“Miejsce” Not Guaranteed (Or, Your Place Is Not Guaranteed) (2829102022-13012023)

The IC 6502 Heweliusz Express to Gdańsk (departure 1239 +12) is either out of luck or has too too much of it (depending). The train leaves on a Friday, which, as always, heralds the weekend (crowds guaranteed). This is a long weekend (even more crowds), its length resulting from a holiday (tensions rise), during which every second Pole decides that he should be somewhere else, and so celebrates the day off gifted to him by his ancestors (*tadah!*), so if he remembered them on any other day, nay, even if he hadn’t forgotten about them, but simply didn’t place memorial candles on the graves of all our dear buried on this exact day, a clanging cymbal would sound, and in the eyes of those standing pensively over the graves of our eternally resting, he’d be nothing more than a swine and a spiritual parvenue. All Saints, all in motion. November 1 is our national test of logistic limitations. We migrate like wintering birds. In flocks.

In short: the crowds strain the walls, purchasing a ticket seems improbable.TheHeweliusz is (not) moving, and since I’m aboard, I have no such luck of doing so either.

Improbability isn’t an exaggeration. An excessive exaggeration. I made multiple attempts, but the website declared that it was overloaded with user love, that it had the will but lacked the physical ability, and that I could try again once it had caught its breath, though if I insisted on obtaining the ticket, it recommended using the app. The app, in turn, didn’t even make a sound that it was suffering from some inconvenience, it didn’t whine about the abundance of customer attention; it didn’t cry, it didn’t protest, I posed it no issue—it also didn’t sell me a ticket. It didn’t do anything, which means it did nothing (oh ho ho negation, oh negation). Despite my fondness for paper goods (🡪 on tickets), standing in line makes me feel like a member of a reenactment group (we stage a bygone era), but they remind me too much of swastikas (reenactment groups, not lines) for me to want to be in them (by way of generalization: in groups and in lines). I preferred refreshing the page in the dead of night, and when I finally managed to buy a ticket, it was, of course, with “no seat guaranteed.”

There weren’t other options. As soon as the train stopped to absorb me, I telegraphed subtle signals with my elbows to my future fellow passengers that I would be the first in line at the door to the dining car, having decided to spend my journey there. I finally extracted a stool from the car pod, but it turns out that this is not the end of my tribulation.

Near Świecie.

A fisherman alone in a husk of a boat on the pond of a size of half a football pitch.

It’s 3 pm.

The car is governed by a buffet-boss, a chief-sheriff, who orders reality according to clear rules, the first and most fundamental of which is: the dining car is intended for consumption, not travel, so you will not dare slip into a seat without also making good use of a fork, and that coffee should be drunk only in decisive, rhythmic sips. Minor disorderly imperfections don’t perturb the boss: she’s happy that hey, the three guys wobbling on their bar stools (it's not yet 1 p.m.) are ordering another round (this counts as consumption, so they’re allowed) while a baby cries over the aforementioned three (the mother consumes, so the baby is fully within its right to full volume), and to complement the entire polyphony, someone’s phone speaker blasts a movie for the assembled company (a person has to occupy themselves somehow while consuming). If I wasn't already an occasional misanthrope, I’d soon become one. There are also regulations of lesser importance—put your shoes back on, we serve food here, sir, you can change your shoes in the toilet (the question of barefootedness being allowed if someone were to consume with the aid of their feet goes unanswered)—but the supreme law, as it has been said, is singular: whoever does not eat with us is against us, so we will exclude them, remove them, make them a pariah of the corridor.

Everyone eats in the dining car, me included. I eat and drink. I drink and eat. I double the cost of my ticket, but I will not give up my seat; not only because of my neophytic misanthropy, but because I don’t, after all, have a guaranteed seat (oh, negation). I eat some more, I won’t lose my head, so help me debt. The trip to Gdańsk is not a quick one and after two hours of consuming under the supervision of the sheriff, everything starts to swell. From the inside. To swell.

*No seat guaranteed* starts to do its work, too, bubbling, fermenting, digesting itself, filling the imagination, becoming an explanatory formula, an existential figure, a historiosophical narrative, a universal law[[1]](#footnote-2). Was this not the fate of my dismembered country for 123 years? And isn't it so that after the one-two-three (a clever mnemonic) everything has one-two (meaning quickly) become endangered again?

But I have to tell this story in a different way.

**==||== οικος ==||==**

One version of what I am trying to say here could be this: place has become precarious.

Precarity functions better and more easily as a socio-economic category, a human one. It was supposed to be a special state of those who constantly experience the loss of a number of guarantees in the job market—understood not only as a place (as when we talk about a “workplace”), but also as employment (“to have a working job”), and as a performed activity (“I've been working all day”). The thesis about the lack of a guarantee of place is not inhuman (in the sense that it does not turn away from humanity; on the contrary), but at the same time it wants to transcend what is human (at least towards something more fundamental, terrestrial, earthly; more on that later). Therefore, to some extent, I am translating the social into the realm of the spatial.

But when writing about space, I must also acknowledge the time in which I’m doing so, as it is perhaps of some consequence (perhaps time is always of consequence 🡪 on delays). I am writing these words between 2022 and 2023—for over three hundred days, my phone has been displaying constant, daily notifications about the progress of the war in Ukraine.

I can’t, I don’t know how to, and I don’t want to write *what the war means* for contemporary Europe and beyond. I am not a journalist and so don’t feel obligated to explicate the world in its current form, but maintaining a distance necessary for interpreting ongoing events, of which I am not a participant anyway, seems *out of place*. I believe that the statement about the lack of a guaranteed place is irreducibly related to the war in Ukraine, but if I were to write about it, I would have to conclude that *inter arma silent Musae*, nothing more—and I would prefer not to. I can’t, I don’t know how to, and I don’t want to claim that I am able to refer to an event that was never supposed to happen again in Europe (a conventional, large-scale armed conflict in which at least one person is killed, let alone thousands of people, tens of thousands). But I can write about the feeling of an impossible event. The measure of this feeling is fear.

I belong to the generation for which the end of the People's Republic of Poland signaled the end of the earliest phase of childhood, while the threshold of adulthood was marked by Poland’s entry into the European Union. The foreign language taught in schools revealed the switch in the vector’s orientation: Russian in my parents' generation, English in mine. The direction was clear: *go West*, towards a collective community. War featured in the stories of my grandparents.

Near Słonice, discarded railway sleepers stacked in mournful piles.

Which won't burn.

Military ID cards and their distribution belonged to the same folklore as four-leaf clovers (which were supposed to protect against the draft), though everyone received student deferments anyway. For many years, the most dangerous weapon I held in my hands was a slingshot made from a stick (much later, a bow). The closest resemblance to quasi-military pseudo-training took place in high school during defense preparation classes, as absurd as their name. Our teacher, an ex-military officer (“Acceptable nickname: Jabzo. Understood?” "Yes, sir!”), stood in front of our gang of scrawny future computer scientists (lanky in that teenage way, but bearing the unmistakable senile posture born of gremlin-like hunching over our keyboards) and explained the purpose of the OP-1 Chemical Protective Suit and how to use it. As he spoke, we were supposed to animate the individual elements sketched in the textbook in our imagination (preferably in three dimensions) until they finally arranged themselves into a full suit on the next page. The school didn’t even have one physical copy. After these lessons, we were as ready to defend ourselves with the OP-1 as we would be ready to defend a goalpost having watched Monty Python's philosophers attempt to play soccer. Forty-five minutes per week, for a school year or maybe two. I don't even remember. The only thing I remember of Jabzo’s wisdom is his repeated attempts to build the illusion of the usefulness of his subject based on the same argument from the author's apocalyptic historiosophy: remember that you’re living during the longest period of peace in Poland’s history—the statistics are stacked against you.

The Lindy Effect was undeniably a less catchy theory then than it is today, but still, we never attempted to consider counterarguments. It's just that Jabzo sounded to our ears as if he'd suddenly spoken in Klingon or had taken lessons in Black Speech from Morgoth (two references us lanky IT guys understood; perhaps the only two): his language was dense with words of war, harsh, intentionally brutal, and impossible to believe.

More than two decades later, the longest period of peace in Polish history continues, but the mental machinery built on the conviction that this is a historical necessity is sending increasingly weaker signals. Fear is the most audible. A friend says that he has backpack where he and his partner keep their passports, money, medication, and dog vaccination certificates—just in case. Another invokes the ritual leitmotif that security guarantees are reliable until they are put to the test (at this point, using the example of Poland's guarantee in 1939 – when the war began, the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany but afterwards did almost nothing – is a real *argumentum ad Hitlerum*). The smartphone's constant stream rhythmically projects the fear that danger in one form or another (war provocations, stray missiles, open conflict) will cross borders and threaten my-your-our place.

For now we all know people who have lost their place. It is no longer possible to pretend that the migration crisis in Europe doesn’t concern Poland. The war migration from Ukraine has increased the population of my country by several percent (depending on the source).

I haven't used paper maps in a long time, so the order of associations is as follows: the cross on the map is the place where the treasure is hidden, an address we want to reach, or one we want return to (like that of one’s hotel in a new city).

When V. points to the village near Kiev from which he and his family escaped (I meet them over 1,100 km later), the crosses on his map mark the places they had to avoid because of the active fighting there. So many crosses. So close to his finger.

I don't want to, I don’t know how to. I can only humbly listen and understand that despite the pointing finger (indicating “right here"), being a refugee is an apophatic of place (being not-here).

**==||== γαια ==||==**

The recent escalation of a war that has been ongoing since 2014 also awakens dormant dread that I cannot fully understand, though I know it very well thanks to its representation in culture—the Cold War Era fear of nuclear war. And again, a stream of smartphone messages cascades like a waterfall from which I can distance myself but whose roar I cannot stop, the voices of the same friends sounding in simultaneous, repetitive variation, overlapping, creating a fugato of everyday life’s bustle (fugato from the Latin *fugere*, to flee). The voices take on many subjects: the situation at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the risk of using tactical nuclear weapons, or—the least probable but most Cold War-esque—open nuclear conflict. The power plant in Zaporizhzhia is the largest in Europe. By including it in the war zone, Russia is not so much playing with fire as playing (pretending to play?) Jenga—until the first mistake.

Mokrz

Traces. Of deforestation.

Bierzwnik

Traces. Of deforestation.

Rębusz

(*nomen omen*)

Traces. Of deforestation.

Stary Klukom

It’s dark.

You can’t see anything.

The gaming analogy is also the reason why, for me, the specter of a nuclear holocaust is in perpetual postponement. My first lesson in the logic of nuclear conflict was the 1983 movie *WarGames*. Maybe not the most credible source, but it’s why I believe that if we are to protect any hope of sense (that is, to operate within the established rules), the nuclear sword can hang over our heads by a madman's hair, but it cannot come down. “A strange game—the only winning move is not to play," states Joshua, an AI simulating a nuclear war. I don't remember how old I was when I saw the film.

I was three years old at the time of the Chernobyl disaster, so questioning the credibility of my memories is not beyond consideration. I remember (at least I think I remember) drinking Lugol's iodine. I remember (at least I think I remember) looking out the window and being disappointed that the radioactive cloud was nowhere to be seen, that it wasn’t sweeping over Poland accompanied by archangels’ trumpets.

Today we know that Miłosz's 1944 “A Song on the End of the World” is not so much a commentary on a war barely ended as it is a prophecy (or in other words: it is prophetic not because it pierces the veil of existence, but because it turned out to be so in retrospect). While the Cold War world expected lightning and thunder and atomic mushroom clouds and radioactive contamination and nuclear winter, the apocalypse was already in motion. Those who expected signs and moved the hands of the Doomsday Clock to seven to midnight, then twelve til, ten til (supposedly we have 100 seconds left today) didn’t believe that the destruction is happening now. No one believes it is happening now, that the catastrophe of the world as we know it, the climate catastrophe, is happening now.

Yesterday's notification: floods in California have already resulted in 17 casualties and over $30 billion in damages and economic impact. A notification from the day before yesterday: the toll of the floods in Pakistan in the second half of 2022 is almost 2,000 victims and $15 billion in damages. A notification from January 1: this is the warmest day in January on record in Poland.

On January 1, I went for a run—in short sleeves and running shorts. It was 16°C. Between 1991-2020, the average temperature in January in Poland was -1.1°C.

The climatic end of the world awaits another Poland, too. Poland is a village in the Republic of Kiribati in the Pacific Ocean. By 2050, Poland and the rest of Kiribati will be flooded by the ocean. It will literally disappear from the face of the earth.

Climate catastrophe means experiencing no guaranteed seat on a planetary scale.

**==||== τοποι κοινοι ==||==**

I have to be careful, because the lack of a guaranteed place can itself become a place, an outline that too quickly succumbs to gestures of convenient completion. Isn't there an all-too-quick agreement among writers that we are inherently homeless? That literature ~~~

~~~ {is} a guide for the homeless regardless of place of residence. {When one poet writes} it is autumn, Lord, and I have no house {another replies to him:} whoever has no house now, will never have one. {Isn't that why we read and write poems} rejecting everything and choosing poetry as a place on earth given to us by God {because we ask the question} is it certain that a true poet occupies a place? Is he not that which, in the eminent sense of the term, *loses its place*, ceases occupation, precisely, and is thus the very opening of space? {Paradox upon paradox, because that is how it reveals} a reality that for the time seems more real, and certainly more worthy to be lived in, than the “real world.”

{My reaction, therefore, is to recognize that} I am pigeonholed, assigned to an (intellectual) site, to a residence in a caste (if not in a class). Against which there is only one internal doctrine: that of *atopia* (of a drifting habitation). {With the attraction of the word "drift" comes the risk of ease, so} therefore I ought to decisively interrupt the drifting or skidding. I would do it if it were possible. ~~~

~~~ is a constant skidding: from the sense, from the self, from the stability of the ego. This is why literature does not allow the drift to be interrupted, because it displaces the literal from the literary. Isn't the lack of a guaranteed place also a result of my formative development? The extensive insertion between the "~" symbols is made of only battered (but not garbled) quotes. In alphabetical order (so as not to impose an *out-of-place* order): Roland Barthes writing about himself in the third person (translated by Tomasz Swoboda into Polish and Richard Howard into English), Jacques Derrida (translated by David Wills), Emmanuel Lévinas (translated by Janusz Margański into Polish and Michael B. Smith into English), J. Hillis Miller, Reiner Maria Rilke (translated by Tomasz Jastrun into Polish and Stephen Mitchell into English), Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki (born, after all, on the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, declaring as the first language the non-existent dialect in the written variant).

Near Kolin, the fence around the cow pasture is made of old tires.

They’re motionless.

I apprenticed with them and many others; from them and many others I took the idea of inherent homelessness—that this is the nature of language and literature, that a considerable dose of ideas can be well accommodated in this sense of uninhabitability. Even if some of these names are no longer fashionable, even if their *place* has been taken by writers who are very often *situated* in opposition to those mentioned above, it will not change the fact that they co-created my intellectual development.

I could say that I don't want to accept their theses too quickly. I could say that I’m not in a position to refuse them. But does that explain it all? Is it enough to disclose the names of those six theorists that might as well have remained secret (as do some others in this text), to reveal six cards from the covered deck, to learn the arrangement of all the others? Maybe. Or perhaps I need to look for answers in yet another language.

**==||== κοσμος ==||==**

Again: why?

Why did I decide to write about this place?

And why like this? Why about its precarity?

What is my location?

After all, at the appropriate level of generality or metaphorization, I could say and write anything. Every bon mot explains just as much everything as it is does nothing.

A topoidentity exercise: read the following phrases from the left column aloud, and then draw lines to connect them (with a pen!) to the adjectives in the right column. Be prepared to justify your choices.

1 Home is where the heart is 1) true

2 In my father's house are many rooms. 2) false

3 Life is elsewhere. 3) sublime

4 No seat guaranteed. 4) banal

5 Home is the place where, when you have to go there, 5) inspired

they have to take you in.

6 Home is the skin of emotion. 6) deceptive

Thick, greasy smoke from the chimney of a house shrinking away from the tracks in embarrassment. Yellow in places.

Like sea slime.

I would have noticed it even if the station was not called Szczecin-Zdunowo.

Now connect the rows of the left column with the rows of the right column by rolling the dice from the game of Parcheesi. Now you know that the choice has been narrowed down to six possibilities just for your convenience, so that one side of the dice corresponds to one of the adjectives. If you don't have dice, you can use a coin. Think you can't choose six adjectives randomly with just one coin? Don't worry, you can. Think you'll be rolling all night? Don't worry, there's a simple answer: ten throws are all you need[[2]](#footnote-3). If you're lucky, five dice rolls or ten coin flips will suffice—yes, yes, five for the dice, because the choice of the youngest in line will be determined by the fate of their predecessors anyway, and although it may not be obvious at first, random decisions can be much simpler than you might think they seem (🡪 about coincidence). Regardless of the chosen method of drawing, connect the results with a pen of a different color. Can you justify your new answers? Of course you can. You’re an inference generator, *animal rationale*, a scholastic animal, a Pavlovian hound salivating at the call of argument.

If this is the case, and you know that it is, that every phrase can be a cliché, can mean everything and nothing, then why do you insist that one is different, why insist on no seat guaranteed? You could write anything. And then something completely opposite. The slogans “my house, my rules” and “in the house, a guest is God” are contradictory (the first proclaims autocracy, the second—unconditional submission), but they can be valid simultaneously. For all your writing to make sense other than as a dialectical exercise, you must finally accept and admit that (any) interpretation (of the world) is a (hidden) (auto)biography.

**==||== πολις ==||==**

I’ve traveled to other cities and countries, and sometimes I counted my stays there in months I didn't think of any of those apartments as home. Paris, Ann Arbor, Thessaloniki, Uppsala are not my cities. My city is Poznań—I have lived there for at least five generations.

In Polish, the words “city” (miasto), “place” (miejsce), and “to fit” (mieścić się) have the same Proto-Slavic root \**město*, place. Etymologists claim that in the 16th century, the then-form of *mieśćce* meant not only a place and not just a homestead or a job; *mieśćce* also included the amniotic membranes and placenta. The city-place is an interpenetrating order of topography, economy (homestead, job), and reproduction (amniotic membranes, placenta). I am emplaced in a place, and my place envelops me like an amniotic membrane.

Poznań. I am of its membranes. I was born here. I have lived here for at least five generations. I live in Poznań, probably already as the grandfather of my maternal grandfather. I definitely live here as his son. And I live further—in subsequent journeys and variations of the four nitrogenous bases of the double helix. "Probably,” “definitely”—the place on the scale of certainty is determined by the places where the documents were burnt, destroyed, or lost. But if the word reality is to make sense, I have lived in Poznań for at least five generations.

**==||== νοστος ==||==**

Nay! There’s more. My address has changed many times, but today I live as my great-grandfather and as his great-grandson in the same building.

The three-story rental tenement looks inconspicuous compared to its surrounding companions, which—although also built in the early 20th century—all boast four floors. Were its inhabitants referred to as the people from the little building? I don't know.

I know that in my family, my great-grandfather was called grandfather-Józek-with-the-tobacco-store. Every happy family has such scripts. The unhappy ones too. Grandma Lusia. The one with the gingerbread? Yes, the one who once brought over some gingerbread. So: grandma-Lusia-with-the-gingerbread (then, when someone tries to find her grave, they’ll discover after a week of searching that Lusia is really Helena). Sometimes these semi-mythical characters are known only by their labels: uncle-Zdzichu-who-almost-went-to-India (“What happened?” "Nothing. He didn't go.”) And so on: Michał-who-went-crazy, Julia-who-ran-off-with-a-Russian-officer, Julia’s-brother-what’s-his-name-Michał ("The one who went crazy?" "No. A different one.”), Michał’s-daughter (But which one’s?), a-brother-in-law’s-lover’s-friend’s-son’s-sister’s-horse-or-elephant. My point is simple: my great-grandfather, whose great-grandson I am, is grandfather-Józek-with-the-tobacco-store, because he had a state lottery office and tobacco shop in the city center. Ah, *petit bourgeois*.

Sing, Mnemosyne, of when my friend P. broke into my neighbors' apartment and actually burst into the house where I live as a great-grandfather with my family. History knows many like P.: he decides to change his life, so there’s no place for him in his former place, his new location the result of dislocation. While I’m travelling away from the apartment for a while, P. moves in to take care of the animals (a win-win situation), and on one of his first evenings goes out, gets a little tipsy (because when we want to change our lives, we reach for our proven methods first), and struggles for a long time with the locks. He’s woken up in a flurry of commotion, hangover not at all soothed by someone shouting that the police is, the policemen are, the police have been, because ... he is in the apartment one floor below where he’d planned to be. This’ll make a good anecdote (though the cats are hungry), the great-grandson will doubt the lock’s security guarantees (clearly, there were no tests involving a determined drunk desperate for some shut-eye), and the great-grandfather will think that it is unlikely that this is the first time someone has forced the door of this particular apartment. Many will have similar stories. It’s enough to really frighten a person, give them a heart attack even.![Text, letter

Description automatically generated]()

Sing, Mnemosyne, because only you know that the winter’s cold and year-round darkness in the apartment somehow bother me less when I'm a great-grandfather. Or rather, when I am a great-grandfather, I feel neither cold nor darkness. After all, that’s why the stove fitter got paid in advance, so that he wouldn't rush in sealing the pipes in at least one room, but would carefully direct the fumes, and if anyone wanted, it was possible to get high, until everything was even more than bearable. In a working-class district, finding a craftsman isn’t difficult. And since he did the job well, an exhausted sunset marked the end of his shift, sluggishly oozing through the crystal feathers of frost on the window. There was no way around it, as he explained: what the stove can add in heat, the glass can take away. It's good that the largest room has one small window. It only became dangerous once, when the gossamer rustle of unextinguished embers began to snake across the pine floor; but he noticed in time, before it got so warm that he would have run out of breath.

Sing, Mnemosyne, that the next time I scrape the car against the wall of the tenement, instead of swearing, I can gaze with my great-grandfather's eye, shrug my shoulders, and consider that the entrance to the back, to the garden and the stable, never seemed too narrow to me. It is true that I rarely drive through it, after all, no one drives to work, which is only a quarter of an hour away by foot. And work? Work’s work. Except that from under buttoned cuffs, tobacco brown crumbs fall everywhere, as if in some staging of the merchant version of *Hänsel und Gretel*. It would be best to keep the shirt outside the house, being so saturated with embarrassed clouds of beryllium smoke. There is a crowd in the lottery store, gentlemen and fishmongers on their way from the market, textile merchants and clothiers, and each one will buy a lottery ticket, plus something from the assortment of goods, gossiping while smoking.

State Lottery Collection

Number 1290

J. Hoffmann

Poznań, 61 Marcin Street

Phone 50-82

SPECIALTY TOBACCO STORE

offers:

CIGARETTES — CIGARS

TOBACCO

WIDE SELECTION OF PIPES

and PLAYING CARDS.

Sing. Sing and dance. Because the better part of our memories exist outside us, in a blatter of rain.

This tenement house is not my childhood home, but it’s ... well, what is it? How can I describe an intergenerational relationship whose only link is place? Should this relationship be abstracted or be abstracted from it? Match the relationship with Mnemosyne to one of the six adjectives from the previous task. Which method will you choose? Introspective or aleatoric?

For writing to have meaning beyond a dialectical exercise, I must finally accept and admit that (each) interpretation (of the world) is a (hidden) (auto)biography.

**==||== στροφή ==||==**

I was about thirty when someone mentioned Józef-who-died-at-Auschwitz. A mental shortcut. The same as saying grandpa-Józek-with-the-tobacco-store. Just like that. Over a bowl of soup. Offhandedly.

I didn’t immediately connect the dots into a contour, the shadow of the same figure.

Józef Hoffmann, my great-grandfather, whose great-grandson I am, was murdered in Auschwitz circa October 27, 1942. This date appears on the preserved death certificate issued by the Gestapo—the death camp death certificate, although there is no mention of the camp anywhere on it. The place of death listed is the city and Kasernestrasse, or Barracks Street – the main road to the camp. *Ordnung muss sein*, so there's even an invented hour of death: 6 p.m. (and 25 minutes). In the same document, what appears before his name is *der Kaufmann*, merchant. Official cause of death: *Myocerdinsufizienz*, myocardial failure.

The death certificate is the only evidence that he was a prisoner in Auschwitz. He’s not on the transport registers. I don't know his identification number.

When I was a child, no one spoke of the Nazis’ crimes at home. You don't need a psychology degree to understand why. But a little imagination allows you to envision a completely different scenario.

I give myself eight hours to review the printout and finally close these fragments (about) the no guaranteed place. Then I travel to Szczecin on the R 78303 (departure 924), and three hours later I return on the R 78303 (departure 1635+5). It's not that the only association I have with trains is cattle cars full of chopped-up people (quite the opposite). But a little imagination says that it could be.

Is it the same bit of imagination with which writing begins? Is it the same bits of imagination that determine what we write about? Maybe in the end the choice of the youngest in line will be determined by the fate of their predecessors anyway, and although it’s not visible at first, random decisions can be much simpler than we might think.

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Index of places:

Auschwitz (50.01141, 22.67852)

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Świecie (53.40909, 18.44480)

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1. I’ve decided not to conceal that the place of this text is immediately doubled.

   The doubling is related to the linguistic framework: I write in Polish; the target language of this text is English. After conversations, consultations (thank you Nataša!), and internal audits, it turned out that it could not be otherwise—my place is Polish, because I live in a Polish city (🡪πολις). *After all, this is about doing justice to the place in language*, and by choosing English, I could only write in someone else’s idiomatic language about my idiom. How much would this decision gesture towards auto-colonization? The horizon of the future translation shapes my thinking about what I want to say now (perhaps beyond the border of my consciousness). In other words, I am trying to emphasize the fact that the phrase "no seat guaranteed” can only work fully in Polish (in this sense, the guarantee of its accuracy is the lack of guarantee of accurate English that could convey it), but this work can only fully be realized by means of what is foreign to it (both the phrases and the Polish language)—through the perspective of another language. And so, translation is always a necessity. And so, the translation is also a necessity.

   This is also why I need to write the following paragraph originally in English, to contaminate the sterility of my discoursemiejsce has no proper place (miejsce in Polish) in English. This is the reason why in this text it becomes a certain certain (doubling intended) proper name for the incertitude of proper miejsce (*idem per idem* intended). miejsce does not share with English any clearly defined space (miejsce in Polish); for instance, it does not have only spatial qualities although they dominate. miejsce is 1) a place, 2) a space, 3) a point, 4) a spot, 5) a locus, 6) room, 7) a venue; but it can also mean 8) a job. miejsce indicated in a text becomes 9) a passage. I leave the 10th meaning open, I leave some space. In fact, a trustworthy PL-US dictionary lists 11) a seat (the initial meaning in the eponymous phrase) not earlier than at the entry’s 11th position (position, miejsce in Polish).

   Here, doubled doubling: the constant negotiation with the absent whole (which is a feature of any writing that takes place within the logic of the fragment) and the irreducible perspective of going beyond one's own language (irreducible and at the same time postponed until and as long as I am writing), makes the text with the phrase "no seat guaranteed” cease to have enough space, it is written as a function of its displacement.

   It can also be expressed in a simpler way: there’s a risk that a text about no guaranteed place will expose itself to a lack of guarantee of a place for itself (i.e. understanding, the reader's possibilities, sense). It’s not a risk that I can brashly say “I'm ready to take” (risk as opportunity). I’m not at all sure that I am. To a greater extent, I can't avoid it (risk as a result of lack of skill) if writing is to mean something to me.

   It is therefore important to me that the titles of the individual fragments are written using the Greek alphabet. It’s not just idle showing off (maybe a little bit?). But should their fate depend on a transcription, I’ll provide them here in the order they appear*: oikos*, *gaia*, *topoi koinoi*, *cosmos*, *polis*, *nostos*, *strophe*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Of course, there is also a difficult answer, since you have to answer the call of argument, why ten flips of a coin? What does luck mean? 10 throws produce 1024 possible outcomes, any result over 719 will make you have to repeat the draw. So your odds of not having to redraw are exactly 70.3125%a. That's what luck means.

   a) And the fact that counting that 70.3125 gives you the kind of happiness that even the best writingb can't give you *makes you keep asking yourself if you're in the right place*.

   b) 70.3125 will be the same tomorrow. It’s unchanging. It's conclusive. Writing immediately forces us to ask who’s jotting down all these permutations, and since we have enough paper to make a list of 720 possible versions in which 6 phrases with 6 adjectives can be combined, wouldn't it be easier to prepare 6 cards to draw? But that's not the point. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)