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«Gombrowicz reads Borges», Or: Writing vs. Walking

«Who, in comparison with Sartre, the mountain of revelation, is this Argentine Borges! A tasty soup for writers?»¹

«Der Anfang alles Philosophierens liegt im Ich, in der ursprünglichen Energie dieses Ich, vermöge deren das Ich sich beständig setzt.»²

My paper has four parts. In the first part, «Givens», I present some theoretical markers about my use of the word medium. In the second part, «Consciousness into Life», I discuss a scene from Gombrowicz's work that illustrates the fight between the registers of thought and the registers of life, and I propose a differentiation of literature into Cartesian literature (Borges) and topological literature (Gombrowicz). In the third part, «Life into Consciousness», Gombrowicz and Borges engage in a duel which Gombrowicz loses and in part four, «Becoming Medium/Becoming Walking, Gombrowicz escapes from Borges.

GIVENS

In his book *Cinema 2*, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze describes a «naturalist» cinema — in opposition to a «realist» cinema — as a cinema in which «[l]ife will no longer be made to appear before the categories of thought; thought will be thrown into the categories of life»³. In naturalist cinema, cultural milieus (which Deleuze also calls «derived milieus») invariably

1 Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary*, vol. 3 (1961–1966), trans. Lillian Vallee, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1993, p. 92.

2 Wilhelm Dilthey, *Logik und System der Philosophischen Wissenschaften (Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 20), eds. Hans-Ulrich Lessing/Frithjof Rodi, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990, p. 73.

3 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson/Barbara Habberjam, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 189.

en: Wolfram Nitsch/Matei Chihai/Alejandra Torres (eds.), *Ficciones de los medios en la periferia. Técnicas de comunicación en la literatura hispanoamericana moderna*, Köln, Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek Köln, 2008 (Kölner elektronische Schriftenreihe, 1), pp. 245–255.

descend into natural milieus (which Deleuze also calls «originary worlds») along «entropically» inclined slopes. From the position of cultural milieus, the naturalist vector is invariably going down towards degradation and atavisms.

Deleuze's conceptualization of derived milieus and originary worlds might be read as programmatic for his own *œuvre*, if one sees the relation between them not as one of either «rise or fall», (maturation: the rise from naturalism to realism; degradation/ (re)juvination: the fall from realism to naturalism), but as a relation in which derived milieus are embedded in and remain the «attributes» of originary worlds, although they are in certain aspects also radically different from them. Deleuze's idea of culture as immanent to nature can also be found in the work of the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey. As Bernard Groethuysen notes in his annotations to volume VII of Dilthey's *Collected Works* about Dilthey's theory of the «autobiography», «the manuscript about «experience» [*Erleben*] was inside an envelope [...]. On the top of the envelope one finds the following statement»:

Life is a part of life in general. But this is what is given in experience [*Erleben*] and understanding [*Verstehen*]. Life in this sense covers the whole extent of the objective spirit, in as far as it can be reached [*zugänglich*] through experience [*Erleben*]. Now, life is the basis [*Grundtatsache*] which forms the beginning of philosophy. It is that which is known from within; it is that beyond which one cannot go. Life cannot be brought before the bench [*Richterstuhl*] of reason⁴.

What exactly is the relation between «thought» and «life» that both Deleuze and Dilthey talk about, and which both relate, in almost identical words, to a scene in which life is «brought before» the law of thought in order to be judged by it? In the following, I want to explicate this relation by way of that between «talking» and «walking» and thus between the «medium» of language (which Deleuze relates to the registers of representation, «the theater» and «psychic reality») and the «mediality» of the material body (which Deleuze relates to the registers of production, «the factory» and «lived reality»). In this encounter, Jorge Luis Borges will stand for «talking» and Witold Gombrowicz — who spent most of his life in Argentinian exile and thus became Borges' literary/cultural neighbor — will stand for «walking».

Before I start playing out the «poetics of talking» against the «poetics of walking», let me give you my theoretical «givens»:

1. I do *not* understand the term «medium» according to its prevalent definition within culture-driven media studies, where it designates specific technological apparatuses (telephone, typewriter, radio, computer or film as writing systems» [*Aufschreibesysteme*]). Rather, I understand a medium as any set of loosely-coupled elements that can be formed (ultimately, the medium is the unformed). This definition of medium is used in the hard sciences, which treats «carriers» such as air/ether, water or electro-magnetic fields as «material

4 Bernard Groethuysen, «Anmerkungen», in: Wilhelm Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften* (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7), ed. B. G., Leipzig, Teubner, 1927, p. 359, my translation.

media». It is also the definition of medium in what might be called a «radical media studies, in which «radical» refers to the theory of «radical constructivism». In such a «radical» media studies, the «form/medium» distinction proposed by Maturana/Varela, Vilém Flusser or Niklas Luhmann replaces the technological/semiotic definition of the medium with a structural/material one: not the radio, but airwaves; not the cinema, but photons; not the typewriter, but the alphabet. My paper, therefore, will be less concerned with Argentina as a technological «periphery», than with the difference, in Argentina, between «cultural media» and «natural media».

2. «Material media» form (as Marshall McLuhan noted), a media-ecology, which means, an interlaced field/meshwork, and

3. they are recursively stacked: atoms are the loosely coupled medium that can be formed into molecules, molecules are the loosely coupled elements that can be formed into complex organisms, words are the elements that can be formed into sentences, sentences can be formed into books, and books into libraries which might contain — as Borges notes — the whole world in all of its possible permutations. (Or maybe not. We'll see.) For now, let me just note that from a higher — as in «more comprehensive» — level, a form can function as medium. (Bricks, from the point of view of a house, are a medium.) From a lower level, a medium can function as a form. (From the point of view of single grains of sand, bricks are a form.) Language, in this context, is the set of loosely coupled phonetic elements that can be formed into specific «communicative/ meaningful surfaces». The realm of language, however, is not the only level on which one can find forms of mediality. Within this recursive architecture, specific media and «their» formations are independent. Sand, for instance, can be formed into a castle, but also into a mermaid or — by «natural» agents — into a dune.

4. In my definition of what humans are, I follow the theory of autopoiesis, which defines living systems — from cells to humans — as operationally/informationally closed, but energetically open to their environment. Humans, in this context, are complex aggregates made up of a very large number of «meshed» autopoietic systems. They are differentiated from other autopoietic systems only by the presence, within their system, of what Maturana/Varela call the «observer», an agency within the system that observes its own operations as well as the operations of other systems: «the thing formerly known as consciousness». 2nd order cybernetics defines autopoietic systems as «eigenorganizations» with specific «eigenvalues» that define their systemic history.

5. To come back to the initial question of the relation between the categories of thought and the categories of life, I will treat categories of thought as a field made up of immaterial relations (mind), and categories of life as a field made up of material intensities (brain). According to radical constructivism, these categories are operative in humans simultaneously, although they operate on radically «separated» levels.

CONSCIOUSNESS INTO LIFE

I know these are a lot of «givens», there are many questions attached to them and I have presented them rather telegraphically and theoretically. To make matters less abstract, let me turn to Witold Gombrowicz's novel *Cosmos*, in which he stages what happens when the categories of thought (which, to make things even more complicated, I will relate to «consciousness») come to overcode the categories of life (which I will relate to «the unconscious», which I understand as material rather than linguistic). Let me give you this endless moment in all of its «slow-motion terror». It is a longish quote, but well worth it, I think. (In fact, when dealing with Gombrowicz, one is constantly tempted to «do a Pierre Menard» and to just go on quoting). On a walk through the woods, the protagonist, who is, as always in Gombrowicz's work, a fictional/autobiographical version of «Witold Gombrowicz», suddenly becomes conscious of a specific, purely immaterial «constellation» of stones:

It was a stupid, trivial trap. In front of me were two small stones, one to the right and the other one to the left. On the left a little farther on there was a brown patch of earth that had been loosened by ants, and beyond that, also on the left, there was a big, black, rotten root, and these three things were in a straight line, hidden in the sunshine, sewn up in it, concealed in the luminous air. Just when I was on the point of walking between the two stones I made a small diversion to pass between one of them and the little patch of earth that the ants had turned over, it was a minimal diversion amounting to nothing at all, but there was no real reason for it, and that, I think, disconcerted me. So I mechanically made another minor diversion to pass between the stones as I had originally intended, but I experienced a certain difficulty about this, a very slight difficulty, it is true, deriving from the fact that in view of these two successive divisions my intention to pass between the stones had assumed the quality of a decision, a trivial decision, needless to say, but nevertheless a decision. There was no excuse for this, of course, for the total neutrality of the objects lying in the grass justified no decision. What difference did it make which way I went? [...] In these circumstances I decided to pass between the two stones. But the few moments that had passed made the decision more of a decision than ever, and how was one to decide since it made no difference either way? So I stopped again. Furious at this, I again put my foot forward to pass between the stone and the patch of earth, as I had decided, but realized that if I did so after two false starts it would not be ordinary walking, but something more important. So I decided to take the route between the patch of earth and the root. But then I realized that if I did this I should be acting as if I were afraid, so again I decided to pass between the the stone and the patch of earth. Good heavens alive, what was happening, what was the matter with me, I could not allow myself to be held up like this on a level path while I struggled with such phantoms [...]. I just stood. This position

became more and more irresponsible and actually crazy. I had no right to stand there like this, it was impossible, I must go on, but I stayed rooted on the spot⁵.

It is only when he considers the general avalanche of relations that already defines his reality and the overall oppressive presence of the relational labyrinth he is caught in, that he is able to «disregard» this specific, unimportant trap:

At this I moved, thereby immediately destroying all the impossibility beside me, and I moved forward quite easily, without even realizing which way I was going, because it was completely immaterial, thinking about something else as I did so. [...] I walked on towards the house, whistling to myself, I lit a cigarette, and all that was left in my mind was a large residue, a pale memory⁶.

The result of the «thoughtful» overcoding is that a smooth/continuous, graceful movement/process (fluid becoming), is broken up into a series of striated/discrete, inhibited moments/stasis (arrested being). What was automatic and unconscious becomes reflected and conscious: the film of life slows down into a series of stills. According to Gombrowicz, this overcoding is tragic for both life and consciousness. As he notes in his *Diary*, «in consciousness there is something like its being its own trap»⁷. Gombrowicz's work is permeated by such tragic moments. In his novel *Pornografia*, for instance, it is not the autobiographical «Witold», but his companion Frederick, who performs a comparable ballet of inhibitions:

He was offered some tea, which he drank; a lump of sugar remained on his saucer — he stretched out his hand toward it, but obviously considered his gesture pointless, and withdrew his hand. Since this gesture was even more pointless, however, he stretched out his hand once more, took the lump of sugar, and ate it — not for pleasure but to behave consistently... toward the sugar or toward us?... Clearly wanting to eradicate this unfavorable impression, he coughed, then, so as the cough should not seem pointless, pulled out his pocket handkerchief — but did not dare blow his nose and simply moved his foot⁸.

Although it might seem so at first sight, Gombrowicz's program is neither to completely uncouple thought from life (that would be the pure form of «realism»), nor to completely uncouple life from thought (which would be the pure form of «naturalism»). Rather, the program is to let thought (culture/-consciousness) emerge from life (nature/unconscious) and to keep it its attribute. In poetological terms: to keep writing «in the service» of life. To be

5 Witold Gombrowicz, *Cosmos*, trans. Eric Mosbacher, New York, Grove, 1970, pp. 132–133.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

7 Gombrowicz, *Diary*, (n. 1), p. 162.

8 Witold Gombrowicz, *Pornografia*, trans. Alastair Hamilton, London, Calder & Boyars, 1966, p. 14.

young/immature even while one is old/mature, projects that lead straight to *Ferdydurke*⁹ and, more cannibalistically and murderously, to *Pornografia*.

To produce a living, intensive literature is possible only by making it an attribute of life. Easily said, one might say, but how can one measure the extent of life or intensity in a text? Please remember the differentiation I made between material life and intensity on the one hand and immaterial thought and relation on the other. Let me use this differentiation to delineate two <literary spaces>, which can be modeled on two geometrical concepts of space and of literature; one topological and the other Cartesian. Cartesian geometry is concerned with the metrical measurement of discrete objects (which are defined by logical relations and individual, extensive masses/weights) in an inherently empty, uniform space defined within a Cartesian grid. In classical geometry one normally speaks of transformations in space, but never of the transformation of space, for space is classically pictured as an immutable, inert, three-dimensional container for lower-order dynamics. Topological space, in contrast, is a dynamic spatial force-field that is defined by intensive, physical, nonmetric relations and energetic tensions. Simply stated, Cartesian space is hard and empty, topological space is elastic and <full> (*spatium intense*).

My proposition is that one might measure texts according to whether their structural registers are more Cartesian (thought) or more topological (life). Of course such a measurement can only ever gauge tendencies, because no text is exclusively Cartesian or topological. (Remember also that it is not a question of replacement of the sets but of which of the two sets is more inclusive.) Tendentially, then, while Cartesian texts are organized around sets of logical relations and propositions (→ functions/prospects), topological texts are arranged around a set of material attractors and intensive arrangements (→ affects/percepts).

As Gombrowicz's poetics rely on a deep belief that life is not only the *raison d'être* of literature, but also its aim, and that writing should always remain <an attribute> of life, he detested Cartesian literature, in which, as he notes repeatedly in his *Diary*, life continues to be mutilated, personalized, humiliated, killed, and in which writing continues to be taken as an end in itself; *l'art pour l'art*. Of course, Borges is the perfect screen onto which to project this Cartesian literature, and in his *Diary* Gombrowicz comments on Borges' work in precisely these registers. The immediate context is the blind Borges traveling to Europe in expectation of the Nobel Prize. And he should get it, Gombrowicz notes cynically, because

this is a literature for literati [...] an abstract artist, scholastic, metaphysical, unoriginal enough to find a road already paved, *original enough in this unoriginality* of his to become a new and even creative variant of something known and recognized. An excellent head cook! A gourmet cuisine [...] sparklers, the fireworks of *an intelligentia intelligently deprived of intelligence*, the pirouettes of rhetorical and unloving thought incapable of taking on even *a single living idea*, of thought completely uninterested in <real> thinking, consciously fictional,

9 Witold Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, trans. Eric Mosbacher, London, Boyars, 1979.

arranging its arabesques, glosses, and exegeses on the sidelines consistently ornamental. [...] What a head cook! [...] [T]he Borges-ists, that army of aesthetes meticulous people, connoisseurs, initiates, watchmakers, metaphysicians, know-it-alls, gourmets...¹⁰.

Gombrowicz's vitriolics are aimed at a literature that has completely severed itself from its relation to life. «*The smarter, the dumber*», he notes in his *Diary*¹¹. The curious thing, Gombrowicz notes, is that this closure of writing in itself (realism) happens in a country that is everywhere so full of life (naturalist). Unfortunately, this «unmodern» life — which is the one Gombrowicz is extremely fascinated by — is the one that Argentinian culture is extremely ashamed of: The Retiro → the «stupid» young people with their «naturally beautiful» bodies → the unconscious → the culturally unformed → the media. Because he is a representative of «cultural form», Borges is not the most «Argentinian» of writers, he is, ironically, the most un-Argentinian writer. (The truly Argentinian writer is, of course, Gombrowicz!).

In 1955, Gombrowicz writes about a meeting with Borges in his *Diary*:

This supper, however, was also attended by Borges, probably the most talented Argentine writer [...]. What was the possibility of understanding between me and that intellectual, aesthetic, and philosophical Argentinian? I was fascinated by the lower stratum in that country and this was the upper crust. [...] Borges, for example, was someone who took into consideration only his own age, tearing himself completely from his base, this was a mature man, and intellectual and artist [...]. He was something extraneous, pasted on, he was an ornament [...]. I would prefer a creative gaffe, a mistake, even sloppiness, anything that was alive with energy, intoxicated with the poetry which this country breathed and which they passed with their noses stuck in a book¹².

Borges is fully formed and conscious. Argentina is unformed and unconscious. Is this merely the exotism of a writer in exile?

10 Gombrowicz, *Diary* (n. 1), pp. 63–64.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 191.

12 Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary*, vol. 1 (1953–1956), trans. Lillian Vallee, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1988, p. 135. «The most original and independent writer of Argentina, Borges, writes a fine and elegant Spanish, is a stylist in the literary sense (not in the sense of spiritual solutions), and most gladly cultivates a literature about literature, a writing about books — and if sometimes he surrenders himself to pure imagination, it leads him far from life, into a sphere of convoluted metaphysics, the ordering of beautiful rebuses, a scholastics made up of metaphors» (Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary*, vol. 2 (1957–1961), trans. Lillian Vallee, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1989, p. 131).

LIFE INTO CONSCIOUSNESS

I don't think it is mere exoticism. Rather, it is a poetological position. In his novel *Trans-Atlantyk*, which is the most autobiographically autobiographical of his works, Gombrowicz rewrites this meeting as a deeply poetological duel between a Cartesian and a topological literature. *Trans-Atlantyk* is the account of Gombrowicz's «adventures in the Argentine», especially of his initial difficulties of finding a «position» in his new exile. (Gombrowicz had been on a visit to Argentina when the Second World War broke out and he decided to not return to Europe.) The combatants of this poetological duel are a very thinly veiled Borges, portrayed as the undisputed master of a Cartesian/-relational literature on the one side, and a fictional(ized) «Witold Gombrowicz» as the passionate inventor of intensive literary arrangements on the other. Again, let me give you the scene in all of its terrifying detail: the setting is a *soirée* at the painter Ficinati's, to which Gombrowicz goes with the Polish Envoy and his «pack», who want to introduce him into Argentinian society as «the great Polish author» «the Master Great Polish Genius Glorious Gombrowicz»¹³ in order to defend the greatness of Polish literature in the Argentinian exile. Of course, nobody cares about Gombrowicz (the Polish «trauma of inferiority»). The party deteriorates into more and more «irrelevance», until somebody makes his entry as pompously as a king with his court:

So first entered a lady in ermine Cape, with Ostrich, Peacock Plumes, and with a large Purse; beside her some Lickspittles and after the Lickspittles some Scribes, next some Scribblers and some Jesters who beat the Drums. Likewise amongst them a wight Clad in Black, and seemingly distinguished for when he entered voices could be heard: «Gran escritor, maestro» — «Maestro, maestro»... and out of admiration they might have fallen on their Knees, save they were eating petits fours¹⁴.

In the following, the maestro commences to «celebrate» himself.

That man (and haply so strange a man for the first time in my life had I seen) was uncommonly pampered and, what is more, was still Pampering himself. In a Greatcoat, behind large Black glasses as if behind a fence from the whole World shut off, around his neck a silk scarf with demi-pearl grey dots on't, on his hands Demi-gloves of black cambric, on his head a hat, demi-brimmed, black. So muffled and apart, now and then he took a sip from a narrow flask, or with a Kerchief of black cambric mopped himself and fanned. In pockets Papers aplenty, scripts the which he ceaselessly mislaid, and under arm Books. Of intelligence enormously subtle the which he in himself all the time ensubtled, distilled, in every utterance of his so intelligently intelligent he was that the Women's and Men's delighted clucks arose (even though they inspected Socks,

13 Witold Gombrowicz, *Trans-Atlantyk*, trans. Carolyn French/Nina Karsov, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994, p. 30.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

ties). That voice of his he quietened constantly but, the Quieter the louder indeed, as others, having quietened themselves, all the more intently did listen (though they Listen not) [...]. Looking into his books, notes, mislaying them, Wallowing, weltering in them, with rare quotations he sprinkled his thought and capered with it to and for Himself, as in a solitary. And so whimsically coddling himself in Paper and Thought, all the more intelligently intelligent he was, and that intelligence of his, multiplied by itself and a-straddle on itself, was becoming so Intelligent that Jesus Maria!¹⁵

It is against this formidable opponent that his compatriots force Gombrowicz to fight. A direct fight, however, is difficult, because the opponent is curiously «elusive» and acorporeal: «But how to bite if the beast as if from a book is Marzipanning, marzipanning so that it sickeneth, and all the more Intelligently Intelligent he is, subtly Subtle... »¹⁶.

Symptomatically, the rhetorical frame of the «duel of words» is food, as something that relates to both cultural registers (thought) and to natural registers (energetic/life). Borges reduces — also in the way that sauces are «reduced» — every one of Gombrowicz's statements, which Gombrowicz feels express the singularity/intensity of his personal life and are therefore uniquely his own — with a specific «eigenvalue», that is — to cultural quotes. When Gombrowicz attempts to evade his relentless metricalization and intertextualization by saying things that are more and more meaningless and idiosyncratic, this only leads to Borges' repartees becoming more and more refined — also, like sugar is refined — and subtle.

Gombrowicz opens up the duel with a reference to a «decadent» literature and life-style, stating that «I don't like Butter too Buttery, Noodles too Noodly, Milet too Millety and Barley too Barley!» To which Borges replies: «Here they say that butter is buttery... The Thought interesting indeed... an interesting Thought... Pity, not quite new for Sartorius said it in his Bucolics»¹⁷. In his reply, Gombrowicz, who begins to suffer from what Harold Bloom would call a case of the «anxiety of influence», stakes his individuality against the presumed precursor: «What the Devil do I need to know what Sartorius said if I Say?!»¹⁸. Borges, however, retaliates by turning even this assertion of singularity/individuality against Gombrowicz: «Here they say: What do I care for Sartorius if I Say. And this is not a bad Thought, indeed it could be served with Raisin sauce, but the trouble is that Madame de Lespinasse said something like it in one of her Letters»¹⁹. Borges' cultured culinarianization (the cooked) pushes Gombrowicz even deeper into the registers of the raw. Exchanging the registers of meaning/reason for those of intensity/irritation, he shouts «Sh.t! Sh.t! Sh.t!» [chickenshit, H. B.], the very thing he is afraid of becoming in the eyes of his compatriots and the other guests. Even

15 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 34. See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973.

19 *Ibid.*

this «excremental exclamation», however, is recuperated into quotation marks and transferred into exquisite culinary registers by a relentless Borges: «Ergo 'tis not a bad Thought and good with Mushrooms», Borges answers, «just fry it a bit and baste with Cream; but alas, it has already been said by Cambronne...»²⁰. Each time, as a result of Borges' devious operations, Gombrowicz's «sentences» are no longer forces that construct a dynamic, intensive assemblage/meaning but fixed/static positions in a metric, discursive grid. To make matters worse, as «copies» they are not even specifically Gombrowicz's positions. Gombrowicz's intensive literature has been judged by the cultural milieu as «fake» and as «derived». It is not an «originary world», but a «derived milieu». Always already intertext.

Gombrowicz can escape this terrible transfer of topological expression into Cartesian quote (and, generally, the transfer of topological into Cartesian literature) only by radically changing registers from the discursive/textual to the corporeal; a change that returns me to my «givens». This escape charts the change from a culture-driven media-studies (cultural media) to a radical media-studies (natural media) (this refers to: given 1). While Borges' world is a violently textual, discursive universe which is constructed as an intertextual/intermedial maze «carried» by technological/semiotic media, Gombrowicz's world is a recursive set of structural/material media, of which language is only the specific medium related to the function of consciousness. If mediality is reduced to the level of language/meaning, all other material media within the overall «media ecology» are silenced/erased (this refers to: given 2+3). As culture's appreciation of literature is based purely on the relational «registers of thought/observation» and not those of the intensive «registers of life», an intensive literature will be perceived as degraded (this refers to: given 4). If the categories of life, therefore, are «made to appear» before the categories of thought, the result is shame: Under the accusing and stern gaze of thought, life becomes ashamed of itself (this refers to: given 5).

It is impossible to escape this cultural judgement from within culture. Rather, one needs to change registers completely. One has to flee into the register of life. Symptomatically, Deleuze had noted before talking about life's trial by the laws of thought: ««Give me a body, then»: this is the formula of philosophic reversal»²¹. (Note Deleuze's choice of verbs. While life is made to appear, as in: appear in court, thought is thrown into life, as in: thrown into chaos.) Gombrowicz similarly «asks for a body».

BECOMING MEDIUM

BECOMING WALKING

Now heedless of everything, leaving everything, from my disgrace, shame escaping, towards the door through the whole salon I began to go walking, and I Walk Off! I walk off, as the Devil with it all and the Devil, the Devil, all gone to the Devil! Fleeing, walking out I am! [...] Yet when I had walked almost to the

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2* (n. 3), p. 189.

door, again I turned (for this Walking of mine is already transforming into just a walk across the Salon), and again through the salon I go [...] and so the Devil, the Devil, I Walk on and Walk forth and Walk, and so am Walking, Walking and Walking and Walking... [...]. [T]hey look and I Walk, Walk still, Walk on, whereupon that Walk of mine drums as on a bridge. The Devil, the Devil, and I know not what to do with this Walking of mine, for such a Walk, such a Walk, and I as if uphill Walk, am Walking, and hard, hard, uphill, oh what a Walk! Oh what am I doing? [...] [T]hat Walk of mine, the Devil, the Devil, I directed to the door, and through that door — oh, now I'm not Walking on, Walking on but only Walking out... Walking — as if the Devil, as if Satan were chasing me — Out!²².

Having been defeated and shamed in the discursive duel, Gombrowicz gives «himself» over to a material movement that is first anonymous and then in actual fact quite literally «becomes him», an anonymous walking that starts in his feet, slowly takes over his whole body and then changes into a «becoming walking». In the end, he quite literally escapes the «registers of thought» (the theater of textual, «psychic reality») into the registers of life (the factory of material, «lived reality»). In these dynamics, he reverses the arrest of the Gombrowicz from *Cosmos* who could not «walk on» in the woods. Rather than breaking up an automatic walk into thoughtful «stasis», he — or, more precisely, his body — frees himself from the categories of thought through a movement that has its beginning in the unconscious media of which he, as a human being, is composed (the body becomes a complex set of media-form platforms). In this escape, the media are no longer those of significations, but those of the physical machinery of walking: One can escape the judgement of the categories of thought only by a material response. Only material becomings can break up the exoskeleton of cultural structures and formations. And note that the form of language is also «walked over» in the excerpts I have quoted. With Gombrowicz, even language attempts to walk away from itself as a form and into itself as a medium. The struggle with form is an integrated one (it also acts on the materiality of language!) and it leads to the «land of the unformed». As Gombrowicz notes in the *Diary*,

The problem of Form, man as a producer of form, man as a prisoner of form, the concept of Interhuman Form as a superior creative force, inauthentic man [...]. [T]here is no subject except for the tyranny of form, the ballet of structures. [...] I want to be relaxation itself and they are cramped, tense, stiff²³.

22 Gombrowicz, *Trans-Atlantyk* (n. 13), pp. 35–36.

23 Gombrowicz, *Diary* (n. 1), p. 182.