

# There is more to cybertext than “cyber”. Constructive level in contemporary Polish *silvae rerum*.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Making the obvious dubious. On few assumptions on electronic literature.

Modularity is one of the most important features of electronic medium. Lev Manovich sees it on all levels of the new media object, beginning from disparate materials it comprised of and ending at the bottom level of pixels:

*Media elements, be it images, sounds, shapes, or behaviours, are represented as collections of discrete samples (pixels, polygons, voxels, characters, scripts). These elements are assembled into larger-scale objects but they continue to maintain their separate identity. [Lev Manovich, 2000, p.53]*

Later in his landmark book Manovich stresses on discrete samples and separate identities of new media object in yet another context: the new paradigm of cultural expression: the database, which is "a collection of individual items, where every item has the same significance as any other".

The other important feature of the new media object, or more precisely electronic literature work, is its operational level, demanding from the reader exploratory, configurative and textonic activities. These make electronic work different from the printed one, which - as Espen Aarseth explained in his groundbreaking *Cybertext* - is dominated by the interpretative function of the reader. Because objects of electronic literature have a networked nature, their modularity and operational aspects are accompanied by links. Long tradition of hypertext link typologies lists large number of link types, though - following Aarseth - we can reduce the linking aspect of a e-lit work to three attributes: it has either implicit links, or conditional links, or it hasn't got any links at all.

The main goal of my article is to put some parts of the above assumptions into question. First I would like to show that disparate items of certain types of old media objects can form a hybrid work that reads like "database", and then can be seen in the same group of heterogeneous works with new media objects. I have no intention to regard them as proto-hypertexts or proto-cybertexts, but rather to show that the gap between them is not that huge as it may seem. By doing this we are capable of seeing electronic and paper domain of texts from a perspective that can shed a new light on both on them. This perspective can give us some useful tools for studying e-works and p-works on a common ground: it can contribute to theory of texts in general, but also can help in laying the foundations of a broader, transmedial ground.

I would also try to show that "interpretative" role of the reader is more complex than the one described by hypertext theory and consists - actually by definition - of constructive effort of the reader. In the examples I will present this constructive aspect is built into an artistic strategies, and sometimes is expressed by the author as a set of hints for reading the work, with "linking" as the important factor of the process.

A closer look will be taken on specific literary form, deriving from ancient roots, but reappearing in different context in the second part of XX century in the works of several Polish writers, but especially in the collections of Noble Prize laureate Czesław Miłosz. I will try to answer, or at least suggest an answer, to several questions: where does linking, constructive work of the reader, and dynamic "work" of the text begin? What can we learn about it from pre-electronic texts?

## 1.2 Short History of bigos, uncultivated literary garden and the Forest of Things.

Bigos is one of the trademark meals Poland can offer to the world of culinary traditions. Fried cabbage, slices of sausages, vegetables, mushrooms, and almost anything a chef has at hand can be put into one pot and eventually become a delicious, warming up dish. On the literary field bigos started its career quite early, but mostly in a pejorative sense, as a depreciating label for a specific literary technique. *Old Polish Bigos* - is a term, used in history of Polish literature related to works that were far from what many Renaissance poetics dictated. A form in which genres and styles were mixed together: fictional fragments were accompanied by practical household advice, unfinished amateur narratives by citations from the great classics, and Polish was interwoven with Latin interpolations. No surprise it was not by all means not favoured by pre-modern and modern scholars.

This state of affairs changed after the Second World War. During last two decades of the communist era, in conjunction with post-modern approach to literature, often socio-political than formal reasons, bigos once again became a favoured mode of writing for some Polish authors. On the critical field there were serious and successful efforts to root it in the broader tradition and thus deprive it of its pejorative connotations. Its generic predecessors were found in literary "garden" and literary "patio" (pl. "wirydarz") popular in XVII and XVIII centuries [Walczak]. Critics started to bridge the old concept of variety of form and content with postmodern writing. Finally the very term "bigos" was eradicated from critical discourse and substituted with more neutral term "sylwy", based on Latin "silvae rerum". Meaning "forest of things" silvae dates back not only to Polish "gardens" or "patios" but also to ancient Roman genre, originated in one of the works of Publius Papinius Statius (ca. 45-96) entitled *Silvae*.

## II. *SILVAE*

### 2.1 Roman tradition

Statius's *Silvae* was a collection of odes, panegyrics, descriptions of villas, and even catalogues of gifts emperor gave to the citizens of Rome on the occasion of Saturnalia. Its unique and novel character was the sole heterogeneity of the whole work: poetry was mixed with prose, fiction with non-fiction, and there was a broad scope of generic mixture: from flattery poems to lamentations for deaths. As one work, written by a single author, but containing heterogeneous textual elements *Silvae* became a precedent that waited long centuries to be followed by. When Latin literature was being rediscovered in the West by founders of the Renaissance culture, what was to be taken from the deep pool of literary tradition in the first place was generic purity. It is only in late Renaissance and Baroque when Statius work could gain its followers and so it had happened.

### 2.2 Old Polish *Silvae*

A literary form of "sylwa" (polonized silvae) that had emerged at the end of XVII century among noble families was in fact a departure from the course given to the genre by Statius. The main difference being that "sylwa" was no longer written by a single author. It was a work of a compiler who in one place, under single title (if there was any at all) and in single volume, gathered different texts by different authors. Thus the understanding of ancient silvae shifted: in its polonized shape it was a sort of a literary scrapbook: collection of citations, poems and pieces of prose by different authors. Such was a first example of Polish silvae: anonymous manuscript written

between 1560 and 1570. It contained odes, trifles, and erotic poems of two most prominent authors of the era: Jan Kochanowski and Mikołaj Sep Szarzyński. [zob. Walczak] as well as three unidentified Latin poems and ... a Latin - Polish school draft.

In XVII century the form developed further, taking the shape of a family chronicle, but being something much more diversified (the family chronicle being just a discourse framework) with its scope of textual heterogeneity, and multi-authorship taken to extremes:

*It was added to by many generations, and contained various information: diary-type entries on current events, memoirs, letters, political speeches, copies of legal documents, gossips, jokes and anecdotes, financial documents, economic information (price of grain, etc.), philosophical musings, poems, genealogical trees, advice (agricultural, medical, moral) for the descendants and others* [wikipedia]

Other sources add also that sometimes silvae contained hair locks of some family members kept inside the book as a souvenir. For scholars of electronic literature, the most interesting is the fact that some of the silvic works were lent from one branch of family to the other and family's friends. These readers were allowed to add their own comments to silvae's content. In this way Old Polish silvae can be regarded as a precursory form of a work with implied textonic activity on the side of the reader. Although a sense of order was definitely welcomed in a family chronicle an exemplary silvae was hard to read in a linear fashion. Some of them had almost two thousand pages. Reading them from page to page would be impractical. We can guess that skipping through a material included in the body of the work but not relevant to a given reading was a common practice. If a reader wanted to browse the family history in the financial aspect, he must have omitted occasional poems, and focused just on economic information. If we consider that comments written by fathers could be followed by comments written by sons and this process could go on through generations a single silva appears as a huge rhisomatic work, and at least of structure resembling huge axial hypertext (the axis being formed by temporal framework of family chronicle and physical boundaries of a manuscript) more compound and complicated than contemporary Internet blogs.

## 2.3 Old Polish Silvae as cybertexts.

Is Old Polish silva an ergodic work and can we also see it as an example of proto-cybertext? Placing silvae in the context of Espen Aarseth's typology of cybertext is not - as it may seem- a simple task for at least two reasons. Firstly, most of the silvae are manuscripts with a restricted access, some of them are even not in libraries but a part of private collections. It is thus not easy to inspect the most intriguing element that would affect: the comment feature of some of the examples of these literary

antiques. (the textonic aspect of silvae is not a major issue in traditional historical or linguistic research). Secondly Old Polish silva is a closed historical form. During the time of writing it had most of the features of a multiply text, open to changes, additions and comments. It was literally a work in progress ready to be read but also to be written. As such its textual condition is quite different from the same work but as a closed historical form we now it today: to be read in the library. Which one of them should be included in cybertext typology? My solution is to treat silvae as a model derived from several of the examples one can find in quite modest literature on the subject. This way the potentiality of the model will be exposed and not its concrete manifestation. To make the typology more balanced I will introduce two types of silvae: moderate and extreme. The former will be a collection of pieces of literature, non-fiction materials and diary entries, similar to the mentioned anonymous first Old Polish example of silvae. The latter is co-authored and commentable "family chronicle".

	<b>moderate silvae</b>	<b>extreme silvae</b>
Dynamics	static	<b>dynamic</b>
Determinability	determinable	determinable
Transciency	intranscient	intranscient
Perspective	impersonal	personal
Access	random	random
Linking	none	none
User Function	interpretative	<b>textonic</b>

As we can see, the moderate silva does not differ from a traditional written novel (for example *Moby Dick*, mentioned by Aarseth) at least in this typology. It matches all the variables attributed to Melville's fiction. The only variable that could set it apart from printed narratives is a user function. At first it seems to be an explorative one: the reader simply does not read silva from page to page. It has 2000 pages covered with variety of textual and non-textual material, literary types and genres, prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction. It is dubious that readers do not "explore" the text. But

if we want to be strict in following cybertextual typology in its definition of "exploration" we must grant silva's reader a solely interpretative role<sup>1</sup>.

The first two variables are crucial and most controversial in our case. In fact the way we place extreme, commentable silva on cybertextual grid depends on the perspective we are willing to take. "In a dynamic text the contents of scriptons may change while the number of textons remains fixed" - writes Aarseth - "or the number (and content) of textons may vary as well". At this point the attributes of the two first variables depend on what is the role of a given reader (is he a member of a family, a co-author of the family's silva or just a family's friend, a commentator) and what value we will give to the additions and comments. Are these additions just short snippets of secondary information, or they contribute to the whole as segments of text equally important for the work as other segments? If the reader is a part of the family whose history a given silva describes and is obliged not only to read but to write her own story, to include her own literary efforts, citations, favourite poems, gossips, jokes and anecdotes and on top of these to comment on already existing material, then a silva will have to be called dynamic. The attribute of the second variable - determinability will depend on the first one. If the model in question is dynamic in a sense just described then it will also be indeterminable.

But of course we must take into account what stage of silva's life we examine. In general silvae can be dynamic and indeterminable only when they are - in Marshal MacLuhan words - a cold medium. When they function as an open-ended document whose readers, forming a closed -circle of a family silva "is about" have to be writers at the same time. But in some point of its history, for many reasons, silva is no longer a living document. It becomes what we now it now: a literary relic, a hot medium, in the same sense as a printed novel, with just a higher degree of heterogeneity, and of collage - like nature.

At this point one could conclude one's reflection on the proto-cybertextual nature of Old Polish Silvae and say that there were some ergodic, dynamic texts with textonic user's function in XVIII and XVIII century Poland, distributed among noble families whose members were at the same time readers, characters, writers, commentators and editors of a single work. And though this conclusion might be interesting, gap-filling,

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes it is hard to sustain the validity of Espen Aarseth's formulas. On one hand he says that explorative function is the one in which user "must decide which path to take" and then includes in EF Cortazar's *Hopscotch* in which user "can decide", but excludes from EF *Composition No 1* in which user "must decide" which page to go next in order to progress. If we then compare Appolinaire's *Calligramms* with Saporta's *Composition no 1*, the former being given explorative function and the latter interpretative, the problematic nature of these differentiations is even more striking. Few poems that branch can make the whole Appolinaire's collection more explorative than a work where it is up to a reader to construct a meaningful narrative from disparate paragraphs of fiction.

Perhaps the most problematic of Aarseth's variables are dynamics and determinability. According my readings of Michael Joyce's *afternoon*, a story, this work is dynamic (number of scriptons - changes, textons are constant) and is indeterminable (adjacent scriptons of every scripton are not always the same).

inspiring, there is more to learn from silva than this and implications of this peculiar form can be much wider. But not directly. New insights on nature of links, user's interpretative and constructive activity this traditional form of writing gives as through its contemporary mutations, where it became a formal pattern and structural metaphor for modern and post-modern literary experiments

## 2.4 Before the contemporary silvae

Polish literary Modernism and late Modernism brought several works in which the boundaries of linearity and homogeneity of a printed novel were questioned. Though they were mostly connected with French literary movements, some of them, like *Pałuba* by Karol Irzykowski, published in 1903, with its meta-fictional level and multi-angled perspectives on the main subject of the novel even predated experiments of Marcel Proust and Andre Gide. [zob. M. Głowinski]. In a intentionally unbalanced relations between the authorial commentary, appendixes, introductions and the main text *Pałuba* introduced link mechanisms that helped direct the reader through its parts. An ambitious follow up to this precursory work was Jerzy Andrzejewski *Pulp* (pl. *Miazga*) - a work that predated XXI century networked model of publishing and distribution [zob.Pająk]. The complete work actually had never seen a daylight (censorship cuts from 1983 Polish edition reappeared decade later in a London edition). Even the author himself, after almost thirty years of working on it, couldn't decide which parts and versions of it can form the ultimate edition. *Pulp* introduced two possible worlds of narrative events, an author's diary, an index of characters and among them snippets of different, loosely related materials: from fragments of weather reports to political reflections.

Heterogeneity of *Pulp*, and to some extent *Pałuba*, is impressive. Nevertheless all the different voices, genres, and narrative modes have in both cases some unifying factors. *Pałuba* has several single fields of reference, for example one fictional world. *Pulp* has an unifying meta-fictional discourse topic: modern narrative and impossibility of writing under the communist regime.

Before silvae rerum was rediscovered as an ancient genre especially suited for contemporary literary tastes a closely related tradition of writing had started to evolve. Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, highly influential painter and play-writer coined the term "bag-novel" (pol. "powieść-worek") for the kind of unobliging writing where author within the boundaries of a single work includes almost anything he wishes: mixing narrative themes and voices, unfinished fiction pieces with the polished ones, meta-reflections with extended transcriptions of character's conversations on culture, science or politics. And though his own novels, like *The 622 Downfalls of Bungo* or *The Demonic Woman* did not comply with bag-fiction

ideas, he has set a theoretical framework which is important till today, and the difference between silvic mode of writing and "bag-novel" one is sometimes quite hard to grasp, as may be clear in the following blog entry by critic and writer Jerzy Sosnowski:

*In "bag-novel" the rule is as follows: there are no rules, between the cover pages of the book, with author's name and the title on them, you can put anything you want, as you put things in your bag. With a bit of luck the effect can be polyphonic, quadrophonic, and within the work emerges a mini-universe of texts, among which the reader takes his own path, not without any hints from the author, of course. [Sosnowski]*

In general, the difference between "bag-novel" and silva lies in the former having much more freedom, randomness and chance than the latter, with more often than not having some underlying motive or pattern that could link different pieces together. In "bag-novel" anything goes... in a truly post-modern sense of the famous phrase. In contemporary silva, especially in Miłosz's case, anything can mean something, that can lead you, a reader, a bit closer to the hidden, or not possible to express meaning suggested by many carefully selected, scattered fragments.

## 2.5 Political silvae: how the hybrid form helped fight the Communists.

The shortest definition of contemporary silvae, as "radically opened texts, with essey-like style of narrating, build from fragments of other texts, often non-literary ones" [Nycz.] does not match entirely its most known examples: works of Tadeusz Konwicki. But it is with these highly difficult to categorise works that the career of silvae in their contemporary denouncement started. Konwicki's *The Calendar and Hourglass* (pl. *Kalendarz i Klepsydra*) published in 1976 was neither novel nor collection of stories, and even not a diary, but - as the author put it himself - a "fake-diary". The collection of short scenes from the life of a Warsaw writer, his reflections on the small daily events he's a part of, anecdotes from literary circles or recollections from his childhood in a small Lithuanian town struck the reading audience and the critics not only with huge sense of humour and political allusions hidden between the lines, but also with the novelty of the form. Reaching out for a forgotten silvic form was for Konwicki dictated by political situation. When the freedom of speech is centrally controlled and you don't find the truth in newspapers, on the radio or on the television perhaps the least you could expect from the authors of fiction is another fictional narrative. But of course even the author, whose text was closely observed by censors before publishing decisions could not write what he really thinks. Konwicki's method to cheat the censors, was to make his prose more modular, cut it into disparate units, changing subjects and characters as often as possible. The



method was huge success but not for a long. Great popularity of *The Calendar and Hourglass* made the censors more vigil, and the next novel - *The Polish Complex* was published not in Poland, but in England. In his own country Konwicki went into the publishing underground. But the chosen poetics, which played not a small part in the success, stayed with Konwicki: his anecdotes, openly anti-communist comments, gossips, and jokes from perfectly fitted the underground way of distributing forbidden literature: the *Polish Complex* could re-printed in fragments, then smuggled through the border, copied on a home-made machines, and passed by from hand to hand. And if this was not the case, it was easy retell the short, spicy fragments mouth by mouth.

The silvic mode of writing after Konwicki started to be seen as an esthetic category and was widely accepted by other writers. The critics themselves started seeing the Old Polish *Silvae* as a deep structure for more and more contemporary fictions. The scholarly breakthrough came more than a decade after *The Calendar and Hourglass* with monography *Sylwy Współczesne* - by young poststructuralist Ryszard Nycz, who redefined several perspectives on Polish literature and put Old Polish *silvae* as a defining genre for Polish postmodernism.

As for the formal side of Konwicki's works, if we compare them to our model of old dynamic *silvae*, and if we put them on the scale of modularity, we can see that they are quite moderate, if not conservative kind of *silvae*. There is one main voice uniting all the text elements, one main discourse topic (struggles of a writers with absurdity of a daily life in a communist country) and one main timeframe: a concrete period of author's (narrator's) life. These strong fields of reference make the constructive activity on the reader's side quite mild. Referential and discursive linking are unidirectional. But at the same time, these elements make Konwicki's work an example of a very high modularity, when a reader can pick up just a short part of a work and even few samples can gie him an overall strong impression of style, undertone and quality of the whole.

### ***III. SILVAE, MOSAIC, KALEIDOSCOPE***

#### **3.1 Czesław Miłosz and his search for an ideal form.**

*I have always aspired to a more spacious form  
that would be free from the claims of poetry or prose  
and would let us understand each other without exposing  
the author or reader to sublime agonies.*

Czesław Miłosz: *Ars Poetica*

"The more spacious form" that Miłosz aspired for in 1968 in *Ars Poetica* needed years to be found and when it happened it was by no means Old Polish bigos. When talking about his search for a perfect form Miłosz had distanced himself from what he called "ivy-like nature of Old Polish language" and complete lack of any "sense of form" among old authors [Błoński]. Nevertheless the form he found - a "book of varieties" shared some elements with the concept of *silvae rerum*, or to be more precise with "prose written essay kind of *silva*" [Nycz]. One of the first ones was *The Garden of Science*.

*The Garden of Science is my private book of varieties. It contains citations from different authors, translations of poems, short notes, etc. It is not a neatly bounded volume, but a whole shelf of thinner or thicker notebooks from different years, which I used in my work. Now I fish out from them this or that, adding a commentary. [Ogród Nauk]*

In the same book he also admitted: "It would be good to compose a book just of citations, and let them speak for themselves". The book of varieties found its most accomplished form in *Roadside Dog* (pl. *Piesek Przydrożny*), published almost 20 years after *Ars Poetica*. Composed of 312 text units, of length ranging from a single sentence to several short paragraphs. Sketches, commentaries, short translations, and mini-essays all were the part of this literary hybrid. And though before *Piesek Przydrożny* Miłosz published several volumes of essays, composed in a way similar to a classical form of *miscellanea*, established by Montaigne in his *Attempts*, as well as collections of poems where, in their scattered pieces of poetry we can find resemblance to T.S. Eliot's poetics of "objective correlative", the variety of subjects, narrative voices, fictional and nonfictional worlds and discursive modes in Miłosz's silvic writings went beyond established poetics.

The most important here though will be these aspects of *Roadside Dog* which can shed some new light on our approaches toward electronic forms of literature. The text units of this volume are alike those we find in classical hypertext fiction, they just perfectly fit for the screen. The fact that they are bound to the book form is - as Miłosz admits himself - a sort of necessary evil that forces the author to finish what is not finished, to define what is not defined. In an interview when asked about his next work Miłosz said:

*For quite a long time I have not published any poetry books, because I do not want to crystallise what has a character of a work in progress, in constant development. [...], where bits of prose mix with bits of poetry and bits of a chronicle. This has an experimental aspect for me, a sort of aspiration. If I was to publish it in a single book, it would have solidified, like a jelly, and after that including some new fragments would be much harder. [cyt. Turowicz].*

As we can see, even years after his *Ars Poetica*, Miłosz is still not satisfied with his form, in this case pointing the printed medium as an obstacle towards a better transmission of thought between the author and the reader. And the quality of it was probably the key point of all the work of the Polish Noble Prize laureate. Miłosz had set himself two goals: to show his writing simultaneity of being and to pass to the

reader the experience of theophany [Nycz]. These ideals cannot be fulfilled, but one can try to evoke, by literary means, some similar effects. The basic step to do this is to split the text into discrete units and let these units be of different origins, genres, and even - in Miłosz's case - different cultural contexts (Western thought is often accompanied here by Eastern wisdom: buddhism especially). The first effect of the arrangement of the book of varieties is the most obvious one: the random access facility of a book form is utilised here to its extreme: the reader is encouraged to read the work randomly. This encouragement was several times expressed by the author, who kept saying that he intentionally "left some space for a chance". Why? Because - as Ryszard Nycz puts it - every textual segment represents the discourse topic that is common to all of the elements, and relates

*...directly to the semantic core of the whole text. The reader's invention can serve however as a means to overcome inevitable sequentiality of the speech which is - in Miłosz's words - all subjected to temporal succession and hence lacks the means to achieve the simultaneous. [Nycz]*

Random selection of different fragments from Miłosz's silvae can be thus understood as constructive activity of a mimetic nature: the moments of quasi religious illumination and understanding, an epiphany, comes when some material objects, images, thoughts are taken out of their usual context and are seen in a new, refreshing way. A reader, doing the same with discrete pieces of the work, has a chance of finding the evoked, overall meaning.

The second effect of segmentation comes from the metaphor of mosaic underlying the work. "My aim is to gradually add one new pebble after another to the mosaic, until, gathered together, they form a picture" - says Miłosz. [*Ziemia Ulro*]. In this case reader's activity is to link the elements into a meaningful whole, a process similar to jigsaw-puzzle mode of reading literary hypertexts [Marie Laure-Ryan]. The third implication of the arrangement of book of varieties comes from its kaleidoscopic nature which allows for kaleidoscopic readings where reader is encouraged to establish his own, local meanings of the fragments he retrieves. Miłosz himself further explains this kaleidoscopic kind of reading: "it means one sentence here, another sentence there, and their changing, evolving meaning dependant on what will be read after what, going forward, back, leaving behind all the scruples of a so called in depth reading. [Miłosz, ON]. This style of writing and suggested style of reading exactly matches the kaleidoscopic design of hypertext fictions [Marie Laure-Ryan].

I hope I have shown enough reasons for reflecting a bit longer on the works of Czesław Miłosz and his realisation of the silva rerum pattern. It was a unique one. We can see clearly that his artistic strategies, the modular nature of his works and the

role he ascribes to the reader, are not far from those we find in electronic literature. It is no surprise that Miłosz is one of Michael Joyce's favourites [„,„].

Miłosz's literary goals were ambitious ones. To achieve them he had to question the boundaries of the book and the printed form. The technique involved: segmentation of textual units containing varieties of literary forms and discourses which invited the reader to randomly select the units from kaleidoscopic textual material and linking it over to form a meaningful, if not - illuminating mosaic is not merely an interpretative effort. It is in fact an explorative and configurative one. The hard-lined divisions introduced by Espen Aarseth over a decade ago between the interpretative functions of a reader of non-cybertextual works and operational activities of a cybertext reader were necessary. Then. But today, in my opinion, we can start building bridges between the e-world and the p-world.

#### IV. BUILDING THE BRIDGES

### 4.1 The scope of hybridity: a comparison

	author	narrating voice	world	time frame	genre	dominant discourse topic	links	medium
Old Polish Silvae	M	M	M	S	M	S	S	M
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
<i>Naked Lunch</i>	S	S	M	M	M	M	S	S
<i>Pulp</i>	S	M	M	S	M	S	M	S
<i>Kalendarz i Klepsydra</i>	S	S	S	S	M	M	S	S
<i>Piesek Przydrożny</i>	S	M	M	M	M	M	M	S
<i>afternoon, a story</i>	S	M	S	S	S	S	M	S
<i>Hegirascope</i>	S	M	M	M	M	M	M	S

Eight variables of hybridity: author, narrator, fictional world, dominant time frame, dominant genre, discourse topic, types of links, and diversity of the medium (using illustrations can count as an already second medium). Attributes: M (several, multiply), S (single). The most controversial here are links. But a

different typology is employed here. It starts from referential links (present in every text), then there are discourse links (the ones I've shown in *Piesek Przydrożny*, implied by author, but not visible, forming some kind of order above the scattered fragments of the text. After these come implicit links, programable links (conditional, random), and these special kinds of links I we can call "meta-hypertextual", or "pattern" links which create rhetorical figures contributing to a general meaning of the text (and not serving simply as a navigational, or branching mechanisms. This typology is very sketchy and provisional. But was necessary here.

## 4.1 Electronic Silva ?

Stuart Moulthrop's *Hegirascope*, dubbed by critics "narrative confetti" and "the most typical hypernovel in digital literature" (or rather - non-novel) can easily achieve a status of electronic silva rerum. Its excessive fragmentation, variety of narrative modes, polyphony of narrating voices, and diversity of fictional worlds, make the whole work silvic in nature. Its degree of hybridity does not differ it much from the printed or manuscript examples of silvae. What differentiates Moulthrop's work is related to more specific characteristics of the digital medium it inhabits. First there is the temporal pull of textual segments, allowed by a simple piece of html code which forces the browser through which the reading takes place to present the work in a form of a slideshow that can only be stopped by pressing the "back" button. This effect inevitably has it's implications on the semantic level. When we read about Surfer, the main character in one of *Hegirascope*'s narrative strands, who lays bodiless in front of his TV set, watching passively as two of his uninvited guests are zipping through the channels with his remote, we can see the allusion clearly: we are like Surfer, *Hegirascope* is like these channels on the TV that we ourselves cannot choose.

And then there are links. Four links, in few cases more, on each of over 200 segments, with their own contribution to the meaning of the whole work. Activating some of them triggers irony, some other - clarification of what previously remained narrative mystery, there are also special kinds of links, let's call them mimetic, when clicking on a word "forever" draws us into an infinite loop of the same text over and over. Temporal pull and links play an important factor in *Hegirascope*, adding yet another grade of complication, and another step towards crossing the boundaries not only of the novel in general, but hypertext novel in particular

*Collage-like in form, heterogeneous in content, Hegriroscope's world is a kaleidoscope, its configuration shifting in tandem with changes of perspective. But this kaleidoscope is a meticulously designed construction, rather than a motley mingling disparate elements without pattern or principle. [Lee]*

But from the the silvic perspective the implicit links of new media object can be seen as a limiting factor. If we compare function of implicit electronic links to the implicitly unlinked printed silvae, we can see that most of what they do is literally pointing the reader to a suggested connection, giving him small space for invention, strongly required for example in Miłosz's work. Regular, invisible, referential or discursive links abound in every text, but in the best examples of silvic works they

are a crucial part of the "pact" between writer and reader. In electronic fiction, where implicit links try at the same time overwrite and reduce referential links which can effect in an unpleasant feedback between both kinds of links, creating noise that can disturb the reader on his way to grasp the meaning of text.

This is of course the worst case scenario. More often than not we can say that by simplifying the connections between open ended segments of text, by making these connections literal, links serve as help hints. And highly, "diabolically" as Moulthrop admits, disjunctive *Hegirascope* can be the best example. They guide readers through complicated, labyrinthine networks of texts and without them any sort of order would be hard to establish, especially the work performs its temporal pull, forcing the texts to change every 30 seconds. Moreover, links form a building material for yet another level of text, which we cannot find in printed literature. The layer of so called "hypertext contours", reappearing patterns which themselves contribute to the semantic wholeness of a given text.

## 4.2 Building the bridges: literary dynamics, links and fields of reference.

Silvic works have no links. And yet there is quite obvious linking aspect in them, Miłosz's silvae engage readers with strong constructive activity: creating links between the many pieces of a literary mosaic is its necessary part. Sometimes, during these readings, one can experience quite a surprising situation: the bigger the distance between disparate pieces in a given reading sequence of a silva, the stronger is reader's impulse to connect them by a common context, common topic. But in the theory of electronic literature inspired by cybertext taxonomy there is no place for these kinds of links. And it should not be surprising. Thanks to harsh distinctions between "trivial" and "non-trivial", "interpretative" and "configurative" aspects of electronic text the whole field of studies, its goals, and its tools could be clearly defined and stay clear of promiscuity of discourses that was typical for hypertext theory in the nineties. These distinctions gave in the hands of e-lit scholars strong arguments while approaching conservatives' claims saying that "this hypertext was always already in the text". But today, more than a decade after *Cybertext*, perhaps time has come to start loosening the ties of stiff precursory armour... There is more to cybertext than "cyber". There is also text. And it is dynamic. And if cybertext can enhance a general theory of text, dynamic aspects of the latter one can enhance cybertext theory.

The first thing we need to consider in order to build the bridges between connective and configurative qualities of printed works and electronic works is the problem of interpretation. If we want to better understand the reading process of the objects of electronic literature we cannot consider interpretation level as a monolithic, purely

interpretative activity. Markku Eskelinen made once a clear and catchy distinction between games and literature, saying that in "literature we may have to configure in order to be able to interpret, but in games we have to interpret in order to be able to configure" [Eskelinen]. But the second leg of this assumption can in fact relate both to games and literature, if the goal of a literary work is, like in Miłosz's example, to put together a meaningful mosaic out of many scattered elements. In a literal, not metaphorical sense. But even if the mosaic was just a metaphor the reader is always configuring and interpreting, and this process is continuous, because it reflects the processes of semiosis. From traditional (structuralist) point of view interpretation consists of three stages: analyses, interpretation proper and evaluation [Sławiński]. These stages loosely correspond with configuration, interpretation and putting the meaning into broader context.

There is a theoretical school that takes these configurative/interpretative processes further, claiming that they do not begin and end with final paragraph of a work, but they are in constant flux. The theory of literary dynamics, developed by Israeli scholars in 70. and 80. enclose text segmentation, text junctions, links and patterns to its set of theoretical tools for understanding of how the text "works" in reader's mind.

*any reading of a text is a process of constructing a system of hypotheses or frames which can create maximal relevancy among the various data of the text - which can motivate their "co-presence" in the text according to models derived from "reality," from literary or cultural conventions, and the like. Each of these hypotheses is a sort of "label" constituting an answer to questions such as: What is happening? What is the state of affairs? [...] What is the argument or the idea "reflected" in the text? And so on. [Perry]*

The goal of theoretical works of Benjamin Hrushovski, Menakhem Perry or Rachel Giora is to find patterns that develop when "text continuum" meets "constructive level" of the work during the reading process. These patterns are "links of two or more elements in a text constructed by any means whatever" [Hrushovski] and see how they orchestrate the dynamics that occurs in the construction of meaning. This process shifts between three layers: the layer of sense, a Field of Reference (FR) and Regulating Principles of the text. Meaning is a resultant of the interaction of these three stories, and whenever a reader draws her constructive activity from one level to the other the text starts to segment, and group into frames of reference, a field of reference and a discourse topic. "The reader has to readjust, reorganise and reinterpret the various kinds of information he obtains as he advances along the text" - writes Hrushovski. Linking and finding the links: between characters, ideas, images, elements of plot as they refer to each other and to the outside world is a basic task of the reader, an engine of the literary dynamics. Linking starts at the beginning of the work and works till its end, branching in many directions, moving back and forward, readjusting the meanings of already read material: "every word in a text remains open, pending termination of the reading process". Is it just an interpretative activity?

In a cybertext theory things are simple: if there are no implicit links in a text, it just hasn't got links. In theory of dynamic literature every text, even the most linear, abounds in links. Somewhere in the middle of these two perspectives there are works like *Piesek Przydrożny* by Czesław Miłosz: they haven't got implicit links, they have these omnipresent interpretative ones (let's name them referential), and at the same time they invite for yet another kind of connections between hundreds of text paragraphs designed to be read randomly, by associations, or by clusters if reader wants to achieve the goal set by the author.

All this, I hope, must not frustrate us, but instead encourage to re-examine several established notions of new media theory in general, and electronic literature theory in particular. First things we should do is to find some clear but at the same more detailed definitions for functions of the reader of e-lit work. We should also try to find new typologies of links, which could encompass and give justice to linking activities in both ergodic and non-ergodic, instrumental and non instrumental, playable and non-playable work.