task of finding our way back home by developing a new metaphysics of life. In this regenerative gesture that is design one should transcend the despair following the demise of a factory and replace it with pensive sadness (for we do live amid fragments, surrounded by ruins, having experienced a loss), combined with the need to “kindle the flame” again. The work of post-industrial design should be preceded by an attempt to read the place precisely in regional terms. In this sense, design is not transferable to other contexts, regardless of the similarity of cultural narratives. It springs from a particular place, attached to the periphery and focused on the local centre. Indeed, one should always hold on to where one is.

A PLACE WHERE WE VANISH AND DISSOLVE IN THE DARK

In his novel *Kafka on the Shore* Haruki Murakami made a remark that before Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung appeared on stage, the correlation between real or physical darkness and darkness of the soul was something natural, and these two kinds of darkness tended to be mixed together, with no boundary separating them.²⁸ Before the discovery of Thomas Edison’s bulb the world experienced the dark differently. In contemporary times the outer darkness has disappeared, leaving behind the darkness of the heart.

The factory, a quintessence of development and gravity, always craved for light even though it was immersed in the dark and covered with smoke and dust. The electric lighting, while it meant less profit, enabled shift work system. Artificial light was not only practical but also made it possible to illuminate the factory which had the spectacular effect of highlighting objects and adding a ceremonious touch to the space, like in the cathedral. The subsequent stages of the use of Davy lamps by miners to detect methane, the introduction

²⁸ H. Murakami, *Kafka nad morzem*, trans. A. Zielińska-Elliott, Warszawa: Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie MUZA SA, 2013, p. 302.

of gas lighting and finally the use of electricity to make light with the aid of a glass bulb, followed by the development of the network of electric lighting and its distribution – were all instrumental in gradually eliminating darkness from the factory, yet the dark could not be ultimately removed.

The factory has always been immersed in the dark both in the literal and metaphorical sense. The immediate environment of the factory which surrounded the machines was lit, but the darkness enveloping the industrial landscape and lurking in the corners of a steel plant or mine was the reason why the factory gestured towards the real darkness and correlated with what Murakami calls the darkness of the soul. The secrets of factories, the workers' craft, discipline and cruelty, loneliness and community were all linked here in an obscure manner. The surroundings were dark and uncertain: on the one hand, they were marked with the light of the Enlightenment and the progress of reason together with its economic calculation but, on the other hand, they were pervaded by mystery, with dark powers, ghosts, spectres, wonders, diseases, death, passions, fear and decline always in the background. Darkness and twilight tend to awaken our imagination, as Pallasmaa wrote.²⁹ Homogeneous bright light standardizes human beings by equating their experience and crippling imagination, while shadows, twilight and darkness of the surroundings make the place multi-dimensional, infinitely multiplying its relation to what was before us and what comes after, to what is underneath and what is above, and to what exists beside us and persists all the same.

The demise of the world of factories may dangerously affect our vision by bringing to light what used to be immersed in the dark and defined the match between human darkness and that of a factory. The post-factory seems to uncover too much by disclosing the secrets of work to the mass of the uninitiated. The world of ruin is susceptible to collapse because of the bright light directed at the space that should sink in twilight. However, looking more closely at the organization of the post-industrial space, we

²⁹ J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and the Senses*, op. cit., p. 46.

can observe that it is possible to expose it in an adequate way, acting with discretion, keeping the twilight and shadows of the past when they are supposed to be, so as not to give the visitors an illusion that everything here can be known and understood.

The post-factory should not be an easily decoded space to be consumed on the spot. It should be an invitation to vanish in the dark for a little while, to sink in what is impenetrable, out of respect for the implacable forces of nature, and without the arrogance of excessive lighting and lavish entertainment that plays games with what is dead serious. Thickening twilight, the sound of feet rustling along the ground, the noises of machines in the place are what still resists our vision that longs to make everything clear and unequivocal. And the darkness of the self finds relief in the momentary stay in the post-factory – surrounded by machines, in the very centre of brightly lit city, dazzling us with its superficial glitter. We can thus go back to the old correlation between two kinds of darkness. Post-industrial places in the city are such twilight zones that should be protected for the very reason that they provide us with the shelter from excessive brightness and let us hide in dense shadow. In this way, we come back to the places we have perhaps never left.

A PLACE WHICH IS LIKE A SPRING

Can we bridge the gap between a spring and a post-factory which smoked, rambled and filled the world with its vocal presence until quite recently? A spring is what is crystal clear and life-giving: it is situated at the beginning of things and radiates its energy, spilling over and illuminating the surroundings. A spring has an influence on everything around by defining direction, speed and layout of the space, both empty and filled with presence. It is always essential, establishing the frames of reference, not only spatial but also temporal ones, as it is also an origin. It refers us back to the image of Eden, from which four Biblical rivers

originate,³⁰ expressing the ultimate human longing for a life-giving force, a central point and, most importantly, a mystical source. The spring of paradise is a centre and active beginning of things, as Juan Eduardo Cirlot puts it.³¹ A spring has its distinct place in human culture: it underlies the much cherished image of the garden with a fountain symbolizing the source of the water of life, as we read in Jung's texts.³² To a mystical thinker life calls for a revival and regeneration, and a life arrested in its development needs a new source that stands for spiritual energy and inner activity of the self.

A spring is what defines the world of experience. It exists prior to, above and beyond a human being, so that one does not know where it comes from and what for, or for what and whose sake it persists. It accumulates the future and the past, as well as life and death, within itself. An everlasting spring, but also a spring that is about to dry up or has already dried up, is like the germ of a new life but at the same time a void covering up indeterminacy and terror and a crack opening into darkness. A spring is both a basic point of reference which eternally sustains life and allows us to grasp what is ungraspable and elusive, and a place of imminent decline and dissolution. Overgrown with myth and experience, referring to what lurks under the surface and reaching into the deep, a spring cannot be discussed in material terms because it is lacking in social and instrumental coordinates. Therefore, it cannot be approached with the aid of a common language so as not to defile its crystal-clear waters and to let it penetrate life (also human life) from afar.

The post-factory as a life arrested in its development needs a return to the source or spring. In his book *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*, Rudolf Arnheim, referring to Albert Einstein's concepts of matter and field, as well as to Paolo Portoghesi's notion of social and perceptual fields, wrote that buildings are like

³⁰ Cf. the Book of Genesis 2: 10–14.

³¹ J.E. Cirlot, 'Źródło,' in: J.E. Cirlot, *Słownik symboli*, trans. I. Kania, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2006, pp. 492–493.

³² C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*. Collected Works of C.G. Jung, vol. 12, trans. R.F.C. Hull, ed. G. Adler. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 118.

islands in that they define the dynamics of a field; that is why “a field of visual forces expands from the centre and propagates its wave front as far into the surrounding environment as its strength permits.”³³ If we wished to apply this theory of architecture to the thinking about a spring or source, we would have to focus on and highlight the condensation of what is essential in the centre and its ability to establish the field of influence. The post-factory is such a condensation of things which expands from the centre and affects the surroundings. It is condensed energy because it combines on the one hand what is permanent, rooted in the depths, down-to-earth and palpable in its presence, and, on the other hand, a destructive force that makes everything vanish into thin air and turns the most durable constructions into ruin. By participating in these two incongruent orders the post-factory is able to link fluidity with the former gravity: it is both light, exempted from the burden of functionality, and attached to the earth with the force of experience and history. Stuck in the place, it makes it at the same time more spatial and expansive. The post-factory belongs to the earth since it takes up again the notion of roots and is subject to the law of gravity; simultaneously, it seems to rise lightly into air towards heaven. For a human being, it offers a space mediating between belonging and ephemerality.

A PLACE THAT TEACHES US TO UNDERSTAND WE ARE ATTACHED TO THE GROUND

Frau Schwientek, a great character in Janosch’s novel *Cholonek, oder Der liebe Gott aus Lehm* was right when she expounded her view that “nothing comes from nothing.”³⁴ The philosophical

³³ R. Arnheim, *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977, p. 30.

³⁴ Janosch, *Cholonek, czyli dobry Pan Bóg z gliny*, trans. L. Bielas, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2011, p. 27.

phrase, echoing Melissus of Samos' and Lucretius' *ex nihilo nihil fit*, in the Silesian context does not so much serve the purpose of showing the contradiction inherent in the notion of becoming, as indicating the posture of existential humility in the face of what there is. Of significance here is not the logical meaning of the sentence but a desperate lament behind it, one that emphasises a connection between the interaction of things and its consequences, and expresses the view that people and things are bound to each other with the chain of actions, words, and effects of their work, and that they are fastened to the ground. Thus, the treaty on nature is also a treaty on culture. We are attached to the ground even though we are as restless as we can be in contemporary times. We plan our lives, continually coming and going, beginning something and abandoning it, each time letting the fresh air in and closing the door behind. We may seem self-sufficient and unrelated to the place, capable of adapting to the changing conditions of living, standardized, internationalized and similar, but we still suddenly realize at one point that the idea of home is about permanence and has to be taken into consideration as such.

In the ruins of the post-factory there is something lyrical but also deeply upsetting. A home that is both solid and turned upside down, powerful and full of glory on the one hand, while being fragile and easily destroyed on the other, shows how strong our foundation is. We have accommodated ourselves to the landscape. We follow obediently the routes available to visitors and touch the machines in order to identify all the significant and insignificant reasons why we have come to visit the place. Thrown into the place, we keep trying to reach it from afar. The post-factory offers us such a journey which is perhaps a passage to the heart of darkness. The disintegration of buildings corresponds to the mortality of those who formed the substance of the city before us and worked hard for the sake of the factory's development, only to fill the common soil with their bodies. We exist in the vicinity of people and things, and the post-factory makes us deeply aware of the layering of human and non-human lot. It exposes

a limitless foundation beneath. It also inscribes our existence in the larger event of dwelling.

The post-industrial landscape we immerse ourselves in anew by consciously following the processes of its reconstruction, reconfiguration and revival, finally enters our very being, which results in establishing a new order based on reintegration and mutual belonging. We are now subjects of the places we have never really outgrown; we have become part of the location by participating in its dynamics of life and death. The imagination which is set free in post-industrial places lets us descend into the depths of thinking that old mines or steel plants keep alive. One generation after another, we keep guard in the place by both exploiting it and caring about it, inflicting wounds and then letting them heal.

A PLACE OF RECONCILIATION

The post-factory is a place of unique reconciliation. It is where a ritual has taken place, one involving not only the material aspect of existence (architectural, renovating, animating, anesthetizing, popularizing and other activities), but also the social (the behaviour and active engagement of people who have visited the place, wandered around or been on a pilgrimage) and the spiritual (the place, already uprooted and often vandalised, has been restored to its proper order and function, which has helped to reinstate the relationship between a human being, nature, industry and the place). To transform the post-factory into a *place* is to open it again to the infinite and to make it part of the community. What once used to be a realm of humility and discipline, or loyalty and devotion, after the fall of the factory and the experience of its end has become an unmarked space, most often disliked and rejected as mediocre and alien. It is only the post-industrial gesture of extracting the value from what is distant that can make the place

existentially open to the unknown and re-establish its position with all the rigour that is needed.

In this way the space may become home again. However, the reconciliation is not just about the re-instatement of the sacred dimension to a vandalized and desecrated place, but has also the deeper sense of reconciling the sinner with the church.³⁵ *Reconciliatio* conceived as reinstatement allows us to stress an interesting anthropological (not just legal and theological) aspect of the process: what is meant here is the reconstruction of a community and inclusion of a person in what is going on “between us.” Not only in the sense of interpersonal relations but also in terms of what the place is, what brings us together, what stretches between us and locates us where we currently are. We visit post-industrial places by including them in the itinerary of our pilgrimage, by experiencing again the anxiety about our roots and by making a conscious effort to dwell here again. This is why the reconciliation that takes place in post-industrial spaces has so much to do with homecoming. The process of reconciliation is only possible when the discrepancies between us and the space we inherited are fully experienced and overcome. We reconcile ourselves with the place by creating connections between what has so far seemed irreconcilable. The more time we devote to the precise reconstruction of the details of work, the more effort we make to closely read and experience the place, the more we are able to immerse ourselves in the homely space that we now treat with respect. As subjects of the place, we are duly respectful of the ongoing eternal mystery of transfiguration and redemption that we are being involved in here. We have the feeling that we are part of something profound.

³⁵ See: Z. Teinert, ‘Odpusty i kary doczesne w świetle dokumentów Soboru Trydenckiego,’ *Teologia i Moralność*, vol. 9, 2011, p. 186.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOCALNESS AND THE ARTS

THINKING THE METROPOLIS WITH A DIFFERENCE

Cultural space is not just a topographical metaphor. As Ewa Rewers stresses, it may be tantamount to embracing the fact that “public communication takes place in a framework that can be discussed but one that cannot be replaced by the discussion.”¹ The researcher is mainly interested in art and architecture which shape communicative communities. But if her insights are given a metaphysical twist, then the notion of cultural space being irreplaceable by discussion has a fundamental, and not just communicative, meaning. Space is referred to not only in topographical, physical or communicative terms but also, most importantly, in experiential terms, which leads one to perceive communities as not simply social but first and foremost as cultural. It is the cultural space that resonates with *ethnos*, the particularity of the place, its *genius loci*, intimate understanding of its natural surroundings, etc. Behind the cultural valence there is however still something more – a metaphysical community. The space is more meaningful than the word. The shift from one to the other makes it possible to ask the question what it means to characterize a given

¹ E. Rewers, *Miasto – twórczość. Wykłady krakowskie*, Kraków: WAW, The Academy of Fine Arts, 2010, p. 32.

cultural space as particular, unique, or one that may contribute to living a good life.

The recognition of human and natural forces has to find its reflection in the landscape of cultural experience. I do not trust the communities that disregard the rhythms of cultural and natural territory, rendering its unique voice inaudible. Good spaces involve a separate and unique way of thinking that resonates within us and is manifested without when we are situated in a given place. It strikes others with difference and yet we too are appalled by its otherness. This kind of thinking is not only social but also metaphysical. Cultural identity does not rest on the social attributes of “us” and “them,” nor does it reside in the well-known ethnographical inventory of cuisine, custom and belief. It is the essential that we are only beginning to take root in: the recognition of space-time continuum, the distance from oneself and from the others, the attachment to fate and necessity, the silence one needs to keep, the focus on the accidental, the affirmation of either stability or changeability, the thinking in terms of the fragment, detail or whole, the receptivity to the infinite, the experience of living, the attachment to a certain geometrical order, etc.

Still, in order to trust the space in the real sense, so that it is not just a short-term social construction whose meaning is reducible to its social serviceability, one needs something more. Strong cultural spaces do not exhaust their meaning by demonstrating their particularity but they seek to make space for multiple influences, to accommodate a multitude of everyday practices and to create spheres of experimentation with the place and its tenacity. At the same time, they do not allow unification and the triumphant march of globalizing dullness. These are not spaces that are merely crossed by others or passed by. They do not impose the necessity of settlement, they do not make one stay within their bounds, but what they do require is the recognition of the distinct value of local places and practices of living. The strength of the place strikes us with its particularity and the easiness with which that particularity is manifested.

The metropolis can be first and foremost recognized by expansive thinking, and only secondly by mere administration processes that have a vast range because they encompass different areas of activity bound to nearby towns, or cities, or – most often – districts. The metropolis is a space of multi-focus architectonic experimentation² that ventures to transcend the limits of the former space while retaining its original character. These tangible architectonic fireworks coexist with the fireworks in the educational, economic, liberal, moral, artistic, etc. sphere. Within the metropolis, open-mindedness replaces the sense of “primordial ties” that anthropologists have been so fond of talking about.³ The story of blood, ancestry, customs, religion and language loses its transparency, which does not mean that Geertz’s “identity package”⁴ has faded into oblivion. The metropolis is marked by a vast range of its instrumental thinking and action.

The vast range of thinking is a culmination in the development of urban culture which is however more detectable in the network of correlations between cities, towns, settlements, villages, and all kinds of territories. Metropolises, as distinct points on the map of territorial thinking, circulate popular ideas, reinforcing them through repetition and encouraging the mutation of thoughts and cultural practices. This kind of “expansion” of fashion, cultural trends and patterns of behaviour is discussed by Roberto Salvadori.⁵ On the one hand, the metropolis radiates its influence on its surroundings; on the other hand, there is no metropolis without the reinforcing context that provides a corrective to metropolitan thinking. The context places constraints on the artificiality and

² Cf. projects based on space which have been carried out in metropolises: *The Contested Metropolis. Six Cities at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, ed. R. Paloscia, Basel: Birkhäuser, 2004.

³ E. Shils, ‘Naród, narodowość i nacjonalizm a społeczeństwo obywatelskie,’ trans. K. Kwaśniewski, *Sprawy Narodowościowe*, no. 5, 1996, pp. 9–30.

⁴ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, pp. 261–263.

⁵ R. Salvadori, ‘Miasto mieszczańskie,’ trans. H. Kralowa, *Architektura*, no. 2, 2005.

excessive experimentation of the centre. What I am interested in here is the fact that the metropolis lives both separately and together with its others. And it is out of the right proportion between the two that the particularity of the place arises.

Undoubtedly, the metropolis can be described as a connection and collaboration between smaller organisms. It is still a potent metaphor for architects and city planners, who view the combination of natural elements and urban texture as a chance to animate the space. This is perhaps best exemplified by the ideas presented in *The Pop-Up City* blog, which strives to articulate the notions and strategies capable of shaping the city of the future. Thanks to the new technologies and the architecture that draws on nature, the city becomes quite literally a living being, as evidenced in the projects of Rachel Armstrong, who cooperates with architects and researchers to make use of the building materials that have living capacities and can stimulate the “growth” of architecture.⁶ Armstrong hopes to be able to build sustainable cities by connecting them back to nature – and so the limestone reef is supposed to rescue Venice from sinking and to instil environmental thinking in its inhabitants.

Nevertheless, the organic metaphor is not the most significant one to describe the anthropological dimension of a place. The metropolis is not an organism of the kind that is sustained by the eighteenth- or nineteenth-century belief in the being dependent on the collaboration of organs which combined to create the whole of social life. The metropolis is not an organization. The metropolis lives, but if it were a living organism in the biological sense transplanted onto the social sphere, it would be difficult to notice this residual living. It would be still more difficult to bring together its rough and uncoordinated experiences which are not tangible enough and therefore escape objective observation.

⁶ J. Payet, ‘Architecture That Grows And Repairs Itself,’ *The Pop-Up City*, May 24, 2011. <http://www.popucity.net/2011/05/architecture-that-grows-and-repairs-itself/> [date of access: 2.11.2012].

And even though the story of the city's heart, tissue, bodily surface, arteries, lungs and so on is well situated in our public space, as is the reference to the adaptation to the environment, I would rather frame the metropolis at a distance from Herbert Spencer's evolutionist perspective.⁷ I think the myth of the perfect cooperation of parts is what should be resisted and marginalized in our thinking.

I find it also difficult to comply with the notion of the metropolis as a system. The term itself is satisfying on the epistemic level only to theoreticians working on model images of thinking and action. I do not share Ludwig von Bertalanffy's fascination with the potentialities of a general system theory,⁸ since it is difficult to believe in the "palpability" of its approach to the world. It is still harder to justify its generalizing manner of speculation. Whether the system has a biological, cybernetic or economic reference, it becomes all too easy as an intellectual practice capable of discovering the principles that govern complex holistic structures. This is due to the movement of thought which is as sweeping as it is totalizing and simplifying. The generality and unity of such thinking about nature, society or artificial structures makes me consider the metropolis in quite different terms. Despite the fact that the systems narrative had an impact on Talcott Parsons's or Niklas Luhmann's respective theories, I prefer to situate the experience of the place away from social engineering. It has always been alien to me, as it has never been sufficient for a theory that struggles to preserve sensuality, to be a sort of theoretical "sensorium" so that the fragility of experience is still retained as a vital quality. The notion of a system is useless when one attempts to describe experience or point to locations where a human being is present, as it is of little use in tracing the "thickness" of a place.

⁷ Cf. H. Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/spencer-the-principles-of-sociology-3-vols-1898> [date of access: 21.05.2019].

⁸ L. von Bertalanffy, *General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications*. New York: George Braziller, 1968.

It is to be regretted that one has to say farewell to the systems theory as it is a tool which both easy to apply in its procedures of verification or falsification, and spectacular in terms of effects, making the scientific narrative coherent and unequivocal.

The metropolis is not a simple machine marked by its teleological character and specialization of its units, although the machine-related vocabulary is still capable of producing new metaphors that respond to our need for innovation. It is not just the modernist poet's appeal for constructing a singing city machine.⁹ It refers both to the seventeenth-century idea and to a modern formula that has several versions. The machine metaphor may relate to the network of consumption, market processes, local government in its functioning, globalization processes, social regulations, urban policies or an ideological machine. The problem is discussed by Kevin R. Cox in his 1999 book, which by referring to Harvey Molotch's 1976 work attempts to re-examine the machinery of practical urban ideologies which unify the phenomena at the local level and marginalize the existent racial and ethnic divisions or other social differences. Cox also strives to frame the ideological machinery of local community, which is tied to some preconceptions that make us celebrate the localness of a social group in the "we feeling" formula, while contributing to the formation of a sense of collective identity at the local level.¹⁰ The focus on machinery can also yield a description of the city as a machine of entertainment, as Terry Nichols Clark does in his work, showing that the former ways of thinking about localness were too simple and that the question of finding someone's position within the city is a question of what they are close to, meaning places of entertainment and consumption, or urban

⁹ T. Peiper, 'Rano,' in: idem: *Pisma wybrane*, ed. S. Jaworski, Warszawa: Ossolineum, 1979, p. 169.

¹⁰ K.R. Cox, 'Ideology and the Growth Coalition,' in: *The Urban Growth Machine: Critical Perspectives Two Decades Later*, ed. A.E.G. Jonas, D. Wilson, New York: State University of New York Press, 1999, pp. 21–22.

facilities.¹¹ The city thus becomes the business machine of entertainment, tourism, consumption, residence, leadership and administration, which are all means to programme comfortable collective living.

The notion of the city as a machine may also concern the networked space which is able, through its mapping of local connections, to build urban relations. Finally, it can denote a political or financial machine behind the city. In any case, what is at stake here is an automatically reproduced and repeated procedure that sustains urban existence. So construed, the city turns out to be a manifestly technologized, informational and cybernetic monster. The contemporary ways of thinking about the city and the metropolis still cling on to aspects of machinery but more in the sense of a computer network, cyberspace, or a virtual city that combines electronic means of communication and formerly independent urban structure. And even though the characterization amounts to a spectacular image of the city, one that is conspicuous, surfacing in many artistic and communicative projects, it is not the electronic or the cybernetic that provides the main gravitation centres for the city and its meaning. Metropolises have many gravitation centres and many ways of thickening the space-time continuum (since the city is not reducible to mere space). The centres of real importance are however placed in the proximity of the local experience.

The metropolitan is about the politics of recognizing not just the unity but, first and foremost, the independence of its constituent solids, figures and points. It is out of the spirit of independence of that strange geometry that the metropolis arises. The metropolis is never a physical or spiritual monolith. To examine the metropolitan geometry of space is in fact to come up against a multitude of geometries. And even if the focus is on the nonlinearity or linearity

¹¹ T.N. Clark, 'Introduction: Talking Entertainment Seriously,' in: *The City As an Entertainment Machine. Research in Urban Policy*, ed. T.N. Clark, Oxford: JAI Press/Elsevier, 2004, vol. 9, pp. 1–18.

of the metropolis, on its spacious or superficial character, on its attachment to certain solids or figures, what cannot be left out is the significance of the points in the space-time continuum which correspond to individual experiences of the inhabitants faced by the fate and cultural force of the territory. It is on them that the metropolis truly relies.

The metropolis is a continuation and reinforcement of urban settlement in its major sense that Richard Sennett was writing about – of providing the space for the encounters between strangers.¹² The metropolitan dwells on the interpersonal distance and implies the trust in idiosyncrasy. It aims at loosening ties and basing social games on the rules of politeness and indifference. It does not mean, though, that it is a mere social product since strong metropolises do exhibit the power of a separate cultural territory. This kind of local distinctiveness is what cannot and should not be disregarded.

The metropolis has to extend over some large space as its surface is its main force. It is a real and tangible power within territorial bounds. One cannot dismiss this territorial power from one's interpretation since without the sense of being rooted or settled in and on the ground, without the expansiveness, there will not be any expansive thinking or nonchalance of action typical of the metropolis. To govern such a vast territory is to highlight the differences of its constituent areas and, most importantly, to blur the boundaries and to acknowledge the detail, the ornament, and the stigma of different and unfamiliar experience. The broadness of thinking elevates the position of the fragile points of experience and individual relationship with the metropolis. In short, the metropolis is what acknowledges and upgrades local routes.

The metropolis is a social project and even more – it is a cultural project that consists in learning how to deal with differences. At the gates of the postmodern metropolises, gates that have already become blurred, transparent, allowing migration

¹² R. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, Cambridge–London–Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 39.

into the city space, there is always a gathering of strangers. The tension detectable in the relationship between hosts and strangers is examined by Michael Alexander.¹³ One could draw the conclusion that the metropolis is a peculiar notion that relies on the presence of strangers both at its gates and inside. There is a necessary clash between the metropolitan policy of openness, also in liberal and aesthetic terms, and its practices of exclusion and assimilation. As Rewers rightly points out, the metropolis may aspire to become something more than just a cosmopolitan agglomerate – it may become “urban culture transcending constitutive differences.”¹⁴ It can however also work to make the differences inessential and supplant them by the ceremonial celebrating of irrelevant divergences in the public space. But I am interested in still another element of the metropolitan life – ethnicization of space that reinforces the differences of one’s own and those of newcomers. This corresponds to what Rewers calls the “re-ethnicization of European culture,” where “both newcomers and hosts withdraw into the familiar.”¹⁵ In the humanities it is perceived as a threat in the context of the dominating myth of rootlessness that is cultivated by authors who fear the comeback of nation-states. The idea of a nation-state is associated with the suppression of autonomous communities and local dialects, a vision ominously sketched by Zygmunt Bauman.¹⁶ But it is a gross overstatement to link rootedness and ethnicization with the idea of a monolithic nation. One should not frame the problem by confronting it with the threat of the renaissance of nationalism. It is not so much about the nation as about localness. It translates into the hope for recovering the ethnic and, in this sense, genuine nature of

¹³ M. Alexander, ‘Host-Strangers Relation in Theory and Practice,’ in: idem, *Cities and Labour Immigration: Comparing Policy Responses in Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, and Tel Aviv (Research in Migration and Ethnic Relations)*, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007, pp. 25–36.

¹⁴ E. Rewers: *Miasto – twórczość*, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 37.

¹⁶ Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity, 2000.

the place, which can be a good, homely and communal space unless it becomes the territory of cultural dictatorship. It is much more advisable to trust the attachment to the cultural difference of a place than J. Nicholas Entrikin's idea of cosmopolitanism, which is reducible to the educational project of transcending one's own position in favour of something in fact little known and understood.¹⁷ Rewers has struggled with the question of what is conducive to the creation of a cosmopolitan place, whether it is hybridization and transgression, or mixing, or rather erasure of borders and introduction of transnational standards.¹⁸ This is a crucial problem. In my view, from the perspective of the place and localness, the desired opening of borders can only be brought about by a strong place, that is, a place with roots, one that has a distinct position on the map of surrounding local communities, yet one that is also hospitable, allowing the changing cultures of newcomers to be heard and seen. Otherness is highlighted by the local culture on condition that the culture of others actively engages in its being brought to light.

This is how I perceive the problem of localness and the metropolis. A local metropolis is a space which brings to light the localness of a community which is stronger than any headline-making social events or conspicuous civilizational changes. Localness is present in the experiences of individuals who realize their potential within a community and do it with a sense of being rooted in the place. Barcelona would be a perfect example of such a good local community brought to light by Catalonia. Without strong regionalism there would be no home because it is only at home that the metropolis is able to exhibit its rootedness. One should give up the notion of the chief significance of rootlessness and the social project of tolerance based on the hotch-potch of

¹⁷ J. N. Entrikin, 'Political Community, Identity, and Cosmopolitan Place,' in: *Europe without Borders. Remapping Territory, Citizenship, and Identity in a Transnational Age*, eds. M. Berezin and M. Schain, Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

¹⁸ E. Rewers, *Miasto – twórczość*, op. cit., p. 42.

different views and ways of living. It is true that they come to light within the metropolis on account of the vastness of its thinking and openness of its hospitable space. They are nevertheless not primary. Home is built by means of the power of the territory and the passion of thinking about the local position of a human being, however bombastic it may sound. This local orientation of a human does not lead to the closing of local worlds, but it does bring about the common creation of the space of certainties, which involves not only the unquestioned pride in one's identity, but also the imperative to extend it in all directions: towards the infinite, toward the other, the impossible, the incomprehensible and the strange. Localness is then what introduces the city to the neighbouring areas that contribute to its making. It would be an overstatement, though, to say that localness leads the city out of and away from itself. Being at home is never a lost chance. A local metropolis does not close the door on strangers, nor does it try to overcome difference: instead, it endeavours to reinforce it and demonstrate the strength of the place. It imposes on its inhabitants a sense of being subjects of the place that transcends them. To respect others is to accept the fact that whatever is mine is strong but the difference of strangers is equally strong and well founded. If we respect difference, we no longer debate about bland and wishy-washy ideas such as equality because a place is always defined, it is "mine." And what is mine is unified by the imperative of hospitality, but also by the need to protect oneself and one's own image of what constitutes a human being, community and territory. In this sense, localness of the metropolis would be an alternative to the notion of the metropolis as a big social shopping mall. To local territories difference is something essential that cannot be made irrelevant by the demands of political correctness.

I would be most glad to be able to share Rewers's view that the immigrants are the "avant-garde and laboratory of the post-nation state."¹⁹ I can see the point – they can indeed be an animating

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 46.

factor that impedes the growth of the sense of homeliness, in the sense of being at home which is my castle, securely locked against strangers. But I do not think that they are a real driving force because the proper subject of culture is a place. It is what reverberates in thinking, in the receptivity to others, in the treatment of time, necessity and fate, and in the approach to nature. The newcomers complete the existing project of a place inasmuch as they become its subjects – in the good sense of subjection as service and humility, as conscious being in a place that means being adequately situated. It is utterly wrong when they question the rules of a community and threaten to erase the uniqueness of the place.

It is true that we are in need of a language of communal rights that would secure one's membership of a community such as EU, but it need not be construed as a project aimed at erasing local difference. Whenever I think about the Habermasian notion of "European constitutional patriotism,"²⁰ I know that for Europe it is a mere ethnographic invention – the idea of combining societies in the name of a broader community unified by its attachment to Enlightenment emancipation projects. Transnational social movements and the defence of human rights are a cultural advantage, a mere particular gesture that becomes both the object of desire for the others without and the reason for their aggression. Universalism of the European perspective is a local value that may be tempting to others while having pride of the place in the community. The most sensible attitude is to hold on to one's space, which remains open to whatever comes but at the same time is able to guard its distinctiveness in terms of the repertoire of local values and mental habits. This is a guarantee of the particularity of the place, of the sense that where we live is not a mere construction of the discourses of administration and law.

²⁰ J. Habermas, 'Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe,' *Praxis International*, no. 12, 1992.

BARCELONA'S LOCALNESS IN CULTURAL PROJECTS

Barcelona's extensive arteries conceal both suspicious-looking nooks and charming little shops. It still echoes with the distinct voice of Eduardo Mendoza, who in *The City of Marvels* conjured up the place at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with its provincial character, forbidden districts, brothels, amusement arcades, all kinds of monkey business and crooks with their careers; a city boosted by two world fairs – the International Expositions organized in 1888 and 1929 – in its metropolitan transformations and modern development.²¹ There is a sense of mystery here that brings to mind Carlos Ruiz Zafón's books, which present Barcelona, whether in the 1920s or in the second half of the twentieth century, as shrouded in darkness, construed spatially and symbolically.²² Both *The Shadow of the Wind* and *The Angel's Game* abound in the descriptions of its historical neighbourhoods, Barri Gòtic (The Gothic Quarter), Port Vell (Old Harbour) and El Raval. Barcelona amounts to the places of experience. It is able to create an uncanny sensation like in *The Shadow of the Wind* which portrays the cemetery of lost books where a boy is brought by his father to select the only book of the youth's life. It is still possible to detect here a spirit of the old provincial metropolis that underwent radical transformations as recently as 1980s in order to become a world-famous metropolitan city. The place is also overshadowed by its monumental past like in Ildefonso Falcones de Sierra's *Cathedral of the Sea*, which is set in the fourteenth century in Barcelona, the capital of what was then the county of Catalonia, around Santa Maria del Mar Cathedral.²³ To what extent

²¹ E. Mendoza, *The City of Marvels*, trans. B. Molloy, New York: Pocket Books, 1990.

²² C. Ruiz Zafón, *The Angel's Game*, trans. L. Graves, New York: Doubleday, 2009; C. Ruiz Zafón, *The Shadow of the Wind*, trans. L. Graves, London: Penguin Books, 2004.

²³ I. Falcones, *Cathedral of the Sea*, trans. N. Caistor, New York: New American Library, 2008.

are these layers of time still perceptible here and now? Does the temporal dimension translate into a sense of particularity?

The old and sleazy neighbourhood El Raval in Barcelona is a difficult place in communal terms. It is ethnically mixed, with a large number of immigrants. It lives its queer existence with Arab enclaves, newly established Asian districts, and the still present rhythms of a petit bourgeois Catalan community. There are small restaurants, butcher's and pastry shops next to big hotels, luxury apartment buildings, and glamorous townhouses which are located in the vicinity of the main routes: Avinguda del Paral·lel, Ronda de Sant Pau or Ronda de Sant Antoni. The present tensions have an interesting historical background that has contributed to the intriguing, dynamic and villainous image of the area – it used to be a red-light district. Yet the image is also attributable to a modern process, which has been a recent huge wave of immigration, naturally absorbed into suspicious places. The ethnic difference is very much noticeable and problematic here, and it finds expression in cultural projects. In the heart of El Raval there is a cultural centre, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB). Its presentations are far from neutral or indifferent in cultural terms. Aestheticizing matters and producing art for art's sake would be a gesture of cognitive and moral arrogance. Experimentation in art is meaningful insofar as it helps to change the world and transform human relationships or the image of the place. CCCB is a site of anthropological negotiation and investment in the story of the space that is constantly changing but remains burdened with its heritage.

One of CCCB's projects, entitled *Barcelona – València – Palma / Barcelona – Valencia – Palma. Una història de confluències i divergències / Una historia de confluencias y divergencias*,²⁴ was

²⁴ The exhibition was open to visitors from 26 May to 12 September 2010; the curators: I. Aballí, M. Comes, V. Sanchis i Llàcer. Cf. the exhibition catalogue: *Barcelona – València – Palma / Barcelona – Valencia – Palma. Una història de confluències i divergències / Una historia de confluencias y divergencias* (català/castellano), Barcelona: CCCB y Direcció de Comunicació de la Diputació de Barcelona, 2010, p. 184.

such an occasion to demonstrate dedication to the thinking about a close and neighbouring fragment of space-time. The Cultural Centre, together with the Department of Catalonia's Culture and Media, have undertaken the task of rethinking the history of the city and the region. It has yielded a narrative of the confluences and divergences in the common development of three Catalan Mediterranean cities. This was also a story about the changes taking place in civilizational, economic and natural domains. The curators of the subsequent exposition, Ignasi Aballí, Melcior Comes and Vicent Sanchis i Llàcer, pointed to the history of the local experience, the community of language, tourism, processes of urbanization and migration, the similarity of architectonic solutions and practices of living as vital elements of the narrative. The contemporary picture of the cities was painted with the civic space and landscape in mind, showing their various dimensions. The respective sectors of the exhibition illustrate the city of the future, transformations of the language, the city as a spectacle, ugliness of the city, its corruption and deformation by the tourist industry, the city of pleasure and the medieval city (see pic. 39–41).



Pic. 39. The exhibition: “Barcelona – València – Palma / Barcelona – Valencia – Palma. Una història de confluències i divergències / Una historia de confluencias y divergencias.” CCCB, Barcelona 2010 (A. Kuncce).



Pic. 40.



Pic. 41.

The exhibition: “Barcelona – València – Palma / Barcelona – Valencia – Palma.
Una història de confluències i divergències / Una historia de confluencias
y divergencias.” CCCB, Barcelona 2010 (A. Kuncze).

The future was here situated in 2085 and imagined according to a model of predictable adaptations, i.e. most likely natural, climatic and civilizational changes. The authors were thus mainly interested in a cultural transformation that would result from the gradual alteration of the coastline and the accommodation of the power of the sea and its intrusion into the coastal area. However, these futurological considerations included not only nature, but also means of transport, architecture, and the styles of living. Importantly, the vision of the future was based on the care for the locality, *locus*. The sea and the urban environment did not obscure the significance of particularity, which is an important clue. The local should not be perceived as the reservoir of memory or the necessity of slavish repetition, but as the stimulus to reconsider future transformations. It makes us look beyond ourselves.

Perhaps only from inside of the local are we able to look beyond the horizon line?

A common language is what secures the experience of community in the practices of communication. Barcelona, Valencia and Palma are all determined by the use of the Catalan language, which has united them since the thirteenth century. Regardless of the problems related to politics, administration and then immigration, Catalan is still a powerful mark of the region. However, the designers of the exhibition are also concerned with the risk it involves and the changes it undergoes that may contribute to the making of separate language maps in the future. They point to the continuing presence of the Spanish language and its oppressive domination as the outcome of the political and administrative sovereignty of the monolithic Spain. The exhibition, however, strives to show the common future development of Catalan and Spanish, intertwined with the continued coexistence of the Catalan and Castilian people. Importantly, it also documents the use of other languages that resonate within the cities, most notably Barcelona: Tamazight, Urdu, and Chinese. The linguistic predictions for the place are quite interesting: Catalan and Castilian will tend to mix more and more with the languages of immigrants. But it does not amount to

prophesying the demise of the Catalan language; it is more about indicating a sense of linguistic neighbourliness that forms the background for the local scene. However, when judged from the cultural perspective, CCCB's predictions seem to imply that Catalan will not just become an attractive spatial mark but an object of desire for different social groups resident in Catalonia. Thus, even if it continues to thrive alongside other languages, it may become marked as a privileged identity indicator.

The three cities have also been framed by the notion of the spectacle, as it is the spectacular quality of artistic, sports and economic events that secures the image of the city as an attraction, which in turn translates into both the economic growth and the growing interest of visitors. There is obviously a question of striking the balance between the city's potential for spectacle and the protection of its unique local form. The designers of the exhibition have outlined the problems and showed some spectacular actions, but it is tempting to offer a more general interpretation. After the stage of euphoria that is especially typical of an overly dynamic metropolis, there comes an alarming realization that the spectacular events have been all too easy to come and go. However, they have not contributed to the making of communal bonds and or added anything to the local landscape. The aim of the spectacle is just to reinforce an experience of fun that is soon gone. And the city as the source of fun is far removed from the metropolis that strives to protect the local and for that reason has to marginalize the dynamics of the spectacle.

Moving on to the next part of the exhibition, the three cities have been interpreted in terms of urban planning and its resultant ugliness, in particular within tourist areas. The enterprise boils down to mapping resident districts, revitalizing parts of the old town, and designing commercial and tourist areas. A collection of souvenirs used for the exhibition is here an important sign. The city becomes instantly recognizable and communicable to visitors as an array of local emblems such as fans, figurines, hats, musical instruments, dummy folk products, art reproductions, toys and mascots. The aesthetic and anthropological degradation consists

here in producing an iconic screen for the place. It appears “instead of” the experience of the rhythms of daily living and communal practices. The living texture is thus hidden behind the screen of souvenirs. A good sense of localness, however, makes one think differently. It is possible to plan a route of mementoes in such a way that it is to be followed fragmentarily, alongside the rhythms of living and forms of behaviour of local communities so that the latter remain conspicuous and are not dominated by the former.

From still another angle, Barcelona, Palma and Valencia appear as hedonistic cities. They are Mediterranean metropolises, and the vicinity of the sea together with a hospitable climate make it easy to develop spaces of leisure and organize mass tourism in their bounds. To counteract this tendency, it is vital to resort to cultural roots: the way a particular space of the street or square is important to the social existence in terms of ongoing communication. The historical aspect of space management may help to highlight local values. The established routes of communal presence in squares or parks, as well as time-honoured habits of spending time in a place, are what cements communities. So even if the space is intruded upon by mass tourist routes, it is never damaged. What persists is the gravity of the moment, a fixed way to spend siesta, persistence in cultivating a leisurely presence in a place, and the ease of being at home. The sense of localness that implies social existence alongside tourism and does not clash with it is a good solution to a metropolis. And so it works in Barcelona.

Finally, the exhibition focuses on the recollection of a medieval town. The three cities under comparison have the same historical framework. It is essential that the old town is not a mere tourist destination, demonstrating an ostentatious lack of social life. The city should see to it that its historical parts are still invigorated by the residents’ permanent routes and ways of being so that the districts are indeed inhabited. Admittedly, it is a difficult task to sustain a quotidian existence in such places.

CCCB’s project attempts both to document Catalonia’s space and to transform it by fostering social thinking about one’s place

of living. It encourages responsibility for the shape of architecture and communal practices. It sensitizes people to good neighbourly relations and promotes model and non-intrusive attitudes to immigrants. Significantly, it is intent on humbly following the local. That is why Barcelona has been dealt with on the local level. Such enterprises make us realize that the metropolis is not just an administrative and iconic community which is noticeable on account of its spatial markedness, historical treasures, an efficient system of management and monumentality of its events. In the case of Barcelona it is first of all a metropolis brought to light by Catalan thinking. It is the foundation of living and assumes responsibility for the successes and failures of that fragment of space-time. However, the Catalan quality cannot be removed from the city's image. It corresponds to the cathedral, the sea, the harbour, squares, parks, streets and alleys, townhouses and offices, the market, the work ethos, French influences and the separateness of the region.

In a similar manner, the local quality of the metropolis was highlighted in CCCB's earlier project entitled *Local, local! La ciutat que ve / La ciudad que viene*.²⁵ To celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the reinstatement of the democratic rule, the curator Francesc Muñoz prepared an exhibition documenting the changes that the fields of citizenship, aesthetics, technology, administration and population have all undergone once the state monolith was exploded and General Franco's regime abolished. The reintroduction of democracy have entailed the revival of autonomous ambitions and the rise of regional awareness combined with a sense of metropolitan belonging. The transformation of the city into the metropolis and the subsequent reconstruction of a sense of localness provide an

²⁵ The exhibition organized by CCCB and Direcció de Comunicació de la Diputació de Barcelona: *Local, local! La ciutat que ve / La ciudad que viene*; the curator: Francesc Muñoz; open to visitors from 23.02 to 2.05 2010; exhibition catalogue: *Local, local! La ciutat que ve / La ciudad que viene* (català/castellano), Barcelona: CCCB y Direcció de Comunicació de la Diputació de Barcelona, 2010, p. 152.

interesting background for the story of the changes taking place within the space. Barcelona, together with neighbouring cities, has been portrayed in word and image in the following contexts: shapes that the metropolis may adopt, the society of information, as well as its new representations that come into being in the realm of unimpeded communication, and new forms of coexistence that are bound to arise within the civic space.

The introduction to the exhibition catalogue by Josep Ramoneda²⁶ aims to expose the problems of Barcelona and other cities in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The first question is population growth – especially the extension of human lifespan which has been so difficult to tackle in the urban environment. While the average lifespan in the nineteenth-century Spain was 36–37 years, it jumped to about 80 years in the twentieth century; there was also a substantial increase in human population on a global scale from 1.6 to 7.7 billion people (according to the author's estimate). To Ramoneda it is essential that the facts correspond to the occurrence of political massacres and genocide in the twentieth century, as well as to the development of towns and cities and the necessity of living in strongly urbanized conditions, since, to recall Bauman's point, it is the urban space that involves crucial global problems and remains the site of a major social and political conflict.²⁷ What appears as problematic is the relation between urbanity and the spirit of *civitas*, as well as the effects of globalization that intrude upon the city. Of import to the analysis of the local conditions is a reference to the question of *ethnos* and urban cosmopolitanism, both only touched upon in the discussion yet crucially linked to the reconsideration of localness. On account of the place, it seems necessary to rethink the future of cities in

²⁶ *Local, local! La ciutat que ve / La ciudad que viene* (català/castellano), Barcelona: CCCB y Direcció de Comunicació de la Diputació de Barcelona, 2010, p. 152.

²⁷ J. Ramoneda, 'The Future of Cities,' http://www.cccb.org/rccs_gene/68-Local_local-pr_leg_Ramoneda-ang.pdf [date of access: 20.07.2010].

terms of their coexistence with others and attempt to sustain what is the essence of urbanity. There is a danger that the city of the future will not correspond to contemporary notions of the urban. The city may change dramatically. To save the urban spirit, it is thus vital to secure the autonomy of the cities, as well as the freedom of their individual inhabitants. Hence an important role played by metropolises like Barcelona, which keeps developing into an agglomeration while simultaneously striving to protect its sense of separateness and particularity.

CCCB's idea offers a vital clue. The exhibition is not just about the city's sustainable development, as it is claimed, but it is about localness as the power capable of energizing the metropolis. And even though the curators do not elaborate on the local thinking, by stressing particularity of the place, they inadvertently embrace its significance and secret work. That is why CCCB's projects are permeated by a sense of localness.

UNIVERSITY AND THE IDEA OF PLACE

THE IDEA OF THE UNIVERSITY

The university is first and foremost an idea that connects people in the name of truth and its cognition, but it is also about the time-old cultural practices that denote a special kind of commitment due to their persistence. Regardless of how different universities are, the very idea of university remains the same: the *universitas magistrorum et scholarum* (community of teachers and scholars) provides a general framework for the *whole* of those who teach and those who learn.¹ The twin notions of universality and community make one approach with care the respective realms of *universitas magistrorum*, *universitas scholarum*, and *universitas scientiarum*. The idea of universality as translated into the grand concept of community and realized respectively in the Parisian and Bologna models of the university is what underlies the European university education with its communal focus. Even though the history of the university seems to cover also the history of some other schools resembling universities to some extent (such as the Platonic Academy, the Academy of Gondishapur in ancient Iran, the Al-Azhar Academy in Cairo, Egypt, and the Nalanda school in Bihar, India), thus pointing to the multi-faceted nature and wide occurrence of the centres of research and education, it is

¹ H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, vol. 1, p. 7.

the traditional Latin shape of the university that has contributed most to the formation of the European identity.

A contemporary university nurtures the memory of different ways of legitimating knowledge: its background is provided by a familiar narrative of freedom that Jean-François Lyotard identified in the French Enlightenment story of liberating all Mankind, as well as the narrative of German idealism considering the speculative spirit to be the subject of knowledge which was behind the foundation of the Humboldt University of Berlin in 1810.² Drawing on this heritage, a contemporary university continues to pose the question of what the proper relationship between university teaching/learning and state authority is: either full autonomy and freedom of inquiry, yet sustained by state donation (Wilhelm von Humboldt's project)³ or a close control of the state (Napoleon's scheme).⁴

The university as a multi-layered communal experience embraces both contemporary tensions and modern diseases that determine the course of discussion and make it schematic. It is therefore difficult, while debating the problems of the university, to evade the questions concerning the presence or absence of hands-on approach and financial reductionism, which readily inscribes the university in the narrative of market economy.⁵ Similarly, it is virtually impossible to leave out the notion of social challenges, the question of the relationship of an institution of higher education to its environment or of the plausibility of the division into research and didactic centres.⁶ It is difficult to resist the temptation to trace

² J.-F. Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge*, trans. G. Bennington, B. Massumi, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, pp. 31–37.

³ W. Humboldt, 'Organizacja instytucji naukowych,' in: B. Andrzejewski, *Wilhelm von Humboldt*, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1989.

⁴ *History of the University in Europe. Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1800–1945)*, ed. W. Rüegg, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 11–15.

⁵ C. Kościelniak, J. Makowski, 'Uniwersytet na rozdrożu,' in: *Wolność, równość, uniwersytet*, eds. C. Kościelniak, J. Makowski, Warszawa: Instytut Obywatelski, 2011, p. 9.

⁶ Cf. C. Kościelniak, J. Makowski, 'Uniwersytet na rozdrożu,' op. cit., pp. 10–13.

the connections between the global need for qualified workers in the labour market and global education programmes,⁷ which is what forces the university to “readjust” to contemporary reality but also reinforces its role in constituting the global order.

Government policies, social transformations, global changes, a system based on the idea of competition, unification of the practices of living, and the community of civilization is what provides the framework for the debate on the university and at the same time suggests the lexicon to describe the current shape of the institution. We mourn the commercialization of universities, the changes introduced into education to make it adapt to market needs, and the omnipresence of the principle of utility. We distinctly feel the effects of what Jacques Derrida called “tele-techno-media” power, one which in the field of university education translates into simplification and homogenization, application of the criterion of profitability to the field of research, popularity of marketing mentality, ratings and viewing figures, as well as the violence inflicted on language. Past concepts are being increasingly marginalized and consigned to oblivion, while other ideas are becoming dominant, ones whose only purpose is to establish the equivalence between the utilitarian world and the trivial and instrumental instruments of its description. By quantifying the value of the university, we have already agreed to quantify the value of the world. Yet the university cannot be reduced to a mere practice of organization.

The domain of the university is time. Its activity consists in constant deconstructing and reconstructing, demolishing and building anew, placing on the margin and introducing an unfamiliar element into the old and lasting. Without shedding altogether the modern metaphor of progress, but also without succumbing to the overly arrogant contemporary narrative of innovation, the university still persists, watching over the most essential. To put

⁷ M. Carnoy, *Globalization and Educational Reform. What Planners Need to Know*, Paris: UNESCO, 1999, pp. 14–17.

it a bit bombastically, the task of the university is to reinstate and renew the world. Its primary obligation is not to eschew but to bravely confront what constantly recurs as a result of the universal human experience of the clash of the finite and infinite. Regardless of the changing circumstances of daily living and of the changing expectations about scientific and scholarly pursuits, the university remains a place whose duty is to protect the sort of thinking that seems inapplicable here and now but is in fact indispensable as partaking in the practice of posing essential questions. The university remains a real university, and not just a higher school of professional training or an ever-expanding network of exchange of teachers and students, inasmuch as we can refer to it with the words of Thomas Merton describing the dazzling lectures on English literature he attended at Columbia University after he left Cambridge: "It was the only place where I ever heard anything really sensible said about any of the things that were really fundamental – life, death, time, love, sorrow, fear, wisdom, suffering, eternity."⁸ The university does not matter much if it does not confront us with the word made of "fire," rocking the foundations of our knowledge and existence. It is the place that is only meaningful if it protects a strong word written "in blood," one that is worth fighting for, as Friedrich Nietzsche once wrote.⁹

THE CULTIVATION OF WONDER

The university, by protecting a strong and disquieting word, aims to protect wonder. In Greek *το θαύμα* is not just a wonder, a wonderful thing or picture, but also wonder in the sense of astonishment or amazement. Hence the verb *θαυμάζω* (*thaumadzo*) /

⁸ T. Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, Toronto, London: Harcourt, 1999, p. 197.

⁹ F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*, trans. A. Del Caro, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 27–28.

θαυμάζειν (*thaumadzein*) means to wonder, to be astonished, and to admire, but also to appreciate and worship. The meaning of the word is worth remembering since the university cannot distance itself from the power of wonder: it should not fail to provoke fear or bewilderment, to upset people's good moods and their entrenched habits of reasoning, obviously on condition that the negative response is not an end in itself, but a means to an end of posing essential questions on the way to better knowledge and enhanced experience. For Plato the origin of philosophy is located precisely in wonder, as this is a frame of mind indicative of the philosophical disposition.¹⁰ Aristotle recalls the notion of the necessary connection between the origin of philosophical thinking and astonishment.¹¹ He points both to the presence of various degrees of wonder and the absence of practical utility, which is what liberates philosophical thinking and directs it towards rational contemplation, one that postulates reason as the foundation of all being. Aristotle also signals another connection that cannot be regarded with indifference by the staff of contemporary university, especially if they strive to place the human studies on the pedestal. As we learn from the ancient philosopher's considerations, whoever loves myth is in a sense a philosopher because myth satisfies wonder, which is a pure desire for knowledge. Even though the orders of *muthos* and *logos* are separate and diverse, they both partake in wonder, bringing forth an interesting connection in the realm of the humanities. Their mutual gravitation may indeed be invigorating for the practices of the university.

What is however most significant is that wonder, due to its close connection with the university, is an ever-present stimulus and inexhaustible source that is a fountainhead of philosophy, capable of constant renewal, to follow Karl Jaspers's explication. Wonder is thus not a mere point in time marking the beginning that

¹⁰ Plato [Platon], *Teajtet*, transl. and commentary by W. Witwicki, Warszawa: PWN, 1959, 155d.

¹¹ Aristotle [Arystoteles], *Metafizyka*, transl. and commentary by K. Leśniak, Warszawa: PWN, 1983, A2, 982 b 18 ff.

soon fades away but an eternal source of knowledge. University cannot fail to anchor its thought and idea of community in this very origin. What is *thauma*? It is a shock accompanying the act of recognizing things for the very first time. The old becomes new because it is seen distinctly and accurately for the first time. Wonder upsets the order of things, especially if they are quotidian meanings and events. It introduces a break in the routine of perception, and questions previous experience and habits of legitimization. Finally, it leads one to ask questions about the very nature of the universe. It prompts a recognition of something as radically new. Yet, in its openness and receptivity to the new, it does not foreclose the old.¹²

The cultivation of wonder in the spiritual dimension, as well as in everyday practices of the university, seems to be necessary on account of its basic meaning: wonder is what prompts one to pose philosophical questions, whether it be out of disbelief, confusion or unease, and what leads one to realize one's ignorance. The Socratic ignorance becomes a first step toward gaining insight into the essence of things, and the university's task is to kindle interest in this sort of thinking while carefully handling the connections between thinking, understanding and being. It is difficult, however, to imagine the connections without referring to Martin Heidegger's philosophy and his notion of wonder, which is more than just a mere beginning: it is perceived as what pervades philosophy and constitutes it every time anew. The Heideggerian wonder is also related to the Greek *πάθος* and as such necessitates a reference to the question of suffering and pain. In order to correspond to the becoming of being, wonder simply must be regarded in attunement with "the Being of being."¹³

The space of the university, arising from wonder and striving to maintain the latter's power, needs also some room for doubt. We may be curious about the relationship between wonder and

¹² Cf. D. Kulas, 'O nomadycznej filozofii,' *Anthropos?* no. 6–7, 2006 [available online: http://www.anthropos.us.edu.pl/anthropos4/texty/kulas_1.htm].

¹³ M. Heidegger: *What is Philosophy?*, trans. J.T. Wilde, W. Kluback, New Haven: College and University Press, 1958, § 48.

doubt. The starting point for scholarly considerations is mundane experience and the image of reality it yields – initially taken for granted, it becomes increasingly less obvious. We can thus ask whether wonder always entails doubt. These are two powerful figures in the philosophical discourse, whose coupling is a driving force not only of the development of knowledge, but also of wisdom. Therefore, wonder and doubt are supposed not only to further philosophical reflection but also to pursue and accumulate wisdom. Constant wondering – which means listening attentively, looking differently, being ready to relinquish a previous explanation, and remaining rootless – is thus both a humble attempt at gaining some insight into reality and an exercise in wisdom.

What is alarming, amazing, and unheard-of, what breaks the routine of our thinking and our good mood stemming from familiar knowledge, arises in the space that is distinct, separate and liberated. It is university that needs to create such space. Alternative thoughts do not occur in the unified space sustained by similar programmes, similar metaphors and similar practices. On the other hand, the spirit of liberation, which is dominant within the university, is sustained by alternative thinking.

THE UNIVERSITY: GLOBAL OR NOT?

The establishment of the global criteria of quantification of knowledge, the constant repetition of identical metaphors used to describe the university (such as innovativeness, internationalization or quality of education), the legitimization of the systematic solutions for the practice of academic living, the presence of universally valid and rigorous procedures of assessment – these are the gestures that pave the way for the domination of the principles of unity and identity. The latter make us feel confident and secure – we know what to expect, what to question, and what to rectify in accordance with the notion of standardized mental

activity. Yet we also feel imprisoned in the scheme which forces us to restrain and censor our thoughts and actions so that they respect the rules of academic correctness. We are thus forced to reconcile the needs of our imagination and personal freedom with the policy of universal standardization. We are aware that the policy does not amount to good and wise living, as wisdom is what eludes scientific norms. The university nowadays no longer addresses the question of wisdom and wise people; it is rather interested in scientists and scholars conceived as experts, specialists, researchers, or coordinators of scholarly pursuits. Its current aspirations can be best summarized by Leo Tolstoy's ironic comment stating that scientists have created a model of science that seeks to answer innumerable sophisticated questions but is unable to address a single issue of what a human being is and how he or she should live.¹⁴ By expecting the university to be an institution intent on protecting qualitatively homogenized knowledge and bridging the gaps between equally homogeneous scientific fields, we aid in reinforcing the power of the Same.

The university based on identical, universally valid criteria of assessment is only able to yield an expected product in terms of scholarly knowledge and academic practices. It is a product which is easily measured, universally recognizable and overly repetitive: it is ever "the same." It is placed on ranking lists and thus legitimized by the legislators of science who see to it that the correct procedures in accordance with the rules are strictly observed. The paradox of such an institution is that it is no longer necessary to travel between universities as we feel at home everywhere. We do not encounter difference: never do we come across a tribe of strangers. We move about in the familial space that has previously silenced the alien *ethnos* and subscribed to the space of the predictable and homogeneous. And even though we are differently positioned on the career ladder and may have

¹⁴ L. Tolstoj, *Droga życia*, trans. A. Kunicka, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Aletheia, 2004, p. 335.

different experiences with regard to innovativeness and ability to access financial means, we are located in the same mechanism of the production of knowledge, forced into the same procedures, squeezed into the straitjacket of a single definition of a scholarly pursuit. This machinery of homogenized science is far removed from the Derridean *différance*, which does not govern anything, does not reign over anything and has no power.¹⁵ What is globally the same has little tolerance for difference. The latter is allowed in only at the price of its subordination. As long as the differences are minor and insignificant to the power of homogenized science, they can exist as local, insubstantial and short-term practices. The situation results in the muting of the imperative to give voice to Difference, one radically conceived and irreducible to a number of insignificantly differing arguments, the same difference that made the Nietzschean Zarathustra “stroll over” the heads of those that are homogeneous, with the exclamation that “human beings are not equal.”¹⁶ The university becomes impoverished when it is not distinctive and does not nurture radical difference taught by the likes of the teacher of the eternal recurrence¹⁷ and revealing the other in the incessant movement of repetition and return.

What is problematic is that we do not know what or who fuels the belief that the world needs the same university, based on the same criteria, everywhere: whether in Latin America, in Asia or in Europe. There is something that makes us suspicious about it, as suspicious as we become of the Nietzschean Zarathustra when he attempts to undermine science. There is something that makes us open the door and slip out “to let in the good air.”¹⁸ It is systematic thinking introducing universal solutions that legitimizes the aforementioned belief. The belief is however far from beneficial to a human being, since it is against culture, against difference,

¹⁵ J. Derrida, ‘Różnia (Différance),’ in: *Drogi współczesnej filozofii*, ed. M. Siemek, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1978, p. 402.

¹⁶ F. Nietzsche: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, op. cit., p. 99.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 177.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 245.

against the local and the ability to make oneself at home in a given place. No system mourns the fragility of the university, and neither is any system affected by the fact that we do not attempt to protect what is small and insignificant, immature, uncertain, local, fragile, infinite, rare, unprecedented, unimaginable and so on. The global world will not miss or mourn the lost chance for differentiation, yet a local human being, clearly defined by a point in time and space, aware of his or her local roots and impermanence of the material world, may develop such a longing or desire. And there seems to be a great but still unacknowledged desire for a local university with the capacity for acknowledging difference.

The more intensively the universalizing procedures of the control of universities are implemented, the more we are convinced that the world does not need any global institutions of higher education and research. This is because a human being is more localized than we would be willing to admit. What is important is difference, the untranslatability of knowledge and languages, the contextual grounding of thinking and action, as well as the experience of the fragility of what is "locally human," which makes us observe closely a local human being, attached to a place, wandering about with the notion of home, and thus dispelling his or her doubts here and now, even when they tend to recur eternally. A comparative approach should not be reducible to a distanced act of confronting different standards. It should be sustained by the imagination which is both eager to take risks and sensitive to difference, and which cannot be levelled, curtailed, translated, fully comprehended and, finally, tamed.

THE REGIONAL ART OF LIVING

The university should be first and foremost recognized and sustained by the region which yields alternative thinking and action, and does not demand that the conceptual tools and ideas match the canon

imposed by the administrative centre. It is the region that makes us sensitive to the place we live in, a place which is not accidental but is so often made non-existent by the usual “rootless” science. Thinking about regions is a “centripetal” move, a “pursuit of the centre,” but it is also an art of authentic living in the proximity of “authentic centres” – close to a human being, as Krzysztof Czyżewski wrote.¹⁹ It would be, however, a mistake to think that the region is what binds us to a place and does not let us get out, beyond the familiar framework of thinking. The region makes us acutely aware of alternative ways of being – those of other people living “elsewhere,” far away, outside, beyond our boundaries, and so on. Still, it is highly significant that the region secures the basic responsibility of the university as a site of research and education, as well as a place of various encounters.

By protecting a sense of gravitation of the university to a place, we indicate that the university cannot be the world’s playground, a laboratory experiment, a “trick,” or a universal project that is not translatable into living here and now. Culture is not a project of the modern laboratory. The university is a commitment to the surroundings whose task is to teach how to be committed to what is furthest away. This is a commitment not only to what constitutes home and a local community, but also to newcomers. The university stays close to living, construed not just biologically, but in the Nietzschean and Diltheyan terms. In Nietzsche’s words, life is not a heavy burden and neither is it a story of trivial happiness. From the point of view of the will to power, it is an act of affirmation or liking.²⁰ The Nietzschean favourable attitude to life²¹ means perceiving from the affirmative perspective the whole of human life, life which is a movement

¹⁹ K. Czyżewski, ‘Od granic do samego środka, czyli Europejczycy w poszukiwaniu tożsamości,’ in: *Czas przekraczania granic. Antologia Borussi 1990–2015*, eds. I. Liżewska, K. Brakoniecki, R. Traba, Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Stowarzyszenie Wspólnota Kulturowa „Borussia,” 2015, pp. 65–66.

²⁰ F. Nietzsche: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, op. cit., p. 28.

²¹ Ibidem.

originating in the spirit of lightness and is creative enough to be able to stay open to the realm of the future. Krzysztof Michalski, taking up the philosopher's theme, elaborates upon it by saying that human life is, on the one hand, composed of familiar elements and assimilated into the well-known structure ("here is a house, here is a mountain, here is a hammer and a triangle"), but, on the other hand, life is something more, something alien and different from one's expectations and preconceptions ("It differs from what can be called my deep and abysmal difference, impossible to overcome").²² It is thus essential that the university should exist in the felt proximity to the processes of living conceived as what is familiar and abysmal simultaneously, just as it was important for the Diltheyan *Geisteswissenschaften* to be intimately close to life.²³ Perhaps the magnitude of the experience of the university stems from its ability to penetrate into what is both home- and abyss-like? Indeed, the humanities that sustain the university protective of thinking have long been supposed to approximate life so as to be able to find the connection between thinking, acting and living. The limits of understanding are the limits of living – what is thus really at stake here is approaching life in the most adequate way, as Wilhelm Dilthey indicates.²⁴ The university is thus committed to living in the hermeneutic sense.

The very fact does not, however, translate into the university's utility and the demand for its effectiveness so that it is able to solve social problems, at the same time marginalizing any considerations that seem to have no instrumental quality. The university approaches life inasmuch as it defends the posture of engagement and responsibility by being able to bridge the gap between individuals and community and to affirm difference that powers imagination.

²² K. Michalski, *Plomień wieczności. Eseje o myślach Fryderyka Nietzschego*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2007, p. 94.

²³ W. Dilthey, 'Rozumienie »nauk o duchu«,' trans. K. Krzemieniowa, in: Z. Kuderowicz: *Dilthey*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1987, pp. 186–190.

²⁴ W. Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, Einleitung von M. Riedel. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970, pp. 70–73.

BEING AT HOME IN A PLACE

The university cannot be homeless, unanchored, or uncommitted. While at university we do not perceive the world from the vantage point of science which is found “nowhere,” but from within the realm of culture that places scholarship in the cultural, moral and aesthetic framework. Home is something distinctive. That is why an institution of higher education cannot offer a narrative of cognitive and moral neutrality, understood as a tool for avoiding biased content. It was already the Nietzschean human sciences that suspended the belief in neutrality through the reference to the processes of living, as Michalski pointed out: “It is only life and the evaluation with regard to life that can bring to light the validity and, at the same time, the real meaning of an act of cognition.”²⁵ Neutrality is thus restricted on account of life, due to the authorial figure behind. And yet, all things considered, it is also restricted by being-at-home. Distinctiveness, the stamp of the name and place, the emphasis on the perspectivist character of research, looking at things “from within” is the best way to rule out preferential treatment of what is familiar but mediocre, or politically and ideologically correct, be it a judgment or an interpretation. A lack of neutrality, just as the lack of anonymity, is what protects us against the plague of cowardly assessment. By displaying our name, we attach special significance to the idea we have just called into existence: our thinking turns into action for which we are responsible. We are ready to defend it; moreover, we can be blamed or praised for what we have conceived, recognized, affirmed or rejected. In any case, the lack of anonymity makes the researcher and the university more distinctive. The widespread affirmation of a blind review system shows how much the idea of reliability and impartiality has been divorced from the notion of belonging, commitment and individuality.

²⁵ K. Michalski, *Plomień wieczności*, op. cit., p. 50.

In Michalski's words, a human being is wise if he or she is able to reach not only what is given, already in existence or previously planned, but what is further on and beyond – or “up in the sky.”²⁶ The university, inasmuch as we perceive it from the double local-and-global perspective, needs to take roots in order to retain its distinctiveness and to be able to reach the stars. The process of wrestling with the notion of home is always both departing and home-coming, abandoning and reconstructing. To be at home in the world means first to be at home in the idea of home and region as a spiritual realm, as what the Germans and Silesians call *Heimat*, using a word difficult to translate into other languages. *Heimat* is supposed to open the door to the world, not to close it. In this way what is homely is also worldly. Oikology,²⁷ as a study of home, does not refrain from tackling the question of *Heimat*, which can be traced back to Johann Gottfried Herder's ideas on social bonds, a sense of belonging, being part of the folk and nation, and, finally, culture which shapes the human being.²⁸ As Peter Blicke indicates, taking up Herder's points, *Heimat* is best expressed in the notion of belonging and homeland.²⁹ Oikological considerations, which tend to connect home, a human being and a place, are not really attached to the idea of a nation; what is more important is the relation of an individual lot to the earth, as was discussed by José Ortega y Gasset.³⁰ We are now coming back to this wise observation, unwilling to succumb either to the slick mythologies of the herd or to the mythologies of rootless (dis)association.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 93.

²⁷ Cf. T. Ślawek, A. Kunce, Z. Kadłubek, *Oikologia. Nauka o domu*, Katowice: SIW, 2013.

²⁸ J.G. Herder, *Myśli o filozofii dziejów*, trans. J. Gałęcki, introduction and commentary by E. Adler, Warszawa: PWN, 1962, p. 388.

²⁹ P. Blicke, *Heimat. A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland*. New York: Camden House, 2002, p. 54.

³⁰ J. Ortega y Gasset, ‘Tematy podrózne,’ in: idem, *Po co wracamy do filozofii?*, introduction by S. Cichowicz, trans. E. Burska, M. Iwińska, A. Jancewicz, Warszawa: Spacja, 1992, pp. 25–39.

The university needs to make itself at home anew by being responsive to the needs of a place. Being at home in the local area is never neutral; it already constitutes a commitment. And it is only the condition of belonging and being at home that opens the door to the world. The imagination of university people is situated at the crossroads of the world and home. Whenever we take a look at the world, we do it from within home. It is also from home that we set out on a journey towards far-away places. The planetary imagination is thus a local imagination. The university in the service of truth cannot fail to serve both the world and home. Each and every gesture of an intellectual entails the notion of service and humility, even if the gesture is not remotely connected with culture or cannot be translated into cultural terms. At the end of the day, we work either to strengthen the world or to destroy it. Scientists and scholars – who are at the same time orderly and mad, playing the roles of discoverers and archivers, sages and disciples, patient experimenters and radical artists, those who worship procedures and expert advice and those praise freedom and free-floating signifiers – connect discipline and order with what is unpredictable, unexpected, infinite, and inconceivable. Yet in this violent confrontation of different elements that elude totalization, like the simultaneous adherence to the rules and praise of their violation at the university, there is ample room for the loyalty and service to the notion of home and homeland – which is both affirmed and rebelled against, left behind and constantly returned to, lived and reconstructed. In this clash of provocation, enthusiasm of exodus and local service, the university rediscovers its identity as a difficult community of the place.

AN-OTHER UNIVERSITY: ON AUTONOMY

The university's autonomy, both as a claim and imperative, or a practical requirement, cannot be suppressed. It was well-known to Józef Maria Bocheński, who pointed out that the essence of

autonomy resides in six demands: (1) that the university is a separate and self-sufficient legal subject; (2) that the organization and selection of the fields of research and education is the university's own and free choice; (3) that the university is independent in its decisions regarding both the personnel and students; (4) that the university independently elects its authorities; (5) that the university has freedom in making use of its financial means, no institution (such as the state or church) being authorized to dictate how the money is spent; (6) that the discipline of research and education is also the university's own business, as an extension of its autonomy.³¹

The autonomy is closely connected with the recognition of the university as "a purely spiritual power," to quote Bocheński's remark.³² Let us stop at this point and stress the phrase, which tends to be deliberately forgotten these days. If the universities were to be deprived of this spiritual power and transformed into efficient and well-organized institutions of expert knowledge, we would have to depart from the time-honoured tradition that had so far declined to reduce their existence to the questions of utility, efficiency and organization. The spiritual dimension, which is incompatible with the bureaucratic languages used today to describe the field of education and research, makes it virtually impossible to equate the university with any other social institutions. Bocheński was neither the first nor the last person to elaborate on its autonomy, but he was one of the few people who regarded it as a guarantee of good relations between the university and the church or state. Tadeusz Sławek writes that autonomy requires thoughtfulness so as not to turn into "aping."³³ And he adds that human beings are free "for themselves" but at the same time they have to be free from themselves or their "excessive

³¹ J.M. Bocheński, *Sens życia i inne eseje*, Kraków: PHILED, 1993, pp. 67–68.

³² Ibidem, p. 70.

³³ T. Sławek, 'Autonomia, kształcenie, dług,' in: *Wolność, równość, uniwersytet*, op. cit., p. 29.

selves.”³⁴ Autonomy does not mean the right to do whatever one pleases and to spend the money available in an uncontrollable way, just as it does not mean absolute intellectual liberty. Quite on the contrary, autonomy is what gives rise to a sense of responsibility for the condition of the institution that exists “on its own” or separately from, but still in connection with, the whole family of universities.

Autonomy also means the necessity to meet cultural requirements. In order to stay together, one has to learn first how to live separately, as the theoreticians of the community well know. That is why, to quote Roberto Esposito, our communal living oscillates between rootedness and rootlessness because it involves both staying in one place and wandering.³⁵ We should constantly bear in mind the combination of the two important elements: *locus* and *communitas*. Concern for the university is not about creating a monolith of power, a system based on the cultivation of unity and familiar identity; it is about looking forward both to what is familiar and what is different. An-other university is able to contribute something new to the world due to the distinctiveness and originality of its ideas. The quality of reflection and research is related to their specific, unique and unusual character. The local-global university is distinctive because it celebrates the autonomy of the languages used to create worlds in different fields and the attachment to its own, select genres of academic writing (which is far removed from the common recommendation to apply one universal standard of writing, one taught in the class on “how to write an academic text”). Furthermore, the university shows a preference for the use of one’s own concepts and a predilection for specific metaphors, which means the willingness to recognize the diversity of individual academic styles. And once again, the celebration of autonomy needs to be referred to the insatiable

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 21.

³⁵ R. Esposito, *Communitas. The Origin and Destiny of Community*, trans. T. Campbell, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 5.

drive of creative living which “always transcends its limits by creating ever new forms, none of which can be called final.”³⁶ Behind the alternative ideas and practices, behind the alternative discourses and values that the local community should be ready to fight for, there is a distinct cultural trademark. And it seems that the university should strive to possess its cultural trademark.

CONCLUSION

Little can be seen from the privileged centre of power/knowledge, especially in the human sciences. Withdrawing, staying away and apart, at a certain cognitive distance, can have a salutary effect in that it contributes to the making of separate peripheral centres. Being on the periphery, construed in positive, and not condescending, terms, lays a good foundation for thinking at a remove from the blinding light of knowledge pursued by those who wish to constantly affirm their identities in the same schemes. The discovery of the university in its peripheral existence is however no apologia for some mediocre or deficient knowledge that would serve to safeguard the parochial interests of one's native group. The acknowledgment of the university's peripherality is instead aimed at protecting fragile knowledge by sheltering what is easily lost in the consideration of human beings and community. It means highlighting the periphery in terms of its acute awareness of difference, of detail and margin. It is about constant dismantling of the power of the centre and its systematic interpretation of the world, which makes it possible to uncover the glimmering texture of living and to affirm what comes as a surprise, unexpected and unannounced.

The local-global university is a commitment due to its desire to come home.

³⁶ K. Michalski, *Płomień wieczności*, op. cit., p. 241.

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Dynamically understood figure of localness, extracted from stagnation or from a sealed fortress, becomes close to the image of rough sea. Along with localness which keeps our attention on home, on the surroundings, comes the knowledge that the reason of the stubborn focusing on the local is to have strength to confront the infinite, unheard and limitless. Thus, the home thinking directs us towards the indefinite and provides us with simple knowledge that in the realm of home we deal with the infinite and indefinite. In the realm of a local man one could find the power to create a renewing bond with the world and a valid story about a place.

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