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TRANSGRESSIVE HUMANISM IN MID-SOCIALIST POLAND
Nina Seiler
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Transgressive Humanism in Mid-Socialist Poland

This book focuses on the often-overlooked middle period of socialism in 20th-century Poland, tracing the transgressive variations of humanist thought that emerged as forms of resistance amid the intellectual crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

It analyses how an upsurge in anti-Semitism and discourses of exclusion in the period stimulated environmental explorations beyond the hegemonic notion of the human subject and humanity. Readers will find a synthetic analysis not only of the atmosphere of the mid-socialist period, but also of fragmented, decentred, and marginalised phenomena in film, literature, theory, and theatre, in which transgressive moments in well-known work such as the theatre of Tadeusz Kantor, Stanisław Lem's writing, Maria Janion's cultural studies, or Jerzy Skolimowski's early films feature alongside artistic output that was never broadly known or is mostly forgotten now. By acknowledging the specificities of transgressive humanism in socialist Poland, the book enriches post-anthropocentric theory with a distinct perspective from the so-called semi-periphery.

The volume is relevant for scholars of post-humanist studies, the history of knowledge, studies on socialist Europe and Polish studies.

Nina Seiler is a research associate at the Department of Performing Arts and Film of the Zurich University of the Arts, as well as chief editor of the feminist studies magazine *Fem*Fém*.

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Transgressive Humanism in Mid-Socialist Poland

Nina Seiler

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1 Introduction

In the late mid-20th century, nations and societies around the world (both capitalist and socialist) weighed questions of agency, freedom, and the power to determine the future. The ideological struggle over the best means to allow societies to thrive and bestow justice, progress, and prosperity to humankind was full-fledged. Humanity's desires and needs were debated, while at the same time, insecurities about its actions and values could not be silenced. The traumatic experience of the past world wars and the Holocaust shaped these discussions of the notion of humanity and of its imaginable and desirable future in many parts of the world. Moreover, nuclear warfare had signalled humankind's potential end in a biological sense, and technological progress continued to challenge humans' role and self-perception. Humans' claims over natural resources began not only to be challenged geopolitically, but also from a perspective of nature preservation. Global social and environmental interdependencies and responsibilities slowly began to penetrate political consciousnesses.[1]

Humanism as the European philosophy of (the championing of) man[2] had become a questionable ideology after the Second World War in view of human precariousness and self-destructive tendencies. The notion of the "human" itself, of "man as a species-being"[3] and seemingly self-evident category came partially under examination[4] and with it the notion of the human subject and its relation to the (imagined) collective. In Europe, existentialism was one answer to the questions about humans' raison d'être; philosophical structuralism and the cybernetic integration of human "nodes" into overarching systems another. Somewhere in between these philosophical trends, the Marxist humanism of the 1960s—discussed East and West—attempted to develop a dialectic understanding of the freedom of the human individual and its social responsibilities in the struggle against the alienation of humans in both capitalist and socialist societies and modes of production.

The rebellious atmosphere of the 1960s additionally re-positioned the human individual against society's norms and expectations. A young generation experimented with new lifestyles basing on the notion of freedom—social, cultural, sexual, educational; freedom from economic constraints—and challenged the political systems about their hegemonic oppressions and

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ideological dishonesties and paradoxes. It is often discussed in what way the political and social claims of 1968 succeeded or failed in Western capitalist societies; however, it is beyond dispute that in the socialist societies of the late 1960s, the demands for reforms and experimental youth culture were thoroughly suffocated.[5]

The Thaw of 1956 in the socialist countries had brought a series of political and ideological reforms. Marxist ideology underwent a philosophical change, taking into consideration the relevance of the individual and its needs; an issue that had been neglected if not repressed altogether in Stalinism. Marxist philosophers across various countries attempted to develop a dialectic understanding of individual freedom and social responsibility.[6] Young people, workers and students alike, engaged themselves culturally and politically in order to establish a more democratic system, often arguing from a Marxist perspective. Yet the state repression of 1968 in Poland, and more so the Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia, brought these political, philosophical and cultural developments to a halt.[7] In the Polish People's Republic (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL), the repression of 1968 was moreover coupled with an anti-Semitic upsurge initiated by the party media and circulated by wide parts of society.[8] The following period is often considered as lacking initiative, courage, and creativity, as a period of political, social, and cultural inertia. The mid-socialist culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the very middle of the Polish socialist system's historical duration, saw culture engaged primarily with this atmosphere of stagnation, mistrust, and isolation. Later in the 1970s, the theme of material welfare and consumer culture became prevalent, before a political reinvigoration led into the late 1970s' and 1980's oppositional culture.[9]

The culture of post-1968 Poland is usually associated with linguistic tug-of-war, as language had become one of the main stages of the ideological struggles and the propaganda offensive of the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR). The poetry of the so-called Generation '68, of young poets making their debut in the beginning of the 1970s, challenged the party newspeak with their own linguistic twists, intending to unveil the political corruption of language as a sociotechnical instrument of rewriting reality.[10]

The aim of the present book is, however, the study of cultural works whose increased mistrust in the human *logos* and the contemporary socio-political situation led them down different paths in their resistance against the period's cultural inertia. Certain films, novels, theatre productions, or scholarly work chose to de-centre language and to explore non-verbal associations, the performance of bodies and materiality, and the possibility of finding a new, affective approach towards human and non-human others. An interest in the human and its environmental entanglement connects them to humanist traditions, while showing at the same time reservations about the superiority of the human species and their lingering mistrust in the coherence of the human subject. This dialectic outset of engaging the human figure with its

more-than-human relations to the world, always arguing from a specific position within these social-material cobwebs, is what I chose to term *transgressive humanism*. Conceptualising transgressive humanist navigations, my reading-writing of mid-socialist Polish culture weaved a loose fabric of strands that do not, however, form an acknowledged cultural trend, let alone an established school of socialist humanism.

The works and fragments analysed here could be considered the silent legacy of the Marxist humanist tradition developed in the years before; and they are harbingers of a post-anthropocentric, inter- and intraspecies affective environmental awareness growing rapidly in view of today's cumulating planetary crises. By engaging multiple formulations of a transgressive humanism, I describe and theorise a specific, socialist-informed strain of (post-) humanism emerging in the aftermath of the Second World War and out of the loss for new social models in the second half of 20th century Europe. The book discusses a phenomenon that resides on the margins not only of the discourse on post-humanist theory and culture but also of the narrative about the Polish socialist cultural past, thus enabling a broader and at the same time more detailed understanding of both epistemological strands. This book is hence part of a budding interest in post-anthroponormative thought and practice in Poland, which originates in literary and cultural studies, Holocaust studies, and critical historical approaches to knowledge formation and discourses. It will present new readings of established as well as hardly-known cultural work alike, tracing unseen-before connections and pointing out the relevance of transgressive humanist endeavours for the survival of critical thought in socialist Poland and today.

1.1 The crises of mid-socialist culture

In Poland after the Thaw of 1956, the period known as First Party Secretary Władysław Gomułka's era had promised a certain extent of economic and cultural liberalisations, which provided the grounds for the development of Marxist humanism and reformist endeavours. Socialism "with a human face"[11] was the goal of political and economic reforms sketched beyond the official policy of the party. However, in the 1960s voices critical of the rigid bureaucratic system, or introducing too liberal views based on democratic practices, were increasingly repressed.[12] This process culminated in what is commonly referred to as the events of "March 1968." The date 8 March 1968 saw the escalation of state violence against young protestors who had voiced their desires for more political and cultural freedom.[13] The system regained discursive control and thoroughly silenced protest. March 1968 stands also for the upsurge of an officially encouraged anti-Semitic campaign, which had commenced already in 1967 and rooted partly in the USSR's condemnation of Israel after the Six Day War, partly in homemade anti-Semitism and resentments against Jewish functionaries, who were blamed for the misdemeanours of the Stalinist period. Poles of Jewish descent were accused of a

cosmopolitan "Zionism" said to be corrupting Polish socialism from within. The anti-Semitic media campaign closely related to and intermingled with the media slandering of the reformist attempts.[14]

Studies on the 1960s and/or 1970s in Poland have primarily focused on the development of political thought, the political atmosphere, and the doings of the Party and its officials. Ideological aspects were also the main topic for the intensified interest in workers' history in recent years.[15] Historians of politics, society, and culture concentrated on the reformist formations known as "revisionism," or on the "March" events of 1968, which also link to the revisionist movement. There is a considerable and growing body of historical and socio-political research and memory work on the events of 1968 and the anti-Semitic campaign.[16] Researchers have examined the media discourse and propaganda language in the late 1960s as well as the institutional problems of cultural and academic production such as censorship.[17] Still, the connection between the socio-political crisis and cultural-philosophical developments in terms of the values and explorations transported by cultural works has received less attention. Books and articles examining artistic production around 1968 tended to limit their analysis to the direct relationship between political events and cultural output, often focusing on a single genre.[18] Artistic works were usually approached as statements about the events themselves or the difficulties raised by ideologically overwrought language. It seems, thus, that the culture of the late 1960s and of the early 1970s was of interest primarily if it could be classified as referring directly to the political development, or being directly affected by it, for example, by censorship.

The period of the very historical middle of the PRL is marked by but not limited to the events of 1968 and 1970—the brutal and bloody repression of shipyard workers on strike in Gdańsk in December 1970, due to which Gomułka was substituted by Edward Gierek as First Party Secretary. The focus on this somewhat vague period of transition, which I term "mid-socialist culture," is unusual. Cultural research often deals with either the Gomułka era—called "small stabilisation" (*mała stabilizacja*)[19]—where the lingering hope for political reform and liberalisation allowed for a certain political and cultural flourishing. This period is seen as coming to an end with 1968, although formally dismantled only in 1970. Alternatively, studies consider the 1970s and the beginnings of a "counter-cultural" trend (*kontrkultura*), in which the linguistic experiments of the Generation '68 and the student theatre's critical productions play a central role.[20] The 1970s are also known for their parodist, humoristic aspect of artistic production, in which the socialist form of consumerist lifestyles is partly criticised, partly reconciled. In political terms, the early 1970s are rather seen as a "low" period before the oppositional reawakening of the late 1970s and 1980s, when the Workers' Defence Committee (*Komitet Obrony Robotników*, KOR) was founded in 1976, a precursor and inspiration to the Solidarity (*Solidarność*) trade union movement.

Thus, mid-socialism is generally perceived as either an *end* or a *beginning* (or rather the prequel to a beginning). The periodisation according to the

governing eras of two First Party Secretaries suggests a break and pause in-between two phases. The image of the pause may reflect the dominating political disorientation and the crisis of ideas spreading in the wake of 1968; however, it does not take into consideration the actual flow of life of this time, the fact that people continued to live and to relate to their environment. The proposition of a term precisely for this period of disruption means thus also to assign historical space to the time of the in-between, the historical expansion of the crisis—and to acknowledge the continuities in culture and everyday life connecting the two eras it bridges.

Everyday (cultural) history in the PRL has not been too busy a field of study, although several publications deal with mid-socialist society.[21] The waning hope in political reformation and growing disillusionment, disorientation, and frustration concerned not only the philosophical and cultural sphere, but also the social and economic plane of everybody's everyday doings. The 1960s saw deepening social and economic difficulties, such as shifting social structures, changes in customs, a rising crime rate, low-wage work, and growing shortages of products and flats.[22] Massive rural-to-urban migration had led to a rootlessness that was both geographic and social, as some felt adrift among the shifting coordinates of post-war values and ethics.[23] The intermediate and intimate level of local, workplace, and familial bonds was marked by loneliness and isolation that sometimes escalated to fear.[24] The destabilisation of large parts of society provoked social and economic anxieties and unrest—a "passive, everyday discontent."[25]

Mass culture, growing but mostly unfulfilled consumer desires, and social expectations contributed to an expanding disjuncture between the human subject and its social environment that was reflected in arts and culture of the 1960s and 1970s. Many works "pointed to a state of social deformation that created a false image of the world (unreality) and rendered it susceptible to manipulation."[26] The "practical deviations" from the "social goals of socialism" were striking in economic, social, and customary terms, and "the discord between slogans and reality was a constant characteristic of the everyday life of those years."[27] For example, media transported goals like gender equality, "partnership" relations, or the reformation of children's upbringing. However, actual relations in the family shifted only slowly: propagated but hard to achieve liberal models were contested by a customary conservatism that spoke of a toppling of the gender order, chaos in the family, and a crisis of the male.[28] These conservative narratives corresponded particularly well with the ethno-nationalist, anti-revisionist trend in the late 1960s.[29] Such social negotiations and tensions did not dissolve with the replacement of the First Party Secretary and the new decade, but must be seen as underlying and intersecting currents to the intellectual and political trends.

The period stretching from 1967/68 to the early 1970s is usually seen as a turning point in the project of Polish communism. Up to the late 1960s, the communist project had appealed to parts of the older and younger generations despite the Stalinist experience, as there was still hope in a reparation of

the system and the instalment of a socialism with a human face. After the events of the Polish March 1968 and especially after the forced participation of Poles in the Warsaw Pact's invasion into Czechoslovakia and the suppression of the "Prague Spring" revolution in August 1968, however, political historians detect a general estrangement from and renunciation of communist ideas.[30] The Party-driven anti-Semitic campaign produced a nationalistic, exclusionary discourse about Polish socialism. Many Jewish Poles were driven or forced to emigration, setting loose a certain run on the abandoned positions or flats. Apart from a nationalist baseline, political and moral coordinates seemed increasingly impalpable to the common citizen, but also to people with political experience. State repression, ideological disappointment, and social fear made it difficult to formulate critique or to develop political or philosophical solutions.

The ideological crisis of the late 1960s was connected to a mechanism of language turning against itself. Language was now mainly perceived as the politically corrupted newspeak featuring totally twisted semantics. Therefore, language was no longer able to perform its main task: to give adequate form to thought and to guarantee the inter-human exchange of ideas, thoughts, and impressions. With the loss of control over language, one of the foundational pillars of humanity, the human individual, its rationality and agency seemed to be curbed. Bureaucracy and political stagnation additionally presented the human individual as caught in an impenetrable system. I discuss these issues in Chapter 2 of the present book, where I analyse the impact of the socio-political sphere and the March 1968 events on language, discourse, and culture. This chapter concentrates on the relationship both between political repression and individual experience, and between media communication and everyday language.

I discuss at the example of contemporary or retrospective documents, for example, texts written by Andrzej Mencwel and Wojtek Lamentowicz, how the exclusionary discourse created an anxiety about personal information and how the official information policies muffled the experienced reality. To grasp the socio-cognitive adaptation of the human individual to the atmosphere of anxiety, I borrow the concept of "minusivity"[31] from the renowned Polish reporter and writer Ryszard Kapuściński, who had introduced the term in his novel *The Emperor* (*Cesarz*, 1978). Kapuściński's concept ideally adapts to the mechanisms of mistrusted communication and attempted immunisation against negative information in lesser-known writer Wiesław Jażdżyński's novel "The Case" (*Sprawa*, 1969), whose example serves me to discuss these matters.

Two minor fragments—a diary entry by writer Anna Kowalska and a retrospective account of scholar Maria Janion—allow me to analyse how resistances against the omnipresent discourse of affective exclusion were performed and also show the limits to subversion. The social anxiety also made people rely on prefabricated linguistic scripts in verbal communication, which is hilariously paraphrased in Marek Piwowski's cult comedy *The Cruise* (*Rejs*, 1970). The film's tragic humour derives to a big part from the incongruity

between the verbal level and the social reality corporeally lived-through. It is this latter, environmental-relational space that offers itself to transgressive humanist explorations. Yet due to the omnipresent linguistic scripts' monopolising much of the research attention concerning mid-socialism, this non-verbal sociality has seldomly been acknowledged in studies.

1.2 Transgressive humanism as a mode of knowledge production

While Marxist humanism was widely abandoned in philosophy and the humanities after the repression of the late 1960s, the mid-socialist situation encouraged the establishment of a structuralist trend for the next 20 years, which protected its perpetrators due to its allegedly ideology-free principles. Cybernetics, too, responded to the vanishing of the human figure in the system, dreaming of a flawless network of input and feedback. However, as I argue in Chapter 3, there were also movements of resistance against these new paradigms, for which the notion of human agency, human corporeality, and its position in the processes of knowledge production became a central issue. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, a March émigré, saw "[t]he lack of utopia," as creating "a void, an opaque, bottomless abyss, in place of a smooth extension of the present."[32] A crisis of ideas, as it manifested itself in mid-socialism's ideological hiatus, had hence an increased potential to call out the forces of the irrational. Such mechanisms are described in Andrzej Szczypiorski's novel *A Mass for Arras* (*Msza za miasto Arras*, 1971) in a sort of reversal, at the birthplace of humanity's belief in the power of rationality in the 15th century. In a similar reversal, the "opaque, bottomless abyss" as a moment of crisis of the rational human subject and inter-human communication emerges as yet unmapped by language and may become the irrational space where the transgression of classical humanism and the anthroponormative order is possible. I will also discuss in this context theatre director and anthropologist Jerzy Grotowski's 1960s' performances. They experimented with the possibility of repetition practiced by the actors' bodies and gestures as a means to re-stage states of crisis, and affectively confront the viewers' own suppressed experiences and traumata. However, Grotowski's quest became, starting in the 1970s, increasingly tied to the notion of an archetypal truth, which is why I will touch upon his theatrical explorations only briefly.

A key figure of transgressive philosophical-cultural exploration was the Polish literary scholar Maria Janion, in whose work "transgression" became a central notion for her understanding of human culture. She was intensely absorbed with the social, cultural, and political productiveness of ruptures, multi-layered voices, and incomprehension, all of which she acknowledged as key moments of knowledge production and a non-linear understanding of the world.

> Let us assume that there is something hidden in what we say which, while not being completely transparent to the very speaker, will become clear to others, that it will stimulate them to such incomprehension,

> which will eventually become understanding—or, on the contrary, will remain incomprehension, this octopus, so accurately described by Victor Hugo in *Toilers of the Sea*, an octopus that casts a shadow and places itself as an obstacle (the very existence of the monster does this) in the way of "linear cognition."[33]

The encounter with the octopus/incomprehension is both a disturbing, if not terrifying experience, and at the same time the foundation of critical, decentred, transgressive reasoning. It enforces the acknowledgement of the unknown, the other beyond the reach of appropriation, and thus a pluralisation of knowledges. By confronting the octopus, the space between the self and the other becomes tangible; and this hidden space, which disturbs and resists the flow of cognition by opening towards productive *in*comprehension was Janion's main field of study. She emphasised the constitutive and political liminal space of borders between socio-cultural categories, and between humanity and a more-than-human world. Her explorations went beyond anthropocentricism while remaining deeply interested in human subjectivity.[34] The concept of transgressive humanism ties back to this oscillation of constantly overcoming the established limits of the human self while always returning to see what was left behind, and how these movements changed what we understand as human. Against the backdrop of the mid-socialist crisis, I read Janion's 1972 book "Romanticism, Revolution, Marxism" (*Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*), whose hermeneutic explorations and conceptual suggestions allow me to elaborate the features of transgressive humanism.

Following Janion's emphasis on the situatedness of human subjects, I explore the notion of knowledge production and the scholar's resistance to the idea of a defined truth and objective reason. Dialogue (dialogism)[35] and polyphony[36] emerge as further key features of Janion's book and her hermeneutic understanding of reasoning as an ever-ongoing process. Dialogue translates into the ability to acknowledge and listen to others; this especially includes the relation to the plurality of more-than-human others and their diverging voices and perspectives. Yet transgressive humanism's dialogue concerns less the binary encounter of two or more entities than their relating to each other, their permeability and affectivity. Janion's polyphonic writing, in which a multitude of voices woven into the text tips almost into the horror of overflow, at the same time opens up the space for a glimpse at the vulnerability of living beings. These questions raised in "Romanticism, Revolution, Marxism" are also encountered in Stanisław Lem's novel *His Master's Voice* (*Głos Pana*, 1968) and Tadeusz Konwicki's novel *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* (*Zwierzoczłekoupiór*, 1969). Both critically negotiate the claim to true-speaking and definite knowing. By pointing out the diversity of voices and rationalities, each of the novels leads us onto the traces of a precariousness underlying transgressive humanist explorations.

Central to my understanding of transgressive humanism is another tool proposed by Janion, a tool she calls "humanist intuition"[37] for hermeneutics. By this, she understood the acknowledgement and integration of more-than-rational mechanisms in cognition, the experiencing and thinking with the whole self as a psychophysical, historically situated being. Janion, an expert in romanticist culture and its traces in the Polish culture of the 20th century,[38] reinvigorated a non-rational tradition of affective knowledge production in her struggle to preserve humanist endeavours against the "final drain"[39] of 1968. She insisted on an integral methodology including the notion of both human agency—against a structuralist "dehumanisation"—and a historical-materialist affective interrelation with the world—against the notion of an abstract, universal, and dogmatic truth-to-achieve. In this, she showed a more open, flexible, and maybe more productive approach, for example, theatre practitioner and anthropologist Grotowski, who increasingly perceived the human body and its movements as the one vehicle to touch upon (mythological) sources of truth and authenticity. To Janion, however, it seemed clear that ambivalences or paradoxes of the relation of post-logocentric epistemology to writing and verbal structuring did not have to be resolved. What is written or spoken also opens spaces[40] for productive readings beyond words, as the reference to the octopus of incomprehension clearly shows.

Indeed, this octopus was my companion during my reading of mid-socialist culture, whenever I stumbled across transgressive humanist impulses, jolts that something was *there* somewhere. At the same time, these moments of transgressive humanist intuition came as incidents on which I often could not fully lay a finger on. A similar experience is described by Roland Barthes (1915–1980) in *Camera Lucida* dealing with his looking at photographs. During his *studium* of the images, an analytical looking-at, Barthes experienced affective breakthroughs tied to rationally unimportant things in the picture. For this phenomenon, he introduced the term *punctum*; flashes that spoke to him on an intuitive, very personal level, "this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."[41] Thus, *puncta* happen in the interplay of affects between the material and its reader, puncturing both. The underlining of the concrete viewer—Barthes—is of relevance because of the singular cocktail of experiences, memories, feelings, and thoughts this particular viewer features. Another viewer might experience different *puncta* or none at all while looking at the same photographs, unable to understand the excitement Barthes might show at a certain detail. In the perception of things (among others cultural products) and how they speak to their observer, an individually and socially constituted "biology of cognition and biology of reading,"[42] as Janion put it, becomes relevant. These piercing moments that Barthes experienced base thus on a thinking and understanding with more than reason as it is usually conceived. Or, to put it otherwise, reason must be understood as an enveloping process of entangled perception, in which the body, incorporated memories, affects, and feelings play an important role.

My encounter with mid-socialist transgressive humanism thus manifested itself as a feeling that something was there that led my "thinking" to escape the lines of text or images. The puncturing of anthropocentrism and normative rationality emerged in the interplay of affects *in-between* (e.g., the text and its reader—me) as moments of an experiencing corporeal self. These transgressive humanist impulses—*puncta* that spoke to me in a certain, personal way, without maybe striking a chord with other reader-viewers—came across not as formulated ideas, but as explorations, performances, affective soundings, a play with possibilities; fleeting glimpses of a world in which the human subject is companion to its environment.[43] These moments could not have been intentionally placed but emerged in the affects in-between the involved entities—as a sort of louder or subtler, yet always ambiguous background noise[44] that haunts the *studium*.

My *studium* of the cultural text in mid-socialist Poland is hence necessarily incomplete due to two factors. In order to search for expressions of crisis, expanding to moments of transgression, every single snippet of artistic and non-artistic output could have been explored. The choice of material presented in this book may be surprising, if not to say eclectic; internationally renowned creators such as Tadeusz Kantor or Andrzej Wajda feature among writers hardly known in Poland such as Wiesław Jażdżyński or partially forgotten Kalman Segal. It is impossible in retrospective to retrace the meanders my reading of mid-socialist culture has taken; especially, because I have hardly channelled it in the beginning, stretching out my "tentacles" here and there. In the beginning of my research-wandering, I hardly even knew what I was looking for, waiting for the material to touch me. The present constellation of materials that punctured my reading and made it through the following transposition of translating these *puncta* into the language of cultural studies analysis may thus appear disparate. Its foundation is an idiosyncratic reading, in which not only the materials I could lay hands on were organised around my personal situation and possibilities, but also the transgressive moments captured were tied to the singular affects sparking between this material and me. Yet this eclecticism corresponds to the phenomenon I set out to explore; it would never have been possible to establish a well-defined container for the transgressive humanist hints I found in mid-socialist culture.

1.3 Layered experiences in postwar ecologies

Chapter 4 of the present book is where I explore such puncturings in the cultural text of mid-socialist Poland in more detail. Bogdan Wojdowski set the tone for my further soundings with his novel on living in the Warsaw Ghetto, *Bread for the Departed* (*Chleb rzucony umarłym*, 1971). The destabilisation of the border between life and death in the space of the ghetto expanded to a pressing issue also for those who survived. Surviving became a transgressive state, in which the feeling of guilt for being alive beyond death complicated the relation to being in the present. The entanglement with the

past created a kind of double vision and an expanded space, in which, as in Tadeusz Konwicki's film essay *How Far, How Near* (*Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko*, 1971), material spectres of the past mingle with the reality of postwar Poland. Through its material dissolution and moral transgressions, the notion of humanity was tested during the war; and the branching out of multiple layers of dying and surviving added to the questioning of conventional perspectives on the human subject. Both Konwicki's film and Wojdowski's novel suggest an assemblage and openness towards that which no longer exists, but that sedimented in the one that survived.

Indeed, the notion of multiplication and layering inside a singular human being was explored in mid-socialist culture in several ways, including soundings of corporeal precarity and bodily entanglements with others. Kalman Segal sketched a transgenerational inheritance in his novel "The Associated" (*Skojarzeni*, 1971), where his war traumatised, petrified protagonists put their hope into their little daughter, burdening her with their own dead. While Segal's novel deals with a subtle, rather psychological intermingling of human identity, another form of palimpsestic technology and imprinting of the burdens of the past awaits the main protagonist of Andrzej Wajda's short sci-fi comedy *Roly Poly* (*Przekładaniec*, 1968). In an undefined future, medical progress in transplantology has advanced to the point that a single human figure might now be composed of the parts of several others, including nonhuman animals. The patchworked corporeality poses difficulties not only from a juridical perspective, but also questions the notion of individuality and identity. Theatre director and artist Tadeusz Kantor, in his turn, was highly interested in the overlap of human corporeality and the material world of things, bringing together objects of the lowest level and human bodies in his packaging works. The bio-objects populating his theatre productions like *The Water Hen* (*Kurka wodna*, 1967) and *Lovelies and Dowdies* (*Nadobnisie i koczkodany*, 1973) integrate their human actors as dummies and things amongst others, while their mechanical interaction creates an other, nonrepresenting reality space.

Returning once more to Wojdowski's *Bread for the Departed*, I explore how the erosion of the notion of humanity opens the space for a broader material sociality in the novel. The way the human figures are embedded in architectural structures, coexist within the wandering of things, and interact with natural elements suggests a social dynamic in which human life no longer takes the conventional centre stage. The encounter with a more-than-human world during the war is also, but differently, realised in Wanda Melcer's novel "A Woman's September" (*Wrzesień kobiety*, 1965). Melcer let her human protagonist dive into the sensual embrace of a rampant patch of garden plants and flowers, a moment of ecstasy flashing up in the miserableness of war-torn Warsaw. Transgressive sensorial encounters also occur in Jerzy Skolimowski's early films—*Identification Marks: None* (*Rysopis*, 1965) and *Walkover* (*Walkower*, 1965). They demonstrate an affective physicality of the present that revels in the contemporary experience of postwar city life.

Skolimowski translated the disintegrating atmosphere of early mid-socialism into a multi-sensory immersion in an almost orchestral way, pointing out the agency of the city's sounds and movements.

Especially towards the end of the book with its focus on interrelations with the world of non-human others, the transgressive humanist phenomena in Polish culture analysed could be studied without doubt within the frames of a "post-humanist" genealogy.[45] Indeed, all of the snippets presented in my reading-writing avoided Enlightenment humanism's emphasis on human reason, subjectivity and "linear cognition" in favour of more material, corporeal, and interrelational thinking, feeling, and being. They are reminiscent of other 20th century reconfigurations of human(ist) epistemology that aim to offer a broader, more democratic outlook on the world. Systems theory, developed in the second half of the 20th century, also incorporates a dialectic understanding of the world "as a whole," in which humans, human agency and subjectivity are entangled fragments of specific, fluctuating unities (*Ganzheiten*) analysed as systems.[46] Similarly, the somewhat newer Actor-Network-Theory that emerged from the 1980s insists on a much broader understanding of "the social" that is not restricted to human interaction.[47] Such developments in social sciences suggest that transgressive humanist phenomena connected to a field of thought broader than what is strictly termed as "post-humanism." A term like "proto-posthumanism," introduced by Marija Grech in her study of primarily Anglo-Saxon genealogies of post-humanism across national borders and disciplines,[48] hence appears for the field studied in the present book as unduly focused on linear progress and does not do justice to the complexity of the field of Polish mid-socialist culture and epistemology.

In general, post-humanist or post-anthropocentric research has yet been rather limited in Polish academia, especially if it concerns the Polish past. Nonetheless, there are a number of studies engaging with Polish culture, society, and landscape in a "post-humanist" vein; interestingly, however, most of them refrain from labelling their research as foremost post-humanist studies, instead using terms like "environmental" studies or "non-anthropocentric" culture.[49] The reluctance to refer both to humanism and to post-humanism might be due to a simplified narrative about the humanist-post-humanist development in Western European and US culture, in which there is at first glance little space for complications and deviations. "Post-humanism" may thus appear as incongruent with the respective fields of research conducted on Polish culture precisely because of its reference to a humanism whose position and implications in Polish intellectual history may not agree with the notion of "classical" humanism. Moreover, the relevance of memory and the past is underlined in many a study concerned with Polish culture, adding yet another layer to a conventional understanding of "post-humanist" or "post-anthropocentric" research. With my proposition of "transgressive humanism," I nonetheless would like to suggest a certain, but not untroubled lineage with humanist thinking and its interest in the human subject and its agency,

while at the same time pointing out the expansion and transgression of humanist approaches towards a more environmental perspective.

The shape of my reading-writing as it merged into the present book encourages me to note a few observations about the material I worked with. It came to my notice that the transgressive moments I was looking for accumulated mainly in artistic output of creators that were not of the youngest generation; indeed, much of it seemed in one way or the other connected to the fact that these creators had lived through the Second World War. This setting, as it appeared to me, instilled the works with a specific kind of melancholy or sometimes even silenced despair that made the transgression of the limitations of the human subject not only possible, but necessary. Also, the relevance of the corporeal dimension seemed heightened, possibly due to the fact of an acute memory of bodily-social vulnerability. This connection to the period of the war enhanced the possibility of being affected by the March discourse, invoking a repeated suffering through the atmosphere of minusivity. Therefore, most of the analysed material here was created by writers, filmmakers, or theatre directors that experienced the war in their teenage years or older. Moreover, in many of these biographies Jewishness was of a certain relevance. Some of the writers were Jews themselves; others explored the possibility of having Jewish ancestors or were marked by their relationship with Jewish life before the war and their close experiencing of its brutal extinction. Many of the creators could be called Jews "in spirit" or "by choice"[50] without doing harm to the way the perceived themselves.

It seems thus not surprising that the topic of the Second World War and the Holocaust did not only occur in my book, but increasingly occupied the space of my analyses. However, I did probably not expect the intensity with which the past haunted the transgressive humanist explorations in mid-socialist Poland, of which the fourth chapter of the book is a testimony. Transgressive humanist explorations do not necessarily need to be related to the trauma of the war *directly*, as for example the films by Skolimowski discussed here signal. Transgressive humanism should rather be seen as a fraying denotation, traceable most certainly in many different cultures and periods. However, to disassemble transgressive humanist moments from the war experience and repercussions in mid-socialist Polish culture might be an impossible task.

I was also struck by the fact that almost all the material I analysed was produced by men. This, of course, is in a way not only explicable, but was also predictable, as the biggest part of cultural production in these years was of male provenance. Therefore, to find materials produced by women was the one aspect where I guided my reading direction purposefully. Nonetheless, the results were meagre, apart from the scholarly work of Maria Janion. Maybe women cultural producers were unwilling to dive into the philosophical strand of engagement with the material world, a world that was anyways clinging to women more specifically than to men and had thus been kept at a distance? Probably, though, my inability to unearth female transgressive humanists in

the arts was also connected to my decision to fully exclude poetry in my analyses. A thorough engagement with the poems by Anna Świrszczyńska, for example, might have unearthed interesting strands of transgression.[51] Poetry, to my sorrow, is the domain that does not speak to me easily, and so I was mostly unable to encounter transgressive humanist *puncta* that I could explore without self-consciousness.[52] To return to the observation made on gender in transgressive humanism, I can however state that the phenomenon itself proposes a sort of "queering" of humanism, where *white* male European reason is entangled and crossed through with snippets of just any provenience. The category of gender partially dissolves in the intermingling of multiple bodies and identities, as Andrzej Wajda has shown in *Roly Poly*—half with horror, half with admiration.

Notes

1 See e.g. Donella H. Meadows et al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (London: Earth Island, 1972); Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, Wiesław Pawlak, and Piotr Urbański, eds., *Humanism in Polish Culture* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011); Jörn Rüsen, 'Humanism in Response to the Holocaust – Destruction or Innovation?', *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 2 (2008): 191–200, https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790802004703; Richard Schechner, 'The End of Humanism', *Performing Arts Journal* 1, no. 1–2 (May 1979): 9–22.

2 Humanism could be defined as "an anthropological idea that affirms the dignity, freedom, autonomy and rights of man, recognising him as a being who prevails over the world of nature by means of his consciousness, subjectivity and creative potential, and who proclaims inalienable ethical values." I intentionally used and kept the term "man," as classical humanism's subject was male (and, if we want to extend the list, a *white*, educated, upper-class subject). Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, Wiesław Pawlak, and Piotr Urbański, 'Introduction', in *Humanism in Polish Culture*, ed. Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, Wiesław Pawlak, and Piotr Urbański (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 7.

3 See Karl Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Selected Writings*, by Karl Marx, ed. David McLellan, 2nd ed. (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 83–121; Thomas E. Wartenberg, '"Species-Being" and "Human Nature" in Marx', *Human Studies* 5, no. 2 (1982): 77–95.

4 See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2002).

5 See e.g. Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker, eds., *1968: The World Transformed* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Chen Jian et al., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building* (London: Routledge, 2018); Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed., *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2011).

6 See e.g. Natalia Borisova and Aleksandra Konarzewska, eds., *Twilight of Idols? Studies in Intellectual Production in Socialist Europe 1956-1968* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

7 See e.g. Emil Brix, ed., *1968 und Mitteleuropa*, 2008; Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, eds., *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Michał Przeperski, Aleksandra Konarzewska, and Anna Nakai, eds., *Unsettled 1968 in the Troubled Present:*

Revisiting the 50 Years of Discussions from East and Central Europe (London, New York: Routledge, 2019).

8 See e.g. Jerzy Eisler, 'March 1968 in Poland', in *1968: The World Transformed*, ed. Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 237–51; Piotr Osęka and Marcin Zaremba, 'Wojna po wojnie, czyli polskie reperkusje wojny sześciodniowej', in *Polska 1944/45–1989*, ed. Krystyna Kersten, vol. 4, Studia i materiały (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 1999), 205–39; Feliks Tych, 'The March '68' Antisemitic Campaign: Onset, Development, and Consequences', in *Jewish Presence in Absence: The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland, 1944-2010*, ed. Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2014), 451–71.

9 See e.g. Andrzej Friszke, *Przystosowanie i opór. Studia z dziejów PRL* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Więź, 2007); Jan Skórzyński, *Nie ma chleba bez wolności. Polski sprzeciw wobec komunizmu 1956-1980* (Warszawa: Biblioteka 'Więzi': Collegium Civitas, 2017).

10 See Lidia Burska, *Awangarda i inne złudzenia. O pokoleniu '68 w Polsce* (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2013), 211; Michał Głowiński, *Nowomowa po polsku* (Warszawa: PEN, 1991).

11 See Juliusz Mieroszewski, 'Słowo wstępne', in *Komunizm z ludzką twarzą* (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1969).

12 See Krystyna Kersten, 'Rok 1956 – przełom? Kontynuacja? Punkt zwrotny?', in *Polska 1944/45–1989*, vol. 3, Studia i materiały (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 1997), 7–18; Magdalena Mikołajczyk, *Rewizjoniści. Obecność w dyskursach okresu PRL* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, 2013), 95–142; Zygmunt Bauman, 'O frustracji i o kuglarzach', *Kultura. Szkice, opowiadania, sprawozdania* 12, no. 255 (1968): 8–11.

13 See Eisler, 'March 1968 in Poland'.

14 See Josef Banas, *The Scapegoats: The Exodus of the Remnants of Polish Jewry* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979); Osęka and Zaremba, 'Wojna po wojnie'; Tych, 'The "March '68" Antisemitic Campaign'.

15 See Dariusz Gawin, *Wielki zwrot. Ewolucja lewicy i odrodzenie idei społeczeństwa obywatelskiego 1956-1976* (Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy 'Znak', 2013); Michał Siermiński, *Dekada przełomu. Polska lewica opozycyjna 1968-1989. Od demokracji robotniczej do narodowego paternalizmu* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Książka i Prasa, 2016); Michał Siermiński, *Pęknięta Solidarność. Inteligencja opozycyjna a robotnicy 1964-1981* (Warszawa: Książka i Prasa, 2020).

16 See e.g. Lucjan K. Perzanowski and Antoni Kuczmierczyk, *Nie ma chleba bez wolności. Reportaż dokumentalny z wydarzeń marcowych w Polsce* (London: Polonia Book Fund Ltd, 1971); Jerzy Eisler, *Marzec '68*, Dzieje PRL (Warszawa: Wyd. Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1995); Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, eds., *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, vol. 1, 2 vols (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998); Grzegorz Sołtysiak and Józef Stępień, eds., *Marzec '68: między tragedią a podłością* (Warszawa: Profi, 1998); Jerzy Brochocki, *Rewolta marcowa: narodziny, życie i śmierć PRL* (Warszawa: Placówka, 2000); Beate Kosmala, ed., *Die Vertreibung der Juden aus Polen 1968. Antisemitismus und politisches Kalkül*, Dokumente, Texte, Materialien / Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung der Technischen Universität Berlin (Berlin: Metropol, 2000); Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Jerzy Eisler, *Polski rok 1968* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006); Piotr Osęka, *Marzec '68* (Kraków: Znak, 2008); Leszek W. Gluchowski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *1968: Forty Years After*, Polin 21 (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009); Marek Gumkowski

and Maria Ofierska, eds., *Marzec czterdzieści lat później, 1968-2008: sesja naukowa na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim, 8–9 marca 2008* (Warszawa: Otwarta Rzeczpospolita - Stowarzyszenie Przeciw Antysemityzmowi i Ksenofobii, 2012); Hans-Christian Dahlmann, *Antisemitismus in Polen 1968. Interaktionen zwischen Partei und Gesellschaft* (Osnabrück: fibre, 2013); Ewa Winnicka and Cezary Łazarewicz, *1968: czasy nadchodzą nowe* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Agora, 2018).

17 See Aleksander Pawlicki, *Kompletna szarość. Cenzura w latach 1965-1972. Instytucja i ludzie*, W krainie PRL (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2001).

18 See Marta Fik, *Marcowa kultura. Wokół Dziadów, literaci i władza, kampania marcowa* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wodnika, 1995); Alina Molisak, 'Kilka uwag o różnych odmianach "marcowych" narracji', in *(Nie)ciekawa epoka? Literatura i PRL*, ed. Hanna Gosk (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2008), 275–88; Burska, *Awangarda i inne złudzenia*; Agata Adamiecka-Sitek et al., eds., *1968/PRL/teatr* (Warszawa: Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, 2016).

19 The term, coined by writer Tadeusz Różewicz in 1964, refers to the relative continuity of the system and party-state bureaucracy in the process of de-Stalinisation, coupled with the promise of economic stabilisation due to reforms. See Tadeusz Różewicz, *Świadkowie: albo Nasza mała stabilizacja*, 6th ed. (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986); Monika Talarczyk-Gubała, *PRL się śmieje! Polska komedia filmowa lat 1945-1989* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2007), 58.

20 See Małgorzata Baranowska, 'Barańczak, Krynicki i duch czasu', in *Sporne postaci polskiej literatury współczesnej. Następne pokolenie*, ed. Alina Brodzka and Lidia Burska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 1995), 99–113; Burska, *Awangarda i inne złudzenia*; Aldona Jawłowska and Zofia Dworakowska, eds., *Wolność w systemie zniewolenia. Rozmowy o polskiej kontrkulturze* (Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski, Instytut Stosowanych Nauk Społecznych, 2008); Tomasz Maślanka, *Kontrkultura. Źródła i konsekwencje radykalizmu społeczno-kulturowego w perspektywie socjologii kultury* (Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2017); Małgorzata Anna Szulc Packalén, *Pokolenie 68. Studium o poezji polskiej lat siedemdziesiątych* (Uppsala: Acta universitatis Upsaliensis, 1987).

21 See Błażej Brzostek, 'Życie codzienne w przeddzień Marca', in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1, 2 vols (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 31–38; Marcin Zaremba, 'Biedni Polacy 68. Społeczeństwo polskie wobec wydarzeń marcowych w świetle raportów KW i MSW dla kierownictwa PZPR', in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1, 2 vols (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 144–70; Małgorzata Szpakowska, *Chcieć i mieć: samowiedza obyczajowa w Polsce czasu przemian* (Warszawa: WAB, 2003); Marcin Zaremba, 'Społeczeństwo polskie lat sześćdziesiątych – między "małą stabilizacją" a "małą destabilizacją"', in *Oblicza Marca 1968*, ed. Konrad Rokicki and Sławomir Stępień (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2004), 24–51; Katarzyna Chmielewska, Grzegorz Wołowiec, and Tomasz Żukowski, eds., *Rok 1966. PRL na zakręcie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2014); Malgorzata Fidelis, 'Jugend, Moderne und die Welt. Die polnische Jugend an der Schwelle der Long Sixties. Historische Betrachtungen', in *Nouvelle Vague Polonaise? auf der Suche nach einem flüchtigen Phänomen der Filmgeschichte*, ed. Margarete Wach and Deutsches Filminstitut (Marburg: Schüren, 2015), 80–100.

22 See Brzostek, 'Życie codzienne'; Zaremba, 'Społeczeństwo polskie lat sześćdziesiątych'; Fidelis, 'Jugend, Moderne und die Welt'.

23 See Zygmunt Bauman, 'The Second-Generation Socialism: A Review of Socio-Political Trends in Polish Society', in *Political Opposition in One-Party States*, ed. Leonard Schapiro, Studies in Comparative Politics (London: Macmillan, 1972),

228–29; Przemysław Czapliński, 'PRL i sarmatyzm', in *(Nie)ciekawa epoka? Literatura i PRL*, ed. Hanna Gosk (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2008), 158–81; Szpakowska, *Chcieć i mieć*, 14–15.

24 See Zaremba, 'Biedni Polacy 68', 162.

25 Brzostek, 'Życie codzienne', 37, all translations mine.

26 Przemysław Czapliński, 'Shifting Sands: History of Polish Prose, 1945-2015', in *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture since 1918*, ed. Tamara Trojanowska et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 388.

27 Brzostek, 'Życie codzienne', 34.

28 See Marcin Czerwiński, *Przemiany obyczaju* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1969), 44, 91–93, 98–103; Ewa Graczyk, 'Być kobietą?', in *(Nie) przezroczystość normalności w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, ed. Hanna Gosk and Bożena Karwowska (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2014), 233 f., http://opac.nebis.ch/objects/pdf03/z01_978-83-7151-982-6_01.pdf; Krzysztof Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie młodzieży w czasach PRL* (Warszawa: Rosner & Wspólnicy, 2006), 249, 266–68; Jerzy Piotrowski, 'Badania nad pozycją społeczną kobiet w Polsce Ludowej i wynikające stąd potrzeby społeczne', in *Kobieta, praca, dom. Problemy pracy zawodowej kobiet i rodziny współczesnej. Materiały z konferencji naukowej zorganizowanej przez Zarząd Główny Ligi Kobiet w dniach 25–27 marca 1965 r.*, ed. Krystyna Wrochno-Stanke (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Związkowe CRZZ, 1967), 25; Magdalena Sokołowska, *Kobieta pracująca. Socjomedyczna charakterystyka pracy kobiet* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1963), 60, 172–76; Magdalena Sokołowska, 'Płeć a przemiany obyczaju', in *Przemiany rodziny polskiej*, ed. Jadwiga Komorowska (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy CRZZ, 1975), 165–69; Magdalena Sokołowska, 'The Woman Image in the Awareness of Contemporary Polish Society', *The Polish Sociological Bulletin* 35, no. 3 (1976): 41–50; Szpakowska, *Chcieć i mieć*, 49–68; Sławomira Walczewska, *Damy, rycerze i feministki: kobiecy dyskurs emancypacyjny w Polsce*, 2 wyd. poszerz. (Kraków: eFKa, 2000), 88.

29 See Szpakowska, *Chcieć i mieć*, 102–3.

30 See Gawin, *Wielki zwrot*; Krystyna Kersten, 'Marzec 1968 a postawy intelektualistów wobec komunizmu', in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 172–73, 179; Jacek Kochanowicz, 'Marzec 1968 i życie intelektualne Uniwersytetu', in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 133–35; Siermiński, *Dekada przełomu*; Jerzy Szacki, '8 marca 1988 roku', *Krytyka. Kwartalnik polityczny* 28–29 (1988): 21–23.

31 Ryszard Kapuściński, *Cesarz*, 4th ed. (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1987), 109. The English version actually translates *minusowość* as "negativity," see Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Emperor: Downfall of an Autocrat*, trans. William R. Brand (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 82.

32 Zygmunt Bauman, *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976), 36.

33 Maria Janion, *Czy będziesz wiedział, co przeżyłeś*, Stanowiska/Interpretacje 1 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SIC!, 1996), 63, all translations mine.

34 See Maria Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm. Colloquia gdańskie* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1972); Maria Janion, *Projekt krytyki fantazmatycznej. Szkice o egzystencjach ludzi i duchów* (Warszawa: PEN, 1991); Janion, *Czy będziesz wiedział, co przeżyłeś*; Maria Janion and Kazimiera Szczuka, *Janion. Transe, traumy, transgresje. Prof. Misia*, vol. 2 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2012); Samuel Nowak, 'Przebudzenie mocy. Maria Janion i

posthumanizm', in *Sporne postaci polskiej krytyki feministycznej po 1989 roku*, ed. Monika Świerkosz (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra, 2016), 209–39; Iris Bauer, *'Bombenlegerinnen, Mörderinnen und Rebellinnen'. Literarische Transgressionen bei Maria Janion und Sylwia Chutnik* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2024).

35 See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, 6th ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988); Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 64–93.

36 See Silvan Moosmüller and Boris Previšić, eds., *Polyphonie und Narration* (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2020).

37 Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*, 161, translation mine.

38 See Janion, *Czy będziesz wiedział, co przeżyłeś*, 5–23; Maria Janion, 'Słowiańszczyzna, szaleństwo i śmierć', in *Inny, inna, inne. O inności w kulturze*, ed. Maria Janion (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2004), 9–19.

39 Janion and Szczuka, *Prof. Misia*, 2:31, translation mine.

40 The "blank part of the text," as the deconstructionist practice of Jacques Derrida has it. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Corrected edition (Baltimore; London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 93.

41 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage Classics, 2020), 32.

42 Janion, *Czy będziesz wiedział, co przeżyłeś*, 68. Janion understands by this formulation a connection between the age of the reading body and reading-writing as a process; and between the historical setting of texts and their reading.

43 See Donna Jeanne Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, 2nd print (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004).

44 See Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 115.

45 See Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013); N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

46 See Günter Ropohl, *Allgemeine Systemtheorie. Einführung in transdisziplinäres Denken* (Berlin: edition sigma, 2012).

47 See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

48 See Marija Grech, 'Proto-Posthumanisms', *Word and Text. A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics* VI, no. 1-Proto-Posthumanisms (2016): 5–8.

49 The following publications explore Polish culture with similar methodologies to the one proposed in the present book. They show an interest in non-established phenomena, looking at topics that lie buried, forgotten or abjected, yet that nonetheless constantly configure the way Polish culture is shaped—although often in a "negative" way, as grounds that are pushed beyond the boundaries. Cultural researcher Jacek Małczyński engages Holocaust studies with an approach towards space, spatio-architectural relations and the overlap of nature and culture, featuring a material-historically oriented methodology (Jacek Małczyński, *Krajobrazy zagłady. Perspektywa historii środowiskowej*, Nowa humanistyka (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2018).). Zuzanna Dziuban's research, for example in her edited book *The "Spectral Turn": Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire* (2020), explores the effects of Holocaust's spectral afterlife on Polish culture and society, conceptualising this approach as a way of looking at the

past's ghosts as cultural agents (Zuzanna Dziuban, ed., *The 'Spectral Turn': Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020).). Literary scholar Anita Jarzyna concentrates on literary language and forms of community represented and established within poetry. She studies the interrelation of human subjectivity and non-human animals in Polish literature of the later 20th century, thus providing a study on specifically lyric, more recent materials ignored in my book (Anita Jarzyna, *Post-koiné. Studia o nieantropocentrycznych językach (poetyckich)* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2019).). Also Piotr Krupiński focuses on animals in Polish literature, in relation to the Holocaust (Piotr Krupiński, *'Dlaczego gęsi krzyczały?': zwierzęta i Zagłada w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2016).). Anna Barcz has published several books on the intersection of memory studies, environmental studies, and cultural historiography, where she explores the overlap of human and environmental wounds inflicted under the Soviet rule (Anna Barcz, *Realizm ekologiczny. Od ekokrytyki do zookrytyki w literaturze polskiej* (Katowice: Śląsk, 2016); Anna Barcz, *Environmental Cultures in Soviet East Europe: Literature, History and Memory* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).). With a focus on theatre and performance as well as the importance of the memory of the Holocaust for Polish postwar culture and the relevance of death and the relation to the dead, Grzegorz Niziołek and Dorota Sajewska add two more notable volumes to the list here (Grzegorz Niziołek, *The Polish Theatre of the Holocaust*, trans. Ursula Phillips (London: Methuen Drama, 2019); Dorota Sajewska, *Necroperformance. Cultural Reconstructions of the War Body*, trans. Simon Wloch (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2019).). In the context of these studies, I hope to add yet another layer of research on cultural aspects and artistic works that de-centre and transgress the notion of the human subject towards a more environmental, corporeal-sensory understanding of the world.

50 Przemysław Czapliński, 'Zagłada – niedokończona narracja polskiej nowoczesności', in *Ślady obecności*, ed. Sławomir Buryła and Alina Molisak (Kraków: TAiWPN Universitas, 2010), 338, translation mine.

51 See e.g. Nina Seiler, 'Der Möglichkeitsraum der Fliege. Beziehungsdynamiken häuslicher Gewalt im Gedicht', *FemInfo* 59 (2021): 25–29, https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-214225.

52 This lack in my *studium* is only partly soothed by the fact that with her book "Post-Koiné," Anita Jarzyna has focused on lyric expression in her comparable attempt to engage with the decentring of human self-centeredness. See Jarzyna, *Post-koiné*.

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2 The mid-socialist atmosphere

2.1 March minusivity

Despite promises for reforms and progress, the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) led by First Party Secretary Władysław Gomułka (1905–1982) intensified political pressure on society in the 1960s. At the same time, the system glided deeper into economic crisis.[1] Rising youth protests—by students and young workers alike[2]—for more social, cultural, and political freedom were soon crushed by political oppression and militia force starting on 8 March 1968. These events collided with an officially encouraged anti-Semitic campaign that had begun after the Six Day War in 1967. The media campaign made Poles of Jewish descent responsible for the unrest in society: their alleged "cosmopolitanism" and "Zionism" was said to corrupt Polish society and deform socialism from within. The media discourse in the years 1967-70 closely related this made-up anti-Polish "Zionism" with the notion of "revisionism," the call for reforms of the political system that was seen as a demand of the fanciful intellectual elite, far from the reality of the workers. Both accusations targeted and affected the Warsaw intellectual sphere the most, but reverberated in intellectual and Jewish circles throughout Poland. The result of the diffusion of these accusations in society were social isolation, dismissals, censoring, and sometimes internments of suspected individuals, as well as forced emigration in the case of Jewish Poles. Because an important part of official life in Poland was dismissed from state structures and public life, a generational shift in the Party's power structure and other institutions such as universities emerged.[3]

The unwillingness or even inability for political reforms, paired with power play and a contradictory racist campaign,[4] had manifested the corruption of the socialist system in the Polish People's Republic (PRL). Many of the new functionaries that occupied their posts in the wake of the 1968 events showed a mostly careerist interest in the system.[5] "March '68" revealed how ethnic and social delineations and resentments were instrumentalised for class-struggles inside the socialist system. The image of an elite privileged and hostile to the working class was constructed as a negative contrast to an idealised socialist Polishness, consisting of citizens of ethnic (catholic) Polish

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workers' or peasant lineage. The latter were now able to socially and politically advance, occupying the positions abandoned under pressure.[6] As Anna Artwińska argues, the anti-Semitism of the 1960s must not be read as a Party-installed instrument of power alone, but "organically linked to the vision of the Polish-Christian family, the myth of proper descent and the theory of 'genetic patriotism'"[7] that was present in Poland at least since the 19th century. March 1968 as a dispositive is thus closely tied to the image of a "proper"[8] community, from which identities defined as different were excluded and othered.[9] The anti-Semitic campaign and resentment against intellectual circles in the late 1960s thus furthered *ex negativo* the imaginary of a proper and "closed," ethnically homogenous and egalitarian nation.[10]

The mechanisms of social immunisation in the context of the Polish March 1968 present the background for the development of the transgressive humanist cultural output in mid-socialism. Whereas immunising strategies are a common dynamic of sociality, I argue that in the late 1960s in Poland a growing anxiety about the mechanisms of being-in-common led to a state of social dissociation. This was due to the media campaign feverishly searching for and presenting the "agitators" of the protests. As the "troublemakers" represented in media were mostly of Jewish origin, a double dissociation took place: to protect themselves from being accused of "revisionism" and "Zionism," many people tried to avoid any connection to political activism and Jewishness, thus fuelling the vicious circle of the anti-Semitic and anti-reformist campaign. At the same time, the reality created by officially mediated Party language became increasingly dissonant with the reality experienced by many people. Reality as it was experienced beyond the propaganda narratives did not find direct expression in discourse. This applies to political activists, who saw their efforts and arguments twisted and slandered, or completely ignored and repressed. Yet it is also true for common citizens struggling with everyday difficulties including shortages of products and infrastructure, or complicated and time-consuming bureaucratic processes suffocating any initiative. These living realities did not make it into press or were significantly glossed-over. Both phenomena evoked by the media campaign—the social dissociation from "Zionist revisionists" and the divergent media and experienced realities—resulted in a crisis of inter-social communication that I will conceptualise as an atmosphere of minusivity.

2.1.1 Delineations

The unanimous media coverage of the 1968 events, highly selective and presenting twisted interpretations, parallels the general direction of the Party narrative in mid-socialism.[11] Despite divergences in Party fractions, in 1967 the nationalist current invigorated by Mieczysław Moczar (1913–1986) and his partisan faction took the upper hand in the Party discourse.[12] Many of the PZPR members, including prominently First Party Secretary Gomułka, began to voice concern that an elitist, cosmopolitan anti-socialist coalition under

Jewish guidance would undermine the Polish People's Republic.[13] Class-struggle arguments exploited anti-Jewish and anti-intelligentsia resentments and were characterised by a genealogical fatalism. Notwithstanding the fact that the anti-Semitic current was officially labelled as a struggle against Zionism, in its discriminatory practice it became clear that the difference between Zionism and being Jewish was ignored, neglected, or completely unknown. The security service concluded political attitudes from ethnic origin, imputing anti-socialist and anti-Polish opinions and practices to Poles "whose parents are Jewish."[14] This is even more ironic if we consider that for many Poles of Jewish descent their ethnic origin meant little at all, if they even knew about it. Many younger Poles came to know or fully realise their Jewish family background only because of lists prepared by the "Nationalities Department" in the Ministry of Internal Affairs—the result of meticulous archival research—and because of the social stigmatisation during the anti-Jewish campaign.[15]

The entanglement of ethnic and class or social delineations emerges, for example, in Andrzej Mencwel's (*1940) description of the "commandoes" group (*"komandosi"*), a group of young politically active students. Mencwel, a literary critic, doctoral student, and assistant at Warsaw University, had himself been engaged in the "commandoes" group or its margins until the March events and his imprisonment in 1968. In prison, he provided for a "great essay,"[16] a sharp and bitter analysis of the genesis and purpose of the group. According to him, the group derived "almost as a whole (*w komplecie*) from the sphere of high party and state officials […] [and] almost as a whole of Jewish descent."[17] In applying "Marxist" analyses, Mencwel established that social and psychological mechanisms inevitably led "Jewish proletarians and petty bourgeois" onto the "emancipatory" path of Stalinism. He defined Stalinism as a tool "of ideological universalism taken to the borders of empty phraseology" that after 1956 threatened to betray its supporters. Thus, he concluded, this Jewish elite "in the natural order of things could not find its feet in the Polish reality not only because of political, but also ethnic reasons," as it ignored the national, religious, ethnic "shape" of Poland.[18] Mencwel mentioned the ethnic issue almost casually, focussing mostly on the socio-hierarchical and political levels of the "commandoes" position.[19] This allowed him to sketch the alienation of this isolated group, his words supported by an affective, literary tone.

While Mencwel admitted to having been part of the "commandoes" entourage, he firmly placed this experience in the past. His position was marked by a distance, which allowed him to take the position of a social ethnographer:

> my whole biography—my kind of life experience and stock of reflections— [was] in its nature perfectly different from the world they were hanging out, [which] made me particularly aware of many of the latter's aspects. Moreover, thanks to these circumstances of being at the

> same time inside and outside of this matter, I occupied something like a cognitive position, I think I could better than anybody else recognise certain problematic dimensions of the "commandoes" question.[20]

Later in his analysis of the pathogenesis—as he presented it—of this group of students, Mencwel put more affective emphasis on the "fact" that the "commandoes" grew out of an elitist, powerful social group that was utterly isolated from Polish realities and the rest of society. The enclaves in which these students were educated, Mencwel wrote, "were so exclusive as to not let anybody accidentally come into any contact with any normal person. […] there was no gap through which one could get into contact with reality."[21] This isolated sphere with its "laboratorially prepared minds," where people did not "know the price of butter,"[22] launched with the "commandoes" a political "detonator" that should bring back "the structures of a certain system"—Mencwel has in mind Stalinism, as he refers to the 1950s—but resulted in a "caricature" or "farce."[23] This pathological social sphere, taking itself as "the people,"[24] remains at stark contrast with the rest of Polish society that has to live in overcrowded dormitories and count their money for basic products instead of hanging out with intellectuals in cafés.[25] The upper-class, "Jewish" nomenclature blocked the path to understanding "Poland" for themselves and their offspring, as Mencwel argued, and so they construed an abstract ideology without any reference to actual social circumstances.[26]

The thorough division of Polish society into a "proper" and an alien sphere was executed not only in Mencwel's dissection from the "commandoes" group. In official information and media narratives, ethnic prejudices were entangled with classist resentments, and political arguments intermingled with identitarian definitions. Ethnic lineage figured as a proof of one's ideological stance, while political convictions could easily be understood as an indicator for improper descent.[27] Such mechanisms urged several functionaries and other citizens suspected of Zionism (being Jewish)—for example, because of their "physical appearance, of their German-sounding names or of a police denunciation"[28]—to organise their certificates of baptism or to point out their Catholic family graves in order to proof their Polishness.[29] A strong Machiavellian element was perceivable, too, especially in the centre of political power in Warsaw. In the repressive campaign against the protesting youth, mainly those with parents in high positions in the state or party hierarchy were prosecuted or imprisoned. A list of protesting students sent by the Ministry of the Interior to the politburo in 1967 noted the students' names as follows: "Szyr Joanna daughter of vice premier, Chaber Józef son of deputy head of unit of Central Committee"[30] etc. The parents were hardly mentioned for better identification of the children, as they do not figure by name; rather, the naming of their functions in the system enhanced the children's political misdemeanour as anti-socialist elements, as they had turned against the socialist system from a privileged, non-proletarian position. While the parents' position became a threat for their children, the children's engagement or "misbehaviour" later became the coffin nail for their parents' position.[31]

March 1968 with its anti-intelligentsia and anti-Jewish dispositif was closely tied to the imagination of the properness of socialism, or to be more precise, Polish socialism—behind which lingered the suppressed phantasm of Polishness.[32] The properness of the system and of society could only be guaranteed if the "improper" was excluded. The two intertwined strands of anti-revisionism and anti-Zionism inscribed Polish citizens into the categories of "us" and "them." While the category of the socio- and biopolitically excluded, the "improper," has been widely discussed in research on March 1968,[33] the implicit category of the "proper" remained often under-defined. In Mencwel's analysis too, it only occasionally erupted as the background against which the dissociated elite was sketched. In reading March narratives such as Mencwel's text negatively, the core criteria of proper Polish socialist individuals condensed to an ethnic Polish working-class or peasant lineage and an interest mainly in the prosperity of the national community.[34] Yet to state this nationalist argument would disturb official socialist policies and reveal *internationalist* communism's dismal state, although this was hardly a secret. The lack of explicitness disallowed a positive allocation. To be proper meant first of all to revoke to be improper, of which accusations were quick at hand (of being a Zionist, an elitist revisionist, a lazy student, etc.) Negative delineation and isolation were thus the main instruments offered by the March discourse. Instead of strengthening an egalitarian society focusing on positive deeds and convictions, Polish society veered towards a closed community with politically charged, one-way impenetrable ethno-nationalist barriers.[35]

2.1.2 Affective anxiety

The political and social paradigm of ethno-nationalist communism brought along a discursive fetishising of family lineage and ethnicity that affected not only those welcoming national communism or ethno-nationalism, but also those opposing it. Family relations and "ethnic lineage" started to work as a transmission belt for incorporated trauma and social fears (see Chapter 4).[36] These precarious relations extended not only to biological relatives or an ethnic group, but also to companions in thought or deed. The fact of being related or to relate to someone posed an implicit threat of being affected by the other's potential to fall out of favour with the system and society—to become improper. In focusing on the desmology—the analysis of a topology of connections as proposed by Michel Serres[37]—of the March atmosphere, the concept of affect becomes central. It includes social and corporeal mechanisms of interconnective exchange and transmission. Affect refers to the possibility of being moved by others (mobility), yet also to the active part in the process of being affected, the contribution made by the own self (motility[38]) in the contextual incorporation and transformation of impulses.[39] The notion of affect thus reveals the openness of the subjects, not only in sharing a common space and constantly relating to each other, but also in their "condividuality"[40] as being part of each other in a constant process of interaction and change.

In a society split into two parts, an inner and an outer sphere without anything between "good" and "bad,"[41] the omnipresent potential of interconnectedness—which will become the key for transgressive humanist explorations—posed a problem. Despite the delineative efforts, the two parts inevitably had contact zones; a liminal sphere would emerge, where subjects would find themselves on the threshold between the two parts. This liminal sphere was heavily contested, and the struggles were intensified by the fact that the two spheres did not have equal value: they were split into a positive and a negative one. An urgency to be allotted to the positive, inner sphere of socialist Polishness *through* struggling against connotations with the negative, outer sphere of revisionist cosmopolitanism, was the key feature of the March atmosphere. Wojtek Lamentowicz (*1946), then a student at Warsaw University and member of the party-dependent Union of Socialist Youth (*Związek Młodzieży Socjalistycznej*, ZMS), commented this later as follows:

> In the general climate two paradoxically complementary emotional trends dominated. The anti-repression shock reduced the issue of system change to the condemnation of the compulsion apparatus and to the demand for the rule of law; while the nationalist-communist frenzy searched for the enemy in its closest environment, tracing something alien and secret, reduced itself rather often to seeking out victims among Jews without regard to their stance. People affected by the shock of police-propaganda state aggression perceived themselves as victims of the system. The other ones, affected by the frenzy, tried to find for themselves a safe place in the institutional order by actively pointing out victims. This dramatic alternative—to be a victim or to co-create victims—produced due to its emotional consequences a whirl that drew in an awful lot of, even very rational and experienced, people. I perceived the emotional infection by this narrowed field of choice as something humiliating, offending reason and the elementary rules of common sense. Those who participated in the creation of victims can be divided into two groups: those who did it voluntarily and with conviction, and those who lacked the civil courage to oppose it unambiguously.[42]

This lengthy quote is relevant in several aspects. It not only draws attention to the omnipotent division of society into two groups, the "victims" and the "victim-makers," it also points out the performative aspect this dividing had, as by pushing others into the excluded group, one could claim a space in the included group oneself. Of course, as these strategies of othering worked into many directions, this "safe place in the institutional order" was precarious and had to be re-created continually, while the "frenzy" (*amok*) lasted.

Another very important notion introduced by Lamentowicz is his term "emotional infection" (*emocjonalne zarażanie*). The notion of infection recalls the strategies of social immunisation that would prevent infection. However, according to Lamentowicz, the prevention against infection was

not possible after March 1968: either one was a victim or one participated—willingly or unwillingly—in the creation of victims. Everybody was affected. The immunising processes took place on the level of categorising people and the self-installation on the proper side. Immunisation itself, so to speak, was the infection. As in autoimmunitarian reactions, the "disease" attacking the organism were the immunising mechanisms put into motion for protection. Thus, the performing of divisions and delineations in the state apparatus and in society in mid-socialism led to a further disintegration of society, instead of a consolidation of the "proper" group. This social crisis was intensified by the fact that the economic situation strongly interrelated to the position in society, and social exclusion was almost inevitably connected to a loss of work. Thus, survivalist pragmatisms were staged again and again and on almost all levels of social life. They prevented the entertainment of unbiased relations to others, be they family members, colleagues, neighbours, officials, or complete strangers in the streets.

Yet, the other component in "emotional infection," namely emotions, was just as important. The autoimmunitarian crisis of 1968 played itself out, as Lamentowicz noted, on a level that contradicted "reason and the elementary rules of common sense." Its mechanisms annulled the intentions of "rational and experienced" people. The emotional level brought into play an anxiety about the self's integrity and wellbeing, thus eventually leading people to contradict their own convictions. Anxiety, as Sara Ahmed notes, is in contrary to fear not tied to a visible object but characterises exactly by its non-containment in a specific object, by the delocalisation of its source.[43] In the late 1960s, the need to re-perform social delineations could arise at any time and from any direction, depending on the dynamics the accusations developed. While the PRL itself is retrospectively often described by its specific "atmosphere" or "climate," both these terms become obsessively frequent regarding the period after March 1968. Lamentowicz several times mentioned the specific atmosphere of events propagating authoritarian-nationalist thinking, where he felt "that which already is drawing close, stamps its feet and shouts."[44] His formulation procures an atmosphere of threat—not (yet) physical violence, but a potentiality of violence represented in the physical approaching of something obscure, and in yet undirected gestures of violence like stamping and shouting. Lamentowicz, having experienced the atmosphere in the hall during a speech by the then aspiring for First Party Secretary, ethno-nationalist key figure Moczar, intended to "pass on" (*przekazać*) this uncanny atmosphere as a warning.[45] While we do not have his actual report at our disposal, in his retrospective we can recognise his strategies of passing on an atmosphere verbally: he reconstructed less the content of the speech than the bodily reactions of the audience. The atmosphere appears here as an uncanny effect of bodies-movements on bodies-feelings.

Like the notion of anxiety, an atmosphere does have both a bodily dimension—it can stick to or soak into bodies and things—and an immaterial characteristic that cannot be pinned down exactly but has the most

astounding effects on bodies and behaviours. According to Gernot Böhme, an atmosphere can be understood as an "indeterminate spatially extended quality of feeling" entering the "bodily economy."[46] In mid-socialism, the notion of atmosphere mirrors something invisible yet highly affective, a certain force that disempowered the members of society without being explicitly verbalised or embodied, and that yet found its sedimentation in the bodies and practices of people. The demarcative anxiety was incorporated, even more so, as biopolitical strategies used to in- or exclude people into or from the proper were also tied to bodily features like an imagined Jewish physical appearance and to "suspicious" behaviour. Precisely because of the affective anxiety's effects on the biosocial mechanisms,[47] the concept of atmosphere—as difficult as it might be to grapple with—is key in the analysis of the March experience.

2.1.3 Minusivity

In the novel "The Case" (*Sprawa*) published in 1969, the pathogenesis of an atmosphere of affective anxiety is reflected upon. The novel was written by Wiesław Jażdżyński (1920–1998), a not very well known writer associated with Kielce and Łódź.[48] The narration revolves around a case of denunciation due to career motives; there is no hint of any connection to the March events of 1968 as such. However, there are obstinate parallels to the social dynamics provoked by the March campaign, to the mechanisms of exclusion and immunisation resulting from intensified social anxiety. The main figure Wojciech recalls how he has become the object of a sudden social isolation he did not know the reason for: "I don't remember many details, but I remember the heavy, thick atmosphere of abandonment and probably fear; I don't even know how to call that kind of feeling."[49] The quote shows how the novel connects the impalpability of the experienced phenomenon with its strong emotional dimension; it points out an almost physical tangibility of the atmosphere translated into terms of materiality. When Wojciech muses about his case, he also reflects on the common sphere, where individuals become social beings.

> I'm not an isolated and independent being […]. I'm a man who lives among people and cases. […] What limits my freedom in the most absolute way? The fear of the other man that could do me harm and procure a case? Yet in this case, the meaning of life would be the flight from people, and in the end the lonely death of Narcissus.[50]

The protagonist's realisation of common interdependencies is also the result of his own reaction to social isolation, as he started to retreat and socio-emotionally isolate himself as well. Due to his exclusion from society, his goal was to become socially *unaffectable*. In the novel, this translates into an extensive mistrust towards other human beings.

In order to grasp the effects of these mechanisms of affective isolation terminologically, I want to introduce the term "minusivity" (*minusowość*)[51] that reporter and writer Ryszard Kapuściński (1932–2007) coined in his novel *The Emperor* (*Cesarz*, 1978).[52] The term of minusivity (in the English translation called "negativism") as used by Kapuściński fits exactly the atmosphere that was predominant in the aftermath of March 1968 and that took hold of "The Case's" protagonist Wojciech.

> I have trouble pinning it down, but you could feel [minusivity] all around. You noticed it everywhere on people's faces, faces that seemed diminished and abandoned, without light or energy, in what people did and how they did it. There was [minusivity] in what they said without speaking; in their absent being, as if shrunken, switched-off; in their burnt-out existence.[53]

Kapuściński portrays an atmosphere of self-retreat and the attempt to not present any receptor for sociality. This atmosphere is very elusive, as it can hardly be "pinned down," although it can be noticed "everywhere." It is available to the senses of seeing and hearing, creating an atmosphere that can be *felt* rather than grasped rationally. Thus, to give this feeling or atmosphere a name will translate it into the realm of the narratable, creating a *thing* that is both striking in its conspicuous image and its abstract, mathematical vagueness. The term makes the elusive, affective atmosphere operational in discourse—it helps to discuss the doubled mechanisms of immunisation in the March period. In Kapuściński's description, minusivity translates both in its name and description into the realm of the absent, of retreat and repulsion in both verbal and bodily communication. The fact of living in "conditions of unwilled adjacency,"[54] as Judith Butler calls it, and the thought of being affected, associated, contaminated, or touched by an other, of something occurring that is beyond direct control of the self, threatens the self-image of motility and individuality. People's retreat from public life shows in their faces, repulsing any potential social approach before it could even be initiated. The people encountered by Kapuściński's narrator try not to present any space for interaction, contact, transmission—minusivity is thus exactly the elimination of the social sphere as the realm of relating to each other. Instead of relations and interactions, minusivity fills the space between the potentially social beings. It is the opposite of affectivity, as it negates the liminality of this space in-between, the overlap between beings affectively connecting them to each other.[55] Instead, minusivity presents beings as isolated, closed-off, finite entities—*in-dividual* subjects without any openings where others could interfere and do potential harm.[56] Minusivity is thus in a sense a paradoxical framing because it replaces the common with (the illusion of) a plus, a fulfilment of the self that results, as Jażdżyński's narrator puts it, in "the lonely death of Narcissus."

Sociality, one could resume, is an intricate and dynamic balance of plus and minus. The common sphere itself could be seen as a negative "valency,"

a minus where the self opens up and reduces itself for the relation to the other.[57] It points towards the impossibility of completely isolating the subject that is always entangled in a network of relations and dependencies. Minusivity destabilises the balance of minus and plus and shifts the perspective against the minus of the common. However, it, at the same time, enhances the impression of entanglement, as Wojciech in "The Case" painfully notes; he becomes increasingly convinced of the fact that every social behaviour he perceives is not only directly yet secretly connected to him, but also directed *against* him. His long struggle to immunise himself against the other's doings—that remain non-understandable to him—catapults him into the imagined centre of the surrounding social interaction. During most of the novel, Wojciech is unaware that his social isolation results primarily from his own anxiety and mistrust, that he himself builds most of the wall he suspects others to erect around him. Only at the end of the book, "The Case's" protagonist-narrator comes—in a somewhat implausible turn in the novel's narration[58]—to the conclusion that this endless "flight from people" inevitably leads to a dead end. He realises that "[l]ike that, of course, it cannot be."[59] He begins to embrace the negative valency of being in common as the fact that every subject is open to others and will be affected: "it's impossible to live without suffering failures from which you must recover; without dragging weights. There is only one way, the way of engagement that may be painful."[60] In his embracement of minusivity, the factor of anxiety and fear disappears from social interaction. This process might be interpreted as a positive form of social immunisation—instead of retreat and delineation, the protagonist-narrator in "The Case" now postulates exposure to others, by which the balance of commonality and individuality should be re-established. The effort to revaluate the depressing atmosphere of minusivity in order to elude total immobilisation is thus bound to the movement of going out towards others and acknowledge the fact that social beings are exposed to relations that are affective, that is that shape and transform the social being itself. Jażdżyński's novel with its "positive turn" presents thus an edifying narration—almost a moral tract—about the possibility to escape the spiral of minusivity. However, it concentrates on a singular "case" of growing minusivity, which dissolves with the protagonist's social "recovery."

Looking at some non-fictional examples relating to the March atmosphere, the effects of social minusivity rarely come to a halt even if countering measures of exposure and embracement are undertaken. Minusivity in mid-socialist Poland spread over wide parts of society, as it was transported by media discourse—I will come back to the central significance of language and the distribution of information below—political practices and social interaction likewise. Despite the broad range of the atmosphere of minusivity, it concerned people considered as Jewish or revisionist more than others. Such markers signalled who should be surrounded by minusivity to avoid affection. Even a reversal of this mechanism of exclusion based on the premises of directed minusivity. Thus, when writer Anna Kowalska (1903–1969) noted

on 18 May 1968 in her diary: "Call from Ania Linke. She's coming on Monday. Under these circumstances I can't refuse anyone who is a Jew,"[61] she was well aware that she would rather have been supposed to refuse to invite a Jewish person over to her place. Kowalska concluded for her that being Jewish must in this case imply automatic *inclusion*, without regard to the actual sympathies the writer had for the specific person or considering her own well-being, as Kowalska was ill at that stage. This reaction might have been driven by the fear of being suspected of participating in the anti-Semitic minusivity. Kowalska hence took over the over-signified identitarian markers, as both the social exclusion as well as her personal inclusion focused upon the Jewishness of the given person. Yet given the affectiveness of the March categories, Kowalska inviting Linke would enhance the inviter's "otherness" and lessen the invitee's exclusion, bringing them closer and thus destabilising the ethnic delineations performed in the wake of March 1968.

This case of positive discrimination was played out on a small-scale level; it was intended probably as a signal for Linke and their common social environment. Its notation in the diary might have functioned as a reminder for Kowalska herself and as a testimony for the potential readers of the diary. Thus, the personal decision to invite a certain acquaintance or not would play out on a wider scale of social affiliation and communicate to their contemporaries as well as to future readers the side chosen far beyond the specific person invited. Kowalska chose to ignore the imperatives of minusivity *because of* the social delineations coming with it. Yet seen on the general scale of the March crisis, her gesture was isolated in a specific and small circle of critical intellectuals who were as a liminal group already residing on the boundaries between inclusion and exclusion.

A similar—yet compared to Kowalska's diary entry more demonstratively "public"—approach offered Polish literary historian Maria Janion (1926–2020). In an interview published in 2012, Janion refers to the media campaign following the student protests in March 1968 and its anti-Jewish message. She recalls having been strongly affected by it. This affection translated, according to Janion's recollection, into a gesture of inclusion and engagement, resulting also in self-exposure:

> In the morning, I listened to the radio, I understood what was going on, what is the direction of all of this. I went to my courses and there held a fiery speech condemning anti-Semitism. I remember that I was really shocked; after sharing this with the students I felt somewhat better.[62]

In the situation described, Janion showed an impulse comparable to Kowalska's: in view of the not openly voiced but discursively insinuated and socially tangible demands to dissociate from Jews as alleged enemies of the nation, both felt compelled to disregard these delineations and to side with Jewish people. The state of shock Janion felt after listening to the radio related to paralysation and a loss of control over one's own decisions.

It could only be overcome by an action, which, however, was both in Janion's and Kowalska's case not self-intended, but a sort of compulsory reaction evoked by the oppressive atmosphere. With her speech, Janion went a step farther, as she invited others to do the same movement of shaking off anti-Semitic prejudices and warned against the effects of such a discriminatory sociality. Her approach of trying to connect to a broader public mirrors the radio broadcast in its intent to spread a message about how to interact with others. However, her impulse of engagement could be called "self-transgressive"[63] instead of immunising, as it reached out and exposed her in place of and for the ones pushed out. The sharing of anxiety that Janion undertook in her speech is a way of commoning her shock and sorrow, which brought alleviation and dissolved her own paralysis.

However, this self-transgressive element of Janion's reaction was refused by her students, as becomes clear in her recount of how the situation developed:

> after sharing this with the students I felt somewhat better. And yet a student […] told me, that she and her colleagues had been talking and concluded that I must be a Jewess after all, since I spoke like that about anti-Semitism.[64]

Contrary to Janion's intents, the students feel the urge to categorise people, including her, along the delineations presented to them by media discourse. They cannot acknowledge a position in-between or overarching, so the students intuitively decide to establish their lecturer in the "other" group, thus distancing her from themselves. This twist in the situation shows clearly that the categories were not wholly impermeable; they were porous enough to allow people to socially slip from one (the privileged) to the other (the ostracised) category. A reversal, however, was in the March atmosphere almost as impossible as the refusal to be categorised at all. Most people did not question the erected borders, deconstruct negative labels or even embrace them, but were busy to reject negative connotations. Thus, the strategies of immunisation were redoubled, contributing to the spread of minusivity.

2.2 Language under siege

Language was a central means in the proliferation of minusivity. Without question, social behaviour and the encounter of physical violence were not less affective than language, but they were often limited to an interpersonal range. What really had a broad impact was the transmitted word—like the radio broadcast mentioned by Janion above. The March atmosphere was a discourse performed as a socio-aesthetic method on a communicative, verbal level. March 1968 is thus sometimes analysed as a sort of pogrom in words, a tragedy that was played out on the level of language, media coverage, and an intensified use of socio-political buzzwords.[65] The often used epithet of the March

anti-Semitic "campaign" underscores the significance of "information," media and language around 1968.[66] The starting point in this pogrom in words can be seen in Gomułka's alarming use of the term "fifth column" in his speech on 19 June 1967, when he condemned the conjured-up Zionist conspiracy in Poland in the wake of the Six Day War. Even if this term was cut out from the later publication of his speech in print, "it imprinted itself deeply in the consciousness of many hundred thousands of listeners"[67] of the radio transmission. Moreover, Gomułka used a historically loaded term that in Poland referred mostly to national-socialist German organisations before and during the Second World War. The meaning of this term would not be clear to anybody instantly, but needed to be understood and re-interpreted, setting the tone for the allusive yet imminently instructive language often used in the propaganda campaign. The staged Zionist conspiracy was with this term implicitly linked to fascism; a link that would later be set in more explicate words.[68]

Another early sign of language politics that is commonly assigned to the March campaign concerns the fall 1967 affair about the entry for "Concentration camps" in the Great Universal Encyclopaedia (*Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN*). The editors of the encyclopaedia, some of which happened to be of Jewish extraction, were criticised for pointing out the numbers of Jewish victims of the camps instead of counting them as Polish citizens, a strategy that was allegedly racist, a "denigration of Poland"[69] and "Zionist falsification of history."[70] Simultaneously, the lack of an encyclopaedia entry for the "Martyrology of the Polish nation"[71] was criticised. This attack set the tone for the whole March campaign, even if later the arguments of belonging or not were turned and twisted. The whole campaign was a struggle about inclusions and exclusions, an ongoing verbal performance of defining and re-defining. These linguistic developments ascribing fixed (but short-termed) meanings and valencies to certain expressions did not go without effect on everyday and literary language. Some picked up the language thoughtlessly, others sought for ways not to fall prey to the hierarchies of the official language.[72]

The relevance of words and slogans also becomes obvious when looking at photographs of masses of protesting workers. Such protests were often organised by the authorities in order to demonstrate the disapproval and wrath of the Polish proletarians for the Zionist and revisionist "troublemakers."[73] While the protesting workers sometimes appear unenthusiastic, bored or simply emotionless, sitting or standing in neat lines, their huge banners "shout" out at the viewer in slogans like "cleanse the Party from Zionists" (*oczyścić partię ze syjonistów*), "punish the ringleaders / bankrupted political players / troublemakers / louts" (*ukarać prowodyrów / zbankrutowanych graczy politycznych / rozrabiaczy/wychrzycieli / warchołów*), or formulations like "writers—to the pens, students—to your studies" (*literaci do pióra, studenci do nauki*), or "Zionists—to Israel / to Dayan[74]" (*Syjoniści do Israelu / do Dajana*). An incident illustrating the superficiality and lack of connectedness of the slogans to their bearers is noted by Josef Banas in one of the first

(English) books on the March events and their political background (*The Scapegoats*, 1979). Banas writes:

> A rather funny story shows that most people were, in fact, quite ignorant of the real aims of the witch-hunt. After a general meeting in a provincial factory, the workers went out with a banner proclaiming: 'Zionists, go to Siam!' The same night the slogan astounded many television viewers (television used to broadcast such mass rallies with particular relish), but the puzzle was not difficult to solve; the workers had been told to put out a slogan against Zionists, but as they had no clear idea what Zionism was all about, and the word in its Polish spelling seemed to them like a derivative of Siam—syjonisci, Syjam—they responded with that categorical demand.[75]

While certainly such ignorance did not concern all participants in the mass rallies, this particular incident leads us to a key characteristic of the March atmosphere. The words and slogans had a very tangible effect upon the spreading of minusivity—the content of this banner was multiplied throughout the country thanks to TV broadcasting—and despite the unintended funniness of the misspelling, the mechanisms of allusive or direct accusation worked on an affective level hurting the people concerned. The "failed" banner only enhanced the hopelessness and absurdity of the whole situation. The discord evident in this banner links to the increasing dissonance between the official reality created by propaganda language, and the experience of the people—be it the workers that wrote the slogan without much thought,[76] or the Jewish citizens that found themselves grotesquely accused. Certain narrative "scripts" channelled verbal communication along the propagated reality, allowing to speak in pre-formed yet mostly void formulas, while lived experience and affective interpersonal exchange was suppressed under the conditions of minusivity. Thus, even if society during the March campaign rarely resorted to explicit physical violence, the pogrom in words muted the experience of many people, challenging their status as "speaking subjects."[77]

2.2.1 Logocracy

The propaganda campaign created an official reality that constantly introduced, adjusted, redefined, and hierarchically ordered certain terms and labels. This meant marking specific terms with valencies, dividing labels into positive (welcome) and negative (unwelcome) ones.[78] Literary scholar Michał Głowiński (1934–2023) extensively wrote about the redefinition of terms and the trends of certain words in the fluctuations of the Polish newspeak (*nowomowa*).[79] In his language diary "March Chatter" (*Marcowe gadanie*, 1991), he noted daily verbal trends picked up in the media or the streets. Głowiński thus created an encyclopaedia of the official "reality" of the late 1960s in Poland, catching shifts of meaning "in the go."[80] Telling enough,

Głowiński's first note after the March events—after a longer time without entry—is concerned with language itself ("March 1968 and language").[81]

While the March campaign can be considered an intensification of the propaganda newspeak machinery, the "wordings" mechanisms were no new phenomenon as such. Like other real socialist countries, Poland could be described as a "logocracy," where the "policy over words, the meanings of which not the users of the language were deciding, but the keepers of the 'scenario,'"[82] was decisive. However, the late 1960s marked not only a temporarily intensified logocracy, but also the beginning of a normalised split between the official and experienced reality that would hardly be questioned for the next decade.[83] This intensification was gradual and did not reach back only to the propaganda connected to the Six Day War. A fundamental dispute about the definition of terms is found as well in the "Opinion on the case of the term of information" (*Opinia w sprawie pojęcia wiadomości*). Social philosophy professors Leszek Kołakowski (1927–2009), Maria Ossowska (1896–1974) and Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1886–1981) wrote this expertise in 1965 for the trial of two young academics Jacek Kuroń (1934–2004) and Karol Modzelewski (1937–2019), who were accused of having disseminated "false information" in their infamous *Open Letter to the Party* (*List otwarty do Partii*, 1964). Kołakowski, Ossowska and Kotarbiński argued that the *Letter* did not convey any false information (*fałszywe wiadomości*)—a crime as defined by the penal code—but interpretations that could not be judged as right or wrong as long as the information they based on were correct. While defending the *Letter*'s authors, the three professors at the same time questioned the proceedings of the authorities.

> The relationship of interpretations with factual information is found always in the interpretation of facts, and hence in the way of giving an always disputable sense to a scope of information that is more or less indisputable. The mixing up of information and interpretation is characteristic for a dogmatic way of thinking where someone tries to ensure the monopole of their own interpretation declaring it simply as a direct proof from the factual state. To call others' interpretations—interpretations with which we do not agree—false information is just an attempt to foil the discussion about our own views that are in advance and groundlessly acknowledged as inviolable.[84]

In giving the argumentation yet another twist, Ossowska, Kotarbiński, and Kołakowski not only condemn the reading of Kuroń's and Modzelewski's interpretations as information, but also the fact of presenting this interpretation (of the interpretations as information) as indisputable information. This logocratic blurring of information and interpretation thus applies both to the communication of the accused side, and to the communication of the authorities themselves. With this destabilisation of fact and opinion, everything opened up for distortion. It becomes clear that the notions of language,

information, and reality were entangled in the closest way. Many issues condensed to an actual meta-debate about language and information. Language no longer conveyed information about reality; the media shifted onto the dissemination of interpretations and opinions about reality, thus loosening the bond between language and reality. A different, ever-instable reality emerged that was formed by interpretations presented as information.

However, underneath the set of official reality constituted through official propaganda language, an "unofficial reality" still existed but could not find the spaces to be formulated, expressed, and shared. The experienced reality was pushed outside of language. This concerned most decidedly also the key situation on 8 March 1968, when the students' organisation ZMS was lured into participating in the Warsaw University rally "to guarantee that no party or police force would be called in." Lamentowicz recalls:

> We were cheated, many of us were beaten. [Thus, w]e had the same moral right to voice protest as the students that participated on their own will […]. The apparat took this right from us in the name of the higher goals of the state. We were even forbidden to talk about the [reason of the] presence of the ZMS […]. Nobody and nowhere on the official scene ever spoke about this repressive trap […]. I felt more and more that the press is lying […].[85]

The reality "told," defined by propaganda and scripted communicative solutions, claimed the whole discursive space. The reality "experienced" however, personal impression, feelings, anxieties, even certain social situations or events one participated in, could not find an expressive dimension. Henryk Szlajfer (*1947), one of the most prominently arrested students in 1968, recollects his leaving prison after having given evidence.

> The consequence was isolation, then self-isolation, and for more than two years difficulties with speaking. […] I returned home to keep silent. […] I met two or three former friends from the 'commandoes', but that was for nothing. We spoke in different languages.[86]

The official March speech, together with the repressive experiences made, blurred out the expressibility of personal experiences—and thus their social existence began to vanish. Instead, they sedimented in the affected people's bodies and memories. Their "namelessness" made them into an eerie impresence enhancing the March anxiety.

Many participants in the student protests, or people affected by the media campaign against revisionism and Zionism retrospectively speak of an isolating moment and a huge uncertainty as to what had actually happened.[87] According to art historian and curator Maryla Sitkowska, the "atmosphere of absurd and falseness" following March 1968 had even "the stronger influence on the consciousness and morale"[88] of the youth than the very—yet

uncommunicable—events themselves. If we understand atmosphere as a "common reality"[89] of experiencing subject and its environment, we realise that the March atmosphere was torn; the "common" reality was stamped out and replaced by another "pseudo-atmosphere" that did not really stick. This two-layered reality produced an atmospheric dissonance that was the nourishing ground for the March minusivity and its enormous affective power. "In this situation, the students resigned in the feeling of helplessness and the consciousness, that their voice […] was enclosed in a hermetic vacuum."[90] The people involved in the March events, unable to consolidate the dissonant realities, came to distrust their own experience and memory, even beginning after some years to believe in the official "reality."[91] Thus, the dominant language paradigm evoked affective violence that blurred out the subjectivity of the concerned people by robbing them of their voice, muffling their experience. Conversely, the March experiences and affects could not re-translate into language. This speechlessness and associative paralysis made the March events into experiences reminiscent of trauma.

Consistent with this logic, the impact of March minusivity on the experienced reality of people did not leave many outspoken traces in mid-socialist Polish cultural production. Official March discourse and its side-productions were massively covered in media or can be found in archives, in snippets of denunciations and inter-institutional notes, letters, and other information laying open the immunitarian mechanisms at play. Yet, there was hardly any material that reflected the March events and atmosphere from a personal point of experience, diverging from the official standpoint and narrative scripts. To find a language appropriate to reflect the events and atmosphere proved difficult or impossible precisely because of the sub- and suprarational character of the March minusivity playing out on emotions; but also because the immunising mechanisms had cut interpersonal bonds and the possibility for verbal exchange and because the official language allowed only for prescripted statements, repressing personal utterings. The March events were, apart from the official media campaign, "non-discursive." "[T]heir specific 'silence' in the source materials" points, according to social historian Dariusz Gawin, to their shock character: "The traumatic experiences are played out beyond language, beyond a narrative structure that could put reality under the intellectual control of the mind."[92] Because the events of March 1968 and the anti-Semitic campaign as they are medially represented and performed, and their impact on personal lives cannot be related properly or linked by aesthetic strategies, they cannot acquire meaning and become "haunting" instead.[93]

2.2.2 The information gamble

In film, theatre, or literature, the March events usually did not surface until decades later. Cultural, literary, and film scholars have stated that the events as such were mentioned only later in the arts, especially concerning the "victims'" side.[94] However, we do find cultural evidence of the March era;

materials of the late 1960s and 1970s that identified language—speaking or writing—as a key problem in social existence. Especially the post-March "Generation '68" of New Wave writers and poets expressed their reserve against language by distorting and paraphrasing the official "speak".[95] "Language began to be regarded as a means of disowning reality and an instrument of political propaganda. This was […] a declaration of mistrust in speech."[96] With communication as a form of exposure, an opening up of the self towards the world or the other that is always "insecure"—and, as philosopher Maurice Blanchot puts it, at "the risk of being rejected or lost or not received,"[97]—to speak, write, or communicate in any way was especially dangerous in the climate of mistrust.

The insecurity of the communicative act became crucial in minusivity because it more forcefully translated into an insecurity for the one speaking. The opening created by communication became the space where violations could happen. It seemed hence advisable to organise communication in a way that would set fixed frames and would convey as little personal "content" as possible. The solution to make use—or misuse—of the official scripts was practised by the New Wave poets in the 1970s; however, this critical and defiant stance was preceded by huge communicative insecurities. In my opinion, the insecurities, difficulties with communication, the failing attempts to convey information or the unwilled exposures by others are the features characterising the March atmosphere in the arts. Instead of a debate about what had happened during the March events, a struggle for power over the word broke loose, a negotiation between scripts and experiences, and a shift between the informative dimensions of verbal and non-verbal language.

The novel "The Case" deals with this very struggle, playing out the gambling with information on multiple levels. It focuses on "cases" that work in-between the subjects and that might be employed to "do harm" to one another. These elusive yet powerful cases separating and binding together subjects—"a negative system […] operating between people and things"[98]—are in their core linguistic constructions, resting on somebody's having denounced someone else. Yet the content of the information conveyed remains obscured—the allegations leading to protagonist-narrator Wojciech's "case" are not verbalised in the book until very late. The narrative plays with the fact that the reader is at the same—or even greater—loss for what has actually happened, as is the main figure. The disorientation of the protagonist is reproduced through a lacking introduction and information of the reader who must piece together the presented episodes into a bigger picture.

The reader's disorientation is enhanced by Wojciech's own doubts, his changing opinions making him into an unreliable narrator. The question of reality and "unreality," of meddling on the surface without being able to look behind appearances becomes paralysing. With the indirect way of asking and the mistrusting way of listening, Wojciech only prolongs the state of misinformation and social anxiety. This state is even conceptualised in the book by a former fellow, now psychiatrist, Zajączek. Wojciech oscillates between taking Zajączek's explanations for what they are—a description of

a "psychogenic disorder" of one of his patients—and directly reading the case description as Zajączek's opinion on Wojciech's own state, thus actually confirming his own suspicions.

> […] Zajączek goes on lecturing. Many people in leading positions suffer from psychogenic disorders […] there are neuroses of fear, hypertensions leading in certain cases to dangerous aboulia, that is to the pathogenic incapability of making any decision. After a disaster arising from a wrong decision, unfavourably judged by a superior, there can be yet another illness, that is—negativism. One withdraws the hand instead of reaching out to greet, turns around when they should go on, says no when the answer should be yes.
>
> I listen attentively, the situation is clear to me. […] Maybe some dangerous dissociation is about to take hold of me? Maybe I'm wrong, that means—Zajączek doesn't know anything about me, about my case, or maybe just the opposite—he knows a lot, enough to hit with his allusions without fail.[99]

Even if Wojciech occasionally manages to beat down negativist impulses superficially, a mistrusting aftertaste always remains. His refusal to communicate properly, introducing communicative traps instead of posing direct questions, disables Wojciech to trust even his own intuitions and judgements.

Only on the last pages of the novel, the protagonists and with them the readers discover that the "case" roots in a denouncement by Wojciech's former boss. The fact that the information delivered to the authorities was irrelevant if not outright false, is, at this stage, basically irrelevant: Wojciech's work and social life as well as his own "social belief" had already collapsed.[100] His sociality was destroyed by language, a violation that does not leave any direct signs.[101] While the linguistic deed remained veiled until the end, its impact spread uncontrollably. The novel underlines the affective power of verbal language that elides the control of the subjects and thus may endanger them. Moreover, the power of the word is also in "The Case" non-related to the actual reality, but seems to have a life of its own, channelled by the participants of society. Other than Wojciech himself, his acquaintances

> learnt immediately about my case and preferred not to meet me. […] Around me, an emptiness crept up. […]
>
> So I was sitting at the window for hours, carefully veiled behind the curtain, looking at my former colleagues, they returned smiling, informed properly; because of this information they were somehow better than others, they could already inform further without risk, while I was hurled about by the darkest premonitions.[102]

Information about others, irrelevant if true or not, appears as the social currency in Jażdżyński's book. The ones in possession of information had the (immunising) power over others who were worse informed and thus

vulnerable or already excluded. This mechanism of a social withering of the ones that are uninformed and excluded from communication, is termed "a social death" by philosopher Burkhard Liebsch. A self, Liebsch explains, that "is in no way spoken to and claimed (*angesprochen und in Anspruch genommen*), […] cannot even struggle for recognition, because in the eyes of the others it has (almost) ceased to exist."[103] The distribution of information construes barriers between the informed and the uninformed, dividing them almost into Giorgio Agamben's proper, immanent form of life known as *bíos*, versus the life that can be taken with impunity—*zoē*.[104] Yet in the information gamble in "The Case" these barriers are precarious: the informed are at risk of losing their temporary immunity—gained and maintained by informing about others—and to have their vulnerability realised when information about *them* begins to circulate, as the later downfall of Wojciech's former boss demonstrates. The hierarchies can shift fast, establishing new regimes of information and non-information—and because of this constant danger of finding oneself on the other side, the atmosphere of minusivity, of social avoidance, and mistrust dominates human interaction.

Therefore, even if "The Case" is not a novel dealing with the March 1968 events, it retraces the immunitarian strategies used when social anxiety of being negatively affected is heightened and shows the autoimmunitarian social dissociation under the conditions of minusivity. Another example of such strategies is the discussed above information given by Andrzej Mencwel to the authorities on his former peer group "commandoes," an account that by literary means and an affective intonation enhances the insurmountable gap between the author and his former fellows. It appears the young academic was performing the split *in writing*, literally writing the former peers out of himself, dissociating the other from the self. In doing so, Mencwel inscribed himself in the group of the proper—a deed confirmed by his prospering academic career—while the "commandoes" were marked in almost each of Mencwel's sentences as improper, falsely claiming to be "living symbols of People's Poland" and a "substitute of the people."[105] The crisis of communication, manifesting itself in the lack or refusal of a common language, thus revolved also around the definition of community. Community was questioned not only in terms of identity and political representation, by writing specific groups out of the re-staged national community; but also in terms of social being-with, in a destabilisation of social bonds that was increased by the March atmosphere, but rooted in an intersection of social, economic, and political insecurities.

Minusivity, the inability to approach others without mistrust, developed in the 1960s an intensity that was not restricted to the sphere of political engagement and the March events as such. The immunitarian strategies of discourse and human communication translated even to the very core of society, to family and intimate relationships. In this context, it seems worthy to point out another novel of the 1960s that stages an immunitarian information gamble, as in the case of Stanisław Dygat's (1914–1978) novel *Disneyland* (1965),

it does not involve political denunciation. Nonetheless, *Disneyland* appears as a paradigmatic portrayal of the social condition of the 1960s.[106] The novel traces the love entanglements of several young or middle-aged adults, revealing in the end a circle of false appearances and dishonesties that unnecessarily lead the main protagonist—a sportsman lacking enthusiasm despite his successes[107]—to a criminal deed. Despite his high-minded intents, the protagonist-narrator contributes to the network of lies and fake emotional bonds. He muses: "People terribly lie. They cheat themselves and others in things big and small. Everybody is the enemy of everybody."[108] The socialist society presents itself as a "grotesque"[109] of sheer appearances without any background that could provide its subjects with emotional support or binding values; they drift about a surface of changing interests and attractions as in the title giving "Disneyland." Yet, the immunitarian mechanisms in *Disneyland* are not restricted to the plot, as Mencwel—here not as an ex-activist, but as a literary critic—points out: Dygat's novel appears "hard to judge," because it "defends itself from all sides with admirable insurance policies; […] it is a work perfectly average, the best of the so far known products of socialist *mass culture*."[110] Mid-socialist society and mass culture are marked by an undistinguishedness, a non-formity resulting from refusal and retreat, and a detachment between subject and world that is repeated during the 1960s and 70s in rows of books.[111]

2.2.3 Scripts

Both in terms of the March events and campaign as well as the general sociality of mid-socialist Poland, interpersonal exchange appeared as treacherous, and the disclosure of "authentic" personal feelings and thoughts figured as a threat. By offering a designed reality discursively structuring economic and political dynamics as well as private relationships, the logocratic system provoked a dissonance between experience and communication that dominated the cultural and social atmosphere. It operated through communicative scripts—preformulated slogans, fixed terms, ritualised forms of speaking for most occasions—that organised interaction in almost every situation.[112] At the same time, the use of the official language's communicative scripts painted over the atmospheric discord by refusing its verbal expressibility in the first place. The scripts were the instruments to ignore and avoid the acknowledgement of "another" reality. They shielded off the personal, banning it from communication and leaving the involved subjects untouched in their mere enactment of communication. Yet at the same time, the compulsion to comply with these scripts could lead to "psychogenic disorders" and "neuroses of fear"—fear of a wrong decision, as the psychiatrist in "The Case" suggests; fear of falling out with the script.

Another glance at a passage from "The Case" reveals the disparity between word and deed, between spoken or written language and social behaviour. Even though Wojciech suffers from social isolation, people do actually talk to

him—but their utterings are unveiled as hollow promises of solidarity, scripts that allowed them to keep their social façade while in fact cutting the bonds with Wojciech.

> No… that's not how it was, many people sympathised, ensured that everything will be alright, it's not those times, they just didn't fancy my company, they didn't even want to have a vodka with me, these few glasses, maybe they would have done me good?[113]

Again, there are two layers: on one layer, the verbal reassurance sketches a normality and social stability that should not give reason for anxiety—not as in "those" Stalinist times. The other layer concerns the actual physical proximity and commonly shared space that is—contrary to the promises—non-verbally refused.

The scripts that structure everyday communication hence do not only rely on propaganda language and official situations; they also apply to informal setting and the construction of intimate, interpersonal reality. This becomes even clearer when Wojciech offers his former fellows "small talk" scripts of friends not having seen each other for a long time, along the lines of "As you see, I'm still alive! Does that surprise you?"[114] Yet again, in the following sentence, Wojciech reveals in his narration that this casual question is highly ambiguous, and that he is actually preying on a hint on the non-verbal level, a betrayal of the other's intents without referring to verbal language:

> That should have been a very clever question, cunning and carefully prepared. If he had a hand in my case, he should feel confused; after all, he's a simple lad, so something will show on his face. But nothing shows.[115]

Literature needs to express these shuffles between verbal and non-verbal communication, where the non-verbal layer passes as a more authentic, direct level of information, exposure, and sharing, in an inevitably verbalised manner. Film is a medium that can play much easier with the dissociation of verbal (auditive) and body (visible) language. This is vividly present in the film comedy *The Cruise* (*Rejs*, 1970) by Marek Piwowski (*1935), where an "entertaining" get-together of ferry passengers turns into a series of incorporated verbal meeting patterns.[116] Much of the hilarious film's plot was improvised; and many actors were amateurs that showed a naturalness infused with awkwardness.[117] According to the film's screenplay writer Janusz Głowacki (1938–2007), no figured-out joke would be as funny as simple reality and "true" situations.[118] Yet at the same time, this "improvised" reality based heavily on the use of pre-scripted communication patterns that the protagonists-actors had learned in their daily lives and that now came in handy on the film plot's level. According to film historian Monika Talarczyk-Gubała, the figures made use of the "mechanisms

dominating newspeak, like clear polarisation, imposing of values, pragmatism, rituality and a magic element."[119] To behave spontaneously and naturally "was too embarrassing, because it was accidental and dangerous."[120] Personal content and the expression of emotions was bluntly misunderstood, ignored or censured by the other passengers. She concludes that "in no other comedy could we hear so flawlessly the newspeak in its individual distinctness of the different social groups."[121]

The "trueness" of the film is based on the thorough theatricality of its scenes: the passengers (actors) preferred to act out something like a badly learnt theatre piece instead of exposing themselves with personal content. Personal information conveyed in affective outbursts is verbally reprimanded and painted over at once by a scaffolding of "correct" behaviour. Confronted with a repressive speaking along propaganda slogans,[122] the passengers' bodies showed a growing uneasiness. This uneasiness manifests in twitches, sweating, or nervous glancing about during a meeting; and on this level, the figures seemed to "talk" to each other in a more direct, unmediated, and honest way. Deviations from the script that are too obvious—an outburst of tears or a flight from stage—are repressed and reprimanded by the choreographed collective of the passengers; yet none of them can suppress small incongruities, fissures where the dissonance of realities unveils itself.

An analysis of the film *The Cruise* thus suggests that while the official reality's scripts take over verbal language, the experienced affective reality may still surface in non-verbal communication that appears more difficult to control. This is also the strategy Wojciech in the novel "The Case" applies out of distrust. While on the verbal level, there is the possibility to use newspeak scripts to conceal the self and to avoid being affected by others, the non-verbal, corporeal level was not so officially formatted by scripts and thus offered less possibility for impersonal behaviour. Wojciech does not detect any hints in nonverbal slips of his colleagues because he placed his mistrust in the wrong people. *The Cruise*, however, magnifies such fissures between the staged verbal reality and a different, experienced reality. The experienced reality unfolds between the bodies of the protagonists and in their immersion in dynamic material space. This other, affective corporeal reality is the ground on which transgressive humanist explorations emerge.

Notes

1 Marcin Zaremba, "Społeczeństwo polskie lat sześćdziesiątych – między 'małą stabilizacją' a 'małą destabilizacją,'" in *Oblicza Marca 1968*, ed. Konrad Rokicki and Sławomir Stępień (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2004), 24–51.

2 See Andrzej Friszke, "Ruch protestu w marcu 1968 (w świetle raportów MSW dla kierownictwa PZPR)," *Więź* 3 (1994): 91; Michał Siermiński, *Pęknięta Solidarność. Inteligencja opozycyjna a robotnicy 1964–1981* (Warszawa: Książka i Prasa, 2020), 61–108; Marcin Zaremba, "Biedni Polacy 68. Społeczeństwo polskie wobec wydarzeń marcowych w świetle raportów KW i MSW dla kierownictwa PZPR," in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I:*

Referaty, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 159.

3 Josef Banas, *The Scapegoats: The Exodus of the Remnants of Polish Jewry* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979); Jerzy Eisler, "March 1968 in Poland," in *1968: The World Transformed*, ed. Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 237–51; Irena Grudzinska Gross, "1968 in Poland. Spoiled Children, Marxists, and Jews," in *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2011), 43–53; Piotr Osęka, *Syjoniści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele: obraz wroga w propagandzie marca 1968* (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1999); Piotr Osęka and Marcin Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie, czyli polskie reperkusje wojny sześciodniowej," in *Polska 1944/45–1989*, ed. Krystyna Kersten, vol. 4, Studia i materiały (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 1999), 205–39; Feliks Tych, "The 'March '68' Antisemitic Campaign: Onset, Development, and Consequences," in *Jewish Presence in Absence: The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland, 1944–2010*, ed. Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2014), 451–71; Paweł Wieczorkiewicz, "Walka o władzę w kierownictwie PZPR w Marcu 68," in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 39–57.

4 See Ireneusz Krzemiński, "Antysemityzm, socjalizm i 'nowa świadomość'. Długofalowe konsekwencje Marca 68," in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 265.

5 Jacek Kochanowicz, "Marzec 1968 i życie intelektualne Uniwersytetu," in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 133; Jerzy Szacki, "8 marca 1988 roku," *Krytyka. Kwartalnik polityczny* 28–29 (1988): 21–23; Feliks Tych, "Kilka uwag o Marcu 1968," in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 29; Wieczorkiewicz, "Walka o władzę.".

6 Michael Checinski, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Antisemitism* (New York: Karz-Cohl Publishers, 1982), 229; Andrzej Friszke, *Przystosowanie i opór. Studia z dziejów PRL* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Więź, 2007), 134.

7 Anna Artwińska, "'Zasłużona rodzina polska' albo marcowe gry w genealogie," in *Rok 1966. PRL na zakręcie*, ed. Katarzyna Chmielewska, Grzegorz Wołowiec, and Tomasz Żukowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2014), 367, translation mine.

8 See Marcin Cieński, "Polish Humanism and Its Relation to the Communities of Nation, Society, State, and Europe," in *Humanism in Polish Culture*, ed. Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, Wiesław Pawlak, and Piotr Urbański (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 176–77. For a more theoretical approach, see Timothy Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben*, Posthumanities (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816674640.001.0001.

9 See also Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą* (Kraków: Universitas, 2011), 272–73.

10 See Krzemiński, "Antysemityzm, socjalizm i 'nowa świadomość,'" 269; Joanna Beata Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 248, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1djmhhh; Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead:*

Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust, Modern Jewish History (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 65–71; Marcin Zaremba, *Im nationalen Gewande. Strategien kommunistischer Herrschaftslegitimation in Polen 1944 - 1980*, trans. Andreas R. Hofmann (Osnabrück: fibre Verlag, 2011), 271–358.

11 See Anna Barbara Jarosz, "Marzec w prasie," in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 99–125.

12 Moczar was the head of the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (*Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*, ZBoWiD) that started to accept noncommunist veterans of the resistance and the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK) into their ranks in the 1960s. It was closely related to the PZPR and played an important role in the interior power play introduced by Moczar. See Banas, *The Scapegoats*, 65–70; Checinski, *Poland*, 211; Mikołaj Stanisław Kunicki, *Between the Brown and the Red: Nationalism, Catholicism, and Communism in Twentieth-Century Poland - the Politics of Bolesław Piasecki*, Ohio University Press Polish and Polish-American Studies Series (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 142.

13 See Checinski, *Poland*, 212; Osęka and Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie," 220–21.

14 Eisler, "March 1968 in Poland," 240. See also Osęka and Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie," 227; Tych, "The 'March '68' Antisemitic Campaign," 462.

15 Banas, *The Scapegoats*, 90; Grudzinska Gross, "1968 in Poland," 49; Viktoria Korb, *Ni pies, ni wydra… Marzec '68 we wspomnieniach warszawskiej studentki* (Warszawa: Studio Emka, 2006), 76–82, 106; Justyna Koszarska-Szulc, Natalia Romik, and Adam Michnik, "The Party Descends Directly from the Fascist Right," in *Obcy w domu. Wokół marca '68 = Estranged: March '68 and its Aftermath*, ed. Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, Justyna Koszarska-Szulc, and Natalia Romik (Warszawa: POLIN Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, 2018), 53; David Kowalski, *Polens letzte Juden. Herkunft und Dissidenz um 1968* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 194.

16 Jacek Kuroń, *Wiara i wina. Do i od komunizmu* (London: Aneks, 1989), 299.

17 Andrzej Mencwel, "Sypiąc. Zeznania i rozważania," *bruLion* 19, no. A (1992): 75; all translations mine.

18 Mencwel, 78, 80.

19 On the topic of social stratification, the Warsaw intellectual and political sphere, and Jewishness, see also Grudzinska Gross, "1968 in Poland"; Kowalski, *Polens letzte Juden*; Joanna Wiszniewicz, "Jewish Children and Youth in Downtown Warsaw Schools of the 1960s," in *1968: Forty Years After*, ed. Leszek W. Gluchowski and Antony Polonsky (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), 204–29.

20 Mencwel, "Sypiąc," 74.

21 Mencwel, 78.

22 Mencwel, 80, 77.

23 Mencwel, 81, 86, 84.

24 Mencwel, 67.

25 Mencwel, 77–78.

26 While Jacek Kuroń, one of the leading figures of the pre-March student political activities, admitted that Mencwel's essay conveyed a certain truth about the dissociation and troubled understanding between the revisionist circles and society in general, he also saw it as an expression "of the worst, ultra-nationalist (*czarnosecińska*) propaganda. The more dangerous because it's so intelligent." Kuroń, *Wiara i wina*, 299.

27 See Osęka, *Syjoniści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele*, 10.

28 Banas, *The Scapegoats*, 54.

29 See Banas, 54–55; Eisler, "March 1968 in Poland," 132.
30 Cit. after Friszke, *Przystosowanie i opór*, 175, translation mine.
31 See Osęka and Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie," 238.
32 See Michał Głowiński, "Marzec po marcu," in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 255.
33 See Banas, *The Scapegoats*, 54–55; Checinski, *Poland*, 229–32; Justyna Koszarska-Szulc and Natalia Romik, "Estranged," in *Obcy w domu. Wokół marca '68 = Estranged: March '68 and its Aftermath*, ed. Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, Justyna Koszarska-Szulc, and Natalia Romik (Warszawa: POLIN Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, 2018), 29; Kowalski, *Polens letzte Juden*, 163–65; Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 242–58; Osęka and Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie"; Tych, "The 'March '68' Antisemitic Campaign.".
34 See Checinski, *Poland*, 229; Friszke, *Przystosowanie i opór*, 134.
35 See Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 248; Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*, 65–71; Zaremba, *Im nationalen Gewande*, 271–358.
36 For the reactivation of "a particular form of Holocaust memory" and its expression in artistic forms see Artur Tanikowski, "Explicit and Implicit: Artists towards March, March versus Art and Artists," in *Obcy w domu. Wokół marca '68 = Estranged: March '68 and its Aftermath*, ed. Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, Justyna Koszarska-Szulc, and Natalia Romik (Warszawa: POLIN Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, 2018), 295–96. Also Koszarska-Szulc, Romik, and Michnik, "The Party Descends Directly from the Fascist Right," 57.
37 See Michel Serres, "The Art of Living (Interview)," in *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*, by Mary Zournazi (New York: Routledge, 2002), 204.
38 As discussed by Maine de Biran, see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, 4th ed. (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1993), 72; also Carla Canullo, "The Body and the Self-Identification of Conscious Life. The Science of Man between Physiology and Psychology in Maine de Biran," in *The Origins of Life*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, vol. 1 (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2000), 203–23, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-3415-8_16.
39 Sara Ahmed, "Collective Feelings. Or, The Impressions Left by Others," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 2 (2004): 25–42, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404042133; Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Ruth Leys, *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226488738.001.0001; Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect," *M/C Journal* 8, no. 6 (2005), https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.2443.
40 Gerald Raunig, "After Community: Condividuality," in *Dance, Politics & Co-Immunity*, ed. Gerald Siegmund and Stefan Hölscher (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2013), 271–79.
41 Krzysztof Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie młodzieży w czasach PRL* (Warszawa: Rosner & Wspólnicy, 2006), 140.
42 Wojtek Lamentowicz, "Moje przeżycie Marca," *Krytyka. Kwartalnik polityczny* 28–29 (1988): 44; all translations mine.
43 Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, 3rd ed. (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 1318.
44 Lamentowicz, "Moje przeżycie Marca," 44.
45 Lamentowicz, 43.
46 Gernot Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, ed. Jean-Paul Thibaud (London: Routledge, 2017), 15, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315538181.

47 See Maria Muhle, "A Genealogy of Biopolitics: The Notion of Life in Canguilhem and Foucault," in *The Government of Life: Foucault, Biopolitics, and Neoliberalism*, ed. Vanessa Lemm and Miguel Vatter (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 85, https://doi.org/10.5422/fordham/9780823255962.003.0005.
48 The author's position is an ambivalent one if seen in the light of the March events. Jażdżyński joined the PZPR in 1968 (see Józef Duk, *Od Mickiewicza do Grochowiaka. Studia i szkice literackie o dawnych i współczesnych pisarzach polskich* (Piotrków Trybunalski: Naukowe Wydawnictwo Piotrkowskie, 2001), 203.) but seems in his novel neither to follow the ethno-nationalist paradigm nor to treat the communist framework instrumentally. He directs his critique rather at society and careerism than at the state apparatus as such.
49 Wiesław Jażdżyński, *Sprawa* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1969), 139; all translations mine.
50 Jażdżyński, 141.
51 Ryszard Kapuściński, *Cesarz*, 4th ed. (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1987), 109.
52 The book, though set in Ethiopia and dealing with the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie around 1973/74, was often read as a criticism on the Polish situation in the 1970s and the rule of First Party Secretary Edward Gierek (see Artur Domosławski, *Ryszard Kapuściński: A Life* (London: Verso, 2012), 240–43; Zygmunt Ziątek, "Wymiary uczestnictwa (Ryszard Kapuściński)," in *Sporne postaci polskiej literatury współczesnej. Kontynuacje*, ed. Alina Brodzka and Lidia Burska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 1996), 171.). Kapuściński might not have had in mind exactly 1968 when writing *The Emperor*; his description of minusivity however is embedded in a general post-March Polish atmosphere.
53 Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Emperor: Downfall of an Autocrat*, trans. William R. Brand (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 82, substitutions mine.
54 Judith Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2012): 134, https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.26.2.0134.
55 See Brian Massumi, "Navigating Movements (Interview)," in *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*, ed. Mary Zournazi (New York: Routledge, 2002), 214.
56 See Raunig, "After Community: Condividuality.".
57 Understood in Eliasian terms, valencies determine the relations between human beings and constitute the (structured) need to associate; thus, Norbert Elias calls them „affective valencies". Norbert Elias, "Sociology and Psychiatry," in *Psychiatry in a Changing Society*, ed. S. H. Foulkes and G. Stewart Prince (London: Tavistock, n.d.), 131–32.
58 See Duk, *Od Mickiewicza do Grochowiaka*, 221.
59 Jażdżyński, *Sprawa*, 141.
60 Jażdżyński, 141.
61 Anna Kowalska, *Dzienniki, 1927–1969*, ed. Paweł Kądziela (Warszawa: Iskry, 2008), 521, translation mine.
62 Maria Janion and Kazimiera Szczuka, *Janion. Transe, traumy, transgresje. Niedobre dziecię*, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2012), 141; all translations mine.
63 Muhle, "A Genealogy of Biopolitics: The Notion of Life in Canguilhem and Foucault," 85.
64 Janion and Szczuka, *Niedobre dziecię*, 1:141.
65 Anna Jarmusiewicz, "Domestic Shame. A Conversation with Professor Jerzy Jedlicki," in *1968: Forty Years After*, ed. Leszek W. Gluchowski and Antony Polonsky (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), 265–67; Katarzyna Kuczyńska-Koschany, "Wiersze 'suchego pogromu' – Marzec '68 w poezji polskiej (rekonesans)," *Studia Litteraria et Historica*, no. 6 (2017), https://doi.org/10.11649/slh.1486.

66 Marta Fik, *Marcowa kultura. Wokół Dziadów, literaci i władza, kampania marcowa* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wodnika, 1995), 189.
67 Osęka and Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie," 220; all translations mine.
68 See Banas, *The Scapegoats*, 90–91; Tadeusz Walichnowski, *Izrael a NRF* (Książka i wiedza, 1967); Tadeusz Walichnowski, *Izrael - NRF a Polska* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Interpress, 1968); Tadeusz Walichnowski, *Syjonizm a NRF*, Cykl: Doktryna Syjonizmu (Katowice: Sląsk, 1968).
69 Jarosz, "Marzec w prasie," 115; all translations mine.
70 Fik, *Marcowa kultura*, 192, translation mine.
71 Jarosz, "Marzec w prasie," 116.
72 See Sławomir Buryła, "Proza epoki Marca i wokół Marca'68," *Ruch Literacki* 54, no. 2 (2013): 219–37, https://doi.org/10.2478/v10273-012-0064-5; Alina Molisak, "Kilka uwag o różnych odmianach 'marcowych' narracji," in *(Nie) ciekawa epoka? Literatura i PRL*, ed. Hanna Gosk (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2008), 275–88.
73 See Jarosz, "Marzec w prasie," 124.
74 Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Minister of Defence from the Six Day War (5 June 1967) until 1974.
75 Banas, *The Scapegoats*, 57–58. See also the title of Marek Nowakowski's notes from the years 1967–68, picking up on this iconic slogan: Marek Nowakowski, *Syjoniści do Syjamu. Zapiski z lat 1967-1968* (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2009).
76 The possibility of the slogan having been distorted on purpose was, as far as I know, never discussed. It would be an interesting example of subversive affirmation unveiling the perfidiousness of the March propaganda. However, there is no hint that it was produced or read in such a performative-activist way.
77 Burkhard Liebsch, *Verletztes Leben. Studien zur Affirmation von Schmerz und Gewalt im gegenwärtigen Denken. Zwischen Hegel, Nietzsche, Bataille, Blanchot, Levinas, Ricoeur und Butler* (Zug: Die Graue Edition, 2014), 107; all translations mine.
78 See Fik, *Marcowa kultura*, 189–230; Osęka, *Syjoniści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele*.
79 See Michał Głowiński, *Nowomowa po polsku* (Warszawa: PEN, 1991).
80 It is discussed how truly the published version actually reflects the notes written at the time; Głowiński himself states in his book not to have changed his entries. Michał Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie. Komentarze do słów 1966-1971* (Warszawa: PoMost, 1991), 4.
81 See Głowiński, 32, translation mine.
82 Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie*, 130, translation mine.
83 See Jerzy Bralczyk, *O języku polskiej propagandy politycznej lat siedemdziesiątych* (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1987); Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie*, 130–42; Hanna Świda-Ziemba, *Człowiek wewnętrznie zniewolony. Problemy psychosocjologicze minionej formacji*, 1998; Hanna Świda-Ziemba, *Młodzież PRL. Portrety pokoleń w kontekście historii* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010), 453–55; Zaremba, "Biedni Polacy 68," 146–47.
84 Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Maria Ossowska, and Leszek Kołakowski, "Opinia w sprawie pojęcia wiadomości," 2005, translation mine, http://web.archive.org/web/20050120020234/http://psf.org.pl/publication_print.php?pid=389, accessed 18.08.2023.
85 Lamentowicz, "Moje przeżycie Marca," 42.
86 Henryk Szlajfer, "Marzec jako doświadczenie osobiste," *Krytyka. Kwartalnik polityczny* 28–29 (1988): 32, translation mine.
87 See Kuroń, *Wiara i wina*, 306.
88 Maryla Sitkowska, "Marcowe Pretensje," *Aspiracje*, no. Wiosna (2008): 4, translation mine.

89 Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, 20.
90 Świda-Ziemba, *Młodzież PRL*, 453, translation mine.
91 That is what several participants who had been contemporary witnesses expressed in the symposium "Doświadczenie (auto)biograficzne a tożsamość. Zapisy literackie pokolenia Marca '68" (The (auto)biographical experience and identity. Literary notes of the March '68 generation) and the conference "March '68. Fifty years later" held in March 2018 at the University of Warsaw and POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. See also Karol Modzelewski, *Zajeździmy kobyłę historii. Wyznania poobijanego jeźdźca* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Iskry," 2013), 144.
92 Dariusz Gawin, *Wielki zwrot. Ewolucja lewicy i odrodzenie idei społeczeństwa obywatelskiego 1956-1976* (Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy "Znak," 2013), 142, translation mine. See also Głowiński, "Marzec po marcu," 252.
93 See also Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History. Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 3; Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Zuzanna Dziuban, ed., *The "Spectral Turn": Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020).
94 See Buryła, "Proza epoki Marca i wokół Marca'68"; Jakub Majmurek, "The Memory of March in Films," in *Obcy w Domu. Wokół Marca '68 = Estranged: March '68 and Its Aftermath*, ed. Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, Justyna Koszarska-Szulc, and Natalia Romik (Warszawa: POLIN Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, 2018), 256–67; Molisak, "Kilka uwag." There are some exceptions, but they keep accordance with the dominant language, serving the ethnonationalist paradigm, e.g. Stanisław Ryszard Dobrowolski's *Głupia sprawa* ("Too bad", 1969) or Roman Bratny's *Trzech w linii prostej* (Three in a straight line, 1970), see Molisak, 283 f.
95 See Stanisław Barańczak, "Proszę pokazać język," *Teksty. Teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja* 1, no. 19 (1975): 72–85; Lidia Burska, *Awangarda i inne złudzenia. O pokoleniu '68 w Polsce* (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2013). For a general portrait of the March generation, see Krzemiński, "Antysemityzm, socjalizm i 'nowa świadomość,'" 271–83; Piotr Osęka, *My, ludzie z Marca. Autoportret pokolenia '68* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2015).
96 Molisak, "Kilka uwag," 280–81, translation mine.
97 Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1988), 12, 22.
98 Kapuściński, *The Emperor*, 83.
99 Jażdżyński, *Sprawa*, 75.
100 See Duk, *Od Mickiewicza do Grochowiaka*, 220.
101 See Liebsch, *Verletztes Leben*, 99.
102 Jażdżyński, *Sprawa*, 139–40.
103 Liebsch, *Verletztes Leben*, 100. See also Judith Butler, *"Excitable Speech": A Politics of the Performative* (New York, London: Routledge, 1997).
104 See Campbell, *Improper Life*, 32–35.
105 Mencwel, "Sypiąc," 76.
106 See Ewa Mazierska, *Jerzy Skolimowski: The Cinema of a Nonconformist* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 116–20, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781845458072.
107 See Stanisław Dygat, *Disneyland* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1965), 16.
108 Dygat, 10, translation mine.
109 Andrzej Mencwel, *Sprawa sensu. Szkice* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), 25; all translations mine.

110 Mencwel, 22, 24.
111 For example in Jerzy Andrzejewski's "Pulp" (*Miazga*, 1970/79) or Kazimierz Brandys' "Unreality" (*Nierzeczywistość*, 1977). See also Przemysław Czapliński, "Shifting Sands: History of Polish Prose, 1945-2015," in *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture since 1918*, ed. Tamara Trojanowska et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 388.
112 See Barańczak, "Teksty"; Burska, *Awangarda i inne złudzenia*; Molisak, "Kilka uwag.".
113 Jażdżyński, *Sprawa*, 139–40.
114 Jażdżyński, 62.
115 Jażdżyński, 63.
116 See Iwona Kurz, "Sprachen-Wirrwarr. Kultkomödien (aus heutiger Sicht) aus den frühen 1970er-Jahren," in *Nouvelle Vague Polonaise? Auf der Suche nach einem flüchtigen Phänomen der Filmgeschichte*, ed. Margarete Wach and Deutsches Filminstitut, trans. Christian Nastal (Marburg: Schüren, 2015), 226–38; Maciej Łuczak, *Rejs, czyli, Szczególnie nie chodzę na filmy polskie* (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2002); Nina Seiler, "Toxic Community. Incorporated Scripts, Bodily Resistance: Immunitarian Processes in the Comedy Rejs," in *Unsettled 1968 in the Troubled Present: Revisiting the 50 Years of Discussions from East and Central Europe*, ed. Michał Przeperski, Aleksandra Konarzewska, and Anna Nakai (London, New York: Routledge, 2019), 129–45; Monika Talarczyk-Gubała, *PRL się śmieje! Polska komedia filmowa lat 1945-1989* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2007), 101–11.
117 See Małgorzata Hendrykowska, "100 lat kina w Polsce," *Kino* 7–8 (1996): 49; Margarete Wach, "Cineastischer Ost-West-Divan. Kinder von Marx und Coca-Cola, poètes maudits, coincidentia oppositorum – oder dreimal Nouvelle Vague Polonaise," in *Nouvelle Vague Polonaise? auf der Suche nach einem flüchtigen Phänomen der Filmgeschichte*, ed. Margarete Wach and Deutsches Filminstitut (Marburg: Schüren, 2015), 29 f.
118 See Talarczyk-Gubała, *PRL się śmieje!*, 101.
119 Talarczyk-Gubała, *PRL się śmieje!*, 109; all translations mine.
120 Talarczyk-Gubała, 110.
121 Talarczyk-Gubała, 109.
122 The separation of the personal, corporeal dimension from the verbal schema was repeated on the film's formal level by deliberately separating the audio track from the image through post-synching in post-production. See Barbara Wurm, "Der Ausflug/Rejs. Marek Piwowski," in *Klassiker des polnischen Films*, ed. Christian Kampkötter, Peter Klimczak, and Christer Petersen (Marburg: Schüren, 2015), 100.

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3 On humanism in mid-socialist Poland

3.1 The question of human agency

In *A Mass for Arras* (*Msza za miasto Arras*, 1971), Polish fictional writer Andrzej Szczypiorski (1924–2000) depicts the so-called Vauderies d'Arras, taking place from 1459 to 1461 in the French city of Arras. Following a severe epidemic of the Plague, the Vauderies were an outburst of violence against supposed heretics, a religious "cleansing" of the city in a whirl of denunciations. Directed first at the Jewish community of Arras, the witch hunt-like social madness as recounted in the novel eventually takes hold of and affects the whole city population. Although it is historically set in the phase of the installation of the paradigm of human reason and agency, *A Mass for Arras* most of all sows the seeds of doubt, insecurities, and perplexity. It portrays an epoch of changing convictions: "All sorts of news greatly agitate the minds and doubt creeps into many a soul. The world is going through some kind of transformation, the boundaries of which are fluid and undefined."[1] Father Albert, the—lunatic or inspired—leader of the purges in Arras, introduces into this crisis his very own view on religion and life, violating the teachings of the Church and mocking at the same time the awakening humanist consciousness of the Renaissance period. He sees himself as the instrument of God's will—and is thus completely free to do anything, to imprison and murder half of the city without committing any sin. Yet at the same time, he appears as a victim of the mechanisms set in motion in the city, a lone and fragile figure that can only give his consent to the dynamics of the horrors that develop uncontrollably. Similarly, the narrator Jan oscillates between religious dogmatism, Machiavellian instincts, and something we could call a rational, humanist mind—a mixture that does not earn him special sympathies with the average reader.

What we see in *A Mass for Arras* is how thoughts, convictions, and beliefs flow in-between the human figures in the city; how mindsets change not only with rational reflection, but primarily in reaction to outer circumstances. Szczypiorski's literary examination of the historical crisis concentrates on the question of individual motility: do humans actually have an own will, and how could it manifest itself? Where is the decisive line between fate and

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agency, between the execution of a transcendental plan and the will of an individual? How can the motives and rationality of the individual subject be measured against the collective reason of society? Where does reason collide with irrationalism, affects and feelings like anxiety, and what happens if it does?[2] These questions remain painfully unanswered in the novel. Szczypiorski's text oscillates around the historical constitution of human subjectivity and the development of the concept of rationality, sketching the intertwinement of common belief and individual doubt as the forming mechanism of human reason. Yet there is no sign in his novel of an "optimistic tone of Renaissance,"[3] of a "humanist vision of man as an individual entity striving towards goodness and harmony."[4] Szczypiorski's depiction of the struggles and the pure disinterest the citizens of Arras show for humanist ideals provoke the question, whether humanism could actually be established and to which ends.

Szczypiorski wrote his novel about the events of the late Middle Ages in France between September 1968 and November 1970. Due to the historical setting of its production, the prose full of doubts and ambiguities can be read as a commentary on the Polish turmoil of March 1968 and the social and intellectual disorientation and anxiety it brought about. The parallels between the Vauderies d'Arras and the pogrom-like March crisis in Poland are hard to discard, though the events in Arras were much more drastic and bloodier. In both crises, dominant organs of society forced the exclusion and expulsion of allegedly alien, uncanny individuals and social groups; but the mechanisms of accusation and exclusion gained their own momentum and led to the potential vulnerability of each of its members and groups. The pressure on the individual members of society to take part in the common frenzy was key in both events—and the inability of the mass of the people to resist this pressure a central feature. Yet Szczypiorski connected the Arras of the late Middle Ages and the Warsaw of late modernity not only topically, through the similarity of events. By linking these two historical points, the Polish writer also brought together two ends of the project called humanism. He poses the question of humanity's progress, if not suggesting outright that the development of humans' rationality and the incorporation of the humanist ideals had only been a hallucination. Will humankind ever be able and willing to steer its fate and to install an order without discrimination, injustices, and violence? This question, it seems, did not resonate very positively with Szczypiorski's contemporaries in mid-socialist Poland, although socialism had set out to do just that and had lived through a phase of a Marxist-inspired "humanisation" after the thaw.

3.1.1 Marxist humanism

Polish academic and philosophical thought of the late 1950s and 1960s was marked by a shift towards the human subject and its relation to the world. Adam Schaff (1913–2006), considered the head ideologist of socialist Poland during the Stalinist 1950s, was among those who demonstrated a growing

interest in the "philosophy of man" and the "human individual," subsumed under the auspices of Marxist or socialist humanism.[5] This represented a broader turn in Polish thought towards the position of human individuals and their freedom and well-being in society. The Stalinist dogmatic Marxism of the preceding years had not only in theory rejected humanism as a bourgeois concept that disregarded the entanglement of the subject in social and material relations;[6] it had also, with its practical focus on class struggle and industrial progress, abolished the individual human subject and installed class as the collective subject of a socialist "class humanism,"[7] as the French Marxist theoretician Louis Althusser (1918–1990) put it. Apart from reservations about humanism that were rooted in readings of the later Marx—a topic I will return to—humanist conceptions were also called into question by the experiences of the Holocaust and nuclear warfare; humanity was now seen as potentially capable to eliminate itself deliberately. As the Polish philosopher and historian of ideas Bronisław Baczko (1924–2016) wrote, the "bitter, ironic triumph" of the universality of man[8] lies in the question of "whether he will manage to realize and to preserve himself in the world that he has created."[9] After the Second World War and up to the 1950s, humanism as the European philosophy of man—a precarious and self-endangering species—was considered a questionable ideology at best in many parts of Europe.

Despite these questions, the post-1956 return to humanism as the celebration of the human, "[t]his secular eschatology, this belief in the future elimination of the disparity between man's essence and his existence,"[10] still seemed like an essential corollary to socialist conceptions.[11] The alienation that Marxism had promised to overcome did not diminish in socialist societies; instead, socialist economic conditions had formed their own specific type of alienation. Moreover, the existentialist trends of the 1950s and 1960s inspired interest in human existence and its discontents that restored the individual subject to its place at the centre of philosophy.[12] Thus, the decline of Stalinism and the resulting possibilities to explore previously forbidden topics offered a chance to revise the ideological and political bases of socialist countries, including the PRL. The implementation of a humanist Marxism allowed intellectuals to reconsider the relevance of the individual citizen and strive to erase inequalities, injustices, exploitation, and poverty—the (self-) alienation of man.

In his introduction to the anthology *Socialist Humanism. An International Symposium* (1965), the German-American philosopher Erich Fromm (1900–1980) framed the "renascence of Humanism" as "one of the most remarkable phenomena of the past decade."[13] The "symposium" features figures from both socialist and capitalist countries, including contributions by the renowned Polish thinkers Schaff, Baczko, and Bogdan Suchodolski (1903–1992). Suchodolski traced the development of Marxian humanism to the insights and problematics of Renaissance humanism, focusing on the contradiction between reason or ideal and history (or social reality) as the conflicted motor of the "development of man."[14] Baczko's contribution discussed

the "idea of the universality of man," weighing its problems and historically fluctuating evaluations.[15] Schaff analyzed aspects of Marx's philosophy of man concerned with the human individual as a social being that shapes society and is shaped by it in turn. He noted that "the problems of the individual and a philosophy of man"[16]—and thus a humanist perspective—had always been implicitly present in Marx's thought. The emerging Polish Marxist or socialist humanism thus reformulated the principles of Marxist thought by abandoning Leninist–Stalinist interpretations and re-emphasising the writings of the young Marx and his attention to the human subject in society. In doing so, it developed a Marxist approach similar to the Yugoslav Praxis school of the 1960s and 1970s and other attempts at reforming Marxism in socialist countries.[17]

In the late 1950s, another prominent Polish philosopher, Leszek Kołakowski, initiated a critique of Marxism that influenced revisionism and later criticism of the socialist system in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[18] Kołakowski, a Marxist-turned-liberal philosopher of religion, was innovative not only in the radicalism of his critique, but also in his more decisive break with the socialist idea—in contrast, for example, to the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017), who harshly criticised the political system of real socialism after his forced emigration in 1968 without dismissing the project of "Socialist Utopia."[19] Kołakowski's work after 1956 showed a heightened interest in the human being and its cognitive challenges, an interest that was tied to the young Marx's ambivalent and vacillating thoughts. The Polish philosopher devoted his 1958 essay *Karl Marx and the Classical Definition of Truth* (*Karol Marks i klasyczna definicja prawdy*)[20] to the question of historical materialism and its relation to "nature" and the human self. He found in Marx's early writings a reversal of Engels and Lenin's "metaphysical" materialism, which had postulated the pre-existence and dominance of the material world over human consciousness. Kołakowski hence re-introduced a human subject that stood (according to Marx) in a dialectical relation with its environment rather than being determined by it. Yet at the same time, this Marxian reading prevented the definition of human consciousness as the understanding and reason of materiality—the agent that would master and bring order to nature. Human consciousness could only grasp whatever part of "reality" it was able to perceive; it could not disconnect materiality from its own perception, and so could never refer to a thing *as such*, without the latter being filtered through the human senses. Thus, in this reading, neither the idea of an objective human reason or subject position nor the position of the material environment (*rzeczy*, "things")[21] was fixed. Rather, they emerged simultaneously in an intricate relation.[22]

Unlike later Marxist interpretations, Marx in his writings until 1845 and his *Theses on Feuerbach* appeared to present a more dialectical, if not phenomenological, understanding of mind and matter, or consciousness and being.[23] This "softer," more human-centered version of Marxism appealed to thinkers in real socialist states of the mid-20th century who struggled to explain the mismatch between the revolutionised conditions of

production and the increasing social alienation in their respective countries. The "creative role of ideas"[24] and human agency, which was already promoted by the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) before the Second World War, was rediscovered as part of a revolutionary path that veered from the "rigid, deterministic, and positivistic Marxism inherited from the II International."[25] The socialist or Marxist humanist arguments made by Polish philosophers questioned the dogmatic, "metaphysical" understanding of class determinism and the decisive role of the relations of production. They dismissed what they understood as a solely materialist, "vulgarized"[26] Marxist approach and—with the aid of a more ambivalent reading of Marx and his (early) theses—underlined the importance of human agency and social relations in the dialectic reading of materialist–historical conditions.

In contrast to the socialist scholars who turned to humanist Marxism and the "growing number of European Marxist and non-Marxist scholars"[27] drawn to Gramsci's writings in the 1960s, Althusser insisted on the role of Marxian anti-humanism, drawing a sharp line between Marx's early and late writings. By championing the latter, as Althusser did, "one can and must speak openly of *Marx's theoretical anti-humanism*, and see in this *theoretical anti-humanism* the absolute (negative) precondition of the (positive) knowledge of the human world itself, and of its practical transformation."[28] This binarisation and the banishment of the humanist element from classical Marxism—"the elimination of man"[29]—was subsequently criticised by Schaff, who insisted on the continuation of a notion of human agency in Marx.[30] Thus, the question of Marxist humanism became a question of Marx's humanism. The attention that various thinkers paid to specific periods of Marx's writing produced different conclusions about the dialectical capacity of his texts. Marxist theoreticians in socialist countries seem to have been more interested in the humanist foundation of Marxism and the problematics of the individual in society than their Western communist peers.

The term "Marxist humanism" thus had featured a productive ambivalence in Poland's 1960s, as it denoted a cluster of diverging notions—the championing of the individual human as a free subject of an own will and reason as well as the consideration of material being as the framework determining the human individual or social groups in their distinctness and likenesses. However, both the philosophical Marxist humanism and the more politically or practically oriented strand of socialist humanism did not find its way into the ideological considerations of the Party-state as such. The Polish reality of the 1960s saw the proliferation of bureaucracy and a certain dissociation of the mechanisms of the power system from the people operating it. These developments of mid-socialist Poland pointed rather in the direction of adapting a cybernetic understanding of social engineering, where the institutionalised processes and feedbacks in-between human beings would define the shape and efficiency of the future society.

3.1.2 Bureaucracy and cybernetics

Notwithstanding the ongoing debates over the interpretation of Marx's writings, Kołakowski's revision of Marxism through Marx attempted not so much to impose a correct reading of Marx as to push his ideas further in relation to specific contemporary conditions. Kołakowski's approach inspired and influenced many cultural figures in the 1960s. In the early 1970s, it also contributed to the abandonment of Marxist concepts by many intellectuals and the rejection[31] of the ideological grounds of a socialist system that in practice had already been abolished.[32] Although Polish Stalinism was over after 1956 and mass manipulation and repression waned, in the 1960s frustration[33] over living conditions, social stratification, and economic stagnation increased. The working class, which in theory was conceived as the agent of history, was in practice objectified by the state and production institutions led by managers; its actual weight in numbers and relevance bore "no proportion to its scant ability to voice its own interests in an articulated form."[34] Moreover, the interdependence between human subjects and their broader social and political context appeared to have grown more complex and dynamic after the Second World War. Thanks to the development of mass information technologies and their expanding reach, the scale of individuals involved in and affected by state institutions and media discourses reached new levels.[35] As became clearer by the year, theoretical Marxist revisions and the integration of socialist humanist ideas had little to no effect on actual political decisions or the consciousness of the broader masses. Of course, this was not only due to a certain disinterest among many Polish citizens in political–theoretical reflections;[36] it was also rooted in the power apparatus of the Polish United Workers' Party PZPR and its repression of critical or revisionist writing, foreshadowing the repression of the 1968 protests.

During the political campaign in 1968, prominent scholars like Bauman, Baczko, and Kołakowski, whom the PZPR had already expelled in 1966, were excluded from institutions and decided to leave the country due to their dire professional prospects in Poland and the political and social pressure they faced. These departures and the intellectual silencing interrupted the activities of the informal Warsaw School of the History of Ideas (*Warszawska szkoła historii idei*),[37] of which Kołakowski and Baczko were key figures. The output of this Warsaw-based group of philosophers, historians, and sociologists had been highly influential. Its disruption is representative of the Polish crisis of ideas in the late 1960s, when the revisionist, integrative ideas, and open thinking that flourished after 1956 were repressed and thinkers uncomfortable to the system were removed or marginalised.[38] Jerzy Szacki (1929–2016), another historian of ideas and sociologist connected to the Warsaw school, put it this way: "The only function of [the fight against revisionism] was to destroy the desire to discuss anything, to think in general."[39] For the next several years, the notion of ideas and utopia—of critical thinking about past, present, and a possible future as something valuable and

desired—seemed to have been suspended. In contrast to the cut-down on scholarly discussion with the rise of Stalinism and its domination of the Marxist–Leninist doctrine,[40] in the late 1960s no particular political–philosophical paradigm was propagated, even though a twisted "communist" ethno-nationalism was popular in media and politics.[41]

The imagery of an ideological void was very present in the minds of contemporary Polish intellectuals. Szacki described this turn as follows: "In general, March was the funeral of communist ideology in Poland. Its place was taken by techniques of power, manipulation and propaganda, which were more or less successfully applied."[42] The 1968 backlash against Marxist humanist ideas is thus often seen as the victory of technocracy over the ideological or utopian perspective, which had hoped to "rescue modern man from the dehumanizing and alienating processes of today's world of science and technology."[43] Of course, this backlash did not happen suddenly in March 1968, but was the culmination of a process that began in 1956, gained momentum in the mid- to late-1960s, and in some ways continued until the dissolution of the Polish People's Republic. However, the suspension of thought did not last until 1989. Rather, it evolved in the 1970s into a new, less Marxist-oriented line of thinking.[44]

The increasingly elaborate bureaucracy and technocracy of the 1960s moulded the obscure mechanisms of power into an impersonal system. Indeed, with the alleged "de-personalization" of the political system after Stalin's death, what remained was the system itself, a structure that was widely recognised as an independently operating, self-fulfilling machine. "Bureaucracy," as Bauman wrote, "transcends itself by gaining the ultimate ascendancy and rendering the charismatic ruler […] redundant."[45] The same fate applied to Gomułka, the champion of nationally oriented Polish communism elected as First Party Secretary in 1956. Soon after his election, he began to gradually lose popularity and credibility. He appeared increasingly helpless and unable to control the power mechanisms and to counteract the inner-Party split orchestrated by his Minister of the Interior, Moczar. Moczar benefited from many (young) party members' dissatisfaction over their limited prospects of climbing the party hierarchy by directing their frustration against the older generation of functionaries.[46] Yet, as the example of Moczar's disappointed aspirations to become First Party Secretary shows, it was difficult to successfully direct the workings of the system over a longer period due its manifold possibilities for manipulation and discrimination. The Hobbesian image of the state had become a mechanistic party–state Leviathan that thrived on its subjects' disbelief in its ideological justification and "everyone's fear of everyone, a fear acted out in aggressions."[47] The imagery of a mechanistic state apparatus that operated without regard to its human subjects was widely present in the writings of contemporary critics, who offered varying diagnoses as to whether this apparatus could be stopped or reformed.[48]

The bureaucracy developed in state socialism appeared like an adaptation—voluntary or not—of the cybernetic visions that arose after the Second World

War in the USA and that had their heyday in the 1950s and 1960s. In Poland, cybernetics attained popularity in the 1960s by proposing a "new, rational style of thinking about society and economy, which was conducive […] to the spheres of science, teaching and economic practice."[49] The American mathematician, philosopher, and cybernetics founder Norbert Wiener's (1894–1964) influential work *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (1950) appeared in Polish translation in 1960,[50] and in 1962, the Polish Cybernetic Society (*Polskie Towarzystwo Cybernetyczne*, PTC) emerged in Warsaw. In the 1970s Poland also developed a strand of "social cybernetics" (*cybernetyka społeczna*), led by Marian Mazur (1909–1983) and Józef Kossecki (1936–2015).[51]

Cybernetics, the science of control and regulation, operated through a highly technologised logic of computation and information transmission that envisaged a mechanistic functioning based on input and feedback for all spheres of human (and non-human) activity.[52] The conditions of Polish life in the late 1960s contrasted with cybernetic ideals in some ways and corresponded with them in others. Cybernetic communication envisaged a smooth, obstacle-free exchange of unambiguous information and the continuous flow of input and feedback among its participants. In mid-socialist Poland, however, language was perceived as highly unreliable, information as very unequally distributed, and the channels of its exchange as obscured.[53] However, the aspiration to control—understood as the exertion of "a desired influence on defined phenomena"[54]—was common to both cybernetic theory and Polish bureaucratic reality, which aimed to subordinate social processes to a top–down protocol.

Cybernetics intended to regulate social processes through scientific and technological means that would help to manage and steer every level of (world) society, resulting in a harmonised, conflict-free humanity. Humans themselves were conceived as a sort of machine or node of information processing that could be programmed to function smoothly.[55] Accordingly, cybernetics did not only question the notion of human freedom and independence highlighted by Marxist humanism but rendered it superfluous or even troublesome. Cybernetics enclosed human agency, insofar as it existed at all, in a system of regulations and incentives that would channel it into predictable patterns. Philosopher and fictional writer Stanisław Lem (1921–2006) suggested that in cybernetics, "man" could be understood as an "animal, whose fate is controlled by two channels: the channel of inheritance information, and the channel of cultural information."[56] Of course, this vision did not appeal to everyone. As Mazur put it in one of his first books on cybernetics, "Cybernetic theory of autonomous systems" (*Cybernetyczna teoria układów samodzielnych*, 1966), the science he propagated "violates established views about the role of humans, putting them on an equal footing with other organisms and even machines, which many people find unacceptable."[57] Cybernetics featured elements of transhumanism—the improvement of the human through technological development and techniques of control[58]—while also raising the

prospect that the human could be abolished entirely. The questioning or decentring of the human subject in cybernetics can be seen as a "symptom of reorientation after the World War as well as the raising of a fundamental question in light of technological acceleration."[59]

The popularity of cybernetics in the 1960s was related to the international emergence of another scientific trend: structuralism. Both can be seen as answers to the humanist destabilisation brought about by the Second World War and technological progress shadowed by the threat of nuclear weapons. Both embraced the changes of the twentieth century in their focus on implementing scientific techniques. Cybernetics' embrace of technology and the emphasis on exactitude and definitions pressured the humanities to undergo a transition towards science and objectivity.[60] Linguistics was perhaps cybernetics' most eager adept in the humanities, if one considers the fascination with formulae, forms, and rules in the formalist and structuralist approaches.[61] Structuralism, just like cybernetics, focused on the architecture and dynamics of systems in which the individual human and its agency became embedded functions or nodes in the structure. Thus, "Foucault's emphatic talk of the death of man, understood as the perishing of a major metaphysical concept, is inextricably tied to the cybernetic event."[62]

In the late 1960s, Polish academia refocussed from Marxist–historicist scholarship onto a linguistically inspired structuralism concentrating primarily on the text's structure. This shift happened in the context of an international turn initiated by French theory. Yet, there is a significant difference between French and Polish structuralism of the late 1960s: while the former, infused by Marxism, now "accept[ed] political content as a part of academic discourse," the latter refused to "allow non-academic, political contents onto its terrain."[63] Polish structuralism renounced the possibility of judging a work in relation to its external "reality"[64] as it was analysed primarily "immanently" or "intrinsically" in relation to the literary tradition and the linguistic system alone.[65] The refusal to engage with a given text's (or other cultural work's) ideologeme[66] allowed Polish scholars for a depoliticised stance, which became especially important during the crisis of 1968 and the following years. Thus, the sociopolitical atmosphere of mid-socialist Poland reinforced the turn to structuralism due to the latter's allegedly ideology-free, purely technological methodology.[67] Polish literary studies became, as the renowned structuralist Janusz Sławiński (1934–2014) later remarked, a "reservation" (*rezerwat*)[68] of relative freedom,[69] as long as one steered clear of political questions.[70]

3.1.3 Looking for the human

As Mazur correctly remarked, the cybernetic–structuralist turn was met with a certain degree of resistance. In view of the linguistic uncertainties as well as the reduction of human agency in Polish mid-socialism, the cybernetic fascination with different means of encoding information, namely in mathematical formulae and with the help of the so-called exact sciences,[71] took on a

new level of urgency—a fascination paired with horror—in cultural production. So, for example, in Tadeusz Konwicki's (1926–2015) novel *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* (*Zwierzoczłekoupiór*, 1969). Its protagonist Piotr, a schoolboy, grows up in a family whose members have trouble communicating with each other, and are unable to convey information and feelings properly. Piotr puts his trust solely in books and knowledge gained from science. Whatever happens, he tries to grasp its meaning with the help of scientific reflexion, in which he sees himself to excel and often reads reports about new findings in science with "a smile of pity."[72] Other forms of communication with the world, especially the danger of liking someone and being affected, put him off. Piotr repeatedly explains his rigid position to the readers, as if to convince himself, too: "I once again categorically point out that I am a rationalist and therefore believe only and exclusively in the human intellect, that is, wisdom."[73] At the same time, he does not like people who sport a "carefree faith in human reason" and are "content of life."[74] The cybernetic vision of the human individual stacked safely in a system, fulfilling its function without showing too much individuality seems to appeal to Piotr's mindset distancing him from the affects of others, and his latent distrust in humanity. The boy is in a way a caricature of the new communist human, disinterested in his closer environment and almost dogmatic in his beliefs in the (scientific) system.

The transhumanist utopia in which the young protagonist of *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* struggles to keep his allegiances is however disturbed and questioned. Konwicki, who had just left the Party two years before (1967),[75] clashes this cybernetic vision with a bundle of eerie fantastic events. He also gives the story an unexpected twist in the end: everything the narrator Piotr has told the readers turns out to be invented, as Piotr is a terminally ill child confined to a hospital bed just imagining his other life. With this narrative twist, the novel challenges the reader's conventional trust in fictional information as reliable information. Mistrust in presented information is a key to all levels of Konwicki's novel, as also Piotr shows constant doubts about the stories told by the human and non-human animals he encounters. Built-in uncertainty about information presented marked Konwicki's work since the 1960s in a broader sense, as the writer and filmmaker continuously intertwined (pseudo)autobiographical and fictional content, constantly looping and overlapping different times.[76] The destabilised orientation concerning facts, fiction, and the linearity of time highlights the precariousness of identities and biographical positions. This unreliability factor problematises the image of smooth communication as distribution and exchange of information at its very core, as the basic information as such is indeterminable. *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* counterpoises thus the signalled-only possibility of redeeming cybernetic structures with a melancholic polymorphism and instability of personal facts, positions, identities. Yet in this very elusiveness of identity, there is an assembly and overflow of human experience, feeling, and agency. Resistance to being reduced to a function is thus possible precisely because of this multiplicity and excess.

Such hovering positions are not uncommon in the artistic output of mid-socialist Poland; to present vaguely pessimistic perspectives on the present and future, paralleled with a melancholic intermingling of the past and present opening the space for the unseen and "useless." These issues will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this book.

In search for the human beyond social norms and patterns was also theatre creator and anthropologist Jerzy Grotowski (1933–1999), whose work is one of the best-known theatre phenomena in Poland and in the world. Grotowski and his Theatre Laboratory were looking for "the essence of what may be called theatre."[77] However, they were not interested in theatre in an institutional sense, nor in aspects of space or material as such, as we encounter it in the architectonic–structural reflections of other contemporary theatre practitioners, like Kazimierz Braun's (*1936) *Theatre of Community* (*Teatr wspólnoty*, 1972) or some of the student theatres.[78] Rather, Grotowski's theatre concentrated its main practices on the corporeality of the actor as its working material, where space or additional materials like props should not interfere with or divert the spectator from theatre itself. This would become known as "poor theatre," a term that Grotowski introduced and popularised in 1965 with his manifesto *Towards a Poor Theatre* (*Ku teatrowi ubogiemu*).[79] From 1962 to 1969, Grotowski created several "poor" theatre productions as director of the Theatre of 13 Rows (Teatr 13 Rzędów) first in Opole, then in Wrocław under the name of Theatre Laboratory (*Teatr Laboratorium*).

The productions of the 1960s sounded the interferences of the past and the present and the affective dynamics between actor and spectator. *Acropolis* (*Akropolis*, 1962), for example, based on the eponymous drama by the renowned and often-played writer and painter Stanisław Wyspiański (1869–1907). The drama's action is situated at the Wawel Cathedral, a site of the utmost national historical importance, and deals with motives of eviction, resurrection, destruction, and renewal. However, in Grotowski's *Acropolis* the site of the play is transposed to a concentration camp, or rather, oscillates between the cathedral, the camp, and a connotation of the world in general.[80] Despite the over-evident way the experience of Holocaust violence was integrated in the production, it was nonetheless camouflaged and written-over just like in a palimpsest, as Grzegorz Niziołek points out.[81] The audience was "disinclined to interpret"[82] the observed act of violence, as there was no direct and accessible representation or linear repetition of the Holocaust experience available to fully understand the spectacle. The spectacle included the lived-through experience within a sphere of orchestrated yet unpredictable affective outcomes. It became a place of repetition in a different sense: as a "constant referral […] to the very fact of denial"[83] of the gruesome events. The spectators were placed *again* in the impossible position of being a (passive) observer of someone else's suffering, thus repeating the socially denied Polish experience and suppressed memory of *bystanding* the Holocaust. The repetition of that which is omnipresent and yet cannot be

articulated provoked shock, paralysis, or anxiety; affective experiences the audience had difficulties to pin down and explain.[84]

These affective confusions were linked to the spectacle's referential elusiveness coupled with an unconditionally present experience of trauma. The past emerged not as past, but as parallel to, "alongside" the present times,[85] constantly troubling and countering the flow of life in the present. "Holocaust memory is an insomniac faculty, whose mental eyes have never slept,"[86] is how Lawrence L. Langer put it in his study on Holocaust testimonies. The unspoken and locked out doubling of temporalities certainly confused the image of a smooth proceeding of history and human doings. The past's weight in the post-war present was not only due to the extreme violence that had happened, but also to the fact that it was mostly abjected, refused, layered over. Even if talked about, Holocaust experience remained beyond the speakable and was impossible to convey, especially if attempted to be passed on to someone who had not lived through something similar. At the same time, the ethnic Polish part of society in Poland after the war struggled with its own ambivalent role during the Second World War in a way that was untold and blurred out. In the face of this regime of abjection and silencing, Grotowski turned towards the body as a means of transmission. He perceived the human material body—the actor's, the spectator's—as soaked with the memory that could not be told. Indeed, Grotowski understood the body *as* memory.[87] This buried-yet-present memory could be brought to the fore through bodily movement and the corporeal acts of *repetition* he staged in his spectacles.

Grotowski's emphasis on bodily work, movement repetition and the power of affects evoked by his spectacles aimed at "a dialectical overcoming of historical trauma [; he] created the illusion of an act of working through."[88] Theatre was just the vehicle Grotowski chose to explore this anthropological question. In *Acropolis*, he had "arrived at the point of final decay,"[89] at the point of regression where borders blurred, and the symbolic order failed. The theatre director's notion of body-memory was, according to Dorota Sajewska, "a certain response to the concept of subjectivity built, in an era of decay, on the ruins of Western philosophy."[90] The bodily acting work was thus simultaneously theoretical–cognitive activity, a way to uncover metaphysical dimensions unattainable by symbolically structured verbal language. Body-memory and the ways in which corporeally contained memory was evoked in movement would become the grounds of Grotowski's search for truth[91]—the truth of "human nature" (*istota ludzka*).[92] The question investigated through the performance of human beings in the Theatre Laboratory was: who or what is (a) human?[93] The human body figured as "the site where the collective body is manifested, where old rituals are rediscovered and ancestors found; […] the space enabling the phenomenon of reminiscence and guaranteeing cultural continuity."[94] The single actor's present movements were thus seen as a reverberation and resurrection of a slumbering meaning, as a channel to a transcendent, original human-ness. With Grotowski's anthropological interest growing, the relevance of the movement patterns and exercises in

acting that precede, accompany, and outlive the staging of a specific play became paramount. From 1972, he abandoned the form of the spectacle and no longer fixed movements into a solid performance. This stage of his work became known as "para-theatre."[95]

In the exploration of human-ness through corporeal movement, so-called "details" were defined. This could be a certain position of the hip or the forming of the hand. These "details" figured as a sort of archetype of movement or body configuration beyond cultural formation. Their practising and repetition would help to disrupt the socially embodied patterns and limitations of the body. The way and direction of this disruption were nonetheless meant to be determined by the individual and the situation it found itself in, as the exertion of such archetypal details varied and their succession in the actual exercises would be improvised. Grotowski illustrated this at the example of breathing:

> "And we could make, by studying numerous examples, a choice of one type of inhalation, one type of exhalation, one type of spinal posture. And this is a gross mistake, because there is no perfect type of breath, valid for all people and in all mental states and postures of the body. Breathing is a physiological reaction related to the specific nature of the individual and depends on the situation, the type of exertion, the actions taken by the body."[96]

By avoiding artificial conformity and acknowledging the particularity of the specific human body's situation, one would arrive at a more profound, proper way of breathing. Such exercises would "unblock forgotten energies"[97] slumbering in the bodies of the performers and release the whole self from incorporated social restrictions. Thus, exercising such archetypal "details"—specific positions or movements—would present the starting point not of pure, rigid movement, but of what could be called *différance* and of "activity" (*działanie*)[98] that connected detail and the performer's self in movement. "You must find this spontaneous line of the body, which is embodied in the details and goes beyond them, but which, at the same time, maintains precision."[99] The balance between precision—trueness to an universally human element—and individual expression, movement that encompassed the person "as a whole—with my interests, with my problems, with my difficulties,"[100] as one of the main actors in Theatre Laboratory, Rena Mirecka (1934–2022), put it—was not easily achieved.

Part of the exercises were thus also directed at overcoming individual resistances as "resistance of the body, to step over the fear that one has in many other cases, that beset the human (*człowiek*) as a whole."[101] The movement was directed towards a goal: according to Mirecka, it allowed "to accomplish a certain jump for the whole of me. It was an attempt to fly."[102] The Grotowski Method came close to the romantic conception[103] of the phantasmatic transgression of the borders of the self. In Grotowski's comments and statements, the

image of pushing and trying to climb or tear down a wall that one usually knocks one's head against, appeared as one of the main goals of their theatre experiments. The image transports the impression that behind this wall, the truth about the actor's self lies hidden, a truth that will also reveal aspects of human essence. However, Grotowski relativises these expectations in saying: "Art is a sort of will, desire, of attempt to cross the wall. Thus, what we can acquire is the consciousness of what the wall is. That is the only thing one can get to know."[104]

The Grotowski Method appears as a sort of psychoanalysis practiced through theatre, a performative drilling into the psyche. Former Grotowski actor Ewa Lubowiecka (1940–2011) described the moment when the psychic immunity or resistance (*odporność*) was torn down, but the person in question still pushed forward, as an emergence of a personal hell.[105] "After such a performance, you couldn't talk, you couldn't laugh, you couldn't normally exist"[106]—a state often framed in metaphysical terms as hell, or as sacrum.[107] The exercises performed in the Grotowski Method could thus lead to a liminal state as invoked by ritual practices; this liminality was achieved inside, as a transgression of the self.

The understanding of the self is however questionable if it should be stripped from its cultural and social imprints. In the performative space of un-doing, reduction, and excess, the performer's human self would dissolute into a phantasmatic notion of a universal, true, and enhanced human-ness. There was no clearly discernible distinction between liberation and violation of a self. This distinction becomes especially precarious if its definition lies in the hands of a teacher, not of the performer herself. In the Grotowski Method, the role of the teacher encompassed the power to define both the distilled human "detail" and the range of expression of a given individuality.[108] Hierarchy was built into the method; and the "living tissue"[109] of the body was gradually subordinated to a universalisation and a "vertical and patrilineal concept"[110] of human-ness tied to the notions of arriving at a pure origin. Thus, the method practiced by Grotowski and his followers must be understood as a form of transhumanist striving to unearth a forgotten human essence beyond the contemporary limitations of human beings. The world beyond the human appeared as a means to discover and extend the human experience of itself; however, it was of little interest on its own. In contrary to transgressive humanist perspectives, in Grotowski's method, the self as a cipher for an original, unscathed emergency of humankind became all-encompassing.

3.2 Transgressive humanist intuitions

In my attempt to arrive at artistic and cultural phenomena that transgress a humanistic perspective without dehumanisation, as it was often feared, but towards a more encompassing, environmental understanding of humans, the thought of literary scholar Maria Janion figures as a ground line. Her work

would become the beacon of anthropologist and humanist methodology in Polish philology in the late PRL and post-socialist period. She also accounts as the initiator of psychoanalytic approaches in the Polish humanities.[111] Janion proposed an understanding of the human subject as embedded in history, social, and cultural contexts. She was also highly interested in the role of the situated, corporeal human subject in the processes of cognition and knowledge production. For her, humans were marked by a dialectical relation of the ability to be moved, affected, and shaped by others, by the social environment and history, and the ability of a subject to engage actively with the world. The acknowledgement of an intrinsic human agency provided in her eyes the only basis for political engagement and a sensible life.

The questions about the relation of the human subject and world catalysed Janion's hermeneutic transgressive spiralling through philosophical positions. Her arguments vacillated between classical humanism, structuralist approaches, and deconstruction, sounding a liminal, almost phenomenological position. However, Janion perceived the mid-socialist trending towards structuralism as proof of a crisis of humanist thought,[112] which caused her to insist more firmly on a Marxist dialectic–historical approach. The literary scholar argued that structuralist humanities stripped of historicism would lead to the "death of man"[113] as a motile, pro-active subject, replaced by an "anonymous, impersonal and omnipotent Structure"[114]—a rigid grid of interpretative schemes obscuring the life beneath. In her polemic with the 1960s' structuralist writings of the French philosophers Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), and Michel Foucault (1926–1984), she criticised their "programmatic neglect of the issue of individual […] expression."[115] Although her work was inspired by French thought and its reintroducing politics into academia, Janion could not agree with what she perceived as structuralism's striving for an "impersonal episteme."[116]

Despite Janion's criticism, her understanding of historicism or historical materialism pointed in a similar direction as Foucault's notion of the "death of man"[117] with its questioning of man as a universal, historically static category. Humankind, Janion implicitly argued, is formed by its historical and material context and therefore everchanging. Following the argument of sociologist Jerzy Szacki, she pointed out that historicism undermined the notion of a stable category of humankind, of *Man* with a capital letter. Historicism(s) freed the humanities from a hegemonic (European) universalism, which assumed that a defined, unchangeable human nature would apply to all human beings alike, "independently of where and when they live."[118] The specific socio-corporeal position of a given human in its specific environment would play an immense role in its self- and world-perception and its processes of reasoning. It would also affect its mode of sociality, the ability to speak (or to be heard), and to become a subject. With her main research interest focusing on the fringes of the very category of man/human and the mechanisms of integration and expulsion related to intersecting categories like ethnicity, gender, and (mental) sanity, Janion demonstrated that inclusion in or exclusion from this category has always been contested.

As Janion's starting point was the individual experience in the social structure, not vice versa, her work was often perceived as a continuation of humanist thought in Poland's structuralist 1970s and 1980s. However, Janion's position was decidedly Marxist, too, entailing the decentring of Enlightenment humanism's notion of reason as agency. Janion argued that the humanities should encompass not only the domain of human ideas, but also the productivity of affects, opening rationality and the self towards the material *other* and embracing the anxiety of (non-)identity.[119] In this, she intensified a tendency that had been inherent in Central Eastern European, and especially Polish Romanticist variations of humanist convictions, namely the relevance of the irrational for the conception of man.[120] What could be framed in today's Western epistemological terms as a post-humanist approach to understanding, may appear from a Polish–Romanticist perspective—and Janion was an expert in Romanticist culture—as an organic continuation of humanist thought. However, as I want to focus on the environmental character and the expansion beyond the human subject happening in the material explored in the present book, the term of *transgressive* humanism—the transgression of a humanism of "man"—seemed a very well-fitting term also in view of Janion's own explorations of social transgressions.

Transgression is a figure of thought that insists on the constitutive yet disputable borders of culturally constructed categories. This idea gains importance in Janion's work on the cultural phenomena of liminality and metamorphosis in the later 1970s. In the Polish humanities, the term transgression is strongly connected to Janion's work, as in the 1980s she published a series entitled "Transgressions."[121] Despite the series' title, the concept of transgression was not explicated there, but rather emerges from the palimpsest of assembled materials. Transgression refers to the overstepping of borders and semantically includes an anti-immunitarian character, an intermingling that is in stark contrast to the endeavours of minusivity I discussed in Chapter 2. Unlike *transition* or *transformation*, transgression does not denote the crossing over into another fixed state; transgression is rather a relation that does not leave behind what was before. It vacillates at the border and makes it porous, blurring and intertwining the bordering spheres.[122]

The notion of transgression of humanism answers to those developments in mid-socialist Polish culture that do not remain fixed onto human being, but travel from there to the borders of humanity and beyond, without losing interest in human existence as a point of experience.[123] As humanist traditions were "put on trial"[124] in the 20th century, questions about the quality of being human emerged, and with them the question about humans' relation to that which is more-than-human. For Janion, the social, political, and intellectual crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s had led her towards an intensification of psychophysical thinking-feeling that is most evident in her "cult"[125] book "Romanticism, Revolution, Marxism" (*Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm, RRM*). The radicality of *RRM* lies in its constant negotiation and instability of a point in-between, marked by dialogism and incessant transgression. *RRM* delivers aspects relevant for transgressive humanism

I will discuss here: first, the relevance of human being to the processes of knowledge production and the decentring of rationality with a consideration of the irrational—feeling, affect, bodily sensations—in cognition; second, an epistemological focus on dialogue as a dialectic exchange not only between humans, but also as a process taking place between humans and their environment; and third, polyphony as a means to destabilise notions of fixated truth and identity, which emerges parallel to a consciousness of vulnerability not only of the self, but of others, too.

3.2.1 Bounded human knowledge

Janion perceived "truth" as relative and dependent on whoever researched and stated it. This meant to consider the specific historical–personal setting of a subject that played into the very processes of cognition, knowledge production, and knowledge distribution. The situatedness in social structures and power relations would affect the way questions would be posed, methodologies applied, and results produced. Janion illustrated this zone of knowledge production that resided in the social in-between by referring to the observations of quantum physicist Werner Heisenberg (1901–1976). She referenced Heisenberg as a scientist who "invested much thought into the disclosure of the role of 'man as the subject of science', […] the role of man thinking and asking questions, the role of the anthropological factor in the exact sciences."[126] Janion underlined that even in physics, often understood as the most exact and objective discipline, the "anthropological factor" does in fact influence the results of studies. Heisenberg's observer effect states that through the very act of observing and measuring, systems may be affected and changed. Thus, a scientist may never be able to tell exact results because there is no way to abstract from her effect on the system measured. In this perspective, the knowledge produced in scientific measurements is always knowledge already transmitted through somebody (someone's body); the possibility of pure knowledge without any relation to human corporeality gets highly questioned. Moreover, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle proposes that in quantum physics, even without the physical presence of an observer, scientific accuracy is doubtful or even impossible. Focusing on one aspect, like the position of a particle, would increase the inaccuracy of the definition of another aspect, like the speed of the given particle. Accordingly, the way questions are asked and results searched for becomes a defining precondition for the outcomes. Humans do not really have at their disposal any instrument to come to fixed results abstracted from the process of scientific research, and thus from human activity. Human knowledge would have to do with variables and uncertainties.

With her digression to quantum physics, Janion integrated "exact" sciences and philosophy, questioning their restrictive separation. Her sympathy with and openness towards the sciences however should not be mistaken for an adoration of scientific exactitude that may have flourished in the

writings of other humanities scholars at the time. On the contrary, Janion meditated on how quantum physics' discovery of the factor of interrelativity deconstructed the notion of "pure" or true scientific findings, pointing out that the subject of research would always in some way influence the findings of its experiments or analyses.[127] She underlined that reason is ready to cheat itself as to the claims of its findings, and that these allegedly "true" scientific paradigms inform the human perspective on the world—just like vice versa. The material and the mental world entertain a dialectical relation, which is however unthinkable without the factor of human cognitive processes.[128]

Insisting that "the anthropological factor"[129] destabilises the notion of objective knowledge in the sciences and humanities, Janion made arguments similar to those advanced by Kołakowski in his engagement with early Marxian thought. Both emphasised the impossibility of *knowing* considering humans' inability to detach from their own processes of perception and cognition. Though mostly agreeing with German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833–1911) definition of the humanities as the "understanding"[130] discipline and cherishing the humanist conviction of a motility of the self, bestowing human life with sense, Janion rejected the conception of universal human reason and continual progress towards truth-finding as proposed and propagated by Enlightenment humanism. In her view, clinging to a concept of pure reason was not only false, but dangerous.[131] "Reasoning" could only take place in close interaction with the world, and this interaction would always happen in a specific, biographically–historically embedded situation. Citing Szacki's 1971 essay "On the so-called Historicism in the Social Sciences" (*"O tzw. historyzmie w naukach społecznych"*), she pointed out the "rootedness" of cognition and located the experiencing subject "in the very same social reality that it occupies itself with."[132]

Janion further refined her argument by separating the irrational historicism proposed by Dilthey from the rational historicism of Hegel and Marx.[133] According to Janion, Dilthey favoured "irrational 'life'" over the "rational 'concept'," arguing that the latter was secondary to and born from experiencing life, from the act of "living through" (*przeżywanie*).[134] To consider the whole biopsychical entity of a subject meant to include "irrational" processes that condensed as embodied layers of knowledge. Conceptions of "cognition," "reason," or "truth" were thus only possible as an interface between a corporeal subject and its bodily-material and cultural entanglements. Janion introduced to hermeneutics the tool of "humanist intuition,"[135] by which she meant the acknowledgement and integration of more-than-rational mechanisms in cognition, of experiencing and thinking with the whole self as a material, historically, and socially situated being. In this context, thinking alone proved insufficient if not embedded in being and feeling:

> We do not have to be ashamed at all of the term: "humanist intuition." We use it as an indispensable tool in everyday life, I don't know why we should resign from it in the sciences (*nauka*). In the name of a strict

> differentiation between science and life? It seems that the humanities (*humanistyka*), at least the understanding humanities, aim to break down such distinctions—and I see this as one of their greatest merits.[136]

The "understanding" humanities in Janion's conception were located in the process of life itself and happened in and through immersion in the social and material environment, thereby puncturing the borders between subject and world. Hermeneutics thus became a dialogue between the thinking–feeling self, its history, and environment.

In her insistence on these factors of being—the human self as well as its historical, social-material environment and the necessary interrelations—Janion developed a notion of scholarship that blurred the distinction between the thinking mind and the feeling body. Freed from mediation by a postulated omnipotent reason, the relation between subject and life thus gained a singular intimacy, connecting inner and outer worlds, experience and reason as it united body and mind. While demonstrating a greater interest in materialities,[137] this approach reconnected two subjects that Janion saw as neglected or disconnected by the French structuralism of the 1960s:[138] the human being bestowed with agency and the world beyond its discursive processing, which possessed an existence and motility of its own widely unbeknownst to humans.[139] Life as a process has or generates knowledge that more or less, and from different perspectives, constitutes, imprints itself on and moves the human subject.

An illustration of such cognitive processes bound to the corporeal position of an experiencing being can be found in sci-fi writer and philosopher Stanisław Lem's lesser-known novel *The Master's Voice* (*Głos Pana*, 1968). The novel presents the struggle for understanding—for a human understanding of the world, and literally for humans to understand—as its key question, at the same time stressing the limitations experienced by humans in their quest for knowledge and cognitive mastery over the world.[140] In Lem's philosophical novel-report, several groups of American scientists try to decode a supposedly alien message or information pattern that they have filtered from the white noise of the universe. While the message remains utterly inscrutable, the scientists can also never establish with certainty that the pattern actually is meaningful. Nonetheless, the scientists manage to isolate strips of an encoded structure in the message that leads them to produce a curious, instable material of unknown-before properties, without, however, apparent functionality. Though having managed to transform some parts of the supposed message into matter, the scientists are at a loss.

The produced material seems to have a certain agency and a mysterious—to the stunned scientists—will or agenda, and yet, it is not an alien living being, but a redesign of terrestrial materials implemented by the scientists. The material reveals the uncanniness of the earthly matter that suddenly follows alien rules, rules contradicting the scientific protocols of physics. This emerging "flip side" of terrestrial matter becomes a creature, a mysterious

beingness emerging from the blind collaboration of alien (though this is never confirmed) and human intelligences. Some scientists call the material "Master of the Flies" (*Pan Much*) due to its mysterious effect on flies:

> the flies first became motionless, then spread their wings and the next second, they were swirling around the flask in black crazed balls—I thought I heard their venomous buzzing. He brought the container a little closer to the lid still—the flies were banging about more and more violently.[141]

The flies' reaction to the creature-matter questions the human-installed hierarchy between humans and flies: do flies understand what humans are unable to grasp? The insects seem to further the human understanding of the alien material, serving as one of the very few hints about the characteristics of the material; however, at the same time, the scientists are unable to integrate this scrap of information ("the flies react") into their empty file about the matter.

> [A]s far as this indeed peculiar effect with flies was concerned, nobody had the faintest idea of its mechanism, especially since only a few Hymenoptera showed it apart from flies. Spiders, beetles, and many other insects the biologists patiently carried into this abyss did not react at all to the presence of the substance heated by the reactions going on inside it. There was talk of waves, rays; at least none of telepathy. Flies whose abdominal nodes were pharmacologically paralysed did not manifest the effect. But that was a rather trivial finding. The unfortunate flies were drugged, amputated one by one whatever possible, their legs and wings immobilised alternately, but in the end, the only finding was that a thick layer of dielectric shielded the impact effectively. Thus, it was physical, not 'miraculous'.[142]

The processes going on before the scientists' eyes are beyond their understanding; and the flies are unable/unwilling to communicate the reason for their reaction to the mysterious material to the humans. All the scientists know to do in this situation is to apply their probed techniques of animal testing,[143] to make the flies "speak" to them through "readable" bodily effects. This is why the flies become the "unfortunate" objects of experimentation, cutting up, drugging, and every other conceivable means that the human scientists could think up to elicit the secret of the alien matter.

The anxiousness about the impenetrable alienness of the extra-terrestrial code and material is transposed onto the flies: how can they *know* the material if humans don't?[144] The flies' status of being is destabilised: they turn out just as alien as their apparent "master". Thus, the flies suddenly abandon the human side of terrestrial knowledge and physics, oscillating now between earthliness and alienness, between their positivist categorisation in the human catalogue of beings and their uncanny agency as abjects and intruders,

threatening and promising otherness alike. The flies' refusal to communicate their secret knowledge of the material jolts the hierarchy humans established between themselves and insects. Lem's diagnose of a vast human ignorance, combined with a stubbornness in sticking to established thinking is underlined in the novel by the fact that even amongst the scientists, no fruitful communication is established, as every group isolates their methodology, their findings, and doubts. *The Master's Voice* is thus a literary disclosure and a harsh critique of a solipsistic humanism's violence.[145] Despite its portrayal of "other" realities and knowledges still beyond the scope of human understanding, the novel is very pessimistic about the possibility of humans to overcome their cognitive barriers and human ability to assume the positions of others. This implies not only an impossibility of successful or in any way satisfying inter- or even intraspecies communication; it also confirms the existence of a variety of situated knowledges existing in parallel—a fact that the scientists in *The Master's Voice* are however unable to acknowledge.

3.2.2 Dialogism

The plurality of perspectives and standpoints, their co-existence and conversation, is a key understanding of transgressive humanism. It strongly relates to the refusal of a singular truth, which would not be tied to a specific location in spacetime. In this context, the notion of dialogue as a process of exchange and transformation becomes important. This notion had been developed in the 1960s in Polish academia: the participants in the conference "The historical process in literature and art" (*Proces historyczny w literaturze i sztuce*), held in May 1965 in Warsaw, issued a call for academic integration, the opening of methodological and theoretical approaches, interdisciplinary exchange and personal association among researchers and theoreticians.[146] The proceedings of the conference feature almost 40 pages of discussion after the panel with Janion's presentation. The discussion, which according to Janion lasted nearly 24 hours,[147] reflects the diverse approaches, interests, and doubts present in the conference hall. Janion herself voiced the need for an academic language that would connect the different disciplines—history, literature, film, art, ethnology, etc.—and allow for "broad academic agreement."[148] She ascribed the development of this interdisciplinary language to the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas—the very school that in 1966 came under political pressure and disassembled in the wake of March 1968 with the emigration of Baczko and Kołakowski, amongst others.

Janion was, moreover, convinced of a "dialectical internal dependence," a sort of dialogue, between "worldview and style, the […] way of thinking and its stylistic articulation."[149] Janion's suggestion of a dialectical relation between idea and form was criticised in this very conference, as Polish literary studies and theory were beginning to shift from a historical–materialist method towards the structuralist paradigm of the next decade.[150] Yet in 1965 the attempt at critical disciplinary and methodological cross-fertilisation was

still fully underway, and the academic evolution was accompanied by an articulated need for exchange and reorientation, discussion, and the reassembling of thoughts and people.[151] This dialogue would be cut short in the following years. The period of structuralist literary studies was characterised by a non-dialogism (*nie-dialogowość*) that rarely entered productive dialogue with other methodological approaches[152] and remained isolated from political issues on both the ontological and epistemological level. Similarly, a certain closing-off of Janion's texts from most of the contemporary Polish academic context happened. Janion directed her later critique or refusal of structuralism not at Polish structuralist approaches—these were hardly referenced at all—but mostly at French structuralism.

Dialogue as an exchange of opinions and standpoints was a demand that resounded not only in academia of the 1960s; it was also seen as an instrument to arrive at a more truthful understanding of the world in the domain of cultural production,[153] and as a desideratum in face of the increasing political monologue of the Party. The demand for dialogue was voiced by one of the tragic figures of the March affairs, the Catholic politician and writer Jerzy Zawieyski (1902–1969). In a speech at the Sejm in April 1968, Zawieyski reacted to and condemned the violent attacks against discredited writers, and on a more general level, the hateful atmosphere.[154] A central term of his speech was "dialogue"—according to him, "[i]n the contemporary world, a valuable conceptual shorthand with a strong humanistic content."[155] In accusing his colleagues in the Sejm—the only house of parliament in the PRL—and the Party functionaries to intentionally avoid and suppress dialogue, he also pointed out their divergence from the path of socialism "with a human face" towards a dehumanised system. Relevant in his conception of dialogue was not only the act of talking to each other, where opposing voices could be heard and acknowledged. Dialogue according to Zawieyski would mean to enter a relationship of a common movement of searching and questioning without erasing difference; indeed, he understood difference as fundamental for dialogue:

> The prerequisite for dialogue, apart from mutual goodwill, is an attitude of respect for the other's difference, a willingness to understand somebody else's rationale, a kind of transcendence toward the other person, whom one does not want to absorb, seize or distort, but with whom one wants to seek something together. If this is the case, something of one's own reason must be suspended and even questioned to fully embrace the objectivity of the other, and to awaken in us the sense that the meaning of life is not only within ourselves, but also beyond us.[156]

Zawieyski pleaded for openness and sensibility of the self towards the other and the readiness to be affected by dialogue. Indeed, dialogue must be understood less as an activity than as a mutual process, a dynamic condition which, however, could not develop under the circumstances of social minusivity

when everyone was intent on safeguarding their own integrity. Zawieyski thus saw the destruction of an atmosphere of dialogue in the fact that a commonality bridging difference—he called it the "spirit of brotherhood," translating as "not always fully recognised desires to seek together and to go together"[157]—could no longer be acknowledged. It must also be said that apart from the philosophical reflection on dialogue, his speech was full of defences against his opponents, thus playing into the gamble of accusative words that ruled in 1968. Also, he would not live to see a relaxation of this atmosphere: after having been dispelled from the Sejm in 1969, he suffered a stroke and two months after fell—for contested reasons—from the hospital balcony to his death.[158]

In discussing the notion of dialogue, it is worthwhile to mention the Russian philosopher and literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), whose thinking gave birth to the concept of "dialogism."[159] Bakhtin had developed in the 1930s a notion of dialogue from his analysis of novels as a "microcosm of heteroglossia."[160] Bakhtin understood novels as a melting pot of the diverse languages of the novel's figures, social classes, regional differences etc. He saw these languages not as isolated phenomena, but as coming to signify only in relation and interaction, in the "dialogizing background of other languages:"

> A language is revealed in all its distinctiveness only when it is brought into relationship with other languages, entering with them into one single heteroglot unity of societal becoming. Every language in the novel is a point of view, a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives.[161]

This relational thinking stressed the relevance of a particular moment and a particular position, and thus the impossibility of a singular or unitary site of knowledge. Otherness, its position and relation to the self, was a premise for experience, consciousness, and knowledge, as only the dialogising relationship with non-identity enabled the formation of identity; hence, a self is never self-sufficient, nor is it a stable entity, as it is an ongoing transformative dialogue with the world.[162] Dialogism also came to transport an understanding of reasoning as an attempt "to overcome the gap between 'matter' and 'spirit'."[163]

In this sense, Janion's book *RRM* promotes a dialogic understanding of the processes of cognition. It also takes the notion of "dialogue" literally, presenting itself as a product of previous discussions and as a part of an ongoing conversation, as it states in the very first sentences of the introduction:

> [This is] a book-conversation, a book that is basically "told," colloquial, "spoken," and not "written." It is of course easy to understand that in the end, it is a written book, yet it is born from talks at university […] In fact, I consciously preserved several peculiarities here. They

> result both from the needs and requirements of university pedagogy (e.g., not only discussing the classics that belong to the canon anyway but also books that simply appeared on our book market lately), and from the seminary courses themselves, from the dialogues with listeners that often […] guided their lecturer with thoughts and interests.[164]

Although it introduces binary oppositions, such as "oral" and "written," or "lecturer" and "listeners," the passage immediately upturns this limited imaginary of a dialogue between two actors or counterposed characteristics. Instead, it stresses the processes going on in-between, and the mutual fertilisation. The written book emerges from oral discussion and preserves its traces—and it intends to spark other, written or oral, debates. The book resides on the margins between talking, listening, and writing, and writing and reading again, as its author becomes a reader–writer.[165] Janion also engaged with the hierarchically structured opposition between the university lecturer and her audience. She staged herself (the lecturer) not as *the* speaker, but as a listener who gathers, assembles, and organises the thoughts and interests of her audience in the book to fulfil their yearning for inspiration. Her function is presented as that of a medium, an interface between the assembled students and a cultural sphere they want to explore.

RRM appears as the result of an ongoing dialogue between reading and writing, between lecturer and students dialogising each other. Yet at the same time, it is both less and more than that. Indeed, the students do not have a perceptible voice in the text itself, save for ten pages of reprinted discussion. Their opinions, questions, and interests form the basis of the "talk" woven into the discourse without surfacing. The discourse involves gradually more voices as the book proceeds. But neither does Janion's voice often emerge. It only occasionally erupts into affective expressions or emotive passages in the text that shift the sympathies and agreements of the reader. Especially in these passages of affective eruption, the emerging textual subject invokes its reader, thus adding a layer of reception into the communicative network of the text. The main discussion, however, consists of interaction among several philosophical voices, intertwined with literary, cultural, and social materials.

An intertextual discourse emerges from the multi-layered text, a staccato of voices that sometimes stand side by side and sometimes answer or reject the previous positions. This conversation often seems to flow almost unmoderated, with each voice overlapping and re-writing the other as they spin a dense cobweb of situated opinions on a particular topic. The discourse in the book is thus in wide parts a polyphonic dialogue in which the multiple voices present speak for themselves, interact as if on their own accord and according to their respective socio-historical context. Hierarchies or orders of succession among the voices and opinions are often not clearly articulated, as Janion's hermeneutic circling does not attempt to arrive at a definite truth. "Her" narration is marked by a multi-voiced otherness. Although I would not state that Janion's writing style intentionally set out to confuse its

readers, the polyphonic arrangement of philosophical voices prevents the installation of a master narrative, a voice that organises the proposed opinions into a paramount monologue.

Nonetheless, amidst the fast-paced intermingling of diverse voices, the way in which these voices are allowed to speak—or the way in which they are intoned[166]—occasionally suggests their positive or negative evaluation by Janion. Thus, the book's discourse is not always a "pure" polyphony understood as a "co-working of several compositionally equivalent voices,"[167] but features inequalities as in the following passage:

> Let's say against Foucault that man will realise the kingdom of man. The ascription of the privileged point of view to the proletariat is the result of the historical self-interpretation of Marxism.
>
> In a letter from 1907 Stanisław Brzozowski criticised the pseudo-socialist attitude of *Głos* ["The Voice," a weekly paper]: "*Głos* constantly remarks that the rich do not think about the poor. That is a demoralisation of the working classes; the basis of the socialist consciousness is: away with welfare! We don't want to be thought about! We want to think!" That was a protest against the paternalist social conception, against treating the proletariat as an object of care from above. Today we can also say that structuralism has something of a structure of incapacitation, paternalistic and anonymous at the same time, if not we think, but "something" thinks itself through us.
>
> We understand the furious outburst of the German critic of structuralism, Urs Jaeggi: "The individual does not think anymore, the individual is traded. No one asks about the subject—who? Who talks? Who writes? Who acts? Who did that?" The answers were given in advance. Lévi-Strauss: "It is not the individual who gives sense to the structure in which it lives, but the structure that defines the sense of its life." Lacan: "We are not speaking beings, but spoken, […] not thinking beings, but thought."
>
> Of course, one is free not to accept such answers. One can determine that we do not only want to, but can think, that we keep our status as thinking and acting historical subjects, although we do it—according to Marx's classic formula—"under defined circumstances."[168]

Even though Foucault is mentioned in the first sentence, the name "Foucault" remains somehow an empty term, as Janion never actually allows his ideas to emerge in the textual composition. Nonetheless, Foucault—along with Lévi-Strauss, who at least has a voice—functions as the negative embodiment of a radically antihistorical structuralism in the text. Countering Foucault is the opinion of the working class, voiced, however, by the turn-of-the-century Marxist philosopher Stanisław Brzozowski (1878–1911) in his critique of yet another voice, the weekly paper "The Voice" (*Głos*, 1885–1905)—whose main writer was himself. As a result, the notion of proletariat remains rather vague as well; although it is attributed a "privileged point of view," no

proletarian as such gains a voice in the text, and the proletariat's alleged standpoint is represented by others.

What becomes evident in this case is the difficulty of inviting subaltern voices to speak for themselves, as they are only preserved through the more or less biased writings of literate and erudite contemporaries who managed to have their voices survive. This issue of a voice's autonomy and its embedment in the social discursive structure is the very topic of the passage above: to think or be thought, to speak or be spoken, who (or what?) writes, and under which circumstances. While Janion argues against structuralism in favour of a motile subject that can think and speak for itself, even if it is entangled in social, historical, political contexts ("under defined circumstances," as she terms it) and thus always biased, her engagement with the philosophical discourse also shows that certain voices and social positions are unavoidably excluded, spoken for, or silenced.

3.2.3 Polyphony of vulnerability

By spiralling through the voices and suggestions present in "Romanticism, revolution, Marxism," Janion's text transgresses their positions and constantly shifts the borders between them. The eclectic intermingling of ephemerally introduced voices partially sheds them of their spatio-temporal context: France, Poland, and Germany, 19th-century romantic outbursts and the cool structuralism of the late 1960s are mixed together, with names dropped or left out—a kaleidoscope of accumulated European philosophical thought philosophical thought in synchronic dialogue emerges. In this, the spatio-temporal localisation is not necessarily easy to maintain for the reader. In this carpet of positions that "combine but are not merged in the unity of the event,"[169] the collector-author Janion's "authorial prerogative"[170] is limited to the function of a hastened weaver of voices.

As the organising subject dissolves between the positions, and the positions dialogise each other in this synchronic polyvocality, the text tends towards liminality, a celebration of the sphere of neither-nor and not-only-but-also, lingering always in between the proposed views. In a way, the text becomes a field of de-situated knowledge that exceeds locality and temporality, an unstable knowledge that emerges in the non-space of the relation. It questions, rather than answers, the discussed problems and proposed solutions. In large parts, especially in part II on worldviews, the unbounded[171] text of *RRM* successfully evades assessment and fixation by opening up a multitude of strands and questions. This quality of polyphonic unboundedness and constant transgression produces a sensory overflow that leaves the reader quite shaken or stunned.[172] In *RRM*, Janion practised "reflex[es] of free thought"[173] to the point of epistemological ecstasy. Looking back at it, the scholar aptly remarked:

> I have to say that when I looked through *Romanticism, Revolution, …* now, it aroused some serious horror in me. It overwhelms with

> erudition, a certain excess, a wish to say everything. Why did I read and write all this? It looks like some sort of mania, or so I think.[174]

It seems that the later reading of *RRM* repeated a moment of "horror" that was inscribed into it in the first place, at the time of its writing. The excessive character and almost paralysing abundancy of thought in *RRM* was due to the desire to say everything at once before it was too late—in face of the Polish March propaganda that produced closure, isolation, and the death of communication. The intensity of Janion's book "Romanticism, Revolution, Marxism" as an overwhelming palimpsest of discourses and knowledges resulted from the scholar's affectional involvement in the March atmosphere. Instead of a reduction and retreat, in *RRM* an overflow takes place.

While Janion did not suffer direct discrimination as severe as others,[175] she recollects an atmosphere which reminded her strongly of the experience of the Second World War. The scholar noted how the official media constructed a social schism that excluded and expelled intellectual, allegedly cosmopolitan, and Zionist spheres from the Polish socialist society.[176] The incident noted above in Chapter 2 with her students coming to the conclusion that Janion must be Jewish, since she called for solidarity with Jewish people and against anti-Semitism in March 1968,[177] revealed the impermeability of the categories of identification available at the time. In retrospective, Janion described the "March horror"[178] in the starkest colours as a "disaster […], a catastrophe greater than the one that had already happened."[179]

In this context, it might be fruitful to return once more to Tadeusz Konwicki's *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*. In this novel, the boy Piotr suffers from attacks of indescribable fear that blacken out his senses/reason (*zmysły*) and overwhelm him completely. This fear comes as if from within and at the same time from everywhere in-between, is wholly undirected and basically omnipresent.

> It is the kind of something [*coś*] that assails us all our lives. It contains everything we don't understand about nature, […] everything we don't know about man, and everything we don't know about the unknowable in general. [E]veryone knows it well, is even intimate with it, which does not mean that they can ever stop fearing it.[180]

In the face of this terrifying, unstructured otherness within, the foremost task of the human senses/reason might actually be to integrate the human subject, to provide a unity against the disassembling fear. Thus, although it does not have any direct physicality, Piotr gives the fear a sort of imagined form and tangibility by naming it the "Anthropos-spectre-beast." A different translation in the original word order of *Zwierzoczłekoupiór* might be: Animalmanvampire. The *upiór*, a figure of Slavic folklore and prototype of the vampire, has/is a body, often in states of decomposition or fragmentation. Also, in the term *Zwierzoczłekoupiór* the borders in-between its components

are not fully clear, or who might be feasting on whom. The figure is oscillating, including facets of non-human, human, and no-longer-human body imaginaries that are draining each other and their environment. The "creature" evades physical fixation and invades Piotr's otherwise "strong" nerves effortlessly, crumbling his belief in an ordered and self-willed agency. It contradicts the concept of an individual both in its ungraspable self and in its transgression of the borders of its target subject.

The Anthropos-spectre-beast insists on a very elementary vulnerability of living beings. Philosopher Cora Diamond describes this vulnerability thus: "The awareness we each have of being a living body, being 'alive to the world', carries with it exposure to the bodily sense of vulnerability to death, sheer animal vulnerability […]. This vulnerability is capable of panicking us."[181] Indeed, the end of the novel reveals that Piotr's fundamental problem is his corporeal illness which chains the boy to his deathbed. This issue is constantly abjected during the story, covered up with the fantastic imaginations of the boy; nonetheless it punctures and disturbs his narration. It is not even only his individual death that haunts Piotr. The boy's time travel connects his post-war existence with a mythical pre-war landscape, where he meets the strange girl Ewa, confined to a land house due to her unnamed illness.[182] The melancholic, inscrutable figure of Ewa and the countryside she lives in imbue Piotr with a kind of inexplicable sadness—as if he was mourning over them at a time of their simultaneous existence and historical erasure. They bear in themselves the catastrophes-to-come of the Second World War, which in the novel is as swapped up in a time loop. The blanked-out period only manifests itself in the multiple future potentialities of the past that would never be allowed to unfold; and in the wounds inflicted on the landscape and on the souls and bodies of the people in Piotr's post-war town, erupting in attacks of the Anthropos-spectre-beast.[183]

A "legacy of incomprehensibility"[184] disallows the events of the war and their repercussions to be named and represented. The anxiety inherited from personal and collective experiences of violence and death sedimented in the rational and subrational layers. Janion, who as a child had witnessed the Jews of the Vilnius Ghetto driven out for execution during the Second World War,[185] had the violence of anti-Semitism marked on herself despite not being of Jewish descent. Her biography overlapped with an experience of suffering, the pains of a witness to extreme violence done to others. The reverberation of anti-Semitic violence in the March events reactivated the "relation between history and the body"[186] that had been wrought in the Second World War, effecting a "shock" not only to her conscious recollection, but on the whole corporeality. The omnipotence of the violating March discourse, reviving the unspoken experiences while at the same time covering them beneath bleak propaganda language, provoked a resistance of a specific kind in the literary scholar. It put her in a state of emergency that translated into hurried work to keep the awakening distrust in the humanity of mankind at bay. "I was under the impression that […] this catastrophe had to be prevented by

mobilising the forces in the youth, that you could not abandon them like that."[187] The March atmosphere thus translated into her writing, inspiring a personal yet multiple, affective and eclectic epistemology—a frenzied text.

Janion described "romantic frenzy" (*frenezja romantyczna*)[188] as way of writing that heightens emotional content while abandoning style and form, creating raw and chaotic works that render the inner world external. Romanticism in Polish culture is often seen as a more irrational, affective variety of Romanticism, combining individualist perspectives "with a glorification of a sense of community."[189] Thus, while being trained on Romanticist literature and analysing its textual mechanisms, Janion adapted—or was herself affected by—this style of writing for her own work and the ends for which it was written: to reach out towards others. In this frenetic writing, she almost lost any overarching argument and her textual self in the entanglements of European thinking on Romanticism, Marxism, and revolution. The ecstatic overflow of information and voices, the overturning of the border between inside and outside, appears disorganised; but it is in fact the frenzied character of the text that makes it at the same time appealing and disturbing. The fragments of knowledge and analysis *RRM* presents are linked to each other by an affective, almost pressing intensity. The momentum behind her text is a non-idea, a historical–personal urgency that might be translatable into words—as Janion does retrospectively—but most of all translates into a revelation of vulnerability in the text. It is almost as if the text overruled itself; it is in itself transgressive, conflictual, and paradoxical, not structured by a single line of thought as one would expect of a scholarly book. To understand Janion's work *RRM* as a frenzied text disclosing its wounds makes visible the connection between the experience of (repeated) socio-bodily vulnerability—not only of a self, but of others and the relations constituting sociality—and the way in which knowledge is produced and shared.

Similar polyphonic, trance-like writing occasionally emerged in Poland in post-Stalinist literature, as in Jerzy Andrzejewski's (1909–1983) novel *The Gates of Paradise* (*Bramy raju*, 1960), that deals with the Children's Crusade of 1212.[190] The novel consists almost entirely of one sentence, in which the thoughts and desires of the involved children and some adults intermingle in a stream of multiple consciousnesses. Thus, the dynamics of their naïve, corrupt, or cynic positions reflecting on each other is intensified, as their protective barriers seem almost inexistent in the whirl of the ecstatic walk to Jerusalem. Regarding the Second World War and the Holocaust, the technique of polyphonic writing confusing the reader as to the identity of the voices co-speaking was applied by Leopold Buczkowski's (1905–1989) prose *Black Torrent* (*Czarny potok*, written 1946 and published 1954). Bogdan Wojdowski's *Bread for the Departed* (*Chleb rzucony umarłym*, written in the 1960s, published 1971) used polyphony in a similar way, demonstrating the overwhelming simultaneity of events and crucial decisions, but introduced at the same time a sociality of things that will be discussed in Chapter 4. It seems, thus, that polyphonic writing could serve to transpose sensations of

crisis and vulnerability into the textual structure and to evoke similar sensations with the readers, whose ability to discern voices and identities and to grasp the spatio-corporeal dimension of a given situation was confused.

Notes

1 Andrzej Szczypiorski, *Msza za miasto Arras*, 2nd ed. (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1982), 36, translation mine.
2 See Szczypiorski, *Msza za miasto Arras*.
3 Barbara Niebielska-Rajca, "Humanitas: Projects of Humanist Anthropology," in *Humanism in Polish Culture*, ed. Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, Wiesław Pawlak, and Piotr Urbański (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 75.
4 Niebielska-Rajca, 74.
5 See Adam Schaff, *Marksizm a jednostka ludzka. Przyczynek do marksistowskiej filozofii człowieka* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1965); Adam Schaff, "Marxism and the Philosophy of Man," in *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, ed. Erich Fromm (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 141–50. See also Bartosz Matyja and Monika Woźniak, "Adam Schaff and the Polish Debates on the Concept of Socialist Humanism," in *Twilight of Idols? Studies in Intellectual Production in Socialist Europe 1956-1968*, ed. Natalia Borisova and Aleksandra Konarzewska (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).
6 See Louis Althusser, "Note on 'The Critique of the Personality Cult,'" in *Essays in Self-Criticism*, trans. Grahame Lock (London: NLB, 1976), 84, 87–88, http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/ESC76i.html#s1b.
7 Louis Althusser, "Part Seven: Marxism and Humanism," in *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Verso, 1996), 218, https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C4716651#page/217/mode/1/chapter/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C4716665.
8 I will follow the discussed scholars' terminology when referring to "man" as a term for the human species or human individuals.
9 Bronisław Baczko, "Marx and the Idea of the Universality of Man," in *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, ed. Erich Fromm, trans. Walter Odajnyk (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 187. See also Jörn Rüsen, "Humanism in Response to the Holocaust – Destruction or Innovation?," *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 2 (2008): 191–200, https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790802004703.
10 Leszek Kołakowski, "The Priest and the Jester," in *Toward a Marxist Humanism: Essays on the Left Today*, trans. Jane Zielonko Peel (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 10.
11 See for example the discussion on Schaff's book *Marxism and the Human Individual* (*Marksizm a jednostka ludzka*, 1965), "Dyskusja nad książką Adama Schaffa pt. 'Marksizm a jednostka ludzka,'" *Nowe Drogi* 12, no. 199 (1965): 57–186.
12 See Schaff, "Marxism and the Philosophy of Man," 142–43.
13 Erich Fromm, "Introduction," in *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, ed. Erich Fromm (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), vii.
14 Bogdan Suchodolski, "Renaissance Humanism and Marxian Humanism," in *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, ed. Erich Fromm (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 39.
15 Baczko, "Marx and the Idea of the Universality of Man.".
16 Schaff, "Marxism and the Philosophy of Man," 145.
17 See Una Blagojević, "Worlds of Praxis: 1968, Intellectuals, and an Island in the Yugoslav Adriatic," in *Unsettled 1968 in the Troubled Present: Revisiting the 50 Years of Discussions from East and Central Europe*, ed. Michał Przeperski,

Aleksandra Konarzewska, and Anna Nakai (London, New York: Routledge, 2019), 7–23.

18 See Bartłomiej Kapica, "Leszek Kołakowski and the Revisionists of Marxism: Their Stance on the Socio-Political System of the Polish People's Republic, 1958–1968," *The Polish Review* 66, no. 1 (2021): 41–60, https://doi.org/10.5406/polishreview.66.1.0041; Maciej Michalski, "History of Ideas (Leszek Kołakowski)," in *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture since 1918*, ed. Tamara Trojanowska et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 615–21; Marcin Niemczyk, "Rewizjonizm jako przejaw racjonalizacji myśli socjalistycznej," *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio G, Ius* 66, no. 1 (2019): 334, https://doi.org/10.17951/g.2019.66.1.331-350.

19 See Zygmunt Bauman, "O frustracji i o kuglarzach," *Kultura. Szkice, opowiadania, sprawozdania* 12, no. 255 (1968): 5–21; Zygmunt Bauman, "The Second-Generation Socialism: A Review of Socio-Political Trends in Polish Society," in *Political Opposition in One-Party States*, ed. Leonard Schapiro, Studies in Comparative Politics (London: Macmillan, 1972), 217–40; Zygmunt Bauman, *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976).

20 See Leszek Kołakowski, "Karl Marx and the Classical Definition of Truth," in *Toward a Marxist Humanism. Essays on the Left Today*, trans. Jane Zielonko Peel (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 38–66.

21 Leszek Kołakowski, "Karol Marks i klasyczna definicja prawdy," in *Kultura i fetysze. Zbiór rozpraw* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1967), 49.

22 See Kołakowski, "Karl Marx and the Classical Definition of Truth," 66.

23 See Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan, 2nd ed. (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 3–137; also the discussion of Kołakowski's essay on the young Marx in Zbigniew A. Jordan, "Marxist Revisionism in Poland: Its Background, Sources, and Main Tendencies," in *Kultura Essays*, ed. Leopold Tyrmand (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 132–34.

24 Leonardo Salamini, "Gramsci and Marxist Sociology of Knowledge: An Analysis of Hegemony-Ideology-Knowledge," *The Sociological Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1974): 360.

25 Salamini, 360.

26 Schaff, "Marxism and the Philosophy of Man," 143.

27 Salamini, "Gramsci and Marxist Sociology of Knowledge," 360.

28 Althusser, "Part Seven: Marxism and Humanism," 225, original emphasis.

29 Adam Schaff, *Strukturalismus und Marxismus. Essays*, trans. Witold Leder and Miroslaw Moczulski (Wien: Europaverlag, 1974), 181, translation mine.

30 See Schaff, 175.

31 This conclusion is suggested by numerous mentions of his texts or speeches as key moments in memoirs, interviews etc. See e.g. Henryk Dasko, "Testimony," in *1968: Forty Years After*, ed. Leszek W. Gluchowski and Antony Polonsky (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), 285; Andrzej Mencwel, *Sprawa sensu. Szkice* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), 25; Ewa Żylińska and Stefan Morawski, "Szok. Rozmowa z profesorem Stefanem Morawskim," in *Krajobraz po szoku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Przedświt, 1989), 14, 17.

32 See Leszek Kołakowski, "Przemówienie" (otwarte zebranie ZMS, Wydział Historii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1966); Leszek Kołakowski, "Tezy o nadziei i beznadziejności," *Kultura. Szkice, opowiadania, sprawozdania* 6, no. 285 (1971): 3–21.

33 See Bauman, "O frustracji.".

34 Bauman, "The Second-Generation Socialism," 230.

35 See Edwin Bendyk, "Media and Culture," in *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture since 1918*, ed. Tamara Trojanowska et al.

(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 787; Jakob Tanner, "Komplexität, Kybernetik und Kalter Krieg. 'Information' im Systemantagonismus von Markt und Plan," in *Die Transformation des Humanen. Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Kybernetik*, ed. Michael Hagner and Erich Hörl (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 377–413.

36 See Bauman, "The Second-Generation Socialism," 229.

37 There is a continuous debate whether one can call this scholarly circle a "school"; nonetheless, the name of it is more or less established. See Ryszard Sitek, *Warszawska szkoła historii idei. Między historią a teraźniejszością* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2000), 11–16.

38 See Sitek, *Warszawska szkoła historii idei*.

39 Jerzy Szacki, "8 marca 1988 roku," *Krytyka. Kwartalnik polityczny* 28–29 (1988): 22, all translations mine.

40 See Jordan, "Marxist Revisionism," 110.

41 See Marcin Zaremba, *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism: Nationalist Legitimization of the Communist Regime in Poland*, trans. Arthur Rosman (Berlin, Bern, Wien: Peter Lang, 2019), 256–257, 304–330.

42 Szacki, "8 marca 1988 roku," 22.

43 Salamini, "Gramsci and Marxist Sociology of Knowledge," 359. See also Tadeusz M. Jaroszewski, "Rewolucja techniczna a humanizm," *Nowe Drogi* 2, no. 129 (1960): 57–70.

44 See Dariusz Gawin, *Wielki zwrot. Ewolucja lewicy i odrodzenie idei społeczeństwa obywatelskiego 1956-1976* (Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy "Znak," 2013); Michał Siermiński, *Dekada przełomu. Polska lewica opozycyjna 1968-1989. Od demokracji robotniczej do narodowego paternalizmu* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Książka i Prasa, 2016).

45 Bauman, *Socialism*, 96. On the party state, see also Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957), 83.

46 See Feliks Tych, "Kilka uwag o Marcu 1968," in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 17–30; Zaremba, *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism*, 268–69.

47 Kołakowski, "Tezy o nadziei i beznadziejności," 18, translation mine. See also Bauman, "O frustracji," 14–16.

48 For contemporary interpretations of the bureaucratic system see Maria Hirszowicz, *Komunistyczny Lewiatan* (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1973); and Paulina Preiss, *Biurokracja totalna* (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1969).

49 Piotr Sienkiewicz and Jerzy S. Nowak, "Sześćdziesiąt lat cybernetyki i polskiej informatyki," *Zeszyty Naukowe Warszawskiej Wyższej Szkoły Informatyki* 3 (2009): 14, https://doi.org/10.26348/znwwsi.3.9, translation mine.

50 See Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetyka i społeczeństwo* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1960).

51 See Józef Kossecki, *Cybernetyka kultury* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1974); Józef Kossecki, *Cybernetyka społeczna* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975); Marian Mazur, *Cybernetyka i charakter* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1976).

52 See Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, 2nd ed. (New York: M.I.T. Press and Wiley, 1961).

53 See Michał Głowiński, *Nowomowa po polsku* (Warszawa: PEN, 1991); Paweł Nowak, "Zrozumieć socjalizm… Metafory pojęciowe i słowa-klucze doby PRL," in *Obrazy PRL. O konceptualizacji realnego socjalizmu w Polsce*, ed. Krzysztof Brzechczyn (Poznań: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008), 203–17; also Slava Gerovitch, *From Newspeak to Cyberspeak: A History of Soviet Cybernetics* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 2002) for the Soviet context.

54 Marian Mazur, *Cybernetyczna teoria układów samodzielnych* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1966), 12, http://www.autonom.edu.pl/publikacje/mazur_marian/cybernetyczna_teoria_ukladow_samodzielnych-ocr.pdf, all translations mine.
55 See Erich Hörl and Michael Hagner, "Überlegungen zur kybernetischen Transformation des Humanen," in *Die Transformation des Humanen. Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Kybernetik*, ed. Michael Hagner and Erich Hörl (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 7–37; Mazur, *Cybernetyczna teoria*, 11.
56 Stanisław Lem, *Filozofia przypadku. Literatura w świetle empirii* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1968), 98.
57 Mazur, *Cybernetyczna teoria*, 11.
58 See Nick Bostrom, "A History of Transhumanist Thought," *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 14, no. 1 (2005): 1–25.
59 Hörl and Hagner, "Überlegungen," 10, all translations mine.
60 See Tadeusz M. Jaroszewski, *Osobowość i wspólnota. Problemy osobowości we współczesnej antropologii filozoficznej – marksizm, strukturalizm, egzystencjalizm, personalizm chrześcijański* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1970), 263–267.
61 See Slava Gerovitch, "Roman Jakobson und die Kybernetisierung der Linguistik in der Sowjetunion," in *Die Transformation des Humanen. Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Kybernetik*, ed. Michael Hagner and Erich Hörl (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 229–74.
62 Hörl and Hagner, "Überlegungen," 10.
63 Maciej Gorczyński, "Strukturalizm, uniwersytet, kształcenie," in *Strukturalizm w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej. Wizje i rewizje*, ed. Danuta Ulicka and Włodzimierz Bolecki (Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna, 2012), 471–472, translation mine. Gorczyński frames this as a quite positive feature of Polish structuralism, as a refusal to be instrumentalised politically.
64 See Katarzyna Kasztenna, "From Soul to Science and Back Again: A Short Stroll through Polish Twentieth-Century Literary Theory," in *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture since 1918*, ed. Tamara Trojanowska et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 673.
65 See Aleksandar Flaker and Viktor Žmegač, eds., *Formalismus, Strukturalismus und Geschichte. Zur Literaturtheorie und Methodologie in der Sowjetunion, ČSSR, Polen und Jugoslawien* (Kronberg: Scriptor Verlag, 1974), 8; Kasztenna, "From Soul to Science," 675.
66 See Edward Balcerzan, "Oświetlenia strukturalizmu," in *Strukturalizm w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej. Wizje i rewizje*, ed. Danuta Ulicka and Włodzimierz Bolecki (Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna, 2012), 10; Kasztenna, "From Soul to Science," 671.
67 See Gorczyński, "Strukturalizm, uniwersytet, kształcenie," 472; Erazm Kuźma, "Metafory Janusza Sławińskiego," *Teksty Drugie* 4, no. 28 (1994): 33; Kasztenna, "From Soul to Science," 672–675; Henryk Markiewicz, "Co nam zostało z marksizmu?," in *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze*, ed. Włodzimierz Bolecki and Ryszard Nycz (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2002), 25.
68 See Janusz Sławiński, *Teksty i teksty*, Biblioteka Tekstów 1 (Warszawa: PEN, 1990), 100–102, 168–169, 230–234.
69 See Gorczyński, "Strukturalizm, uniwersytet, kształcenie," 472; Kuźma, "Metafory Janusza Sławińskiego," 33.
70 See Sławiński, *Teksty i teksty*, 234; Karol Modzelewski, *Zaeździmy kobyłę historii. Wyznania poobijanego jeźdźca* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Iskry," 2013), 127–33; Jacek Kuroń, *Wiara i wina. Do i od komunizmu* (London: Aneks, 1989), 285.

71 See Gerovitch, "Roman Jakobson." for the Soviet context.
72 Tadeusz Konwicki, *Zwierzoczłekoupiór*, 4th ed. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa "Alfa," 1992), 32, all translations mine.
73 Konwicki, 55.
74 Konwicki, 197.
75 See Wolfgang Schlott, *Von der Darstellung des Holocaust zur "kleinen Apokalypse". Fiktionale Krisenbewältigung in der polnischen Prosa nach 1945* (Frankfurt a.M., Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Wien: Peter Lang, 1996), 245.
76 See Przemysław Kaniecki, *Samospalenia Konwickiego* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Sub Lupa, 2014); Schlott, *Von der Darstellung des Holocaust*, 244–45.
77 Tadeusz Kornaś, *Between Anthropology and Politics: Two Strands of Polish Alternative Theatre* (Warszawa: Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, 2007), 8.
78 Kazimierz Braun, *Teatr wspólnoty* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo literackie, 1972); Tomasz Bieszczad, "Fakt i Akt," in *Teatr 77*, ed. Tomasz Bieszczad et al. (Łódź: Teatr 77, 1982), 4–12.
79 Jerzy Grotowski, "Towards a Poor Theatre," in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, by Jerzy Grotowski, ed. Eugenio Barba, trans. T. K. Wiewiorowski (New York: Routledge, 2002), 15–25.
80 See Ewa Miodońska-Brookes, *Wawel-"Akropolis". Studium o dramacie Stanisława Wyspiańskiego* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1980), 251.
81 See Grzegorz Niziołek, *Polski teatr Zagłady* (Warszawa: Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, 2013), 286.
82 Grzegorz Niziołek, *The Polish Theatre of the Holocaust*, trans. Ursula Phillips (London: Methuen Drama, 2019), 73.
83 Niziołek, 3.
84 See Niziołek, 4, 56; Niziołek, *Polski teatr Zagłady*, 291.
85 See Niziołek, *The Polish Theatre of the Holocaust*, 75; Niziołek, *Polski teatr Zagłady*, 288.
86 Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies, The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1993), xv, https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300173710.
87 See on this topic Dorota Sajewska, *Necroperformance. Cultural Reconstructions of the War Body*, trans. Simon Wloch (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2019), 70; also *Training al teatro-laboratorio di Wroclaw = Training in the theatre-laboratory in Wroclaw*, Documentary (Radiotelevisione italiana, 1971).
88 Niziołek, *The Polish Theatre of the Holocaust*, 56.
89 Niziołek, *Polski teatr Zagłady*, 307, translation mine.
90 Sajewska, *Necroperformance*, 73.
91 See Niziołek, *Polski teatr Zagłady*, 293, 297.
92 Grotowski in *Być w zgodzie ze sobą*, Documentary (Telewizja Polska, 1999), 1:50.
93 See *Być w zgodzie ze sobą*, 1:50.
94 Sajewska, *Necroperformance*, 71.
95 See *Być w zgodzie ze sobą*, 11:00-14:00.
96 Jerzy Grotowski, *Teksty z lat 1965-1969*, 2nd ed. (Wrocław: Wiedza o Kulturze, 1990), 53, translation mine.
97 Grotowski in *Być w zgodzie ze sobą*, 16:40.
98 Ryszard Cieślak in *"Pełen guślarstwa obrzęd świętokradzki…" O Teatrze Laboratorium Jerzego Grotowskiego*, Documentary (Telewizja Polska, 1979), 24:40, all translations mine.
99 *Training al teatro-laboratorio di Wroclaw = Training in the theatre-laboratory in Wroclaw*, 16:50-17:20.
100 Rena Mirecka in *Pełen guślarstwa*, ca. 17:20.
101 Mirecka in *Pełen guślarstwa*, 27:40-28:00.

102 Mirecka in *Pełen guślarstwa*, 28:10-28:20.
103 See Grotowski in *Pełen guślarstwa*, 34:00-34:40.
104 Grotowski in *Teatr i nie-teatr: Research University Theatre of the Nations 1975*, Documentary (Telewizja Polska, 1975), 4:40-5:01, translation mine.
105 See Ewa Lubowiecka in *Magazyn Teatralny: Jerzy Grotowski*, Documentary (Telewizja Polska, n.d.), 07:20-08:43; 12:10-12:30.
106 Lubowiecka in *Magazyn Teatralny*, 09:00-09:15, translation mine.
107 See Janusz Majcherek in *Magazyn Teatralny*, 04:35.
108 Physical corrections or instructions are present in an extreme way in the documentary *Acting Therapy* (1976), where Grotowski trainer Zygmunt Molik (1930–2010) forced a trainee into specific positions over a longer time. Molik's interference is marked by the use of physical force through his arms and body and underlined by his facial expression showing signs of aggression. The scene looks almost like a fight and feels intensely violent, as it is not only prolonged, but also brings the trainee into a position of subordinance, attempting to find the movement / position Molik has in mind. The fact that he does not seem to be able to satisfy Molik's wishes for the time given in the video is another unsettling moment. See *Acting Therapy*, Documentary (Cinopsis, 1976), https://grotowski.net/mediateka/wideo/acting-therapy.
109 Sajewska, *Necroperformance*, 72.
110 Sajewska, 73.
111 See Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, "Humanism in Polish Culture: Methodological Considerations," in *Humanism in Polish Culture*, ed. Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, Wiesław Pawlak, and Piotr Urbański (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 16.
112 See Maria Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm. Colloquia gdańskie* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1972), 215.
113 Janion accuses Foucault of promoting this very *death of man* after the *death of god*. Janion, 215–16.
114 Janion, 141.
115 Janion, 216; see also 140.
116 Janion, 135.
117 See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2002), 421–22.
118 Jerzy Szacki, "O tzw. historyzmie w naukach społecznych," in *Metodologiczne problemy teorii socjologicznych*, ed. Stefan Nowak (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydaw. Naukowe, 1971). Quoted from Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*, 142, translation mine.
119 See Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*, 175–78. See also Samuel Nowak, "Przebudzenie mocy. Maria Janion i posthumanizm," in *Sporne postaci polskiej krytyki feministycznej po 1989 roku*, ed. Monika Świerkosz (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra, 2016), 209–39.
120 See Bronisław Baczko, *Człowiek i światopoglądy* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1965), 232–34, 246; Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, "Logistic Anti-Irrationalism in Poland," in *Polish Philosophers of Science and Nature in the 20th Century*, ed. Władysław Krajewski (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2001), 242. For conceptions of Western humanism, centering more on logical reason and serving as a point of reference and contrast to post-humanist approaches, see Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge* (Oxford: Polity, 2019); Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
121 Maria Janion et al., eds., *Transgresje*, vol. 1–5 (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1981).This series assembles the study materials and discussions of Janion's Gdańsk colloquia in the 1970s, with the distinctive presence and input of her students (presentations, essays, discussions).

122 A discussion of Janion's transgression can also be found in Iris Bauer, *"Bombenlegerinnen, Mörderinnen und Rebellinnen". Literarische Transgressionen bei Maria Janion und Sylwia Chutnik* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2024).
123 See Maria Janion and Kazimiera Szczuka, *Janion. Transe, traumy, transgresje. Niedobre dziecię*, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2012), 148.
124 Marcin Cieński, "Polish Humanism and Its Relation to the Communities of Nation, Society, State, and Europe," in *Humanism in Polish Culture*, ed. Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, Wiesław Pawlak, and Piotr Urbański (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 187.
125 Maria Janion and Kazimiera Szczuka, *Janion. Transe, traumy, transgresje. Prof. Misia*, vol. 2 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2012), 55, all translations mine.
126 Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*, 175.
127 See Janion, 171–180.
128 See Janion, 176–78. See also Nowak, "Przebudzenie mocy," 225–29.
129 Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*, 175.
130 Janion, 143.
131 See Maria Janion, "Przybyszewska pragnie stworzyć osobowość mentalną rewolucji," in *Osoby*, ed. Maria Janion and Stanisław Rosiek, Transgresje 3 (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1984), 170.
132 Szacki, "O tzw. historyzmie." Quoted from Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*, 142, translation mine.
133 See Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*, 143.
134 Janion, 143.
135 Janion, 161.
136 Janion, 161–162.
137 See Nowak, "Przebudzenie mocy.".
138 Janion also harshly criticises Lévi-Strauss for his separation of biological life from thought and society as something exterior to the latter. See Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*, 272.
139 See Nowak, "Przebudzenie mocy," 218.
140 See Stanisław Lem, *Głos Pana* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1968). This part is a reworked passage from Nina Seiler, "Bugging: The Kaleidoscopic Literary Politics of Insects," *Word and Text. A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics* 11 (2021), https://doi.org/10.51865/jlsl.2021.08.
141 Lem, *Głos Pana*, 176, all translations mine.
142 Lem, 176–77.
143 Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," trans. David Wills, *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 2 (2002): 394; Cora Diamond, "Experimenting on Animals: A Problem in Ethics," in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991), 336–65.
144 See Paweł Majewski, *Between an Animal and a Machine: Stanisław Lem's Technological Utopia*, trans. Olga Kaczmarek (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), 90.
145 See Majewski, 90.
146 See Kazimierz Wyka, "Otwarcie konferencji," in *Proces historyczny w literaturze i sztuce. Materiały konferencji naukowej maj 1965*, ed. Aniela Piorunowa and Maria Janion (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1967), 6.
147 See Aniela Piorunowa and Maria Janion, eds., *Proces historyczny w literaturze i sztuce. Materiały konferencji naukowej maj 1965* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1967), 224.
148 Janion in Piorunowa and Janion, 224–225, translation mine.

149 Maria Janion, *Romantyzm. Studia o ideach i stylu* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1969), 5, all translations mine.
150 See Janusz Sławiński, "Co nam zostało ze strukturalizmu?," in *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze*, ed. Włodzimierz Bolecki and Ryszard Nycz (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2002), 10; Balcerzan, "Oświetlenia strukturalizmu," 10; Anna Łebkowska, "Polski wariant strukturalizmu a współczesny dyskurs literaturoznawczy," in *Strukturalizm w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej. Wizje i rewizje*, ed. Danuta Ulicka and Włodzimierz Bolecki (Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna, 2012), 416.
151 Further evidence of transdisciplinary exchange and the will for intensified synthetic approaches can be seen in the development of interdisciplinary cultural studies (*kulturoznawstwo*) at several universities, starting from 1966. See Piotr Jakub Fereński, Anna Gomóła, and Krzysztof Moraczewski, "Wstęp. Projekty, kierunki, propozycje. Antologia polskiego kulturoznawstwa," in *Antologia tekstów polskiego kulturoznawstwa*, ed. Piotr Jakub Fereński, Anna Gomóła, and Krzysztof Moraczewski (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra, 2017), 7–19.
152 See Sławiński, "Co nam zostało," 10; Łebkowska, "Polski wariant strukturalizmu," 406–407. See also Adam F. Kola and Danuta Ulicka, "From Circles to the School (and Back Again). The Case of Polish Structuralism," in *Theoretical Schools and Circles in the Twentieth-Century Humanities: Literary Theory, History, Philosophy*, ed. Marina Grishakova and Silvi Salupere (New York: Routledge, 2015), 78, that note an increased individuality of the structuralist voices after 1968.
153 See Nowicka-Jeżowa, "Humanism in Polish Culture," 39.
154 See Jerzy Eisler, *Marzec 1968. Geneza, przebieg, konsekwencje* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991), 332; Andrzej Friszke, "Trudny egzamin. Koło Posłów Znak w okresie Marca 68," in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 195–96. The full text of the speech can be found e.g. in Andrzej Friszke, *Koło posłów "Znak" w Sejmie PRL 1957-1976* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2002), 493–500.
155 Jerzy Zawieyski, "Przemówienie Jerzego Zawieyskiego na plenarnym posiedzeniu Sejmu 10 kwietnia 1968 r. w debacie nad odpowiedzią prezesa Rady Ministrów na interpelację Koła Posłów 'Znak' z 11 marca 1968 r.," in *Koło posłów "Znak" w Sejmie PRL 1957-1976*, by Andrzej Friszke (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2002), 499, all translations mine.
156 Zawieyski, 499. Zawieyski's reflections on dialogue are also found in his essay "Zofia and Stanisław" ("*Zofia i Stanisław*") on the Polish writers Zofia Nałkowska and Stanisław Brzozowski, published in the volume "Roots" (*Korzenie*) in 1969. He points out that in Nałkowska's understanding, dialogue is not the same as a conversation, as dialogue "postulates a platform of understanding between opposing positions." (Jerzy Zawieyski, *Korzenie* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1969), 89, translation mine.) Quite remarkably, Zawieyski's conception of dialogue was used in 2009 by gender studies scholar Halina Filipowicz as an outset for her thinking about the precarious dialogue in and about Polish gender studies. See Halina Filipowicz, "Pułapki, paradoksy i wyzwania gender studies," *Ruch Literacki* 50, no. 2 (2009): 102.
157 Zawieyski, "Przemówienie," 499.
158 See Eisler, *Marzec 1968*, 336; Andrzej Friszke, *Przystosowanie i opór. Studia z dziejów PRL* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Więź, 2007), 201.
159 See Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London, New York: Routledge, 1991), 15.
160 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, 6th ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 411.

161 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 411.
162 See Holquist, *Dialogism*, 17–19; Rainer Grübel, "Michail Bachtin und Julia Kristeva: Dialogik und Intertextualität," in *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Poetik und Poetizität*, ed. Ralf Simon (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 300, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110410648-013.
163 Holquist, *Dialogism*, 17.
164 Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*, 7.
165 See also Bakhtin's conception of the author-reader (*avtor-čitatel*) in the framework of intertextuality. Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, trans. Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 4–256.
166 See Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan and Sergeiy Sandler, "Bakhtin and His Circle," in *Theoretical Schools and Circles in the Twentieth-Century Humanities: Literary Theory, History, Philosophy*, ed. Marina Grishakova and Silvi Salupere (New York: Routledge, 2015), 34.
167 Silvan Moosmüller and Boris Previšić, "Polyphonie, Multiperspektivität, Intermedialität: Eine Einführung in die terminologischen Grundlagen und den Aufbau des Bandes," in *Polyphonie und Narration*, ed. Silvan Moosmüller and Boris Previšić (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2020), 1, translation mine.
168 Janion, *Romantyzm, rewolucja, Marksizm*, 140–141.
169 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 6.
170 Erdinast-Vulcan and Sandler, "Bakhtin and His Circle," 32.
171 For the concept of the bounded text, see Julia Kristeva, "The Bounded Text," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, by Julia Kristeva, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 36–63.
172 See Nowak, "Przebudzenie mocy," 212.
173 Maria Janion, "Hermeneutyka," *Teksty: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja* 2 (1972): 15, translation mine.
174 Janion and Szczuka, *Prof. Misia*, 2:32.
175 Janion had been appointed the head of the Department for the History of Literature of the nineteenth century at the Gdańsk Higher Pedagogical School (*Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna*, WSP) in 1968, but lost her employment there in the same year, as the authorities were sceptical of the growing popularity of her engaging and critical lectures among students. After the founding of Gdańsk University in 1970, she began to work in its Institute of Polish Philology, where she earned full professorship in 1973. As an engaged Marxist, she had been a party member since 1949. Unlike other "bothersome elements," however, she was not expelled from the PZPR in 1968 and remained a member until 1979. Furthermore, she was able to continually publish her texts without relevant interference by the censorship, which might have been due to her ambivalent, not openly political writing. See also Janion and Szczuka, *Niedobre dziecię*, 1:142.
176 Janion and Szczuka, 1:143, 146–47.
177 See Janion and Szczuka, 1:141. Apparently, as Janion recalled later, she was called a "Jewess in spirit" at that time, see Janion and Szczuka, 1:35.
178 Janion and Szczuka, *Prof. Misia*, 2:33.
179 Janion and Szczuka, *Prof. Misia*, 2:31.
180 Konwicki, *Zwierzoczłekoupiór*, 56.
181 Cora Diamond, "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy," in *Philosophy and Animal Life*, by Stanley Cavell et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 74.

182 The girl Ewa appears almost like a junior version of Jean Rhys' Antoinette Cosway (*Wide Sargasso Sea*, 1966) and Emily Brontë's Bertha Mason (*Jane Eyre*, 1847), the figure that represents most typically the "madwoman in the attic." See Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
183 See Konwicki, *Zwierzoczłekoupiór*, 156.
184 Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 58.
185 See Janion and Szczuka, *Niedobre dziecię*, 1:33–35.
186 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 26.
187 Janion and Szczuka, *Prof. Misia*, 2:31.
188 Janion, *Romantyzm: Studia*, 6.
189 Cieński, "Polish Humanism," 186.
190 See Jerzy Andrzejewski, *The Gates of Paradise*, trans. James Kirkup (London: Panther, 1967).

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4 Socio-corporeal landscapes

4.1 Living with death: on surviving

The reference point of the Second World War and Holocaust is one of the most important configurative elements of transgressive humanist tendencies. Its relevance for an understanding of humanity and humans' place in the world and in face of each other intensified in mid-socialist Poland. The atmospheric resemblance of the March crisis to the war years awoke memories and evoked unsettling parallels, although these were seldomly voiced at the time. Indeed, it was the specific mixture of a certain discursive absence and atmospheric presence of the past war that contributed to the explosivity of the situation. The fact of absence—of people killed in the war and in the death camps, of those who fled and never returned, but also of former city structures and small-town shtetl sceneries—became present once again. In studying the "aftermath of mass violence," social anthropologist Yael Navaro pointed out the need to grapple with the negativity of non-existence, the having-disappeared of things and creatures, of gaps in memory and physical reality. Navaro drew attention to how these gaps and deficits are regularly maintained and deepened in the political sphere, to cover up for the reality of absence. The issue she discussed was thus not just disappearance per se but also its conscious or unconscious silencing and discursive removal, which must be seen as a form of continuing violence.[1] Navaro's outline is easily applicable to the post-war and mid-socialist period in Poland and the practices of repression of a deeper understanding and discussion of the Holocaust.

Nonetheless, the Second World War had been a topic of discourse, as it featured as a key element in the ethno-nationalist argument. I have mentioned the case of the "encyclopaedists" in Chapter 2, who were criticised in 1967 for noting the number of Jewish victims in Nazi concentration camps, instead of subsuming them as Polish citizens.[2] This critique aimed not only at making the Jewish losses in the Second World War invisible, and thus erasing them once more from Poland in a move that could be called mnemocidal[3]—destroying the memory of Polish Jews. To claim the victims of the concentration camps as Polish also would increase the amount of *Polish* suffering—the "martyrology of the Polish nation."[4] A sort of "bidding on martyrology"[5]

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started right at the end of the war, was a central issue in post-war Poland and the March narrative, and condensed to a national phantasm extremely effective until today. At the same time, this impounding of the Jewish fate and the allocation of its suffering to the Polish nation appears utterly paradoxical if one keeps in mind that on almost any other occasion, Polish nationalist arguments excluded Jewish citizens and Jewish lives.

However, this paradoxical feature becomes clearer, although not less problematic, with a more profound observation. The mnemocidal tendencies to "almost fully conceal the former existence, the history and the annihilation of the Jewish population on Polish lands"[6] had been common in official Poland up until 1967 and continued to function as a "public taboo"[7] into the 1970s. This included a de-Jewisation and polonisation of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (*Powstanie w getcie warszawskim*, 1943) when calling it a "struggle of the Polish people for liberation from fascist terror, the struggle in defence of human and national dignity."[8] The misappropriation was paralleled by a media obsession with Jewish citizens in the years 1967-1970. This obsession, however, which was staged by the media and state officials, focused explicitly on the alleged support of Polish Jews for Israel, and implicitly—on the Stalinist period and the deficiencies of the present, for which functionaries of Jewish origin were insinuated as responsible.[9] Jewish exponents in mid-socialist Poland were cut off from their pre-war and wartime Polish past and established as harmful "cosmopolitans." These two strands of biased media narrations were played out against each other, as Holocaust researcher Jacek Leociak points out: "In the press narrative of 1968, the uprising of the 'good' Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto becomes a weapon in the fight against the 'bad Jews' attacking Poland."[10] It appears almost as if Jewishness could only be accepted in the Polish (nationalist) discourse on the ground of its being past—and dead. This posits a very relevant premise in the discussion of transgressive humanist movements in Polish culture, as they circle—especially when related to the war experience—around the boundary of death.

The historiographical repression of the Holocaust and the topic of Polish-Jewish relations is also connected to the discourse about Poles in the context of the Second World War. The martyrologic narrative of the Polish nation based on the image of the Polish lands and their inhabitants as a main victim of the war dynamics, and on the resistance against the Nazi occupiers, of which the Warsaw Uprising (*Powstanie warszawskie*, 1944) became the central phantasmatic imaginary. However, it also included a resistance to acknowledge that Poles contributed to the horrors of the war, and in particular a renunciation of Polish people's partial responsibility for the Jewish suffering.[11] The insistence on this narrative increased in the late 1960s, when the role of Poland as the site of the Nazi concentration camps was discussed in Western media—precisely in reaction to the Polish anti-Semitic media campaign starting in 1967. In view of the foreign opinion on "the traditional Polish anti-Semitism,"[12] the Polish media listed examples of Polish individuals helping Jews during the wartime,[13] hiding them in their houses, supplying

them with food, etc. Thus, the discussion on the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the Polish-Jewish relations at that time concentrated very much on the question of Polish people's "help and rescue of Jews."[14] However, this stressed Polish generosity stands in a paradoxical contrast with the anti-Semitic atmosphere of the time and its near-fetishisation of the Jewish death. In fact, the nationalistically instrumentalised narrative about the Polish helpfulness functioned unscathed because most of those who could contradict it were dead. Those who had survived and could potentially give negative examples of the behaviour of ethnic Poles during the war were discursively silenced.

4.1.1 (The guilt of) surviving

In this space of Jewish non-existence or inexpressibility, a Jewish voice raised in 1971 the question about being dead or having survived. Bogdan (Dawid) Wojdowski's (1930–1994) novel *Bread for the Departed* (*Chleb rzucony umarłym*), honoured as "Book of the Year" in 1971,[15] described the establishment and maintenance of the Warsaw Ghetto from 1940 until its (partial) dissolution in the "great action" in the summer of 1942. The text vacillates around the boy (growing into an adolescent) Dawid Fremde who, driven by his and his family's hunger, begins to make escapes over the ghetto walls to smuggle in food. The action of the novel nonetheless takes places primarily within the ghetto walls, composing its own space of fading possibilities for survival. Wojdowski's autobiographically inflected confrontation with the past in *Bread for the Departed* can be seen as a kind of Jewish companion piece to Miron Białoszewski's (1922–1983) *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* (*Pamiętnik z powstania warszawskiego*), published in 1970, which brought to central focus the powerlessness and almost fatalistic passivity of the urban civilian population and the cruelties of daily survival before and during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.[16] Similar themes of hopelessness and gradual brutalisation "without a shadow of fighting heroism"[17] are foregrounded and further intensified in both texts. Białoszewski's *Memoir* was a counterpoint and to a certain extent a turning point to the heroising Polish national resistance narratives[18] about the Warsaw Uprising and the unparalleled martyrdom of the Poles fighting for freedom. Similarly, Wojdowski's novel is far from presenting an elated look on the hardships in the ghetto or the potential for Jewish resistance against the German oppressors, instead making disintegration its central topic.

What characterises Wojdowski's text and is reflected in its parallelisation to Białoszewski's *Memoir* is the disentanglement of the Jewish and Polish experiences in the Second World War. The increasing isolation of the Jewish population of Warsaw in the ghetto, where contact with the outside world took place almost exclusively via German control bodies, established an insurmountable wall between the inmates of the ghetto and those living outside of it, who hardly seemed to register the division of the former urban

structure.[19] This prevailing lack of contact between the Polish and Jewish populations was then also likely what made *Bread for the Departed* publishable and reviewable in the context of continuing Polish sensitivity to attributions of guilt;[20] its literary complexity and rampant intensity, on the other hand, led to the award as "Book of the Year."

Wojdowski's novel must be seen as an exceptional case to the political atmosphere of these years and counts, alongside *Black Torrent* written by Leopold Buczkowski in 1946 (published 1954), as one of the most outstanding novelistic works about the Holocaust in post-war Polish literature.[21] It not only points to former Jewish ways of life but also actively works with Jewish cultural and religious content, thus preserving and transposing it.[22] Despite the anti-Semitic atmosphere in Poland, Wojdowski decided not only to stay, but also began to interest and engage himself in Judaism and Jewish traditions in the 1960s. Continuously in these years, he translated his learnings and his experiences as a boy in the Warsaw Ghetto into his masterpiece novel.[23] His writing is not accompanied by accusations, resentments, or self-righteousness; he lets the events speak for themselves and makes room for ambivalence. The book as such must thus be seen as a form of a statement against the discourse of forgetting and silencing—on a personal level, writing the author's early life "again," but also in a societal sense as presentation of the existence behind the ghetto walls to a broader Polish public.

Bread for the Departed is on several levels narrative research on being alive, on survival (or having survived) and on having died at the same time. And it connects these questions in subtle ways to the contemporaneous discourse, which I would like to discuss in the following. First, however, a small biographical detour should help to frame the questions tackled in the reading. Wojdowski, who had lived as mentioned in the Warsaw Ghetto as a boy, had managed to leave the ghetto and to survive in an "Aryan" part of Warsaw with counterfeited documents. But like quite a few other Holocaust survivors, the writer decided finally to put an end to his living, committing suicide in the same city of Warsaw in 1994.[24]

Whoever survives, as Jacques Derrida put it, has disturbed the order of life and death. The division between the two, a division that appears as utterly clear, has been complicated.[25] "Survival" in Wojdowski's case cannot be understood as a simple continuance of living, but also as a sort of additional life after actual death, in proximity to having died already—a "doubling of the existential situation."[26] It is a traumatic experience, the source of which might be "the encounter with death, or the on going experience of having survived it,"[27] as Cathy Caruth framed it for her research on trauma in literature. Wojdowski had to grapple with the paradox of survival in this sense throughout his postwar life, and this status of neither-nor and both-and collapse in the novel. Survival must be read twofold: as the act of staying alive in face of death and the following concurrence of being alive and having died—and as surviving while others die. Wojdowski himself said: "My generation was extinct. I lived *in articulo mortis*. And I write *in articulo*

mortis."[28] Both forms of survival are closely entangled and are, in a sense, inextricable variations of each other. The others that have died may become a part of the surviving self—as memories, but also as borrowed identities, through former belongings, as having-died-in-one's-place, as suppliers of valuable goods directly supporting the one survival—which thus unfolds into an (un)dead multitude. Yet the position of the survivor is also marked by solitude and loss[29]—and an incomprehensibility for the "not yet […] fully known"[30] violent event of death.

Wojdowski's pointing out of his writing *in articulo mortis*, in the very face of death, is thus to be taken seriously in two ways. It refers to his constant confrontation with his own death and surviving. In having to deal with an *absence*, namely the absence of his own "full" life, Wojdowski entered the *post factum* condition for which Navaro suggested her "negative methodology,"[31] the exploration of that which is not there. Thus, the "negative" background of the physical non-existence of the former ghetto, the foundations of which were completely demolished and cleared away[32] forms the context of Wojdowski's novel that emerges from the rubble as a trace of the former Jewish life. However, in the novel itself, the author uses literary means to lay bare not the established absence but the process of disappearance. The moment of disappearance that has itself disappeared from the surface of Polish life after the war, has nonetheless endured—embodied in the Jewish writer. For Wojdowski, the moment of disappearance and death—a moment that had lasted over several years—is not past, but present. With his novel, he transposed this historically past event into a present becoming.

This shift to the dynamic enables reconstruction of the transition from one state (existence) to another (non-existence) and allows us to understand this precise threshold as a kind of space, a space in which a multitude of stages between being alive and being dead, between existing and a mere trace or memory of existence unfold. The state of indecision is potentiated if one considers the space of the novel as the space of the ghetto, a place isolated and basically mute for the outside world—dead, in a way. Nonetheless, inside the walls, the "background noise"[33] of the babbling voices of the disappearing can still be heard. The inhabitants of the ghetto balance between life and death in the same way as they balance between appearing and disappearing from the narrative's horizon, thus remaining ungraspable to the reader's comprehension of their state of being: alive or already dead? This makes the narrative space, in literary scholar Alexander Höllwerth's reading, an "uncanny"[34], fraying, and inconsistent space.

If we consider this balance between being and extinction, the conclusion of the novel is of special relevance. The text ends with the deportation of many Jews, including Dawid, from the ghetto, but leaves behind an indefinite, phantasmic space not quite depopulated. "Along the way David heard people whispering that some prisoners had stayed behind on Prosta Street and that they had managed to find really good hiding places there."[35] This penultimate sentence, which plays with the apprehensive hope of a

historically refuted happy ending, reopens the threshold between existence and disappearance, between survival and death, a threshold which is highly relevant for the text as a whole.[36] With this conclusion, the novel features not only as a historical-fictional document but also decidedly initiates and upholds the movement of transposing Jewish (non-)existence into contemporary space and letting it become a sort of an ongoing spectral visitation of the post-Holocaust imaginary.[37] The space of the ghetto is no longer enclosed, but diffuses into the present space of the living as an impossible potentiality. Thus, the frayed socio-architectonic space of the novel extends into the post-war Warsaw landscape, in which behind a visible contemporaneity lurks the ongoing, undead past.

The ghostly presence of the Holocaust and the traces of the war violence were entangled in many and diverse ways with the reality of the post-war era. Memories haunted the living; and while the ruins of war were slowly cleared away and new city spaces emerged, new neighbourhoods with new citizens, the material traces of war merged into this new space. Their direct visibility was decreased; but with their vanishing from view their ghostly presence was enhanced. The same applied to social bonds torn apart by the war. People missing since the war may have reappeared again all of a sudden, may have written unexpected letters from abroad or may have been confirmed dead. But still, some people's status was unconfirmed, their whereabouts unclear, their identities blurred. In *Bread for the Departed*, the last inhabitants of the ghetto that managed to hide themselves take on such a spectral existence, at least as a potentiality.

The nagging uncertainty of the post-war reality, transposed into an obsession with the unanswered questions after the war, is however best illustrated by Tadeusz Konwicki's filmic essay *How far, how near* (*Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko*, 1971). It is not coincidental that Konwicki, who had not worked with film for several years, realised this autobiographical cinematographic piece shortly after 1968: "Precisely the eruption of the anti-Semitic atmosphere was for Konwicki the most terrible recollection of the past [pre-war] time, that returns in *How far, how near* in an unusually painful way—as the final end of the multicultural world of his youth."[38] This end is revoked and re-invoked in the film by loops, repetitions and hypothetical situations confusing a chronological order, transposing for example, the Jewish friends leaving Poland after 1968 by train[39] back to a birthday party that might have been before—or a sort of dream. The film is invaded by a multiple vision of post-war, wartime, and pre-war encounters, in which the main protagonist Andrzej confronts a lived-through as well as hypothetical "past that is the future,"[40] intertwined with the present.

Despite a vague understanding of Andrzej's post-war situation, there is no defined present reality which could function as a point of departure for the manipulations of time and space, memory, and fantasy.[41] Without such an anchored position of the main protagonist and narrator, the meanderings of

time and space become more independent, as if tossing around the figures at their own will. It is also impossible to fully distinguish dead from living figures, as both occupy the social space in the movie "in an unfinalizable mode."[42] Also, the protagonist Andrzej seems not to be able to define the reality of the encounters with his acquaintances and "with those, whom I will never meet… and also those, whom I have never met."[43] All of them appear repeatedly in the same material quality, as if time had stopped. Andrzej is driven by questions about the death of his friend Maks, whom he might have killed himself as a traitor in the war,[44] who might have committed suicide in mid-socialist Warsaw, or who might be a figment of Andrzej's imagination.[45] But despite his initial eagerness to uncover the truth, the answer to his questions turns out to be of low relevance.

> What gnaws at me…? What gnaws at all of us…? No, not all—maybe just a certain generation. No, not even, not even a generation. The need for a balance sheet [*bilans*] torments us. We are all the time summing ourselves up. In the morning, in the evening, sometimes—during the day. We are summing ourselves up, summing up—and can't sum us up. Nothing comes out. There is no sum. There is only an empty space where a sum should be.[46]

So, if *How far, how near* is giving any answer at all, it is the answer of the ambivalent position of those who survived. They live with their guilt, with unclosed balances, like Dawid in *Bread for the Departed* unable to "finish the equation, find the solution"[47] to the mystery of their survival. "He felt guilty that he was still alive. Annihilation had spared no one and had swept multitudes of beings out of every corner. By chance one bitter individual, of no use to anyone, insignificant, and astounded by his own insignificance, was still alive—he, himself."[48] No-one is around to provide relief or forgiving.

When Konwicki's protagonist Andrzej in a back loop offers to rescue one of his friends from adolescence, the Jewish boy Szlomo, his offer to save "you as the only one [*ciebie jedynego*]"[49] rings like a cynical attempt to buy himself out from his own consciousness. The support Andrzej offered Szlomo was indeed "bread for the already departed": Szlomo refuses to acknowledge the offer—the time has long passed.[50] Both Wojdowski and Konwicki express the situation of the war and Holocaust survivors in postwar Poland in their respective works as a non-space, an emptiness that is unable to develop into the future. The war has made the lives of their protagonists break, and they continue an undead, "atopic"[51] life. *Bread for the Departed* and *How far, how near* thus also present a challenge to the "untraumatized"[52] survivors of the Second World War, who are questioned in their everyday conviction of the past tense of the Holocaust and the war atrocities, and for the media discourse—sketching the near-futility of the individual Polish help for Jews.

4.1.2 Humanity undone

The narration in *Bread for the Departed* shifts gradually towards the hunger-driven dissolution of the boundaries of physical, psychological, and moral reality. The residents find their own bodily dematerialisation mirrored in the gradual dismantling of the ghetto. In the world of the Warsaw Ghetto, the dead are still living and the living are already dead, and body parts are ascribed almost more life than the human subjects to which they belong. With this confusion of life and death, superimposed by the omnipresent hunger, the moral order fractures and shifts. The degrading dehumanisation of Jewish life as pursued by the National Socialists is retraced in the novel, while nonetheless attempting to translate this "reduced" humanity into another form of living—for what could the concept of "being human" even mean in such a doomed place with its externally imposed revocation of individual and collective agency?

In parallel to the reduction of vitality and agency through the constant threat of a violent death in form of "executions and the organised industrial murder in the extermination camps,"[53] we see a dissolution of life caused by the reduction of food consumption and hygiene, of physical protection and psychological stability, and by an increasing susceptibility to illness. "The strict regulation of food supply and the constant lack of food were one of the most effective mechanisms of extermination,"[54] concluded culture studies scholar and psychologist Jan Borowicz. It was also an effective means of control: "to organise food became the main activity for subsistence,"[55] an activity that often occupied the whole day and took up all remaining energy.

With the vanishing of vitality and the restriction of agency, which go hand in hand, there occurs a shift in humanity in the ethical-moral sense, which will be discussed below; and at the same time an interrogation of being human as a biological–evolutionary designation comes to the fore. "You are dying of self-combustion. The muscles disappear, you grow frail and the skin becomes loose, the bones soften. Yes, my dears. What used to walk proudly erect on two legs begins to crawl on its stomach. The lord of creation turns into an amoeba,"[56] states the Jewish doctor Dr Obuchowski in front of his ghetto patients, which elicits "snickering" among the latter. Obuchowski attempts to provide the starving with medical assistance despite being fully aware that the only effective treatment for them would be nourishment. And it is precisely this lack of food that not only reduces their humanity in a physical sense, making them slowly disappear, but that also dissolves their sense of human socialisation, making them immune against the implications that they should walk erect in order to distinguish themselves from non-human animals and other beings. The physical devastation, as anthropologists Paweł Dobrosielski and Karolina Sulej remark, "caused the victims to begin to look and behave like non-humans—an observation from the perspective […] also of the Jews themselves."[57] The state of his patients brings Dr Obuchowski to muse: "This question hasn't been posed by medicine yet […]. When does man

stop being man? Exactly. The old [professor] Baum talks some rubbish about freedom and other gibberish, and I don't understand anything. The stomach rules the world of the hungry."[58]

Along with the growing hunger, the material and bodily dimension of the ghetto residents comes to the foreground precisely because it is in a state of dissolution. Their bodies become emaciated and transform into living corporeal precarity. This extends to the extreme of bodily self-consummation, as the starvation process leads to a biological self-cannibalisation. "Mercilessly, day after day, hour after hour, you feed on your own blood, your own marrow, your own flesh, your own bones. Until the end. A feast, isn't it? Lick your fingers! Look what a pantry nature has prepared for you at the end!"[59] For Dr Obuchowski, only the presence of a body and its capacity to correspond at least passively with its environment ultimately counts: "The body is something a doctor can stick a needle into. And if the needle no longer goes in, it means there is no body. Finis!"[60] The eclipse of the three-dimensionality of the human body brings about death. This is reflected in the literal sense of the title of Wojdowski's novel, which translates as "bread thrown to the dead":[61] the bread given to the Warsaw Jews by their Polish neighbours is, though in itself a "humanising"[62] act, at the same time futile due to the immensity of the omnipresent hunger and the small amount of bread achieved in this manner. It is the continuation of the regime of starvation and the sheer level of hunger—beside other forms of violence—that renders it an act beyond possible recognition for the maintenance of life.

The loss of the "human being" can be seen in its physical reduction; but there is also a fragmentation of the coherent subject that accompanies the reduction of the functioning body: "When [Dawid] placed the lightweight bag on the table, a green face covered with hair rose from a mattress, and a bundle of rags, shivering convulsively, crawled out from the bedding, complaining in his mother's voice and asking why he was so late."[63] Parts of the body like the face, the voice or the fingers later touching the still warm bread begin to act individually and are now linked only by their habitual association with a human entity—the mother. In another passage, the parts of the father's body assume the function of communication in the decision about whether Dawid should smuggle the valuables of a third person out of the ghetto:

> Father shrugged and stiffly spread his arms. He pulled in his neck and it looked as if his arms were growing out of his ears. "I don't want to make such a deal."
>
> His eyelids drooped and his eyebrows rose up his forehead. His temples wrinkled as he grimaced. And when he opened his eyes, Attorney Szwarc was still sitting in front of him on the chair with his hand extended in friendship.[64]

The bodily dimension seems to assume the power of deciding, of guiding the actions that are still carried out. With its restricted agency, the human subject retreats behind a fragmenting-yet-binding materiality possessing an apparently independent life. The materiality of the body organises its subsistence, even if this means its own dissolution.

Paradoxically, it is still precisely the reduced bodies that persist as things, omnipresent on the streets of the ghetto as a tangible memorial of death. Here, too, the line separating the dead from the living proves to be exceptionally fluid:

> He [Leibuś]'d been lying there quietly for a couple of days. There was a patient, sad smile on his dirty little face. Faiga had already died beside him; her uncovered remains lay stiffly on one side, her knees drawn up to her chest and her head in the dust of the street; she was shirtless and there were tattered slippers on her feet. But when a fly landed on the dead woman's forehead, the brow still twitched. […]
>
> "Take the feet. Get moving," Elijah said, and the space on the sidewalk beside the little boy was emptied.[65]

The dead woman who is brought away by the cemetery porters still has enough life in her to react bodily to the fly, to attempt to swat away this harbinger of decomposition. Her son Lejbuś on the other hand, who is still alive, desires already to follow the path of the corpse, and requests to enter the process of being disposed of reserved for the dead:

> He looked in that direction, lowered his head, and then crawled over to the wagon. The weak little body dragged enormous, elephantine legs behind it, and the child's heavy skull swayed on the thin neck, as fragile as a withered stalk. When he stopped for a moment, emitting a weak sigh, and raised his head, his eyes closed from exhaustion, the old porter said sorrowfully, "Don't be in such a hurry. Where are you rushing to, my little angel?"
>
> David and Zyga stood motionless, watching as Leibuś tensely followed the wagon and porters with his dead gaze. The porters were silent and did not avert their eyes. And suddenly they distinctly heard him say, "Take me away from here. Me, too …"[66]

The refusal of the porters to take him along comes across, despite the logic of their decision, as a heartless act of cruelty. The porters appear as guardians of the line between life and death in the ongoing process of dying, a line which is drawn only upon their arrival. Their sovereignty over the definition of death—this, too, can be understood as an act of preservation of agency through the exercise of power.

Disappearance in *Bread for the Departed* is a *present* disappearance, displaying itself in thinning, emaciation and weakening. Wojdowski's novel

shows the processes of dissolution, reduction and negation instead of the state of having disappeared. The dead sometimes remain simply lying on the street or, even once they are interred in the cemetery, usable for documentary and economic purposes. Even if people are disappearing before they are dead, if they disappear in the vacuum beyond the ghetto walls and thus from the horizon of the thinkable for the ones inside, they are in a way still there in the form of abandoned objects, photographs fluttering around, shoes and valuables now worn by someone else. It is precisely these things that take the much-discussed role of proxies for individual and collective fates in Holocaust research and cultural memorialisation.[67] The objects, interwoven with the fate of the Jews they belonged to, continue a social mode of life even after the death of their owners. With this in view, cultural scholar Zuzanna Dziuban explores the discursive treatment of gold teeth which were broken by plunderers from the jaws of Jews and subsequently resold. She refers to these gold teeth as atopic objects that unsettle the "discursive/normative order,"[68] as objects oscillating between subjectivity and objectivity—between thing and person—whose ontological status must thus continually be renegotiated by the persons handling them. In *Bread for the Departed*, the shift to the atopical (*a-topos*, non-place or non-topic), or perhaps more precisely to the liminal, to that which oscillates at the border between states of being, is not limited to the gold tooth as such—nor even to things. The seemingly independent life of the parts of the fragmented body prefigures as an anticipation of the atopical "life" that the gold tooth leads in its new environment. The living body enters a self-dissection in the direction of a social mode of being between human entity and material nexus. The state of liminality encompasses virtually everyone and everything in the ghetto space.

The intensity of the liminal state dazzlingly appears in all its problematic dimensions in the grave-robbing scene in *Bread for the Departed*. The questionable and uncanny status applies to the stolen dental bridges as well as to the boys who break the teeth from the jaws of the buried, breaking at the same time with prevailing moral conceptions and social bonds. By surrendering their scruples to become instruments of their own self-preservation, they are carried out of existing social orders in an atopical current. This becomes especially striking when they are caught by an elderly Jewish man:

> He looked as if he had long been at rest in the shade of the Okopy cemetery trees, caressed by the soughing of the wind through the old maples, poplars, and birches that were even older than he, beneath the words of prayer chiseled into stone, the name that had been bequeathed to him by his fathers and grandfathers who lay even deeper in the earth.
>
> "What am I seeing? What do my old eyes behold? Rats have invaded the living body of Israel!"
>
> […] The old Jew clutched at his head with his hands and swayed from side to side in a daze. He trembled feebly. His dark, dirty beard stuck to his gabardine like a wet rag. He whispered, "A Jewish child."

> "And what of it!" Ernest raised his head. "Maybe you don't like it?"
> Eliahu shook the wrench. Ernest brandished the pliers. David got behind the old Jew.[69]

The scene raises the question of the legitimacy of breaking the Nazi-ordained vectors of dying, which alongside physical killing also encompassed a dehumanisation via the refusal of the right to "self-guided action."[70] The theft of gold is one of the few remaining ways of getting money to buy food. "In order to survive, one had to take something away from others, to break the basic rules that dominated the pre-war reality in the fight for subsistence."[71] And yet, to act to safe one's own life, even by breaking the tradition, followed the rule of *pikuach nefesh*, the principle of preservation of life.[72] But at which point the moment was given to apply this principle, to do what would normally be forbidden? In resolving this question, the boys are forced to decide over the critical point of dying in their daily living. The actual undertaking of a forbidden act acknowledges that dying is initiated. It is an effect of the radical heteronomous limitation of Jewish agency in the ghetto, and simultaneously a rebellion against this limitation, an incidental effect of which is the unsettling of prevailing Judaeo-Christian moral conceptions and social norms.[73] It triggers a feeling of unease and disillusionment with the reader, one which concerns the integrity and shape of the world after the end of the Second World War. The efforts of the Jewish children to act, to maintain their agency, is exercised under conditions of heteronomy "beyond good and evil."[74] It is a moment of the radical exposure inherent in social fracturing and the erosion of all meaning[75] which occurred with the Holocaust. "The experience of hunger or being witness to starvation redefined the structure of emotions, the very possibility of what one was able to feel."[76]

Precisely this kind of "amoral action" provoked by hunger and the breaking of "elementary cultural bans"[77] integrated seamlessly into the National Socialist political order, which condemned such acts while itself practicing them[78] and—crucially here—by means of its repression practically compelled Jewish people to commit forbidden acts. Thus, the Nazi system forced the ghetto residents to *enact* the designation of "inhuman" which was imposed upon them by the same Nazi political order. In this sense, the at least displayed self-confident conduct of the boys as they are caught in the act, can be read both as a rejection of such self-depreciation and as a radical acceptance of so-called "amorality."[79] The resolution of the young grave-robbers' predicament as they are surrounded by enraged Jewish porters at the cemetery should be seen as highly ambivalent and lacking moral clarity. It is a group of sightseeing Germans who—if unintentionally—save the three boys from their difficult situation and at the same time push them again, metaphorically and literally, to the menacing verge of death:

> "Halt! Halt! Halt alle bis auf den letzten."
> Germans were standing at the cemetery gate. The officers approached the people, and a resolute, controlled menace could be detected in their

> voices. One brandished a revolver in his raised hand; the other held a Leica at the ready. The silvery braids of their luxuriant adjutants' cords fluttered around their shoulders. And behind them, at a distance, came highly amused civilians, raucously expressing the nonchalant attentiveness and exaggerated freedom of tourists.
>
> […]
>
> The other officer lifted his Leica to his eye; the porters slowly and reluctantly retreated into the cemetery, among the graves. […]
>
> The officer, without letting the revolver out of his hand, lined up the boys at the edge of the pit. He ordered them to stand closer, closer … They stood closer. He ordered them to put their arms around each other. Eliahu, David, and Ernest put their arms around each other. But since their eyes were downcast, he shouted at them to lift up their faces and look straight ahead. So they looked straight ahead. […]
>
> They were standing at the edge of the pit and they were free. […] The Germans took photographs. Heads bowed crookedly on frail, bending necks. The film advanced. Fragile ears jutting out from heads. The film advanced. Heads with smudges of dirt on darkened, gray skin. Faces with dull, sunken eyes in which the light has been extinguished and which conceal a barely hidden accusation. The Germans took photographs, as souvenirs. They stood at the edge of the pit and they were alive; it could go on like that until the film was used up and as long as their shadows survived.
>
> […] the film advanced obediently in its dark interior space, sheltering their faces in perfect blackness, empty and funereal, from which—preserved and frozen in a spasm of pain, of fright lost in the past—other, unknown hands would extract them, other eyes would look at Eliahu, David, and Ernest at that particular moment, on that day when they stood at the edge of the pit in Okopy.
>
> "Auf die Seite. Los!"
>
> They were free.[80]

Everything about the scene disturbs the moral order: the children misappropriating corpses; their salvation by Nazi tourists; how these sightseers arrange the children in front of the graves for a series of photographs; the air of naturalness with which the German ladies request a skull as a souvenir.[81] Most oppressive of all, however, might be the continual advance into ever-new spheres of liminality, the constant uncertainty about what direction the situation will take. Will morality or hunger win out when the two young companions Ernest and Dawid are still hesitating about whether to use their tools on the jaws of the dead? Is it shame or pride speaking when Ernest attacks the old rabbi who cannot tolerate their behaviour? Is it just or unjust that the child grave-robbers escape Jewish anger due to the arrival of the Nazis, of all people? When do they cross the line marking a shift from posing for the camera to lining up to be shot above the pit? What if the Germans found out why the children were at the cemetery in the first place?

The physical and regulatory violence penetrating life as it is lived broadens the threshold between life and death into a constant *dying* that pushes itself into the place of life. With the unpredictability and capriciousness with which life tips over into death, those living in the ghetto already nourish death within themselves. Indeed, the bread they organise themselves is a bread for the departed, as their standing on "this" side of life is more than dubious. Their departure is a multiple one—in terms of liveliness as well as in terms of morals, they have crossed the line of a common understanding of humanity.

4.2 Palimpsestic corporealities

The boys at the edge of the pit in *Bread for the Departed* stand with one foot literally in the grave. When they are dismissed, they leave bearing a materialised vision of their own death. This becomes explicit through the operation of the Leica camera, which freezes their faces in a shape like death agony and delivers a dematerialised–materialised part of their corporeality to subsequent "other, unknown hands" much like in a burial. The camera becomes simultaneously an aggressor and a partial saviour that seems to possess a more comprehensive agency than the three mesmerised children do. Such a doubled meaning of the camera is illustrated directly, when for example in Tadeusz Kantor's (1915–1990) play *Wielopole, Wielopole* (1980) out from the camera's objective a machine gun appears—"what was supposedly a portrait shooting scene was actually an execution scene."[82] The use of photographs and the repetition of the act of photographing are elements of a process of "remembering, repeating, and re-experiencing"[83] the violent losses of the past through the play. In Wojdowski's novel, there is no definite decision about the outcome of the photographs; potential death and potential survival are inextricably intertwined. "Photography may both save a subject and bring acute attention to its death, a paradoxical duality,"[84] remarks Polish studies scholar Anna Krakus. It is unclear whether these images will not ultimately be the most enduring moments of the boys' existence,[85] taken at a moment of their dying that was both continuous and acute.

The photographs capture not only the three Jewish children's physical appearance, but make the boys last in their moral liminality—between deed and punishment, at a moment when their moral crime hovers in suspension. The Leica in *Bread for the Departed* functions in the same way as photography and cinematography in general: it stamps out a snippet of life, fences off death and simultaneously realises death in its petrification of a past moment. The camera "makes their deaths constant and their lives unending."[86] Like in Konwicki's film *How far, how near*, the technical device of the camera confuses the definition of existence and allows for the multiplication of life and death, of being and dying and being-dying. The physical existence is transposed to another material, both referencing the former life of the depicted and "arousing the imagination"[87] about their potential life afterwards or even now. Photography and film appear as a "triumph of hope over

hopelessness, the triumph of irrepressible life over the Nazi death sentence."[88] In a way, the same could be said about literature: Wojdowski's novel is both a statement of his not being dead, of his complicated survival and existence in the postwar reality despite the Holocaust and despite the anti-Semitic atmosphere of mid-socialist Poland; and it is in itself an exploration of how to live after so much dying, and with death as a part of reality.

Photography, film, literature, or theatre—and their various forms of cross-fertilisation—serve as techniques of survival in the sense discussed above; techniques of dealing with the ongoing liminality between death and living that accompanies the survivors of the Second World War. At the same time, they are exploited as techniques to conjure the dead and to invite them to partake in the present reality. As Milija Gluhowic notes for Kantor's theatre of memory: it is an "example of a work of mourning in which the ghosts and phantoms of culture are to be entertained rather than exorcised"—and in this liminal encounter and common entertainment, "an opening onto a different future"[89] is created. The dead of the Second World War lead a hybrid life, materialised on photographic paper or film, as ghosts and memories conjured in literature and theatre, in the form of their former belongings now functioning in a social relationship with others—survivors.

For survivors of the war, post-war life is marked by a doubled liminality. It is liminal in terms of temporality—suspended somehow between past and future, in an incessant loop intermingling both with the present. Life and death overlap. Yet the post-war reality is also liminal in terms of material and corporeal existence. The material world appears as fragmented and patched, puzzled together from the remaining pieces. Property is borrowed, found, and mended. The same applies to the dimension of organic bodies: their existence and functioning—their living—are linked up with the death of others, as a sort of debt and obligation to be alive. The dead—also the destroyed landscapes, spaces, social bonds—survive inside the living. The bodies of survivors are marked by loss. Artistic techniques can be employed to deal with the surviving bodies, to render violations and buried connections to the dead graspable. Unlike the younger poets of the Generation '68, however, who "discovered the human body for poetry […] in the specific function of attesting to the truth of statements and the truth of existence against the lies of the system,"[90] transgressive humanist approaches signalled low interest in establishing a "truth," a concept they bestowed with little trust. Instead, they explored the corporeal as a declaration of multiple realities, as an observation about the incompatibilities of perception, personal sensation, and experience, and about the possibilities and impossibilities of exchange on these grounds.

4.2.1 Inherited past

Even if the surviving bodies discussed in postwar, mid-socialist cultural discourse may look unscathed at first glance, they are very often marked by a traumatic past. Invisible or hidden scars are enfolded into their corporeality.

However, these scars remain for many survivors unspeakable; they are unable or unwilling to share their past experiences with others, even if it affects those closest and dearest to them. Such a situation, where scarred existences arrange their lives after the war without finding a way to share their wounds and thoughts with others, is presented by Kalman Segal (1917–1980) in his novel "The Associated" (*Skojarzeni*, 1968).[91] Though split into five parts told by five protagonists of which each carries their burden of what they had experienced during the war,[92] the story of the novel evolves primarily around Julia's wish to have a child again, and around her husband Hubert's war-inflicted infertility. Their first child was killed during the war, and this very situation sets the tone for the impossibility of their understanding and for their voicelessness. Julia keeps having flashbacks of her child, an experience which is her very own and cannot be shared with Hubert due not only to his absence at the time, but also to the non-verbal, corporeal character of this experience. On the other hand, the bodily connection to the lost boy child is repeated over and over as their joint cry:

> [I]t was as if suddenly the whole world around me froze, stood still. Trams stopped in the most random places, people stopped in mid-step, cars, dogs, planes over the city, birds, everything froze and even the wind stopped blowing, and in this imaginary dead silence I saw: my child […]. [T]his little voice crying and angry, this tiny miniature of anger, was a voice almost coming out of my body, still my own voice, and at the same time already the voice of a new human, barely freed, cut off from the bonds of my body. […] And I saw him, I kept seeing him—because the world around me was so compassionate and so merciless that it often stopped to fulfil my anticipation and my maddening longing—in all situations, day after day of his tiny miraculous existence, until the last moment, when he was forcibly taken from me, as I fought madly and unconsciously to the last for his dead inert body, bloodied and lacerated by the shrapnel of a bomb.
>
> And I was then completely alone with my pain and with death because Hubert was dragged out of the house even before I could say that we were going to have a child […].[93]

Traumatised by the death of her child and the disruption of that bond, Julia is obsessively longing to have a child again. Her desire is the motor of the story that connects the five protagonists, which are profoundly immersed in their day-to-day routine of disappointment and resignation towards life, their future, and their partner. They isolate themselves not only against each other but also against their environment: almost no figure from their social context even enters the horizon of the narration. They seem stuck in their own worlds, where the dreams of their youth were shattered by the war. Their respective traumas made them immune against the temptations of a future, as Hubert plainly notes:

> What I had seen and experienced there, behind the barbed wires, it had made me immune, I had neither the courage nor the moral conviction, I did not have, after that cursed war, enough confidence or the necessary sense of responsibility to be able to believe in the sense of population, to be able to desire a child and to believe in a happy future. I was frightened, afraid that one day I would have to ask myself again: what nightmarish, monstrous creativity had invented life, who the hell had invented it and for what?[94]

Life for most of the five protagonists has simply stopped, although it continues to flow—or, rather, it continues to repeat itself in the same patterns every day. Adam and his wife Anna for example stand in each other's way of positive change, waiting basically for the end. Having a child would appear under these circumstances as a signature for change and for faith in thefuture, but so far, all protagonists are childless. They meet one evening for dinner at sexologist Adam and Anna's home, where Hubert sends Julia quite pointlessly to be examined by Adam for her fertility. Hubert had never told Julia about his infertility or the event that caused it when his testicles were smashed by a kapo in the KZ—an event Adam, however, had witnessed. "To fortify myself, to protect myself from her awkward and possibly embarrassing question—and from an equally embarrassing answer, because it's not easy for a man to admit such a disability—I went with her to Adam."[95] All of the three know of the futility of this examination, as they all know about Hubert's infertility, although no one speaks about it. In a kind of double bind, Julia never informs Hubert that the child they are finally having is not his, which he, of course, knows anyhow. She had met Bruno, a relative of Anna and the lover with whom she became pregnant and whom she tossed aside directly after, at the dinner at Anna's and Adam's; thus, the meeting of the five protagonists, though marked by the dissociative distance between the characters and the reluctance of sharing important, intimate things, was the moment of association when Julia's child became possible. Despite Julia's claim for the child ("It is *my* child"[96]), its existence is marked by the specific constellation of figures involved in the initial moment.

The girl Elza, as she is finally born, is thus like an embodiment of the past and future of several people and the moment of entanglement of their lives. She replaces her killed brother, bridging the gap between the traumatic war experience and the presence in which life goes on. Moreover, she resembles in her angelic looks Hubert's lover Elza in the lager;[97] he insisted that she was also named after her—a female kapo feared for her merciless, murderous brutality. After falling in love with Hubert, however, Elza had decided to repent by going to the gas chamber instead of an old Jewess.

> What an association, uncanny and terrifying: a little innocent child and a woman from the bottom of hell. But after all, that's why I gave my daughter this very name, so that I could perpetuate the name of that

> one, who lived a wicked life and died a tragic death, and perhaps even in a way died because of me. How terrible and improbable, how impossible to predict our fates, human fates—judgements that sometimes result from chance encounters, from accidental intrusions of one human being into the life of another.[98]

Elza, the oblivious child, is unaware still of the historical and personal burden put onto her shoulders. Her own story does not develop in the novel, as she functions primarily as a gateway to the past and philosophical reflections. Finally, with little Elza in view, Hubert recounts his story of what happened in the concentration camp—at least for the readers, not to his wife or daughter. So, even if the child is seen as an investment into the future, her parents' generation is unable or even unwilling to imagine this very future. Elza works as the missing link between present and past; but she herself is almost entirely buried under the narrative of the past and the dragging memories of those who survived.[99] Her little body appears like a palimpsest, onto which the stories of her parents are invisibly inscribed, while her own story remains mostly "unwritten" on the novel's pages.

With "The Associated," Segal discussed the possibilities of living on for the survivors of the war in an admittedly slightly awkward novel. Segal, a writer and poet publishing prose in Polish and Yiddish, and poetry in Yiddish, was known for referring often to the lost past of the Galician shtetl and was generally widely read, even if not always with literary approval.[100] With the novel discussed here, he explored the relations of the living and the dead after the Second World War—at a time when the precarious entanglement of Holocaust survivors in contemporary Polish society became for him crucial. Segal had, after having been imprisoned in a labour camp in Kolyma in Siberia during the war, returned to Poland, fled in 1946 after the Kielce pogrom but returned to Poland again shortly after. In 1969, however, he left Poland once more for Israel, in protest of the treatment of and in solidarity with Jewish citizens in the PRL of the late 1960s. He himself had not been a main target of the anti-Semitic and anti-intelligentsia campaign.[101] This disintegration with Polish society may well be read as the background of the novel's protagonists' isolation in their respective "narrations." The March atmosphere might also have been a trigger for him to unearth the wounds and scars inflicted on survivors at the example of his protagonists, to voice the invisible embodiment of the past losses and wounds.

Such an actuation of past traumata in the late 1960s is sketched also in Marek Nowakowski's (1935–2014) "Zionists to Siam. Notes from the years 1967-1968" (*Syjoniści do Syjamu. Zapiski z lat 1967-1968*, 2009), a fragmentary, facto-fictional piece of prose with the characteristics of a diary and a sociological study. In one of the threads, a young woman's mother shows the same fears as Hubert above, a fear from the past that translates into an anxiety about the future. She, however, does not explain these fears to the readers; only glimpses of them escape from her bodily appearance.

> The mother of this girl is a woman over fifty years old, calm and quiet, but there is always some fear lurking in her eyes. She is reluctant to talk about her life during the occupation. Once she mentioned to her daughter—the mood of the evening caused it, the day of the dead, the crowds rushing to the cemetery—about her father being tortured before her eyes in a death camp.[102]

The unnamed fears, sleeping in her body and perceptible only through the shimmer in her eyes, however, burst out in panic attacks at the time when the atmosphere of minusivity connected to the events of March 1968 is building up.

> This issue with the mother started a few days after the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war. […] And on her return from the office she found her mother sitting motionless at the table. Her big eyes were even bigger, dilated with some kind of tension. The flat lay in silence, only water could be heard dripping monotonously from the tap. This silence and her mother's inertness also had a paralysing effect on her.[103]

The relation between mother and daughter works as a transmission belt for incorporated trauma and social fears. Their force is doubled by the fact of their silencing, a silencing which affects the whole person. They affect the woman's daughter quite physically, making her "bend and close her eyes as if before a blow"[104] when hearing her colleagues laugh behind her back. The past lays itself like a shadow over the children of the traumatised, affecting and shifting their own biography and their interaction with the environment. Such a transgenerational perpetuation of the traumatic past seems to be programmed for Segal's little Elza, too.

The unspeakability of the scars, with which the protagonists' corporeality is marked, and its confrontation with a contemporaneity which at the same time plays on them and denies them, haunts also Segal's literary style. Where Nowakowski's "Notes" employ a fragmented style without trying to puzzle together a coherent image, "The Associated" tends towards an over-explication of the characters' approaches towards each other, of their doubts and philosophies. While they cannot manage to open toward each other, they definitely do explain things to the readers. Each of the five figures presents their views and standpoints like a justification of their present position and conduct in life. So, when Adam is attracted to Julia and daydreams of making love with her, he explains (to himself/the readers) his not giving in to temptation as a refusal to be cruel to anybody because all of them knew cruelty more than enough; he is thus, as he concludes, faithful not actually to his wife, but to himself.[105] The figures' conduct is deeply permeated by their wartime experiences; everything translates back to the past, where their course was determined not to be altered again.

This, it seems, is what Segal wanted to point out with his novel: there are *things* invisible to the external observer, things that cannot be voiced except in artistic displacement. They lie at the borders of life and language, the "element within [life] that destroys and kills it."[106] These things, memories and traumata of the past, are nonetheless most pressingly *there*. And they will, as one might add with Nowakowski, be reproduced in the coming generations. Their incorporated presence weighs on the life led after surviving. The human subject can no longer be thought of as independent but is in a pressing way linked up with past experiences of its own or the wounds inflicted upon its parents or grandparents. The notion of the living, "that which produces, grows, and reproduces,"[107] does not quite apply to the figures that present themselves in "The Associated" any longer; their living is strangely petrified.

In Segal's novel, the topic of reproduction is quite significant to the protagonists. Most of them tie the fact of their childlessness to a personal resignation towards life. This almost obsessive circling around reproduction as a means of supporting life is illustrated by one of Adam's personal philosophies. This specific theory of the sexologist, however, belongs to the pre-war past. In the context of admiring Julia's almost "Creole" beauty, Adam notes that he had developed a reproduction theory in his youth, according to which he wanted

> to make the world happy by crossing types, nations and races, whites you wanted to force to marry blacks, yellows to associate with whites, in this way, you said, humanity would strengthen and ennoble, renew and increase its vital potential, as under the influence of an invigorating transfusion, what a wonderful generation of children would come forth from such unions, you even thought of children then, although later, and to this day even, you have not been given the taste of fatherhood. But that was twenty years ago, and it no longer has anything to do with the present moment […].[108]

Of course, Adam's theory is the complete opposite of national socialist race theory, although the goal of strengthening the human species is featured in both despite the inverted means. "Happiness," "vitality," and "invigoration" were key to Adam's thinking, as he imagined a proliferation of human life not along fixed racial categories, but as an abundant force of life as such. These convictions were thoroughly shattered by the war. He long abandoned his theory as impracticable due to not only resistances or disinterest in his working environment, but also in view of his biographical experience and situation. Nonetheless, in the light of the nationalistic atmosphere in the late 1960s in Poland, this mention, the very idea of this theory, is smuggled into the text like a literary coup against the rife phantasm of the "proper" nation. Despite its location in the past, it develops a (rejected) utopian stance,[109] conjuring up a parallel to the great disputed ideas of early communism in contrast to the narrow-mindedness of the present socialist system and society.

It stands in conflict also to the protagonists' social isolation and prevented reproduction. Segal's contemporary perspective forced him to reject any utopias, allowing to imagine a reproduction of the scarred post-war existences only with difficulty.

4.2.2 Patchwork survivors

The difficulty of inherited burdens in another sense is also the topic of Andrzej Wajda's (1926–2016) short film *Roly Poly* (*Przekładaniec*, 1968). The "hybridical"[110] short science fiction comedy, produced for television, is a somewhat odd and often-overlooked production of the earlier period in one of Poland's most productive and widest-known director's work. After his first successes, Wajda experimented in the 1960s with creative styles, trying also to decentralise the preoccupation of Polish culture with the past—to which he would however return in his films from the 1970s onward.[111] *Roly Poly* loosely based on a radio play by Stanisław Lem, "Are you there, Mr. Jones?" ("Czy Pan istnieje, Mr Johns?," 1955), who also adapted it as a screenplay for Wajda's short. While its story definitely looks odd in the rank of Wajda's work, it certainly is "a typical product of popular culture in the socialist Poland of that time"[112] and resounds with the Party's call to quit the habit "of looking back to the past failures and uncertainties"[113] in cinematography. The film also quite smoothly inscribes itself into Lem's imaginary world.[114]

Set in a not nearer defined future in Chicago, both "Are you there, Mr. Jones?" and *Roly Poly* present a racing car driver with juridical, financial and insurance problems due to his having had to replace many organs and extremities after several car crashes. Both raise the question about Mr Jones respectively Ryszard Fox' identity due to his multiple transplantations and exchange of crucial body parts. "Are you there, Mr. Jones?" enrols completely in a court hearing, where Jones defends himself against the Cybernetics Company which "produces artificial arms and legs, synthetic kidneys, hearts, and other organs."[115] In *Roly Poly*, we never actually enter court, instead following lawyer Harvey in his investigations how to fight for the full payment of the life insurance of Ryszard Fox' deceased brother Tomasz. The two brothers had had an accident during their car race, and only Ryszard survived after complex surgery. However, as Harvey soon finds out, Ryszard's brother is not quite dead, either.

In contrast to the earlier play, in *Roly Poly* there is no substitution of body parts through artificial limbs or organs. Dr Burton, the surgeon in charge for Ryszard, has perfected a system—if not industry—of substituting patients in need of an organ with the respective body part of other casualties, whose damage rate was higher. "In view of the huge number of people in need, we cannot, of course, allow any surplus to go to waste, as you will understand,"[116] he explains to the bewildered lawyer. It turns out that some of Tomasz's body parts were transplanted to Ryszard, to save one life of two at least. For Dr Burton, whose appearance and behaviour waver between star

surgeon and hippie guru, this practice of saving as much of life as possible is self-evident, and obvious in his thinking in the categories of organs biologically alive, not in categories of distinct humans. While Ryszard received a bigger percentage of the functional body of his brother, some other of Tomasz's parts were implanted to another person. This results in a "negative balance"—the death rate, so to speak—of Tomasz Fox of only 30%, as the insurance advocate tells Harvey. "He is alive whose vital organs are alive. Where they are located is irrelevant. Here or there, it makes no difference to us. Since they are alive, the insured person himself is alive, too. In a corresponding, to be sure, percentage ratio."[117] For the insurance and for the surgeon, this intermingling and patching presents no problem, as their logic follows a logic of parts and percentages. They are fine with closing the case that Tomasz Fox is both dead and buried (30%) as well as alive, distributed in the corporealities of other persons. Being dead or being alive is no longer a binary opposition,[118] but merge into each other as a gradient just like the overlap of different identities.

For the lawyer, however, the case is more difficult, as he needs to establish who survived as a person—a legal entity that can be sued. The transfer of Tomasz's body parts is seen as a transposition of a part of Tomasz himself into Ryszard. This is exemplified in the assumed transplantation of Tomasz's sexual organs to Ryszard, who, according to the lawyer's arguing, would thus figure as (partial) father of his brother's children.[119] "Or maybe the father of these children is completely somewhere else?"[120] Harvey, as long as he is thinking in the juridical categories of either-or, is unable to grasp the established reality of bio-medical multiplication and fusion. His legal metier is obviously not up to date with the newest medical possibilities, nor can offer any solution to the psychological crisis that follows suit. To his own question: "Who am I actually, huh?"[121] Ryszard procures the somewhat desperate supposition: "Piebald?"[122]

In a political reading of the film, the main protagonists' efforts in establishing Ryszard's identity and his fitting into a defined category must be seen as an allegory of the nationalist and anti-Semitic discourse of mid-socialist Poland.[123] However, these defining efforts are in vain, as the created hybrid, multi-layered figure—of which Ryszard is just one persona of an increasing number—cannot be incorporated into the existing categories of law and established identity, to which the lawyer tries to adjust it. The existing (corpo-)reality evades the attempts at fixation, questioning "the concept of an ideal, uniform, and homogenised communist/national body present in the Polish public discourse in the 1960s."[124] Thus, the incontrollable multiplication of hybrid figures in *Roly Poly* appears like a protest against the exclusionary narrative of the "proper."

The case gets more complicated as Ryszard continues to drive races and have accidents, all of them in the same curve of the racing circuit, where the public has the best view of the race and where his plaintiffs gather. The film replays a sort of déjà-vu for the second race, reinforcing the notion of layering

that becomes so important in the case of Ryszard's personality—"along with the layering of moral, medical and legal issues linked with it."[125] While his body is continuously patched up and stitched together with the living remains of the victims of his accidents, including several women and a "dog of Boxer breed,"[126] his identity and behaviour begin to multiply and overlap with those whose corporealities continue to live within him. In Ryszard's third visit with Harvey, he throughout features a gesturing and mimic that could be described as stereotypically feminine, bringing along a handbag that rouses the lawyer's suspicion. Later on, when his psychoanalyst brings up a connotation with bones, Ryszard begins to growl and bites his arm, and when leaving his cabinet sniffs at the door. With the dog characteristics, his previous self-labelling as piebald gains another twist; respectively, the incorporation of a furry animal was already hinted at. Nonetheless, Ryszard shows after the second operation less concern about his identity, now shifting quite casually between the different facets of his patched being. In front of the confused lawyer, he upholds the impression of coherence, which, considering his naturalised approach towards his "constantly evolving self,"[127] might not have been an effort at all. Curiously, his physical appearance does not change—apart from clothing style and the use of make-up— signalling an unscathed corporeal integrity on the visual level.

The film could be perceived as an unveiling of the divergence between the reality propagated in the media in mid-socialist Poland versus a corporeal, socio-economic reality that struggled to relate to this imagined reality. I would propose, however, that the distribution of aesthetic connotations in the short film is at least ambivalent to such a reading. *Roly Poly* offers a slightly eerie side-glance at American lifestyles and hippie culture, locating the suspicious surgical and psychoanalytic practices in hippie-futuristic aesthetics. This becomes most obvious in youth culture-styled figures with one or two extra pairs of eyes painted onto their face, symbolising the multiplication of personalities in one body and the branching out of identities. As film scholar Janina Falkowska suggests, the disjuncture between mind and body, so easily accepted by the surgeon, could be read as a comment on the poor living conditions in socialist Poland, countered however in the 1960s by a relative freedom in the sphere of individual expression.[128] The sci-fi comedy short provokes an afterthought about possible futures, but both extremes—the binary logic of law and the psychedelic multiplication, intermingling, and dissolution—are eyed with suspicion. Neither of these two systems is able to satisfy Ryszard Fox' needs of a down-to-earth, practicable solution to the problems he is confronted with due to the surgeries.

With its artistic exploration of the relatively new but imagined for centuries transplantology,[129] *Roly Poly* addresses the anxieties of the 1960s about scientific and technological progress and about this progress' implications for humans. This concerns most of all an insecurity about the future of human identity—of the individual and of humanity as such. Transplantology, especially with its absorption of non-human organisms, smudges if not dissolves

entirely the notion of the human subject as distinct, singular, coherent entity—and distinct from non-human beings. It produces and reproduces—layers—multiplications of corporealities and consciousnesses, intermingling the behaviour patterns of diverse gender and species, constantly shifting identities and thus questioning identity as such. The notion of the individual is abolished altogether, as the characteristics of the figures involved is precisely their corporeal divisibility—exploited finally through the medicine of the future—and their ability to assemble multiple consciousnesses in one corporeal unity. As cultural scholar Elżbieta Ostrowska argues, this sketching of a future human existence beyond singular subjects and identities grew out of Lem's and Wajda's attempt to engage with the traumatic crisis of the Second World War.[130] After all, the technology of transplantation is exploited to retrace and visualise processes already set in motion and dealt with intensively after the war experience.

Although *Roly Poly* on the plot level is set in a possible future that destabilises contemporary notions of humanity and human identity, it also refers at least once to a practice of corporeal exchange that relates to the near past. When Ryszard in his second surgery is stitched together with body parts of amongst others Nancy Queen, he also "inherits" her row of gold teeth. These were a present of the young woman's fiancé, a dentist, who saw them as a sort of marriage promise or investment and now demands to get them back. Ryszard utters with a tearful voice: "I didn't take it from anyone, did I; I didn't ask anyone for it. I didn't order any gold crowns, so why should I give it back now, why?!"[131] With this exclamation, Ryszard certainly did not lie; but at the same time, the childlike intonation of his uttering and its rebellious conclusion evoke the affective burden of the difficult discussion about gold teeth, their whereabouts and rightful proprietors.[132]

The convenient appropriation of the gold crowns still seems to produce in Ryszard a certain self-consciousness due to the corporeal combination with something of *an other*. The transplant "becomes a metaphorical figure of otherness both endangering and saving the original body."[133] Unlike the other body parts, the gold teeth are a visible sign of this corporeal metamorphosis, unveiling the processes of transformation that have taken place; and Ryszard bares his teeth to the lawyer in a reluctant smile that is at the same time a shameful self-exposure.[134] Together with the teeth, Ryszard also had to embrace their story and atopical social entanglements. Through the teeth's presence, he can no longer refuse his belonging to and "continuation of"[135] the history of the assembled persons. Although set in the future US-America and without any nominal connection to the past before the 1960s, this staging-on-screen of Nancy-Ryszard's gold teeth inevitably points to their function as material ghosts of the Holocaust and as a reference to the social entanglements of the remains after the war. *Roly Poly* is thus an interesting case of a transgressive humanist exploration, set precisely in the overlap of questioning assumptions about the human subject through the horrors of the Second World War, and through scientific progress and technological shifts.

Corporeal negotiations achieve a critical role in this decentring and transgression of a humanism that postulates a coherence of the human individual and its independency from a more-than-human environment.

4.2.3 Bio-mechanical danse macabre

For theatre director and artist Tadeusz Kantor, the very element of patching—as visible in *Roly Poly*'s gold teeth issue—became important in his work. Kantor was highly interested in the interplay of thing and actor, in the material tension between non-living object and living organism, exploring the interlap between. Already in the late 1940s, he artistically worked for example with umbrellas, an object "of questionable and dubious utility, some 'semi-object'," [136] as Kantor put it. He engaged with "umbrellaic space [*przestrzeń parasolowata*]," [137] exploring the umbrella's osseous structure and its readiness for construction in three-dimensional space. With the umbrellas' skeletons, he created new organisms, "analogous to humans'," "a new anatomy of the human figure." [138]

> The human figure is formed on the border of a living, suffering organism and a mechanism that functions automatically and absurdly. It is governed by the laws of METAMORPHOSIS. The human figure is subject to transformations, abundant growing, transplantations and cross-breedings of species.[139]

Borders intrigued Kantor's work as the contact sphere between things or categories, where overlaps were possible and the impact of one on the other became visible. Kantor's theatrical explorations of the 1960s to 1980s in various ways played with the "artificial borders" [140] between fine arts, performative arts and theatre, but also put an enhanced interest in the borders between art and reality and "the very idea of representation." [141] In the early 1960s, Kantor developed his notion of a "zero theatre," operating with a "void [*pustka*]," with things of the lowest level, considered as of no relevance as all, just anything, "at the threshold between being used and discarded or between existing and not existing." [142] Indeed, he referred to pre-war Jewish writer Bruno Schulz's (1892–1942) notion of a "degraded reality" [143] and of art as forgery. [144] In the creative process of investigating into and blurring the border between reality and art, a process that was to Kantor more important than the actual theatrical product, [145] the instrument of the artistic happening was found to be particularly helpful and as an element and method influenced Kantor's theatre work. [146] In Kantor's theatre, like in Schulz' prose, one expression of the engagement with the lower levels of reality and illusionary representation was their interest in working with dummies, a heretic "creation that fraudulently falsifies reality, that is a forbidden practice done in secret." [147] The overlap between human acts and the presence and agency of a *manekin* was enhanced by the peculiar use of the spoken word on stage.

The verbal level gradually shifted its connection to the actors and the action on stage, turning out asemantical, disagreeing with movement and gestures, as an independent but interfering layer.[148] The actors' possibilities of representation and the production of sense were thus limited, and their function came closer to those of the dummies. Moreover, Kantor would be present on the stage of his plays, walking around, directing, watching, and intervening when the actors would get too immersed in their play or in some other way displease Kantor's vision of a controlled theatrical illusion.[149]

In this context, Kantor's artistic practice of the "emballage" (*ambalaż*) emerged, a practice of enveloping or wrapping and of giving special care to the transformed surface as the border isolating a thing from its surroundings, from reality. He associated emballage "both with the activity of packaging, which fascinated him, and with an object of the lowest order."[150] Not by chance, his first happening in 1967 concerned an envelope of 14 meters carried by "post functionaries" through Warsaw. Kantor became intrigued with the rhino—a figure that stemmed from both Albrecht Dürer's (1471–1528) exceptionally surface-oriented woodcut *Rhinoceros* (1515) and Eugène Ionesco's (1919–1994) absurd play *Rhinoceros* (1959), a play about strange metamorphoses that Kantor was staging at the time. He identified the rhinoceros also in reality—in the figure of a beggar in a café:

> Then someone enters, or rather "something" (like Ulysses in wartime). A dirty, grey individual, dressed in rags, some kind of coat, like an unformed sack, nothing human. He is carrying a monstrous rucksack, almost merging with him. […] But I could still hear the drumming of the rhinoceros dashing off. Clothes. This strange "accessory" of a human being. Of his body. Naked. An "accessory" that, in its materiality, has nothing in common with the human body, with the man. A stranger. It only tries to confuse us.[151]

The material and objects carried on a human body, their "envelopment" and simultaneous transformation of the body and the human intrigued Kantor.[152] He understood the "costume" as something alien that parasitises on the human body, expanding its own agency and becoming more and more independent.[153] Kantor chose to envelop his actors not only with elements of "common" clothing, but also to merge their bodies with unusual objects and extensions, such as bicycle wheels, a second head between the legs, dirty rags, additional arms, pieces of wood, a whole door including its frame or a collection of drawers.[154] While he developed his practice of "insistent[ly] coupling […] his actors with an imposing multitude of 'poor' wooden objects, dadaistic 'machines', and surreal contraptions,"[155] these actors-costumes became—for example in *The Water Hen* (*Kurka wodna*, 1967) or *Lovelies and Dowdies* (*Nadobnisie i koczkodany*, 1973), but also in earlier and later productions—peculiar bio-objects.[156] The actors—and dummies—treated these unusual combinations, nonetheless obstacles to their movement, as a sort of

accidental given. Their human gestures and mimics were deliberately reduced, as they instead repeated lines and gestures like dysfunctional machines pretending to be human(oid).[157] While this patching might have been seen as referencing to "psychopathological anomalies,"[158] it was not supposed to "represent any reality beyond"[159] the concrete being-there of the figure:

> One can dream that one is a vehicle. That is, one possesses certain abilities that humans do not possess. This man carrying a door for no one knows what reason, grown together with that door, who can only open and close it. Nothing else. For any representation of anything, any mental states, irritations, there is no meaning here. He only opens and closes the door.[160]

In their connectedness to a thing, the actor's bodies and movements become objects on stage without direct relation to a localised, stable human subject.[161] Kantor's theatrical productions were a sort of mobile collage of moving images, almost an organic-mechanic perpetual motion, of which not only the actors, objects and the theatrical space took part, but also text, audience, and director.

Kantor's work was closely entangled not only with his presence on stage, but also—especially from the 1970s onwards—with "his own life as source material."[162] For Kantor, the topic of the pre-war multi-ethnic society, which he had experienced as a boy and teenager in his hometown Wielopole,[163] and its dismantlement during the war became increasingly important in his productions. According to Teemu Paavolainen, his work was now "constantly invaded […] by forces of history"[164]; for Gluhowic, Kantor's "engagement with historical trauma, memory, and forgetting" became "almost obsessive."[165] Despite having grown up in a Catholic family, Kantor strongly incorporated Jewish traditions with his own life. Not only did he live in close proximity to the synagogue, but also his father was of Jewish origin. More important, however, than his own biographical entanglement with Jewish culture was for Kantor the close relationship of Polish and Jewish cultures and traditions and their mutual fertilisation. The thorough loss of one of these elements amounts to a trauma of national scale, deeply enrooted also in its Polish parts.[166]

The Second World War was for Kantor "not only a horrifying personal experience but was also a global event that interrupted the illusion of a continuous accumulation of knowledge about a human being and his or her actions."[167] It devaluated, according to Michal Kobialka, the accustomed pre-war perception of reality, which is why Kantor refused to represent "reality" in his art. In this context must also be seen Kantor's suspicion about the human subject and its humanist project of self-amelioration, which he perceived as the source of Nazi ideology and its hierarchisation of the human species. In this sense, for Kantor, the "category of 'human' has lost all validity; it no longer has meaning."[168] It is also here that Kantor's theatre most

radically differs from Jerzy Grotowski's. Both Kantor and Grotowski worked with elements of repetition and especially with the repetition of witnessing, provoking intense affects with the audience. However, where Grotowski working with ritualistic corporeal repetitions came to aim at a regression towards a quasi-religious metaphysical truth about human nature, Kantor

> would operate the other way around: he would break down all patterns of affective reaction, put his audiences on the wrong scent, register experiences of horror as comedy acts, and set in motion processes for exposing the 'uncanny'. […] Kantor entangled the spectator in a system of repetitions that left him or her disorientated, where the possibility of working through experiences of the past disappeared from the field of vision.[169]

Instead of trying to arrive at a point of consistency and understanding of human identity or human-ness, Kantor's strategy was to disassemble all notions of such consistency. So, while Magda Romanska sees Kantor's "proto-posthuman" theatre, exploring the boundaries of human and non-human or living and material worlds, as related to the specific moment of its emergence and as a response to the history of the 20th century, it is certainly true too that the direction of Kantor's explorations took a different turn than that of Grotowski's, although both qualify as "theatre of the Holocaust," as Grzegorz Niziołek terms it. Kantor's practice of patching, so different from Grotowski's "poor theatre's" ideal of the human body stripped from its material "envelopment," questioned the possibility not only of an unscathed body, but also of an intact, coherent human subject.[170] In its stead, a "destroyed room"[171] beyond the vision of healing took the centre space of Kantor's artistic attention.

In his memory-based theatre productions, Kantor invited the past into the space of his theatre through repetition and his patching practices.[172] He extended "a moral hospitality to Poland's Jews who died in the war, and whose losses—in Poland as in the rest of Europe—were for decades folded into national narratives of mourning and loss without acknowledgement of the uniqueness of Jewish wartime experiences."[173] Precisely this unfolding and re-staging of the Jewish reality and experience per se without strictly isolating it from the Polish reality was a practice opposing the obliteration of Polish Jewishness. History appeared on Kantor's stage not as linear temporality, but as a spatial formation allowing for overlaps, recompositing and synchronisation.[174] Moreover, his practice contributed to a secondary performative embodiment of Jewish life into the Polish body of survivors. For Kantor, the idea of the dybbuk was central, a figure of Jewish mythology in which the dead speak through the bodies of the living. Thus, the dead, history, and memory were offered a space on the theatrical stage and through the bodies of the actors-objects.[175] Like in Konwicki's *How far, how near*, the historical and factual location of that which happens on stage was

confused, intermingled with the material presence of the devices, bio-objects, things, or bodies on stage.

In *Lovelies and Dowdies* (sometimes translated as *Dainty Shapes and Hairy Apes*), a production premiering in 1973 that does not yet belong to the strictly memory-guided theatre of Kantor, such inscriptions of the past in the present space were made on several levels. In one moment of the multi-layered play-happening, which featured many human-nonhuman patchwork figures and strongly evolved around the imaginary of a cloakroom (*szatnia*), the genderfluid (genderpatched?) cloakroom attendant enters the theatrical space. Accompanied by a wailing sound of singing or music, they come running with a tattered violin in their hand, held far apart from their body as if it was toxic. Pressing it onto another actor, the latter tries to pass it on to the audience; but having failed, hands it quickly back to the cloakroom assistant who runs back, glancing over their shoulder as if committing a crime.[176] This scene emerges like a retrospective on the March atmosphere, when the label of Jewishness was tossed around and refused like the tattered violin in Kantor's play. Even if one refrains from "interpreting" this scene, it produces a kind of unsettling feeling. By catching the audience quite unawares, leaving no space for reflected reaction, the scene affects the spectator with an uneasiness or even unwillingness about what happened. It reproduces in a flash the March atmosphere of anxiety, "forcing the spectator to re-experience"[177] this still fresh, generally undigested memory. The involved object itself, the tattered violin, is a degraded object; it is "old, marked by time, worn out by the fact of being used."[178] Remarkably, it is not attached to a human body, but stages precisely the attempt to detach the subject from the thing. The violin appears as a remain of a past which "emanate[s its] own absences, of people and their bodies."[179] This absence is enhanced in the way the violin is treated.

Lovelies and Dowdies' topos of Jewish presence and culture is written into the play by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939), which features a choir of forty Mandelbaums—a sort of "seething Jewish mob."[180] In Kantor's production, however, this group was assembled from the audience, a part of which was isolated at the cloakroom for this purpose. They had to leave their cloaks or other clothes—"parts of their personality left hanging in the cloakroom"[181]—and were later "enveloped" as orthodox Jews in long gabardines, beards, and hats. An actor animated them to do exercises—getting up and sitting down—to stand closer together, to wail tragically with elevated hands.[182] Thus, Kantor reformulated the notion of cultural boundaries, letting (forcing) his audience perform as this specific group of Jews. Their performance is—as it is often the case in scenes with audience participation—marked by stiffness, insecurity, and the eagerness to conform to the group and fulfil the task. Thus, as the exercise most abruptly is terminated, a spectator still holding his hands over his head instantly reinterprets this gesture—as if he was just about to scratch his head.[183] The Mandelbaum choir in *Lovelies and Dowdies* works like a palimpsestic space, where past and present overlap; but the production disallows its members to become fully immersed in

their performing a group of orthodox Jews, for example when an actor pretends to be cutting apart the cloaks they had left at the cloakroom.[184] The embodiment of the past remains at the physical level, through materiality and movement bereft of a definable source, as "foci of signs."[185] Kantor's theatre did not create the illusion of recovery or healing, instead presenting a sort of more-than-human danse macabre, in which the sense of humanity and the traces of its past were integrated into the wider material environment.

4.3 Sensorial encounters

The notion of the human—of humanity—was questioned on two levels in the context of the experience of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Most widely recognised is probably the question, how the amount of cruelty amassed in the war and under the cover of it could possibly relate to humanism's premise of a human rationality and progressing civilisation. Trust in the human other had been gravely shaken or shattered because of the horrors of annihilation that sedimented in the corporealities of the survivors and their offspring and in their relation to the world. Yet the war had provoked doubt not only in terms of the humanity of the other, but also of the self. With the destabilisation of the "fundamental opposition"[186] between death and living, the non-living had become a part of living, and the palimpsestic corporealities of the survivors were marked by deaths. In a single body, the trajectories of multiple lives intersected, making its living a living of many. Living had become a platform and assembly, crossing out the idea of a coherent, self-sufficient, and disentangled human subject.

This impression was enhanced by the experience of hunger and the painful dependence of (human) life from nourishment, a deeply material category. In this context, described intensively by Wojdowski, human corporeality found itself in an environment of non-human corporealities and materialities, in which the dismantlement of human life was paralleled by a dismantlement of the cityscape and architecture, a demolishing of objects (once) dear to somebody, a thinning and vanishing of animals in the ghetto space. His *Bread for the Departed* is an "atmospheric document"[187] of the Warsaw Ghetto insofar, that it expands this chronotope in a "polyphonic"[188] way that encompasses not only human voices, but also the voices and noises of vermin, crumbling walls, fluttering photographs, or the crackling of frost. These sounds are not simply the background noise to the human drama; they develop their own intensity, and the agency of the non-human existences and things in the ghetto space overarches the agency of the living-dead humans within it. The more-than-human, de-hierarchised ghetto architecture and intricate dynamics is also mirrored in Kantor's bio-objective intersection of organic life and inorganic matter, which created a new disinterested democracy between these assumed poles. Kantor, like Wojdowski, abandoned the position from which the human would always assume superiority over its more-than-human environment.

Anna Barcz rightly states in her recent book *Environmental Cultures in Soviet East Europe* that in Eastern Europe and its regional environments, "culture, history and memory intertwine with natural resources, and human memory intersects with non-human lives." As "trauma is perceived as more than human," the notion of "ecological scars"[189] becomes relevant. Barcz points out the closely related engineering and exploitation of human lives and natural resources, which produces more-than-human casualties. A similar understanding propose Ursula Knoll, Helena Ulbrechtová, and Alexander Höllwerth with their notion of "contaminated"[190] landscapes, according to which the environment is invisibly marked, carrying hidden material traces of the expulsion and extermination of humans. Landscapes become thus witness and testimony to human violence. In archaeological undertakings, these traces can be unearthed, like in the digging for buried artefacts performed in the short documentary "Archaeology" (*Archeologia*, 1968) by Andrzej Brzozowski (1932–2005).[191] Another way the traces of vanished human life become entangled in their surroundings is described by Dziuban on the basis of the appropriation of property of expelled, deported, and murdered Jews by non-Jewish persons. At the example of the gold teeth, Dziuban argues that their indefinite ontological status makes constant renegotiation necessary.[192] It becomes clear that the "environmental" trauma is not necessarily located in "nature," but expands to encompass a sociality that incorporates humans, animals, things, architectures, and landscapes alike.

The recently deceased Bruno Latour (1947–2022) repeatedly emphasised that the "social" may not by any means be reduced to the interpersonal. He instead saw the social—and in connection with that he spoke of sociology—as the quasi-matter of the intermediate space that extends between any possible "actors" and which first makes possible not just a relation to an environment but to the world itself. The social, according to Latour, is thus locatable in a specific kind of relationality, in the interaction that arises between things and envelops them: between plants, machines, human and non-human animals, geological and geographical conditions, chemical substance, digital encoding, materials, products, tools, etc.[193] In Kantor's probably most famous theatre play, *The Dead Class* (*Umarła klasa*, 1975), the classroom desks that provide the space of the performance are not scenery; according to Kantor, they "are in fact the main actor."[194] The hierarchy is subverted; the human actors figure as the addition, which gives even more weight to the wooden benches.

The transgressive humanist explorations discussed in this book try to engage precisely such a sociality that acknowledges the more-than-human world because they experience the reduction of the social to interhuman relations as short-sighted and potentially dangerous. The humanity of humans is at the same time supported and questioned by their relationships to the environment. The post-war situation, the traumata inherited from the war, allocate a specific kind of loneliness and sometimes impossibility to share with other humans that what had been seen, experienced, felt, endured. Only the consideration of a human's environment enables a fuller perspective of its

location, corporeality, conduct, and historicity, giving a kind of meaning to its existence. Through the atmosphere of minusivity in the late 1960s, which enhanced the semantic silence of interpersonal exchange and the impression of a farce of interhuman communication, the attention of transgressive humanist exploration shifted additionally towards the world of things beyond verbal language. Things appeared maybe sometimes more real and authentic than fellow humans; and because transgressive humanism was still interested in the notion of the *human* that emerged from and dissolved in the world, it turned partially towards the material world of things and spaces to pose the questions that plagued it.

4.3.1 Emerging from emergency

In staging the gradual disintegration of human life and its implications for those (still) living in the sealed-off world of the Warsaw Ghetto, Wojdowski raised questions about the defence and resolution of the human into the more-than-human. He presented in *Bread for the Departed* a shift in the mutual relations between life, agency, and collective being. The novel asks about the effect of obliteration, how disintegration gives rise to a repositioning towards to the other. This results in new and unfamiliar forms of relation and contact from within the process of disappearance. For where the humanity of those imprisoned in the ghetto finds its liminality, there simultaneously arise new spheres of action and relation. Wojdowski opens a literary horizon onto a more-than-human sociality on the threshold separating life from death, and moral repulsion from vital instinct, a horizon where architectural space, natural phenomena, foodstuffs, objects of daily life, and microbial lifeforms are promoted in their respective ways to decisive actors. The world Wojdowski describes reacts to division and negation with a form of commonality that looks with anticipation beyond the limits of an anthropocentric understanding of the world.

The meaning ascribed to the human status as subject comes to coexist in the Warsaw Ghetto with the immense significance taken on by materiality. Things like the weather, architectural decomposition, and "vermin" become central players in the structuring of human life in the ghetto. One could speak to a certain extent of a link to the Jewish mythological tradition, with its inclusion of the multifacetedness of the world and the relationality of its components. The meaning of Judaism and its location in a collective memory is a continual topic of discussion in *Bread for the Departed*, and it sets the experiences of Dawid and his family in a broader frame.[195] The transgression of the individual human fate is inherent in this cultural-mythological approach. Thus, it is less surprising or unsettling that the human protagonists now only appear amidst other, non-human actors, almost as derivations of the conditions of the more-than-human world. However, there is no hint at an organising, all-seeing omnipotent power behind it all; the cultural dimension of Judaism is much more important in the novel than the question of

faith. In the place of a potential god, we see a collaging and intertwining of highly diverse forces, elements, and phenomena.

> The wind blew in through the shattered windowpane and a star plunged earthward through the black sky. Darkness swallowed up the short day almost as soon as the noon hour struck. Winter, winter… When would this winter finally be over? David blew on his hand and rubbed his frozen, stiff fingers. Heavy icicles hung from the gutters and the edge of the roof, like beards severed by ice from the skeletons that lay scattered about the courtyards. The column of mercury fell relentlessly, degree after degree. And here life was flying away with every breath. In front of the windows of the tenement, which grew more deserted every day, a mound of garbage, furniture, and books was piling up, while the snow covered the rags on the street, the traces of the beggars' forced march. Papers flew out through open windows and doors, blew into the stairwells, swept from the stairs out into the courtyard and kept on traveling, and away we go—Leibuś with a smile on his face dashed through the city on Faiga's knees, holding a flag in his little hand, all the way to Żelazna Brama Square, where the holiday photograph froze in the mud. An apple crowned the flag and in the apple was a colored candle… Swollen tongues protruded like stones from between bared teeth, and the faces of the dead turned dark blue.
>
> Discarded clocks lay in the snow, recording a time that had passed. Torn prayer books scattered their verses; mute curses wandered about aimlessly; yellowed, moldy pages flew off in all directions to the four corners of the earth. The eviscerated quilts in which they wrapped themselves when they went out into the streets loosed their feathers in the frozen air, and Jewish specters glided through the city like plucked angels.
>
> The wind blew the stars from the black sky through the shattered windowpane.
>
> "I set the constellations, the planets, and the moon in the void. I extend the Milky Way," said Professor Baum, diligently scratching himself all over.
>
> A louse crawled lazily down his sleeve.[196]

Distinctions between human and non-human beings or modes of being blur, forms of pluralisation, and opening of consciousness emerge. The disintegration of human life in the (non-)existence of surviving and reduced agency shifts the relations of referencing, possession, and power. Space expands and becomes an omnirelationality of that which remains; what once was object becomes situated social subject-object.[197] The borders between organic and inorganic, between life and death, become porous as the inorganic or lifeless assumes the character of elements possessing agency.

Wojdowski did not play down the horrors of the Warsaw Ghetto at all in his more-than-human polyphony. The whole range of the brutality of discrimination and annihilation that can occur between human beings is neither idealised nor stylised with pathos. And yet it is exactly this interpersonal brutality, the perspective of the diverse forms of human inhumanity which first brings about the dissolution of prevailing conceptions of humanity in the novel. *Bread for the Departed* manages to recognise not just the negative and absence in the disappearance of the accustomed social world and the erosion of humanity but also the attendant shifts in relations as an integrating, almost comforting vision of more-than-human worlds. The disappearance of human-bound agency creates space for new forms of commonality, for a sense of a space of coexistence beyond the individual subject. We learn from Wojdowski's text what it might mean to be exposed as a human being to the world and how perhaps to better interact with this world today and in the future. For in the place of a reflexive drawing of boundaries between self and other, Wojdowski presents a form of letting-go that acknowledges the other, "embracing absence and making it perform political work"[198]. Or, in the words of Zygmunt Bauman: "No doubt, the Holocaust did change the condition of the world. It added considerably to our collective knowledge of the world we collectively inhabit, and that new knowledge cannot but change the way we inhabit it and the way we think of and narrate the experience and the prospect of shared habitation."[199] This "shared habitation" can and must be thought, according to transgressive humanist explorations, beyond the limits of the human and lived as such.

While *Bread for the Departed* is almost wholly immersed in this more-than-human sociality, a glimpse of it also emerges unexpectedly from Wanda Melcer's (1896–1972) "A Woman's September" (*Wrzesień kobiety*, 1965). In her novel about a woman and her two children that spend the war in Warsaw, while their husband and father did not return to Poland after the outbreak of the war, Melcer does point out the importance of things in view of a radical absence of close and supportive humans. However, throughout the novel, she does this in a rather accustomed way.

> I have already mentioned that after we lost our things during the raid, in the house remained my boys' duvets and Mieczysław's bedding. That bedding, the duvet he used to cover himself with, the couch he slept on, everything was permeated with his smell. […] I move my hands weakly around me; I would like to find him next to me, what is it, that I cannot find him?[200]

The blanket, the smell—in this passage, they function only as a substitution of the missed person, evoking his presence and physicality. On other occasions, the things gain a certain unknown-yet agency that bases on the reduction of agency or physical skills on the side of the humans that handled them.

> When bread turned up, the crust on it was so hard that chewing it wounded the gums, and while cooking I tried every now and then with a spoonful of cabbage whether it was already soft, and parched my lips so dangerously that I could not heal them for weeks. […] I did not know the properties of the laws that govern the movements of liquids or inanimate objects in general, according to their matter. […] Pots were falling, plates were smashing, cups were breaking. […] The water, instead of having an even surface, as befits one when one is not a sea, lapped without end in the bucket, the soup and milk fled from the pots destined for them, carrying out a number of astonishing evolutions. The spoon, placed on the table, tilted a long time to both sides, making an unbearable clanking sound, and the ladle fell from the nail straight into the bucket.[201]

Part of this grappling with the food—which, here, at least "turns up" somewhat regularly—and its particular material characteristics is due to the fact that the protagonist, having been an intellectual worker before the war, is not really used to constantly do housework, cooking, and washing;[202] part of it comes from the failing strength due to undernourishment and a fought-down despair. It is both a struggle with her own body that rebels against the incessant housework, and against the elements of the foodstuff. In Melcer's novel, to keep on living means thus a fight against the matter of life itself.

In an astonishing passage later in the novel, the woman protagonist has an encounter with the flowers in their courtyard garden—"huge, monstrously exuberant weeds, spurges, thistles, nettles, long tufts of grass, snapdragons, field poppies, camomile."[203] She is overwhelmed by the lustful physicality of the plants, and despite a certain feeling of dread and repulsion, gives herself in to them:

> I have leaned over the precipice of vegetable, half-animal, greedy beings, they want to keep me among them, they entwined my legs, wrapped my arms, creep slowly along the hair on the back of my neck. I want to leave and I don't want to, I want to tear these lianas apart and I'm ashamed to reach out my hand lest I encounter nature's swollen, protuberant reproductive organs. So I throw myself headlong into this cloud of semen, I feel, as a woman, the monstrous lust that these huge, sprawling burdocks hold for me, I am choked by the suffocating smell of the vegetable cum, I almost lose consciousness here, under the tight vault of flowering grasses.[204]

In the absence of her husband and any other intimate sexual relation, and more aware of her environment's material sociality, the woman had come to notice the lustfulness of the flowery abundance that grew in their garden. The "monstrosity" of the orgiastic flowers is emphasised by their stark contrast to the grey and reduced Warsaw city space that features as the background of

the protagonists' wartime endurance. The "flush of shame"[205] with which she leaves her flowery bed relates thus not only to the fact of her having had a sexual encounter with plants; it also points to the transgression of the norm of listlessness towards pleasure and enjoyment framed by the war conditions. Her encounter features as a portal to a space that is entirely alien to her everyday war world. It is abundant, colourful, lascivious, and utterly irrelevant to her surviving the war or to the defence of the Polish nation—the latter emerging occasionally in the novel as a demand voiced in order to classify a survival as successful and acknowledgeable. With this ecosexual passage, Melcer's novel also diverges from the pattern of Polish war literature, a pattern that it had previously played with by highlighting its main protagonist as a *woman*—sensual, practically rather than ideologically guided, and more concerned with the survival of her children than that of Polish honour.[206]

During the war, the space of "nature" had been suspended. In "A Woman's September," it pushes into the city space and the protagonist's narration, emerging at the threshold of her existence. In *Bread for the Departed*, however, there is no more lushness available in the ghetto space. Some of the children do not even know what a meadow is; others, like Dawid, still remembered village landscapes, evoking living pictures of the past before their inner eyes: "The pines were still there, on the sand dunes."[207] Another boy's questions, asking what he remembers and what pine trees are, take Dawid back in memories to the village of his childhood in the woods. Yet unlike in Melcer's episode, this nature is characterised primarily as untouched by humans, signalling a virginity that undoes humans' social interaction. "Pure drops furrowed the lusterless skin of the dangling fruits and diffused the light like cut crystal. Pure tears dripped from the fruits that no one's fingers had touched."[208] Human intervention or even presence is marked here as negative, as a potential destruction, as it was human violent power that cut Dawid off from this lost and re-imagined, de-populated countryside, the utter counterpart to his ghetto existence.

Despite the intimate encounter with the flowers in her garden, the woman in the novel "A Woman's September" is unable to acknowledge it as an interaction "on equal rights:" she ascribes the plants an overwhelming agency directed towards *her*, a will to draw her into this orgiastic encounter partially against her will, partially on the basis of her own, sublimed desire. So, in fact, her classification of the encounter does not categorically differ from the everyday encounters with the unruly spoons, pots and the hard bread crumb: she reads the sociality between her and the things or plants not only from her perspective, but also creates an environment that is there *for* her, directed *at* her. Without her, the things are not agents in themselves, they do not have agency beyond the horizon of her attention; they do not exist without her. Different from Wojdowski's novel, where the things in the ghetto space, despite their human origin and connection (such as photographs), live alongside their fellow humans in the same space, which both create in their existence equally, Melcer's material world is limited to the human gaze. It thus

does not have the same, somehow comforting feeling of being-there; it is not a companion to humans but emerges as their somewhat rebellious background. But without humans, everything would fall apart.

4.3.2 City polyphony

Closer to Wojdowski's vision of the more-than-human sociality of the city scape are the early films made by Jerzy Skolimowski (*1938[209]): *Identification Marks: None* (*Rysopis*, 1964/65) and *Walkover* (*Walkower*, 1965). Indeed, especially *Identification Marks: None*, Skolimowski's first full-length feature film, seems in its attention to the materiality of the city almost like a filmic precursor to Wojdowski's literary ghetto scape arrangement. The film follows the steps of its main protagonist, a young man called Andrzej Leszczyc, on his last day before he must leave for a two-years military service. Leszczyc, here and in *Walkover* played by Skolimowski himself, seems unable to establish a defined way of life, although he is at an age at which others have already attained their degrees, jobs, and social achievements. Andrzej is somehow lost in the reality in which he moves about: He quits his studies right before diploma; his wife, to whom he is not actually married, does not know he is no longer a student; and despite his initial declaration of eagerness to finally fulfil his service, throughout the film he remains unable to decide whether to actually take the train for the military or not. He does this and that but mostly drops his undertakings half-way. In this sense, Leszczyc is an antithesis to the socialist worker who nourishes an ambition of professional and social success, or at least of a certain amount of personal welfare; and he is a male figure whose indecisiveness and lack of initiative deconstructs a normative image of masculinity.[210] This lonely and alienated protagonist, as Ewa Mazierska notes, "barely communicates with those whom he encounters during his wanderings through the city, and when communication does happen, the dialogue is superficial or disrupted. People do not understand him, and he hardly tries to remedy this situation."[211] The figure of Leszczyc is oddly incongruent with his fellow citizens, he is not fully involved.[212]

Kuba Mikurda describes Leszczyc's appearances in Skolimowski's films *Identification Marks: None, Walkover* and *Barrier* (*Bariera*, 1966; with Jan Nowicki as Leszczyc) as a "purely negative existence, which does not want to be constituted by a regulation, a closer purpose, a definition of his own needs as a subject."[213] Thus, Leszczcyc appears as an empty, or pre-subject, "always in a state of becoming."[214] Compared to his purposeful fellow humans, he lacks initiative and agency; and his actions have a limited impact on the social world he wanders through. He emerges like a liminal figure linking the human world to the material world of the city, where heaps of bricks, pipes, or woody debris—wreckage of the war, or remnants of the industrialised landscape and the labour of the working class—happen to lie here and there. Like the cauliflower that had fallen from his shopping bag, which he picks up

distractedly,[215] Andrzej rolls from one scene to the other, bumping against the reality of the world, lost but maybe still of use to someone.

The lack of purpose depicted as dominating Leszczyc's life might be imposed from the specific age of Skolimowski's generation. Though having experienced the war as young children—Skolimowski had just turned seven when the war in Europe came to an end—he and his peers did so in a passive way. They cannot relate their contemporary identities to the roles they had chosen during the war; in the context of the mid-socialist discourse, this leads to an imposition of guilt and indebtedness. In *Identification Marks: None*, an older man enters Leszczyc's flat with the purpose of collecting empty glass bottles from him, remarking that at Leszczyc's age he took part in the Warsaw Uprising. "Now you are well off. I was at your age in the uprising. You were a brat then, in '44."[216] As a kind of proof, he points out his injured leg, an identification mark that distinguishes him, bestowing his life and appearance with purpose. Although Leszczyc debunks the old man's story as a flat lie, which the "veteran" frankly confirms,[217] the mark of having been born too late for heroism is still branded on Leszczyc's figure. The "flaw" of lacking "real" war experience renders Andrzej's inertia devoid of historical explanation; and yet, it precisely sits in these expectations: Skolimowski revolts with his featureless and anti-heroic protagonist against the smug narrative of the older, "established"[218] generation about their heroism of resistance.

The character of *Identification Marks: None* is "chimerical, collage-like,"[219] as the scenes following each other seem only loosely connected like the bullet points on a bucket list, connected simply through the fact that the same protagonist wanders between them through the cityscape. This fragmentised character of the film resulted partially from the fact that Skolimowski arranged his feature film from the short film etudes he realised during his studies at the Łódź Film School.[220] The connection between the scenes was thus indeed not always given, and their arrangement into a full-length film with a partially coherent narrative happened only during the editing stage. This technique of a raw assemblage, halfway intended, and halfway a product of the circumstances, stood for a "new kind of film-making courage"[221] that would become part of Skolimowski's filmic handwriting and guaranteed him much attention in the milieu of European avantgarde cinema.[222]

Identification Marks: None is an intense city polyphony in terms not only of the different human voices encountered during Leszczyc's wandering about downtown. What characterises this film is a polyphony encompassing particular the city's architectural space and sound scape. Skolimowski extensively exploits the filmic medium's ability of layering the visual and audio levels. In the visual sphere, he used uncommon camera loops turning the image upside down, worked with mirrors, doors that were unexpectedly closed, and radical visual alterations in close-up shots due to shifts of the body, etc. Thus orientation in space is disturbed, as heads are suddenly hanging into the frame from above reflected in a mirroring bar counter, or unknown faces flash out of the darkness only for seconds. The audio level

regularly overlaps between two scenes, most effectively in the scene following right after the one where Andrzej leaves his little dog at the veterinary. The dog is about to be put down due to a rabies epidemy, a fact that Leszczyc accepts after only feebly mumbling something about medication. He leaves even before the dog is dead; the last shot of the animal is accompanied by the veterinary sawing open the ampoule with the toxin. The squeaking sound of sawing extends to the next shot, where the viewers see Andrzej walking through the streets. The camera offers a close-up perspective on the back of his head as he steadily walks off; but the camera and the nerve-racking sawing follow suit.[223] It is, probably, the only scene where the viewers get a meaningful glimpse—or an earful, rather—at what might be interpreted as Andrzej's thoughts and feelings. Usually, there is no sign of his inner life whose authenticity we could ascertain,[224] although "we are always in close proximity to the character, able almost to hear him breathing, because the camera never leaves him."[225] Most of his reactions to stimuli appear almost bodily-organic, except for when he feels socially urged to show affect. In the moment of grief about the dog that had to die (because of his lack of initiative, as he did not vaccinate it), it is the cinematographic technique that "aids" and reveals his sadness. However, an abrupt sound of braking tyres interrupts and drowns out the sawing, letting Andrzej swirl around with a start. In a flash, he is already fully present in the city reality again, a reality that forces itself upon him without seeming to be able to effectively touch him.

Leszczyc, who seems to be more aware of the sound level of his environment than other people he encounters, "manages to convey to the audience his physical awareness of walking and listening."[226] However, his listening seems not to be structured by hierarchies or classifications, often reflecting the chaotic, multilayered living of the city in overlapping sound signals. Thus, the film creates a reality that surpasses the human ability to rationally process and classify all stimuli. Sometimes, several dialogues occupy the sound level simultaneously, for example when one woman in the dean's office of ichthyology—the zoological studies on fish, where Leszczyc was enrolled—is loudly talking on the telephone during the other woman's conversation with the main protagonist.[227] This scene is especially complex, as at first, the viewer sees the two women talking only as shadows through the frosted glass pane of the reception, filling the whole screen. One woman, the one later talking to Leszczyc, is seen making repetitious movements with some objects. As she opens the lower part of the glass pane, into view come the telephone and a plate of presumably sliced tomatoes, along with the slicer, a flat tin, and a can. The conversation about Andrzej's dropping out and the documents he wanted to get from the dean's office takes place with these rather prosaic things in view—and with the scraps of telephone conversation and a light classical piano tune in the ear. When the secretary filling out his documents inquires why he had not signed up for his master thesis and Andrzej replies: "I don't like fish,"[228] she gives an unaffected little laugh. Only at a later stage of their conversation, both the woman at the office and Andrzej become

visible, as they bow down and twist their bodies to be able to peer through the small space of the glass screen pushed aside. Like in this scene, often a specific sound or voice emerges that is followed only later by a visual representation of the actual source of this sound—if at all. The temporalities of sound and moving image are not matched in montage, and thus hearing and seeing are partially disconnected. There is no hierarchy between them, as they both add their traces independently to the city polyphony while at the same time semantically expanding and questioning the other layer.

The background noises are not just an audio scenery but tell their own stories, of which the film presents a snapshot. *Identification Marks: None* is like a sound archive of the city,[229] and an archive of the urban forms, geometries and materialities. Stairways and doors, windows and wallpapers, a blank wall or the dark space in an entrance room appear as "protagonists" that imprint themselves on Leszczyc's actions almost as much as they structure the visual dimension of the film. Once, when a radio reporter in the streets asks him if he would like to be a cosmonaut, he affirms, only to relativise the significance of outer space travel comparing it to the work of a lorry driver. "[Y]ou have to make it on time. Then—a free day in a foreign city. You walk around; there is something around every street corner. One does not know the city. One discovers it. It … it doesn't have to be the moon."[230] Like extra-terrestrial landscapes, a city—as is turns out, also a cityscape one is well accustomed to—can be explored, seen and listened to with all senses; in *Identification Marks: None*, with the senses that are available to cinematographic techniques.

Beside the immobile but nonetheless agile and bewildering architectural elements, mobile agents link the humans to space and their material environment. A crashing car gathers the crowd on the street, coffee cups block out the view on the faces mirrored in the bar counter, prosaic tins illustrate lunch time at the dean's office, empty glass bottles and the cauliflower Leszczyc cooks on the stove grant him the company of the alleged veteran of the Warsaw Uprising. The figure of Leszczyc wanders about as a medium collecting these sights and sounds with his body "in the same way a sponge absorbs water;"[231] but he also occasionally contributes to the reverberations of the city reality, for example, when his hurried steps fall on the stairway. His impact on his fellow human city inhabitants is rather limited, though.

In comparison with his following films, *Identification Marks: None* is probably Skolimowski's work where he granted the most space to the seemingly non-orchestrated city polyphony, enhancing its fragmentised and intermingling character through specific camera work and sound editing. However, while his earliest film focused on the urban chaotic three-dimensionality, adding sound as a fourth dimension, in the very next of his films, *Walkover*, things and animals were more prominent. They often appear nonchalantly in the camera frame, whereas in the following *Barrier*, their function circles closely around the story of the protagonists and its symbolic interpretation, making the animals and objects appear as staged and obtrusive. In *Walkover*, the

terrain of the industrial combine (in Plock)[232] where a big part of the film takes place, is repeatedly referred to as newly built, as only a year before, there had been meadows. This transition from one form of environmental living to another translates into a migration of things; beds are carried around, a mirror-glass closet door forces its way into the left-luggage office (notably, the office for hand luggage), paintings should be hanged, complete furnishing stand on the streets seemingly ready to be moved. The sign of a "cheap lunches" restaurant is only just put into a window where there are still parts of shop dummies dangling about, presumably remains of a former use of the local.[233] Repeatedly a heavy pair of scales crosses Leszczyc's wandering path, dragged about for the boxing match taking place in the evening. He himself carries with him several clocks; the prizes he won at boxing matches, most of them of the same Soviet brand with the telling name *Pobeda* ("Victory").

Despite the inexorable invasion of town life together with its objects and entertainments, the animals of the former farming practices have not yet vanished completely. Occasionally, a goat or cow are dragged around by a farmer-worker, and once a goat is transported through a hall of the combine on a small truck.[234] Andrzej is asked by a woman in the streets to kill a chicken for her; Andrzej's companion Teresa does the job as she knows a trick called the "wonder with the chicken," and was a practiced chicken killer in her youth.[235] The village characteristics of the place are partially preserved despite the background of the huge industry complex that structures the new reality and functions like a communal authority and centre. Dogs are present in *Walkover*, too. Unlike in *Identification Marks: None*, the dogs do not feature in the film as the companions or "belongings" of humans—with one exception, a dog that however dies after eating its birthday cake. The other dogs are freely roaming the urban space, striding across streets, restaurant terraces and the film cadre on their own agenda. Some barking and fighting dogs startle Leszczyc out of his listening to the radio he carries with him; it is the only scene when the dog and human world actually intersect tangibly, although they share the same space.[236]

Both in *Identification Marks: None* and *Walkover*, the wandering figure of Leszczyc guides the viewers through the thickness of a city or town architecture inhabited by a multitude of other beings, be they alive or human-made artifacts. Indeed, he almost appears as a tourist guide, demonstrating—but, importantly, not explaining—the behaviour needed to slip through the territory with the least impact. His figure becomes the link between conventional human perception of a city space, and the miracles this very cityscape has actually to offer to open eyes and ears. The filtration of a semantic pattern from the polyphony of the city appears as secondary at best, as the human figure becomes one amongst many figures.

While the bigger part of the materials assembled in this book stem from a generation that had experienced the war consciously, my engagement with the early films of Jerzy Skolimowski breaks out of this frame in two ways. First, Skolimowski is somewhat younger, which translates into an

atmosphere of his main character being lost that is radically different from the loneliness tackled in other works analysed here. One could almost say that it is the problem of pastlessness that haunts his protagonist in his erring through the city space and the lives of others. Second, the two films which occupied the centre of my attention were in a way produced too early—in the mid-1960s, before the rise of the March atmosphere in 1967—for the general frame of my argumentation. Nonetheless, they should not be dismissed here as they pick up more precisely on a topic that is less present in most of the other works analysed: the confusion and disorientation of human subjects in a world that is changing rapidly and expanding in many cases from a village view level of consciousness towards a notion of a globally interdependent geopolitical setting, in addition a setting marked by the non-personal control of the socialist system and bureaucracy.[237] Skolimowski focused more on the contemporary crises and struggles and on the immersion in the dynamics of a industrialising society—dynamics that are however permeated by the war and its aftermaths.

The present book proposes not only a new perspective on culture and the arts in mid-socialist Poland, but also to look at the development and demise of humanist convictions in the 20th century from a semi-peripheric angle. It points towards a form of absence or revocation of the premises of rationality and subjectivity as conditions of being-human, as outlined in Enlightenment humanism. It is in fact precisely the latter that the Marxist concept of alienation seeks to interrogate, and which ultimately comes under radical suspicion in multiple respects over the course of the 20th century. "The human being" and its "humanity" have been lurching about in the field of tension of a spectral (non-)existence for over a century, while, at least in western cultures, the colloquially incontrovertible existence of the human being is juxtaposed against its continuous, performative creation.

The utmost crisis of the Holocaust and the Second World War in general is the lens through which the Polish culture of mid-socialism is mirrored, especially because of the atmospheric parallels conjured up by the March events. The eradication of human agency during the war had set different frames for the notion of the human subject and humanity, frames that could not be dismissed easily. Yet they also created space for new forms of commonality and a sense of corporeal coexistence beyond the individual subject which, in my view, must be taken very seriously from an eco-political perspective. "If we want to discuss apocalypse, catastrophe and annihilation in the context of contemporary problems, we can learn much from Holocaust research,"[238] writes literary critic Marta Tomczok; a statement I can only expand to encompass not only research, but also the cultural text of artistic works. The extensively discussed novel *Bread for the Departed*, for example, is in this sense both a warning and potential first steps toward a solution in its recomposing the rubble of humanity after the Holocaust in new ways.

Contemporary interest in the concept of the Anthropocene and its resultant environmental and climate crises as social crises shows that a Latournian thinking of the social—or whatever we want to call the interactions between human action and the world as a whole—is urgently necessary for productive engagement.[239] This involves developing a *commonal* understanding of world that, building on concepts of convivality and *décroissance*,[240] does not conceive of the world as an inexhaustible resource for the desires of the human subject but which thinks the material in categories of finiteness and limitation—limitations that arise from the many and diverse multispecies demands on reality.

Notes

1 Cf. Yael Navaro, 'The Aftermath of Mass Violence: A Negative Methodology', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 49, no. 1 (2020): 165 f., https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-010220-075549.
2 See Marta Fik, *Marcowa kultura. Wokół Dziadów, literaci i władza, kampania marcowa* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wodnika, 1995), 192; Anna Barbara Jarosz, 'Marzec w prasie', in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później: tom I: Referaty*, ed. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1998), 115–16; David Kowalski, *Polens letzte Juden. Herkunft und Dissidenz um 1968* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 195–97; Jacek Leociak, 'Instrumentalizacja Zagłady w dyskursie marcowym', *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 228, no. 4 (2008): 450.
3 See Christoph Münz, 'Der Holocaust, das Judentum und die Erinnerung. Anmerkungen zur jüdischen "Holocaust-Theologie" und ihrer christlichen Missachtung', in *Das heilige Nichts. Gott nach dem Holocaust*, ed. Tobias Daniel Wabbel (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 2007), 171.
4 Jarosz, 'Marzec w prasie', 116, all translations mine.
5 Leociak, 'Instrumentalizacja Zagłady', 449, all translations mine. See also Alina Cała, 'Die Genese des polnischen und des jüdischen Märtyrermythos nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg', in *Der Holocaust in der polnischen Erinnerungskultur*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska and Piotr Forecki, trans. Arkadius Jurewicz (Peter Lang, 2012), 112–26, https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-01774-8. It is also noteworthy that martyrdom had been an important national narrative since at least the 19th century and the (unsuccessful) uprisings especially in the Russian occupied parts of the partitioned Polish lands.
6 Marcin Zaremba, 'Das organisierte Vergessen des Holocaust in der Ära Gierek. Kontinuität und Wandel', in *Der Holocaust in der polnischen Erinnerungskultur*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska and Piotr Forecki (Peter Lang, 2012), 164, https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-01774-8, all translations mine.
7 Zaremba, 164.
8 Note on the 5th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in the newspaper *Życie Warszawy* from 19.04.1953, quoted after Leociak, 'Instrumentalizacja Zagłady', 451; translation mine. See also Jan Borowicz, 'chleb', in *Ślady Holokaustu w imaginarium kultury polskiej*, ed. Justyna Kowalska-Leder et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2017), 85–86.
9 See Jerzy Eisler, *Marzec 1968. Geneza, przebieg, konsekwencje* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991), 124–45; Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi. Antropologia przesądu* (Warszawa: W.A.B., 2008), 578.
10 Leociak, 'Instrumentalizacja Zagłady', 451.

11 See Anna Artwińska, '"Zasłużona rodzina polska" albo marcowe gry w genealogie', in *Rok 1966. PRL na zakręcie*, ed. Katarzyna Chmielewska, Grzegorz Wołowiec, and Tomasz Żukowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2014), 376; Jan Błoński, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1994), 21–22; Jerzy Jedlicki, 'Das Problem von Schuld und Verantwortung', in *Der Holocaust in der polnischen Erinnerungskultur*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska and Piotr Forecki, trans. Lisa Palmes (Peter Lang, 2012), 41–49, https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-01774-8; Piotr Osęka and Marcin Zaremba, 'Wojna po wojnie, czyli polskie reperkusje wojny sześciodniowej', in *Polska 1944/45–1989*, ed. Krystyna Kersten, vol. 4, Studia i materiały (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 1999), 231; Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, 'Jedwabne: History as a Fetish', in *Der Holocaust in Der Polnischen Erinnerungskultur*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska and Piotr Forecki, trans. Michał Murawski (Peter Lang, 2012), 50–69, https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-01774-8.

12 Jarosz, 'Marzec w prasie', 116.

13 See Jarosz, 117–18.

14 Jacek Leociak and Marta Janczewska, 'Dyskurs o pomaganiu', in *Literatura polska wobec Zagłady (1939-1968). Reprezentacje Zagłady w kulturze polskiej*, ed. Sławomir Buryła, Dorota Krawczyńska, and Jacek Leociak (Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna, 2012), 555. For a study on the Polish writing on helping Jews, see Dariusz Libionka, 'Polskie piśmiennictwo na temat zorganizowanej i indywidualnej pomocy Żydom (1945–2008)', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały* 4 (2008): 17–80.

15 See Hans-Christian Trepte, 'Bread for the Departed (Chleb Rzucony Umarłym)', in *Handbook of Polish, Czech, and Slovak Holocaust Fiction* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021), 88, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110671056-014.

16 See also Alina Molisak, *Judaizm jako los. Rzecz o Bogdanie Wojdowskim* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Cyklady, 2004), 95.

17 Borowicz, 'chleb', 90, all translations mine.

18 See Alina Molisak, 'Kilka uwag o różnych odmianach "marcowych" narracji', in *(Nie)ciekawa epoka? Literatura i PRL*, ed. Hanna Gosk (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2008), 275–88.

19 See Molisak, *Judaizm jako los*, 113.

20 See Jedlicki, 'Das Problem von Schuld und Verantwortung'; Molisak, *Judaizm jako los*, 14–15; Zuzanna Dziuban, 'Atopic Objects: The Afterlives of Gold Teeth Stolen from Holocaust Dead', *Journal of Material Culture* 25, no. 4 (2020): 411, https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183520954462.

21 See Sławomir Buryła, *Literatura polska wobec Zagłady (1939-1968). Reprezentacje Zagłady w kulturze polskiej* (Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna, 2012), 508; Lothar Quinkenstein, '"Und eines Tages trafen die Maurer ein…" Das Warschauer Ghetto als lieu de mémoire in Bogdan Wojdowskis Roman Brot für die Toten', in *'Kontaminierte Landschaften'. Mitteleuropa inmitten von Krieg und Totalitarismus. Eine exemplarische Bestandsaufnahme anhand von literarischen Texten*, ed. Ursula Knoll, Helena Ulbrechtová, and Alexander Höllwerth (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019), 251. Nonetheless, Buryła does not include the novel in his list of Holocaust literature in the same book (only Wojdowski's "Job's Vacation" (*Wakacje Hioba*, 1962), see p. 632.

22 See Quinkenstein, 'Und eines Tages'.

23 See Molisak, *Judaizm jako los*, 96.

24 See Molisak, 24; Quinkenstein, 'Und eines Tages', 252; Trepte, 'Bread for the Departed'.

25 See Jacques Derrida and Jean Birnbaum, *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview. An Interview with Jean Birnbaum*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 51.

26 Molisak, *Judaizm jako los*, 28, all translations mine.
27 Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 7.
28 Wojdowski in Wojciech Wiśniewski, *Lekcja polskiego* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 1993), 349, cited after Molisak, *Judaizm jako los*, 40, translation mine. See on this topic also Marian Pankowski's (1919–2011) drama *Cockchafers* (*Chrabąszcze*, 1970), where a Polish journalist visits a Jewish émigrée in Paris, with a form at hand to fill in who has helped her to escape and survive (p. 867). The woman is astonished and asks: "And why exactly me?", to which she gets the answer: "It is all, unfortunately, utterly simple. The arithmetic is as clear as the selection of colours and forms in this room. Out of the four thousand eight hundred and fifteen of your sisters and brothers… of the Great Community of Polish Jewry in our town—one person remained alive. […] And the rest […] a-sheeeees!" Marian Pankowski, 'Chrabąszcze', in *Polski dramat emigracyjny 1939-1969. Antologia*, ed. Dobrochna Ratajczakowa (Poznań: Lektor, 1993), 865, translation mine. The very sarcastic treatment of the topic by Pankowski was possible due to his having emigrated himself and publishing in London.
29 See Molisak, *Judaizm jako los*, 27.
30 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 6. See also Molisak, *Judaizm jako los*, 15.
31 Navaro, 'The Aftermath of Mass Violence'.
32 Cf. Markus Roth and Andrea Löw, *Das Warschauer Getto: Alltag und Widerstand im Angesicht der Vernichtung* (München: C.H. Beck, 2013).
33 Alexander Höllwerth, *Das Warschauer Ghetto. Zwischen «Ausnahmezustand» und permanent schlechtem Gewissen. Eine Untersuchung anhand zentraler Texte der polnischen Literatur. Mit einem Vorwort von Claus Leggewie* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2020), 192, all translations mine.
34 Höllwerth, 192.
35 Bogdan Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, trans. Madeline G. Levine (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 402.
36 On hope and the unrest connected to hope, see also Molisak, *Judaizm jako los*, 112.
37 See Zuzanna Dziuban, ed., *The 'Spectral Turn': Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020).
38 Maciej Pietrzak, 'Przełamując tabu. O najwcześniejszych filmowych echach wydarzeń marcowych', *Images. The International Journal of European Film, Performing Arts and Audiovisual Communication* 18, no. 27 (2016): 129, translation mine.
39 See Pietrzak, 127.
40 Andrzej in *Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko*, 1971, 5:50, https://www.cda.pl/video/13785983b0, all translations mine.
41 See Alicja Helman, 'Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko. Analiza kilku wybranych motywów', *Kino* 4 (1972): 17–21.
42 Anna Krakus, *No End in Sight: Polish Cinema in the Late Socialist Period*, Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), 63, 66. Actually, Krakus diagnoses a veritable obsession with the theme of death or "un-death" in the later decades of socialist Poland. "These films reject the finality of death, making ghosts the protagonists of stories. So even when death happens, it does not matter—life goes on." (66) Indeed, the dividing line between life and death had been disturbed. However, if death "does not matter," this certainly does not mean that the status of life—of being alive—was in any way raised. Quite on the contrary, for those who survived, death was rejected "as an *end* by showing that death is *always*" (64).

43 *Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko*, 6:00-6:10.
44 Indeed, Marta Fik notes that the censors wanted Konwicki to "soften the scene of shooting a Jew under a Christmas tree by a Polish partisan." Marta Fik, 'Z archiwum GUKPPiW (3). Rok 1972. Film i cenzura', *Kwartalnik filmowy* 4 (1993): 178–82; cited after Pietrzak, 'Przełamując tabu', 127, translation mine.
45 *Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko*, 1:30:00-1:30:20; 21:15; 30:55-35:05;1:10:20.
46 *Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko*, 1:17:00-1:17:40.
47 Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, 209.
48 Wojdowski, 209.
49 *Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko*, 1:07:35.
50 See also Joanna Krakowska, 'cmentarz', in *Ślady Holokaustu w imaginarium kultury polskiej*, ed. Justyna Kowalska-Leder et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2017), 119–20.
51 Dziuban, 'Atopic Objects'. Dziuban's notion of atopic objects refers to things that unsettle the "discursive/normative order" (414), oscillating between subjectivity and objectivity—between thing and person—whose ontological status must thus continually be renegotiated by the persons handling them.
52 Zuzanna Dziuban, 'Introduction: Haunting in the Land of the Untraumatized', in *The 'Spectral Turn': Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire*, ed. Zuzanna Dziuban (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020), 7–47.
53 Borowicz, 'chleb', 89.
54 Borowicz, 89.
55 Borowicz, 89.
56 Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, 258.
57 Paweł Dobrosielski and Karolina Sulej, 'zwierzę', in *Ślady Holokaustu w imaginarium kultury polskiej*, ed. Justyna Kowalska-Leder et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2017), 511, translation mine.
58 Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, 245.
59 Wojdowski, 259.
60 Bogdan Wojdowski, *Chleb rzucony umarłym* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), 245, translation mine.
61 In *Bread for the Departed*, the Polish motorman of the streetcar that passed between the ghetto parts "always had a loaf of bread in plain view behind the windshield, next to the brake handle, and when he drove through the Ghetto he would slow down, ring his bell for the beggars, and throw the bread into the street for them." He did so until he was shot for this disobedience along with thirty random Jews; "it was because of him that those thirty Jews perished." Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, 275.
62 Borowicz, 'chleb', 93.
63 Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, 189.
64 Wojdowski, 214.
65 Wojdowski, 158–59.
66 Wojdowski, 159.
67 See Bożena Shallcross, *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011). For a literary example, see Tadeusz Różewicz, *Wycieczka do muzeum* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1966).
68 Dziuban, 'Atopic Objects', 414.
69 Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, 303–4.
70 Zygmunt Bauman, 'Categorial Murder or: How to Remember the Holocaust', in *Der Holocaust in Der Polnischen Erinnerungskultur*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska and Piotr Forecki (Peter Lang, 2012), 28, https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-01774-8. See also Dobrosielski and Sulej, 'zwierzę', 510–18.
71 Borowicz, 'chleb', 83.

72 See Quinkenstein, 'Und eines Tages', 263.
73 See Quinkenstein, 263.
74 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse; Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 2nd ed. (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1988), 18, translation mine.
75 See Marek Edelman, 'Was Bedeutung im Ghetto hatte? Nichts! Gar nichts! Redet keinen Unsinn!', in *Im Kreis: Gespräche mit jüdischen Kämpfern*, by Anka Grupińska, trans. Esther Kinsky (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1993), 14; Höllwerth, *Das Warschauer Ghetto*, 213.
76 Borowicz, 'chleb', 84.
77 Borowicz, 84.
78 Or rather disregards its own laws, see Höllwerth, *Das Warschauer Ghetto*, 208–11.
79 See also Błoński, *Biedni Polacy*, 100–101; Höllwerth, *Das Warschauer Ghetto*, 225–26.
80 Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, 305–6, 308–10.
81 See Wojdowski, 307.
82 Marianna Michałowska, *Obraz utajony. Szkice o fotografii i pamięci* (Kraków: Galeria f5 & Księgarnia Fotograficzna, 2007), 171; cited after Agnieszka Pajączkowska, 'zdjęcie', in *Ślady Holokaustu w imaginarium kultury polskiej*, ed. Justyna Kowalska-Leder et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2017), 488, translation mine.
83 Milija Gluhowic, 'Revolt of Memory (Tadeusz Kantor)', in *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture since 1918*, ed. Tamara Trojanowska et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 581.
84 Krakus, *No End in Sight*, 67.
85 See also Pajączkowska, 'zdjęcie'.
86 Krakus, *No End in Sight*, 68.
87 Justyna Kowalska-Leder and Joanna Woźnicka, 'dziecko', in *Ślady Holokaustu w imaginarium kultury polskiej*, ed. Justyna Kowalska-Leder et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2017), 142, translation mine.
88 Jacek Leociak, *Doświadczenia graniczne. Studia o dwudziestowiecznych formach reprezentacji* (Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna, 2009), 252.
89 Gluhowic, 'Revolt of Memory', 583.
90 Małgorzata Baranowska, 'Barańczak, Krynicki i duch czasu', in *Sporne postaci polskiej literatury współczesnej. Następne pokolenie*, ed. Alina Brodzka and Lidia Burska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 1995), 107.
91 "Immanent to Segal's characters is a loneliness that they keep trying to overcome, for example by participating in an ideological community or having a physical relationship with a woman, which gives an illusory feeling of understanding. However, the community established is a community in suffering." Magdalena Ruta, 'Tu jest nasza Jerozolima – Jerozolima obłąkanych. O pisarstwie Kalmana Segala', in *Ślady obecności*, ed. Sławomir Buryła and Alina Molisak (Kraków: TAiWPN Universitas, 2010), 191, translation mine.
92 See Sławomir Buryła, 'Lager – Literature – Zones of Silence', *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica* 46, no. 8 (2017): 43.
93 Kalman Segal, *Skojarzeni* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1968), 40–41, all translations mine.
94 Segal, 72.
95 Segal, 72.
96 Segal, 66.
97 See Segal, 70, 78, 82–83.
98 Segal, 78.
99 See also Ruta, 'Tu jest nasza Jerozolima', 191.
100 See Tomasz Chomiszczak, 'Debiut – triumf – exodus, czyli Kalmana Segala kariera (niemal) modelowa', in *Kariera pisarza w PRL-u*, ed. Magdalena Budnik

et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2014), 378–79; Ruta, 'Tu jest nasza Jerozolima', 187–89, 192; Józef Wróbel, 'Blätter der Erinnerung. Die polnisch-jüdische Literatur nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg', in *Der Holocaust in der polnischen Erinnerungskultur*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska and Piotr Forecki (Peter Lang, 2012), 279, https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-01774-8.

101 See Chomiszczak, 'Debiut – triumf – exodus', 382; Marek Nalepa, 'Kalman Segal. Nad (za) wymyśloną rzeką', *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Cultura* 12, no. 1 (2020): 122, https://doi.org/10.24917/20837275.12.1.9.

102 Marek Nowakowski, *Syjoniści do Syjamu. Zapiski z lat 1967-1968* (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2009), 13, all translations mine.

103 Nowakowski, 14–15.

104 Nowakowski, 13–14.

105 See Segal, *Skojarzeni*, 37.

106 This is how Foucault describes the inorganic, the non-living—things. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2002), 252.

107 Foucault, 252.

108 Segal, *Skojarzeni*, 32.

109 Magdalena Ruta sees in Segal's prose a returning motive of a longing for an ideal world full of harmony, see Ruta, 'Tu jest nasza Jerozolima', 191.

110 Malgorzata Bugaj, 'Wajda Meets Lem: Przekładaniec/Roly Poly (1968) as an Example of Early Polish Science-Fiction Cinema', *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 8, no. 2 (2017): 136, https://doi.org/10.1080/2040350X.2017.1285091.

111 See Bugaj, 131; Elżbieta Ostrowska, '"Exquisite Cadaver" According to Stanisław Lem and Andrzej Wajda', *Open Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2018): 103, https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2018-0010. It is noteworthy that Wajda's reputation is mostly tied to specific "Polish" historical themes.

112 Ostrowska, '"Exquisite Cadaver"', 103.

113 Ostrowska, 104.

114 It was actually the only filmic adaptation of his writing that Lem was content of. See Janina Falkowska, *Andrzej Wajda: History, Politics and Nostalgia in Polish Cinema* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 106–7.

115 Stanisław Lem, 'Are You There, Mr. Jones?', trans. Peter Roberts, *Vision of Tomorrow* 1, no. 1 (1969): 55.

116 *Przekładaniec*, Short Sci-Fi, 1968, 7:40, https://www.cda.pl/video/9289203b, all translations mine.

117 *Przekładaniec*, 13:33-13:53.

118 See Ostrowska, '"Exquisite Cadaver"', 106.

119 See also Ostrowska, 106.

120 *Przekładaniec*, 18:57-19:00.

121 *Przekładaniec*, 16:50.

122 *Przekładaniec*, 18:23.

123 See Marta Bryś, 'Brak i nadobecność. O obrazie polskiego doświadczenia Marca '68 w filmach Andrzeja Wajdy', *Didaskalia. Gazeta Teatralna*, no. 126 (2015): 40; Ostrowska, '"Exquisite Cadaver"', 106–7.

124 Ostrowska, '"Exquisite Cadaver"', 109.

125 Bugaj, 'Wajda Meets Lem', 139. Bugaj also points out that the 1960s' period of Wajda's work could be interpreted as a sort of roly poly as well, as the director was working feverishly on many different projects after another, despite of and in order to overcome his artistic impasse. See Bugaj, 140.

126 *Przekładaniec*, 27:40.

127 Ostrowska, '"Exquisite Cadaver"', 108.

128 See Falkowska, *Andrzej Wajda*, 106.

129 See Bugaj, 'Wajda Meets Lem', 137.
130 See Ostrowska, '"Exquisite Cadaver"', 107–8.
131 *Przekładaniec*, 25:10.
132 See also Bryś, 'Brak i nadobecność', 40; Ostrowska, '"Exquisite Cadaver"', 108.
133 Ostrowska, '"Exquisite Cadaver"', 109.
134 See *Przekładaniec*, 24:46.
135 *Przekładaniec*, 26:03.
136 Tadeusz Kantor, *Pisma. Metamorfozy. Teksty o latach 1938-1974*, ed. Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz, vol. 1 (Kraków, Wrocław: 'Księgarnia Akademicka', Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Ośrodek Dokumentacji Sztuki Tadeusza Kantora 'Cricoteka', 2000), 120, all translations mine.
137 Kantor, 1:130.
138 Kantor, 1:131.
139 Kantor, 1:124, original emphasis.
140 Kathleen M. Cioffi, *Alternative Theatre in Poland: 1954-1989* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996), 44.
141 Gluhowic, 'Revolt of Memory', 579.
142 Michal Kobialka, 'The Quest for the Self: Thresholds and Transformations', in *A Journey through Other Spaces: Essays and Manifestos, 1944-1990*, by Tadeusz Kantor, ed. and trans. Michal Kobialka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 304. Paavolainen discusses the different understandings Kantor and Grotowski ascribed to the notion of the "poor" (*biedny* resp. *ubogi*) theatre or object in art. "Poor" in Kantor does not mean, as in Grotowski, pure, but quite on the contrary, lowly, abjected. Teemu Paavolainen, *Theatre/Ecology/Cognition: Theorizing Performer-Object Interaction in Grotowski, Kantor, and Meyerhold* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 120–21. In the same vein, Magda Romanska compares Grotowski's and Kantor's postdramatic "poor theatres," concluding that Kantor's is posthuman, while Grotowski most intensely clings to the notion of the human subject. See Magda Romanska, 'Tadeusz Kantor and the Posthuman Stage', *Postdramatic Theatre and Form*, 2019, 84.
143 Tadeusz Kantor, *Pisma. Teatr Śmierci. Teksty z lat 1975-1984*, ed. Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz, vol. 2 (Kraków, Wrocław: 'Księgarnia Akademicka', Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Ośrodek Dokumentacji Sztuki Tadeusza Kantora 'Cricoteka', 2005), 456, all translations mine.
144 Kantor, 2:458.
145 See Cioffi, *Alternative Theatre in Poland: 1954-1989*, 44.
146 See Kantor, *Teatr Śmierci*, 2:461.
147 Kantor, 2:459.
148 See Konstanty Puzyna, *Syntezy za trzy grosze* (Warszawa: Państwowy Institut Wydawniczy, 1974), 185, http://www.encyklopediateatru.pl/ksiazka/409/syntezy-za-trzy-grosze.
149 See Kantor, *Teatr Śmierci*, 2:462; Paavolainen, *Theatre/Ecology/Cognition*, 163.
150 Lech Stangret, *Tadeusz Kantor. Malarski ambalaż totalnego dzieła* (Kraków: Art + Edition, 2006), 53, translation mine.
151 Kantor, *Metamorfozy*, 1:35–36.
152 See Romanska, 'Tadeusz Kantor and the Posthuman Stage', 87.
153 See Kantor, *Metamorfozy*, 1:235; Stangret, *Tadeusz Kantor*, 50.
154 For photographs of the plays, see http://tadeuszkantor.com.pl/items/browse?type=20&sort_field=Dublin+Core%2CDate&sort_dir=a&lang=en (last access 25.08.2023).
155 Paavolainen, *Theatre/Ecology/Cognition*, 163.
156 See Justyna Michalik-Tomala, 'Człowiek i przedmiot w Kantorowskich przestrzeniach', *Konteksty* 308, no. 1–2 (2015): 248.

157 See Romanska, 'Tadeusz Kantor and the Posthuman Stage', 86.
158 See Kazimierz A. Lewkowski, 'Nadobnisie i koczkodany', *Odgłosy* 10 (1974), https://encyklopediateatru.pl//artykuly/71035/nadobnisie-i-koczkodany.
159 Kantor in *Szatnia Tadeusza Kantora czyli Nadobnisie i koczkodany w Teatrze Cricot 2*, 1973, 7:10, all translations mine.
160 Kantor in *Szatnia Tadeusza Kantora*, 8:20-8:50.
161 See Romanska, 'Tadeusz Kantor and the Posthuman Stage', 84.
162 Cioffi, *Alternative Theatre in Poland: 1954-1989*, 45; see also Michalik-Tomala, 'Człowiek i przedmiot', 243.
163 Stangret, *Tadeusz Kantor*, 9.
164 Paavolainen, *Theatre/Ecology/Cognition*, 99.
165 Gluhowic, 'Revolt of Memory', 579.
166 Gluhowic, 582; Magda Romanska, *The Post-Traumatic Theatre of Grotowski and Kantor. History and Holocaust in Akropolis and The Dead Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 185, https://doi.org/10.7135/UPO97808 57285263.
167 Kobialka, 'The Quest for the Self', 1993, 274.
168 Romanska, 'Tadeusz Kantor and the Posthuman Stage', 93.
169 Grzegorz Niziołek, *The Polish Theatre of the Holocaust*, trans. Ursula Phillips (London: Methuen Drama, 2019), 56.
170 See Romanska, 'Tadeusz Kantor and the Posthuman Stage', 84–85, 93.
171 Kobialka, 'The Quest for the Self', 1993, 274.
172 See Michal Kobialka, 'The Quest for the Other: Space/Memory', in *A Journey through Other Spaces: Essays and Manifestos, 1944-1990*, by Tadeusz Kantor, ed. and trans. Michal Kobialka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 338.
173 Gluhowic, 'Revolt of Memory', 582.
174 See Kobialka, 'The Quest for the Self', 1993, 306–7, 339.
175 See Michalik-Tomala, 'Człowiek i przedmiot', 246; Gluhowic, 'Revolt of Memory', 583; Krzysztof Miklaszewski, *Encounters with Tadeusz Kantor* (London: Routledge, 2002), 147, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315014982.
176 See *Lovelies and Dowdies*, 1974, 6:48-7:20.
177 Gluhowic, 'Revolt of Memory', 580.
178 Tadeusz Kantor, *A Journey through Other Spaces: Essays and Manifestos, 1944-1990*, ed. and trans. Michal Kobialka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 74.
179 Romanska, 'Tadeusz Kantor and the Posthuman Stage', 95.
180 Daniel Gerould, 'Witkacy and Conspiracy Theories', *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics* 31, no. 4 (2013): 67.
181 *Lovelies and Dowdies*, 5:05.
182 See *Szatnia Tadeusza Kantora*, 13:40-13:50; Małgorzata Maj, 'Jak "grałam" w Nadobnisiach i koczkodanach – wspomnienie po czterdziestu latach', *Konteksty* 308, no. 1–2 (2015): 88; Maria Stangret-Kantor, 'Nadobnisie i koczkodany i Umarła klasa', *Konteksty* 308, no. 1–2 (2015): 89.
183 See *Lovelies and Dowdies*, 10:10-10:15.
184 See Maj, 'Jak "grałam"'.
185 Romanska, 'Tadeusz Kantor and the Posthuman Stage', 90.
186 Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 252.
187 Höllwerth, *Das Warschauer Ghetto*, 187.
188 Borowicz, 'chleb', 90. See especially: Molisak, *Judaizm jako los*, 209–13.
189 Anna Barcz, *Environmental Cultures in Soviet East Europe: Literature, History and Memory* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 2.
190 See Ursula Knoll, Helena Ulbrechtová, and Alexander Höllwerth, eds., *'Kontaminierte Landschaften'. Mitteleuropa inmitten von Krieg und Totalitarismus.*

Eine exemplarische Bestandsaufnahme anhand von literarischen Texten (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019).

191 *Archeologia*, Documentary, Short (Wytwórnia Filmów Oświatowych, 1968).

192 See Dziuban, 'Atopic Objects'.

193 See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

194 Kantor, *Teatr Śmierci*, 2:463.

195 Cf. Molisak, *Judaizm jako los*, 106.

196 Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, 191–92.

197 See Donna Jeanne Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, by Donna Jeanne Haraway (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1991), 198; Shallcross, *The Holocaust Object*, 11; Roberto Esposito, *Persons and Things: From the Body's Point of View*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Cambridge: Polity, 2015).

198 Severin Fowles, 'People without Things', in *An Anthropology of Absence: Materializations of Transcendence and Loss*, ed. Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup, and Tim Flohr Sørensen (New York: Springer, 2010), 37, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-5529-6.

199 Bauman, 'Categorial Murder', 29.

200 Wanda Melcer, *Wrzesień kobiety* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1965), 47–48, all translations mine.

201 Melcer, 63–64.

202 Melcer, who had worked as a writer-reporter before the war, had amongst others written a cycle of reports about the Jewish parts of Warsaw, published as "Black Land Warsaw" (*Czarny ląd Warszawa*, 1936), where she criticised the practices of Jewish culture from a perspective bent on hygiene and education. See Aneta Górnicka-Boratyńska, 'W poszukiwaniu starszych sióstr. Wanda Melcer – próba portretu', *Teksty Drugie* 3–4 (1995): 225–27.

203 Melcer, *Wrzesień kobiety*, 140.

204 Melcer, 140–41.

205 Melcer, 141.

206 Górnicka-Boratyńska, 'W poszukiwaniu starszych sióstr', 221.

207 Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, 94.

208 Wojdowski, 94.

209 According to Ewa Mazierska, Skolimowski is two years older (born 1936) than commonly assumed, as his mother falsified his birth certificate to be able to send him to convalescence after the war. Mazierska finds his "[h]aving two dates of birth" "symbolic of the character and status of Skolimowski's cinema" and thus "fitting." See Ewa Mazierska, *Jerzy Skolimowski: The Cinema of a Nonconformist* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 12–13, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781845458072.

210 See Iwona Kurz, *Twarze w tłumie. Wizerunki bohaterów wyobraźni zbiorowej w kulturze polskiej lat 1955-1969* (Izabelin: Świat Literacki, 2005), 103–4; Elżbieta Ostrowska, 'Transgressionen und Regressionen. Männlichkeitsdilemmata in den frühen Filmen von Roman Polański, Jerzy Skolimowski, Andrzej Żuławski und Grzegorz Królikiewicz', in *Nouvelle Vague Polonaise? Auf der Suche nach einem flüchtigen Phänomen der Filmgeschichte*, ed. Margarete Wach and Deutsches Filminstitut, trans. Christian Nastal (Marburg: Schüren, 2015), 155–56.

211 Ewa Mazierska, 'Neither East, nor West (Jerzy Skolimowski)', in *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture since 1918*, ed. Tamara Trojanowska et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 719.

212 See Kurz, *Twarze w tłumie*, 101–2.

213 Kuba Mikurda, 'Das polnische Nach-Neue-Welle-Kino als fantasmatische Kritik (Skolimowski - Żuławski - Królikiewicz)', in *Nouvelle Vague Polonaise? Auf der Suche nach einem flüchtigen Phänomen der Filmgeschichte*, ed. Margarete Wach and Deutsches Filminstitut, trans. Christian Nastal (Marburg: Schüren, 2015), 191, translation mine.
214 Mazierska, *Jerzy Skolimowski*, 17.
215 See *Rysopis*, 1965, 16:47, https://www.cda.pl/video/1453564385.
216 *Rysopis*, 59:27, all translations mine.
217 According to Elżbieta Ostrowska, in Skolimowski's films there is no coherent and logic narrative about the past, which falls apart in disparate images. See Ostrowska, 'Transgressionen und Regressionen', 151.
218 Lutz Haucke, *Nouvelle Vague in Osteuropa? Zur ostmittel- und südosteuropäischen Filmgeschichte 1960 - 1970* (Berlin: Rhombos-Verlag, 2009), 276, translation mine.
219 Tadeusz Lubelski, 'Drei Phasen der polnischen "Neuen Welle". Tadeusz Konwicki – Jerzy Skolimowski – Krzysztof Zanussi', in *Nouvelle Vague Polonaise? Auf der Suche nach einem flüchtigen Phänomen der Filmgeschichte*, ed. Margarete Wach and Deutsches Filminstitut (Marburg: Schüren, 2015), 44, translation mine.
220 See Mazierska, *Jerzy Skolimowski*, 16.
221 Philip Strick, 'Rysopis (Identification Marks - None)', *Monthly Film Bulletin* 36, no. 420 (1969): 211.
222 See Mazierska, 'Neither East, nor West', 718.
223 See *Rysopis*, 22:10-22:33.
224 See Kurz, *Twarze w tłumie*, 102; Ostrowska, 'Transgressionen und Regressionen', 156.
225 Mazierska, 'Neither East, nor West', 720.
226 Mazierska, 720.
227 *Rysopis*, 29:22-31:08.
228 *Rysopis*, 30:05.
229 See Ewa Mazierska, 'Die Welt berühren. Wanderer-Figuren in den Filmen der polnischen Neuen Welle', in *Nouvelle Vague Polonaise? Auf der Suche nach einem flüchtigen Phänomen der Filmgeschichte*, ed. Margarete Wach and Deutsches Filminstitut, trans. Christian Nastal (Marburg: Schüren, 2015), 178.
230 *Rysopis*, 57:13.
231 Mazierska, 'Neither East, nor West', 720.
232 See Mazierska, 'Die Welt berühren', 176.
233 See *Walkower*, 1965, 35:15, https://www.cda.pl/video/7585408ac.
234 See *Walkower*, 53:40.
235 See *Walkower*, 20:20, 35:00.
236 See *Walkower*, 4:40.
237 A very good literary example of these processes is Edward Redliński's novel *Konopielka* (1973; *konopielka* is a kind of folkloristic song), set in a remote village that is about to be "connected" to the world due to the drying of the swamps it is surrounded by. Edward Redliński, *Konopielka; Awans* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1978).
238 Marta Tomczok, 'Historia środowiskowa Holokaustu. (O książce Jacka Małczyńskiego Krajobrazy Zagłady. Perspektywa historii środowiskowej)', *Teksty Drugie*, no. 1 (2020): 276, translation mine.
239 Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.
240 See Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, World Perspectives (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

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