

Abstract

Wounded people - wounded territories: the category of space as a wound in topo(bio)graphic readings of post-memory and post-dependence literature

The subject of dissertation *Wounded people - wounded territories: the category of space as a wound in topo(bio)graphic readings of post-memory and post-dependence literature* is an attempt to take a literary view of the representations of space, occurring in non-fiction writing. Given that condition the selected narratives must reveal to a greater or lesser extent elements belonging to the particular poetics of traumatic realism, the motives of memory work and/or the presence of traumatic literary registers. The material for the verification of my proposed concepts is shaped by works characteristic of two sub-genres of factual literature. On one hand, I am considering post-memory writing (personal documentary literature), directly related to the experience of the Shoah and Marianne Hirsch's concept of the "second generation"; on the other, I take into account literary travel reportage, the subject matter of which concerns the post-traumatic world born after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The work consists of five chapters. The first chapter being theoretical, highlights the current state of research within memory and trauma studies and spatial turn, as well as my own proposals for expanding the methodological vocabulary in the art of interpretation. The next four chapters are devoted to the analysis of particular works of literature. Chapters two and three focus on the examples of post-memorial writing. In chapters four and five I conduct an in-depth analysis of travel reportage literature through the lens of Richard Kapuściński's *Empire*.

The starting point for my study is the idea that literary representations of geo(bio)graphical spaces are topographical reflections of the wounds in the psyche of the auto-narrator or protagonists of the reportages. Thus, in the context of the narrator, we are dealing with an eminently introspective, confessional attitude, and with an attempt to auto-diagnose as the bearer of post-memory. In addition to this, we are also dealing with a variant of Avishai Margalit's "moral witness" trying to articulate the suffering of representatives of ethnic minorities within the poetics of reportage.

I decided to consider the process of creation/re-creation of the backdrop as a manner of articulation of traumatogenic memories and the suffering caused by them as well as part of the process of working through trauma. For that reason, I pay particular attention to the performative

aspects of probing space and the process of creating/re-creating of biographical maps of childhood. I highlight the therapeutic potential of those activities, their emotive character, as well as the poly-sensory perception of places and territories by the protagonists. Topographical and cartographic work becomes, in this sense, the equivalent of memory work and verbalization of memories. I draw attention to such problems as the saturation of the narrative with lexis indicating the traumatic genesis of the story, the ontological status of the auto-narrator, as well as lexemes belonging to the subject of migration and displacement.

I opted for distinguishing a figure of the auto-narrator specific to the discussed literature. I gave this figure the duality of trauma-topographer and trauma-mapmaker. At the same time, in an effort to deepen the links between literary research and medical discourse, I equipped the narrator with features of a (self)diagnosing psychoanalyst, but also of a surgeon who evokes a meticulous description of spacial trauma with anatomical precision.

Another of the interpretative proposals concern the formal aspect of the text. The first concept involves looking at post-memorial literature as a Petri dish - a place of multiplication and contamination, or osmosis of meanings. Under the second approach, I look at the whole of the selected works in terms of a strictly medical analysis, i.e. an epicrisis (it should be emphasized that this term has already appeared in literary studies thanks to Małgorzata Mikołajczak, in the context of post-war settlement literature). I try to treat the prose in question as a post-factum record of the disease process, taking into account the various formal determinants, such as the description of symptoms (anamnesis), preliminary diagnosis and the course of self-prescribed therapy.

As mentioned, I decided to base the first part of the dissertation on a literary exploration of two titles: *A Brief Stop on the Road from Auschwitz* by Göran Rosenberg and *The House with the Two Towers* by Maciej Zaremba Bielawski. These works address the experiences of Polish Jews, often over the course of a single generation (both the Shoah and the events of March 1968, and the post-March exodus that followed). Within the framework of leading topo(bio)graphical investigations I would like to hint at a few side issues which are part of the panorama of research on migrant identity and ontology of subjects "uprooted" from their environment/ethnos. I consider how the direct descendants of the Survivors describe their parents' powerlessness to find themselves in the reality after the historical cataclysm. In *A Brief Stop on the Road from Auschwitz* I focus on the analysis of the space remembered from childhood, as opposed to the one describing the world of a maturing man depicted in *The House with the Two Towers*. Complimentary to those considerations is my investigation into selected photo-narrative themes in the *Pepper Counterfeiters* by Monika Sznajderman.

I devote the second part of my dissertation to *Empire* by Ryszard Kapuściński. In this essayistic travel diary/memoir the geopolitical tectonics of the Soviet Union and the changes within it after the collapse of communism are reflected in the formal composition of the text. I look at the reporter's historical/existentialist musings as a particular record of the trauma of Soviet generations and the physical and mental enslavement of the inhabitants of the various republics of the USSR. Kapuściński is a newcomer "from the outside", "ethnographer", but also a man who became an eyewitness to the Siberia deportations. By traversing the disintegrating totalitarian regime state, he addresses various forms of institutionalized violence which constituted the foundation of every day life for decades. I also base my study on the post-colonial issues (such as metropolis — periphery) or on the perception of nature as a perpetrator and oppressor. Inspired by the assumptions of the rheistic turn, I try to determine to what extent objects (e.g. handicraft) can "speak" on behalf of oppressed ethnic groups. The last section of my dissertation is a case study of a particular chapter chronicling a journey on the Trans-Siberian railway by Ryszard Kapuściński, where I focus, among other things, on how trauma can be conveyed in the phonic, acoustic dimension of the narrative.

As an extended commentary in this part of my work I look at reportages by contemporary authors of travel reportage prose: *Borders of Dreams. About unrecognized countries* by Tomasz Grzywaczewski, *Yakutsk. Dictionary of Place* by Michał Książek, *14:57 to Czyta* by Igor Miecik, and *In Paradise Valley Among the Weeds* by Jacek Hugo Bader.

The main focus of my dissertation is an attempt to outline new approach and analytical tools that may prove useful in interpreting the "trauma-laden" spaces found in non-fiction writing. The multi-faceted approach to the issue of the relationship between trauma and topography in contemporary non-fiction works can greatly deepen further development of theoretical-literary research. It fosters setting new, unexpected interpretative directions, and expands the utility of already existing theories within the recently popular subject matter of migration and (poly)identity.