


Jarosław Fazan  <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4760-9740>  
Jagiellonian University  
jaroslaw.fazan@uj.edu.pl

## The Ruins of the Avant-Garde: The Post-War Manuscripts of Tadeusz Peiper

**Abstract:** In the mid-1950s, at the peak of psychosis, Tadeusz Peiper (the key figure in the history of Polish avantgarde) begins a gigantic manuscript-writing work, which takes the form of an all-encompassing logoreia called “Księga pamiętnikarza” [Book of Memoirist] by the author. In its present form, *Book...* includes dozens of folders of manuscripts and typescripts, in addition to which folders contain excerpts and newspaper clippings. By examining this – still unpublished, available only in the archive – manuscript, author of essay tries to tell the story of a creative subject at the same moment excluded from the social environment (understood as institutions, literary life, social relations) and producing a kind of phantomatic, delusional “environment” (to some extent detached from intersubjective reality).

**Keywords:** manuscript studies, avantgarde, psychosis, Tadeusz Peiper, Polish literature

The archives of avant-garde writers are among the most fascinating resources of contemporary literature. The texts retrieved from them not only complement the works we know, but can also alter our perception of the literature of the twentieth century. In the case of Polish literature, the best illustration of this is the work of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939), whose publication from inedita since the second half of the twentieth century has radically reshaped the conception of Polish modernism.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1920s, Tadeusz Peiper (1891–1969) was both Witkacy’s confederate and rival in the battles for a new art in Poland. Both were advocates of formalism and the autonomy of the artist and both set concrete goals and social tasks for art. Looking back now, one-hundred years since their literary beginnings, it can be said that their works met entirely opposite fates. Witkacy has become an oft-revisited classic. His visual arts are kept constantly in mind in monographic

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<sup>1</sup> I am thinking primarily of the essential, two-volume edition of plays compiled by Konstanty Puzyna (S.I. Witkiewicz, *Dramaty* [Plays] Warszawa 1962), the first editions of the novel *Jedynе wyjście* [The Only Answer] (Warszawa 1968) prepared by Tomasz Jodelka-Burzecki and *622 upadki Bunga* [Bungo’s 622 Downfalls] (Warszawa 1972) produced by Anna Micińska.

exhibitions, while the successive stagings of his dramas continue to contribute to creating the history of the Polish theatre. Peiper, on the other hand, is remembered today almost exclusively by historians of Polish literature and poets attached to the avant-garde traditions of the early twentieth century.

In his latest work, *Radykalne oko* [Radical Eye], whose subtitle, *Fragmenty awangardowego dyskursu* [Fragments of Avant-Garde Discourse], is a clear reference to Roland Barthes,<sup>2</sup> Andrzej Turowski, an art historian who has been writing the history of the Polish avant-garde for almost fifty years, devotes much space to a re-reading of Witkacy, while leaving Peiper essentially overlooked. Turowski, of course, concentrates on the visual arts and treats literature as a background for his reflections, yet the existential-political context of avant-garde transformations, which is a central question in his study, makes Peiper's absence a bitter and substantial one. Especially as his work and fate bear intriguing testimony to the crisis of the avant-garde vision of art, as well as of modern European civilisation. Peiper spent WWII in the USSR before returning to Poland in 1945, which was rebuilding following the end of the war. It needs to be forcibly stated that he continued with his writing as if he had never been a theorist and poet of the avant-garde. Recognising this rupture (and displacement) is a great challenge for a historian of the Polish literary avant-garde. This problem can be studied from multiple perspectives thanks to the quite extensive legacy of the writer's preserved typescripts and manuscripts, which cover the twenty-five years between the end of WWII and Peiper's death in 1969.

Peiper was one of the most important theoreticians and practitioners of the central European literary avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s. As a poet, he founded and set the agenda of the Kraków Avant-Garde, a significant grouping of the literary avant-garde of the interwar period. He established and edited the journal *Zwrotnica* [Switching Point],<sup>3</sup> which set Polish poetry and art on a new track. His works and manifestoes aroused strong negative reactions, and he was chiefly accused of being incomprehensible, "foreign" and detached from Polish realities. These assertions seem to have stemmed primarily from Peiper's ostentatious materialism, his blasphemous anti-traditionalism, his wish for a reversal in the relationship between history and the present and his attempts (many years before Witold Gombrowicz) to liberate the Poles from Poland. Peiper's avant-garde cosmopolitanism, including his journeys through western Europe in the WWI era, was in fact intended as an activating element in the modernisation of Polish patriotism. It can be understood as being attuned to the projects of a

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<sup>2</sup> A. Turowski, *Radykalne oko. O Witkacym, Kobro, Strzemińskim, Themersonach, Żarnowerównie i innych twórcach sztuki wzbudzającej niepokój. Fragmenty awangardowego dyskursu*, t. 1: *Argonauci*, t. 2: *Żołnierze*, Warszawa–Gdańsk 2023 [Radical Eye. On Witkacy, Kobro, Strzemiński, the Themersons, Żarnowerówna and Other Creators of Disquieting Art, vol. 1: Argonauts, vol. 2: Soldiers].

<sup>3</sup> *Zwrotnica* [Switching Point] was published in two series in 1922–1923 and in 1926–1927.

moderate left that wished to build a new Poland as a modern and democratic country capable of effective competition in the international arena. The controversy surrounding Peiper's views and attitudes is vividly illustrated by the epithet he came to be known by, that is, the "pope" of the avant-garde. It came, though, with considerable ambivalence attached. For on the one hand, it expresses genuine appreciation (Polish culture has been closely linked to Catholicism since the Middle Ages and it is one of the cornerstones of Polish national identity), while on the other, it ironically captures the writer's radicalism, which his critics thought shallow, and his megalomania.

In the second half of the 1920s, following the closure of the second series of *Zwrotnica*, Peiper ineluctably lost his position as the leader of the Polish avant-garde and, unable to accept pressure from younger writers and artists, began to cultivate a compensatory myth of an unacknowledged genius and a marginalised force for renewal and modernisation. In the poem *Ze* [That], which concludes the volume *Poematy* [Poems, 1935] he refers to himself as the "mayor of uninhabited dreams", reflecting the paradox of the leader of a movement that had never really come alive, that had been left unrealised. The experience of the gap between the idea and the realisation was to be one of the fundamental factors determining Peiper's position in the history of Polish modernism. To summon T.S. Eliot's famous phrase from *The Hollow Men*, it can be said that a great proportion of the work of the "Pope" of the Polish avant-garde falls in the shadow "between the conception and the creation", which is also an apt metaphor for writing that, from a certain point in time, was intentionally accomplished almost entirely in the form of manuscripts not intended for publication during the author's lifetime.

From the middle of the 1930s, following publication of *Tędy* [This Way, 1930], an extensive collection of manifestoes, and of the definitive edition of *Poematy* (1935), Peiper ceased writing poems, withdrew from the front line of the battle for a new art and fell into a period of isolation and solitude. A worsening mental disorder played no small part. Though publishing less and less, he wrote constantly, more and more often choosing self-referential prose forms. It was precisely these diary-like, self-referential forms (with elements of memoir) that in the future were to constitute the sphere of non-programmatic experimentation, representing a kind of posthumous pathway of avant-garde literary innovation. The projection of psychotic communication, involving the assertion in the manuscripts of constant contact between the sender and the virtual recipients, would be their essential constituent. Peiper's chimerical dialogues, both with his persecutors and with his ever-present friends, are one of the most remarkable aspects of his post-war work. It could be said that this foreshadows Internet communication, in the sense that Peiper's diary entries project a blogosphere as a networked form of interactive literature. Of course, this particular interactivity is illusory, a warped communication between elements of the writer's shattered personality. Peiper treats the manuscript in terms of a text immediately available to the recipient, and although he does not

in any form simulate the responses of his supposed interlocutors, he is actually immediately aware of their responses. *Księga pamiętnikarza* [Book of a Diarist / Memoirist]<sup>4</sup> represents something like a psychotic social-media project.

Shortly before the war, Peiper published the first volume of his autobiographical novel *Ma lat 22* [He Is Twenty-Two-Years Old, 1936], which was intended to be a trilogy. Following the outbreak of WWII, as a Pole of Jewish origin, he eluded the racist repression of Nazi Germany by fleeing to the Soviet Union. He described this in his diary of the first months of that war, *Pierwsze trzy miesiące* [The First Three Months], which was published from manuscripts more than twenty years after the author's death<sup>5</sup> and is one of the most important accounts of the beginning of the German occupation of Poland. Along with Władysław Broniewski, Aleksander Wat and Anatol Stern, he was arrested in Russian-occupied Lviv in the well-known Daszewski provocation, fell victim to Stalinist repression and spent several years in Russian prisons. Next, he was among the founders of the communist Union of Polish Patriots, which was established on Stalin's orders. In 1943–1944 he wrote propaganda articles in the Polish press that were also published in the Soviet Union.

On returning to Poland in 1945, he settled in Warsaw and for a number of years strove to take an active part in cultural life, which was then renascent after WWII. This he did mainly as a critic of theatre and film and as a columnist. It swiftly proved, however, that in both the political and psychological senses, his texts were unprintable in communist Poland. He engaged in harsh and partisan criticism and ruthlessly attacked those whose works he disapproved of. More than this, morbid accents appeared in his texts, such as obsessive suspicion and a belief in deliberate, organised attacks against him. Aware of the shrinking opportunities for publication, he cut himself off from the literary world, lived the life of a hermit and descended into abnegation and psychosis. At the same time, he wrote unceasingly. Initially, these were intentionally short sketches on specific literary and cultural topics, mainly related to theatre and drama. These texts turned into elaborate, convention-breaking and sometimes endless typescripts or manuscripts, some of which have been preserved in the special collections of *Biblioteka Narodowa* [National Library] in Warsaw. Peiper also undertook major projects, including an attempt to write a history of world cinema and a history of theatre in Kraków in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as planning and writing a history of dance in Poland from the Middle Ages to the present day. Some of these pieces, or sections of them, are typical historical essays, and these

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<sup>4</sup> Andrzej Gronczewski published two extracts from *Księgi pamiętnikarza* shortly after Peiper's death. First in *Poezja* [Poetry] 1972, no. 1, and then in *Miesięcznik Literacki* [Literary Monthly] 1978, no. 4.

<sup>5</sup> It was published (Kraków 1991) by the most distinguished of Peiper's editors, Stanisław Jaworski, as one of the volumes in a series entitled *Pisma* [Writings] that began publication at the beginning of the 1970s.

were published fragmentarily in the press. Most of his work, however, lapsed into pseudo-scientific fantasy. These sketches are full of statements and declarations completely detached from facts and reality (for example, according to Peiper, the name Chaplin testifies to the origins of that comic actor in the Polish town of Czaplinek) and they construct a kind of delusional, alternative version of history.

From the mid-1950s, when he almost altogether ceased to publish, he commenced a gigantic manuscript and typescript creation, which took the form of an all-encompassing logorrhoea that the author named *Księga pamiętnikarza* [Book of a Diarist / Memoirist] and sometimes, in the plural, *Księgi pamiętnikarza* [Books of a Diarist / Memoirist]. In its present form, *Księga pamiętnikarza* comprises several dozen folders of manuscripts and typescripts, along with newspaper extracts and cuttings (the bulk of this legacy is held in the Ossolineum National Library Collection in Wrocław). The items in the folders also include cigarette packets covered in small writing, tags taken from various everyday objects (from a sheet, for example) and a crumpled piece of paper containing dried bedbug carcasses. It should be noted though, that even in the strangest passages, the writing is even, regular, and bears clear signs of the calligraphic skill typical of a graduate of a Galician gymnasium from the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is only when the notes fill an unusually narrow space, where sentences are added or overwritten, that Peiper's handwriting can be difficult to read.

Peiper's notes bear traces of his psychosis and sociopathy. They are obsessive commentaries on everyday realities, on various strands of Polish and world history, and on current national and international events. They contain many delusions and conspiracy theories and often focus on minor, insignificant episodes from which Peiper draws conclusions about fundamental political issues. The sale of unpackaged bread he observes in Warsaw shops, for example, is taken by him as evidence of a deliberate campaign to poison Poles. It can be argued that the extraordinary power of creation and creative imagination of the poet degenerated into the spinning of bizarre observations that distort the image of ordinary existence. Above all, however, what these notes reveal is a sense of constant and flawless surveillance, carried out using purported technologies of espionage and unconventional methods, such as trained bedbugs. On the other hand, the writer has the feeling that access to his manuscripts, apart from to his enemies, is also available to sympathetic audiences representing both Polish and world opinion. In these entries, which constitute a sort of battlefield between evil powers and the forces of good, a struggle for the writer's body and mind is in progress.

The phrases Peiper addresses directly to both enemies and friends, which often have a high emotional temperature (invectives, exclamations, augmentatives), are the rhetorical expression of these encounters. Most often, Peiper refers to his enemies as "*dwójkowcy*" [Section II], which is a reference to the colloquial name given to *Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego Wojska Polskiego* [Section Two of the General Staff of the Polish Army], which was responsible for Polish military intelligence in 1918–1945 and with which Peiper may have had brushes as a

left-wing writer subjected to censorship in the 1920s and 1930s. Peiper's obsession with the name "*dwójka*" [two] arouses in him a morbid loathing of the number two, which he attempts to write in a way that does not resemble the ordinary number two. So that the specificity of his discourse is made clear, I shall quote at length from Peiper's notes:

The day in question followed the completion of work on an extensive part of the Book, and was coincidentally 15 December. This was caused by Section II, spying on me remotely, because that is what the obstacles placed before me in my work suggested. It is understood: Section II saw only one thing, only the fifteenth day of the month, they saw only the number 15. Intellectually limited, they immediately thrust their stupid skulls into their political symbolism. They immediately thought to themselves: 15?? That means that he says he will put up a hard battle against us. They began to aim blows at me. Their clouts were clouts of revenge and menace. Among the other things lying on the shelf there were a lot of my already-used notes. I entered them into the Book [...]. I forgot about them. Now I was tearing up these sheets of paper and throwing them in pieces onto the floor. This tearing up [...] causes pencil residue to settle on my fingers. To avoid this, I always try to fold the pages in such a way that the sheets [...] which the writer does not write on [...] are on the outside. This arrangement means that the pencil substance does not come into contact with my fingers. But – Section II do not understand the most straightforward cases, unless by spying they read an explanation in what I write on my pages. Their mental limitations led them to judge that my paper folding is symbolic and announces a fierce and vicious battle with 2. This is the way thoughts are born in their idiotised brains. They amplified their blows, they grew heavier, more painful: they drove a remote nail into my foot. [...] Every few minutes Section II tortured one of my feet with the remote nail. [...] I was unable to bring my work to a conclusion. [...] Tired, I lay down. Immediately the fiends began to torment me here too. But now they drove home the remote nails differently. Unlike at any time before. Both feet at once. And in deep. And in another place. Thus were nails driven into the feet of the crucified Christ. As this phase of tormenting me proceeded, in the courtyard the throat of a girl of probably five years old was screaming: "Tick, tick, on a stick!!!". The cry rang out for several minutes. In this final phase, the remote action and the proximate action connected with it could mean nothing more than this: You will not be the saviour of your people. You will not rescue the Poles. You will not die a martyr's death. You will not be the hero of a great tale. You will die strung up in the most humiliating way: swinging on any old scrap of any old thing.<sup>6</sup>

Section II deliver blows to the eyes, the brain, the feet, the toes, the hands, the fingers, the urethra, the heart and the intestines. They induce drowsiness and fatigue and prevent sleep. They do this by using gases emitted "remotely",

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<sup>6</sup> I am quoting from the manuscripts in the Manuscript Department of the National Library in Warsaw (Access no. 16301, Access no. 16309, Access no. 16310).



with “electro-magnetic” action and through cold and hot thermal currents. He divides his persecutors into two groups: the “cabinet of remote actors” and the “nocturnal intruders”, who haunt Peiper and damage his body with substances applied to selected organs, or using gases, while he sleeps. When he found that they had “produced” (a term he constantly uses) brown spots on the “symbolic” finger of his hand, he wrote:

I shall not engage in explaining what these criminals wanted to express. All the more so because their “cockeyed” use of symbols complicates their expression. They want these complications because they open the way for subterfuge. The Section II criminals are in all their crimes always still deceivers!!

Defining the nature of the protective measures taken by Peiper to save his own body: *Of course: my accurate reasoning can only achieve good results when Section II do not obstruct it.* It is a picture of total surveillance, of constant close supervision by unseen forces. The threat exists that Section II know each step, each thought and each intention of Peiper and, if for a short while he succeeds in evading their superintendence, they soon take cruel revenge on him, for example for his description of their “villainy”. This obsession is largely driven by the decision to look for sources of pain and physical or psycho-physical complaints beyond rational organic causes. It should not be forgotten that Peiper was sixty-nine years old at that point, and many of the ailments whose causes he attributes to the action of the clandestine cabinet result from circulatory disorders and from the degeneration of bone and muscle tissue typical of old age. When searching for the causes of his ill health, the man who was once an extreme rationalist turns into a believer in conspiracy theories. For Peiper, the main suspects are “Jews of the wrong sort” and, much less frequently, Germans. Their actions are driven by hatred resulting from a feeling of foreignness and from their “non-Polishness”.

The case of Peiper’s manuscript work is the story of a subject excluded from the social environment (understood as institutions, literary life, a network of interpersonal relations), who isolates himself within his own world and at the same time continues to write a (non)work: on the one hand detached from reality, on the other unmasking the crisis of western civilisation in the second half of the twentieth century. Viewed from the external perspective of a reader at a distance of several decades, Peiper’s intimate interiority, as established on the pages of his manuscripts, constitutes a realm of illness, of madness undiagnosed by psychiatrists. In his own pathological conviction, he is a heroic defender of Polishness as a mortally endangered value that is constantly and consistently being destroyed by enemies, mainly Germans and Jews. The Warsaw of the 1950s, the capital of a substantial satellite country of soviet Russia, was, according to Peiper, teeming with German and Jewish agents acting to damage the Polish nation. While the writer’s accurate grasp of the aura of surveillance is striking, it is also a terrifying and extreme misunderstanding: it is not German and Jewish, but Polish and

Russian agencies that are spying on Polish citizens. Equally striking in Peiper's case is the extent of his Jewish self-hatred.

The manuscripts, which were not published and not intended for publication during the author's lifetime, became a substitute form of existence, for in them Peiper staged the drama of a close, direct relationship with hostile powers intent on destroying him as a Polish patriot. He also described his contacts with anonymous people, most often encountered in shops and eating houses, in libraries and on the streets of Warsaw, who he suspected of deliberate collaboration with the spy agencies, which (he was convinced) were extremely active in damaging him. His detailed reporting of his persecution forms the essence of his interaction with these forces. The sources of this persecution are invisible. Devoid of tangible form, the attackers act secretly and indirectly, but at the same time ruthlessly and effectively. The description of these encounters constitutes a tedious and at the same time terrifying chronicle of a delusional fiction of aggression and control. To use Foucauldian categories, we may say that we are confronted with a non-work, which cannot be retrieved from the abyss of madness and cannot be given the form of a publishable work. Peiper's notes are inseparable from his daily existence and, over time, their matter comes to fill up more and more of the space in his flat, yet no part of them forms a base for publication in a book or in the press. Remaining in manuscript form, *Księgi pamiętnikarza* set the tone of an alternative existence for a writer alienated from the life of Poland in the interwar years. Following Peiper's death, the manuscripts that make up *Księgi pamiętnikarza* ended up in library stacks as items of museum heritage. Apart from short and selected excerpts, they have never yet reached a wider audience, remaining in the special collections of libraries in Wrocław and Warsaw. What is more, access to most of these notes was blocked by the family's lawyers for fifty years after the writer's death, until 2019. So up until now, scholars accessing the manuscript collection may still be the only people to have read them.

Fragmentary readings of *Księgi pamiętnikarza* reveal the drama in the madness of a mind cut adrift from reality and immersed in delusions. It is a madness that is not the realisation of an avant-garde project, but the dreadful result of the failure of an optimistic vision of the world. In his theoretical (programmatic) and poetic work of the 1920s and early 1930s, Peiper was consistent in, not so much rejecting, as disregarding the psychological motifs close to, for example, the Surrealists, and associated with their apologia for madness as a starting point for attaining otherwise inaccessible forms of cognition and creativity. Peiper opposed these conceptions of art to severe discipline and a strict rationalism ensuring not so much an encounter with the secrets of existence as power over matter. He consistently abjured irrational modes of cognition as sources of creativity or rather he denied that his work (as a concept and in its realisation) was related to them.

Both the Surrealists and, for example, within the Polish avant-garde, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, regarded madness as one of the really necessary prerequisites for cognition and creativity, whereas Peiper saw no benefit in madness, did not



treat it as an important source and saw no value in it. The fundamental reason for this was the integral optimism of Peiper's programme and of the surface, declarative layer of his early poems. Its source seems to have been the conviction that WWI had had a primarily positive impact on the fortunes of the world. While the Surrealists (and Witkacy) concentrated on the destruction of the hitherto existing form of being and the consequences for anthropology and art, Peiper regarded that form as an essential – and salutary! – preparation for a “brave new world”. Yet in the 1920s, this assertion of his was of course without the irony of the Huxleyan title.

Peiper believed, or created the rhetoric of such a belief, that, with the jettisoning of the existing value system, the new man – severely reduced to his material and physiological dimensions as a result of the war – would achieve happiness and fulfilment. It can be said that it is precisely at this juncture that the paths taken by Peiper and Witkacy diverge: a man deprived of metaphysical foundations and desires who joyfully satisfies the need for a comfortable life is, for the former, the fitting character for a human being, while for the latter, it is evidence of a collapse into utter baseness. The fundamental reason for the Peiperian apologia of the working and consuming man stemmed from a simultaneous questioning of Christian anthropology, which opens earthly existence to transcendence, and of the Freudian stratification of the subject.

Provided that the goals of existence (related to the joyful and meaningful transformation of matter, that is, to persistent physical labour) are properly delineated, the author of *Tędy* conceived of humans as living in a single dimension of the earthly present and effectively organising their existence. For Peiper – unlike for Witkacy – meaning was available to, and could be grasped by, humans making the effort to build or remodel the world and trusting in the stability and permanence of being rooted in the material world, so establishing a sense of meaning in the joyful obviousness of the material world's existence. Peiper seems to have believed in the efficacy of erasure, of forgetting, of liquidating everything that can be considered ballast and of shedding worn-out values. More than this, he appeared to think that this effacement would have no side effects and bring no negative consequences. Meanwhile, the destructive effects of modernity, as perceived by Witkacy, led to the disintegration of reality. In this understanding, the world turns out to be meaningless and phenomena accessible to the senses are only seemingly so. The experiences of WWII ruined the material basis of Peiperian optimism, relegating it to the position of an object or even a victim of historical processes, while totalitarianism, which was the consequence of the triumph of radical political movements, challenged the positive version of mass culture and, instead of a society of contented producers consuming the goods they earned, it formed enslaved masses, in which the boundaries between victims and executioners proved fluid. Even though he took part in the formation of the Polish Communist Party, which cooperated with Stalinist Russia in the fight against Hitlerism, he did not become a literary ideologue. His journalism and writings from the war

period foreshadow his silence a few years after 1945, when his intense, even compulsive writing became a creative act almost exclusively confined to manuscripts. It was not published and, in fact, not even intended for publication. Eventually, almost all of Peiper's notes began to be incorporated into the voluminous *Księgi pamiętnikarza*, which he defined as a total work that encompassed – as he himself declared – all of the important issues of the contemporary world. The source of this proud belief in the all-embracing nature of *Księgi* is to be found in its subject matter and in the image of the world Peiper drew from the international press, which was available in the Warsaw reading room of the late 1950s and early 1960s. In his writing, Peiper attempts to give the impression that he was at the centre of the most important events of the contemporary world, even though in reality he was a completely marginalised outsider, detached from all forms of social life. At the same time, there are, alongside extracts from the press and unintentional parodies of encyclopaedia entries, unusually meticulous notes reporting the everyday struggles of the aged and increasingly infirm writer, including problems with sleeping and with buying and eating food. The most awful aspect of these wearisome recordings of humdrum events is the sense of total and constant surveillance, of constant threat from deliberately harmful, hostile forces acting both unseen and through random people encountered on the street and in public premises. Peiper can only speculate as to the ways in which this is happening, but he remains convinced that these forces are acting continuously and effectively.

Writing had become as essential and elementary to him as physiological functions and at the same time completely detached from its proper sphere, that is, the sphere of public communication associated with print and being received by a readership. At the same time, it interpenetrated with his delusions, for both the “evil forces” that were harming him and the sympathetic but entirely theoretical readers he continued to invoke had access to his manuscripts. Peiper's swelling manuscript, which contains detailed descriptions of the suffering caused him by the actions of hostile powers, becomes an alternative reality, a kind of fiction of a parallel world arising from the delusions of a disturbed mind. It is not an emergent work whose purpose is publication (in a book or a journal), but an independent creation in which the messenger engages in an imaginary dialogue with both his audience and his enemies, whose assaults, which threaten the entire nation, are one of the reasons these notes were written.

Translated from Polish to English by Mark Aldridge

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Turowski A., *Radykalne oko. O Witkacym, Kobro, Strzemińskim, Themersonach, Żrnowerównie i innych twórcach sztuki wzbudzającej niepokój. Fragmenty awangardowego dyskursu*, t. 1: *Argonauci*, t. 2: *Żołnierze*, Warszawa–Gdańsk 2023.

Early View