



“CULTURAL RECYCLING” IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN NOW?

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Abstract: The article deals with the history of the notion of “cultural recycling” in the 21st century. This is a continuation of my previous research focused on its early period which started in the 1960s. Although the expression discussed is widely known, there has been no systematic research into its evolving reception over the last half-century. The notion does not belong exclusively to any particular field of humanities; therefore, the proposed survey is inevitably interdisciplinary. Two basic trends will be at the centre of my attention. From the perspective of one, in line with the criticism of postmodern and modern society, cultural recycling was seen as a symptom of a crisis of history from the very beginning, a hallmark of the time thought to be the end of an epoch. Since political and ethical connotations were important for the theories which appropriated the term, it took, at least initially and partly, the meaning of an invective. As regards the discourse of the criticism of the “(post)modern” culture, two points are evident. On the one hand, at a certain moment, a positive attitude towards recycling began to gradually displace the negatively evaluated “eschatological” view. On the other, some scholars finally “deconstructed” it as self-contradictory. Another major trend of both the 20th and 21st century can be characterised as a form of universalism. It embraces the understandings based on the presumption that recycling is immanent, “natural” to culture. Thus, regardless of scholars’ personal intentions, one can qualify it as apologetic. In addition to various interpretations of the term, with respect to the first trend I will comment on its relationships with notions such as collective memory, nostalgia, trauma, new media, and “cultural trash”. With respect to the second, at the centre of my attention will be the issue of epigonism, interdiscursive and cross-cultural forms of recycling, the usage of the term in folklore and myth studies, and in anthropology.

Keywords: “cultural recycling”, collective memory, nostalgia, trauma, new media, “cultural trash”, aesthetic and everyday practices.

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“Cultural Recycling” in the Twenty-First Century: What Does It Mean Now?

The article deals with the history of the notion of “cultural recycling” in the 21st century. This is a continuation of my previous research focused on its early period which started in the 1960s. Although the expression discussed is widely known, there has been no systematic research into its evolving reception over the last half-century. The notion does not belong exclusively to any particular field of humanities; therefore, the proposed survey is inevitably interdisciplinary. Two basic trends will be at the centre of my attention. From the perspective of one, in line with the criticism of postmodern and modern society, cultural recycling was seen as a symptom of a crisis of history from the very beginning, a hallmark of the time thought to be the end of an epoch. Since political and ethical connotations were important for the theories which appropriated the term, it took, at least initially and partly, the meaning of an invective. As regards the discourse of the criticism of the “(post)modern” culture, two points are evident. On the one hand, at a certain moment, a positive attitude towards recycling began to gradually displace the negatively evaluated “eschatological” view. On the other, some scholars finally “deconstructed” it as self-contradictory. Another major trend of both the 20th and 21st century can be characterised as a form of universalism. It embraces the understandings based on the presumption that recycling is immanent, “natural” to culture. Thus, regardless of scholars’ personal intentions, one can qualify it as apologetic. In addition to various interpretations of the term, with respect to the first trend I will comment on its relationships with notions such as collective memory, nostalgia, trauma, new media, and “cultural trash”. With respect to the second, at the centre of my attention will be the issue of epigonism, interdiscursive and cross-cultural forms of recycling, the usage of the term in folklore and myth studies, and in anthropology.

Keywords: “cultural recycling”, collective memory, nostalgia, trauma, new media, “cultural trash”, aesthetical and everyday practices.

My God, don't they know? This stuff is
simulacra of simulacra of simulacra.

[Gibson 2003: 17]¹

This outline of the questions surrounding the concept of “cultural recycling” is a continuation of my earlier work examining the history of the genesis and existence of the term from the period of the ecological boom of the 1960s to the last decade of the twentieth century, when its popularity stabilised [Vyugin 2021]. The efforts of the Canadian researcher Walter Moser, from Quebec, and a group of his colleagues, provided a notable impulse towards the process of interpreting both the phenomenon and the concept. His project, begun at the end of the twentieth century and completed in the twenty-first,² more or less coincided with the turn of the century, as did the appearance of certain other publications which paid more attention to the

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¹ “Recycled” from Marcin Mazurek’s article [Mazurek 2011].

² It began with the project “De la réutilisation au recyclage culturel” (Fonds pour la formation et l’aide à la recherche [FCAR], 1992–1995), but judging by publications, work on the subject continued into the 2000s [Vallée, Klucinskas, Dupuis 2012: 13].

explication of the meaning of the ecological metaphor. However vague the border thus established might be, the interest in theorising this subject, which clearly appeared in the middle of the 1990s, makes it possible to divide the history of the concept in the twentieth century from its history in the twenty-first: into the period of its origins and the period of its further evolution. It makes sense also to take into consideration that at the end of the second decade of the present century, attitudes to the concept of “cultural recycling” underwent a further paradigm shift. Only recently, it was confidently winning over new supporters, but now it is ever more actively being supplemented or even replaced by various modifications. “Upcycling” and “downcycling” are more and more fashionable. In other words, we are currently manifestly experiencing the conclusion of one phase in the history of the concept, which provides a further reason for summing up what has happened to the term so far.

The term has no “canonical” meaning firmly attached to it, so the only way of finding out what it means is to determine and analyse different viewpoints.¹ At the same time, the work does not only aim to expound and compare them: it is an attempt to evaluate what role the term has or has not played in the contemporary understanding of culture.

It has so happened that authors of later research into recycling have frequently reproduced previously discovered “interpretative matrices”, but in most cases as if they were inventing the term anew, that is, without reference to their predecessors’ work. One of the aims of this article is to restore justice, at least in part, by mentioning those names and concepts that have not received the attention they deserve in connexion with the topic of cultural recycling. Therefore, the question put in the heading to the article should not be understood in a normative sense: it does not pretend to establish the correct treatment and discard incorrect treatments, but is only an attempt to systematise the diverse experience that has so far been accumulated.

The term “cultural recycling”, which freely crosses disciplinary boundaries and thereby fulfils a certain mediative mission, is not the exclusive property of any one branch of the humanities. A significant amount of research on it is interdisciplinary in character. For this reason, the present essay also chooses an interdisciplinary orientation (with one important reservation).

¹ In 1993 Moser gave a preliminary definition of cultural recycling as “la réutilisation d’un matériau culturel déjà disponible dans une nouvelle pratique, quelque différents que soient par ailleurs les matériaux et les pratiques en question quant à leur étendue, leur forme et leur domaine” [the reuse of cultural material that is already available in a new practice, no matter how different the materials and practices may be in terms of their scope, their form, and their location] [Moser 1993: 519]. Though it is entirely relevant, this definition needs to be substantiated, which is impossible unless one takes history into consideration.

In the literature of the last two decades, precise definitions of "cultural recycling" are not particularly common, and those that do exist by no means exhaust the content of the term. This is another factor determining the character of the present article: the task with which we are faced is first and foremost hermeneutic, and in this sense not interdisciplinary but rather philological — mistrusting the obvious, to draw out the implicit, those things which are mentioned in passing or not even formulated, but demonstrated by a specific train of thought.

While a large-scale discovery of new interpretative "patterns" of recycling is uncharacteristic of the twenty-first century, the combination and synthesis in various forms of previously enunciated treatments can certainly be regarded as a distinguishing feature of recent times. It is also relevant that since about the 1980s "cultural recycling" has circulated in ever closer interaction with other popular terms related to the idea of repeating or return: nostalgia, trauma, collective or other memory, intertextuality, citation, re-use, re-mix, etc. [Vyugin 2021]. Sometimes "recycling" is almost or partially synonymous with them, sometimes antonymous, sometimes supplementary or corrective. As a result, such collateral terms become part of the discourse of "cultural recycling". But in turn, "cultural recycling" itself also begins to influence its "competitors" in those places where it is remembered. I shall demonstrate how known formulae of recycling are blended, and how the discourses of cultural recycling interact with others.

Only some of the most notable publications of the last two decades are examined below, principally those in which the concept in which we are interested appears in the title or, at the least, is conceptually significant. The accent, moreover, is placed only on a very limited circle of the theses enunciated by the authors. Some very brief recursions into the earlier history of "cultural recycling" have appeared unavoidable, but by and large for an acquaintance with that the reader is referred to the previous article, which examines practically all the works about recycling published in the twentieth century mentioned below.

The existence of a multitude of treatments of the term on various levels, and of spheres of its application, leads one to distinguish the basic types of cultural recycling, relying, for example, on the differences between the spheres or times in which it is observed: "genre-related", "intermedial", "postmodern", and so on. Such extremely abstract definitions, the criteria for the distinguishing of which may vary widely, say little about its meaning when taken out of context, but are convenient as initial classificatory markers. We shall see how and when they reveal themselves, and in what semantic syntheses they participate.

Behind the evident eclecticism of the viewpoints on recycling something can nevertheless be found that they have in common. Most of the authors who use the ecological metaphor are united by their involvement in the conflict that has accompanied the history of the term from the very beginning. This conflict goes beyond quarrels about its meaning as such, and is essentially an ethico-political confrontation which is not always made explicit.

It is tempting to call two attitudes to cultural recycling that formed very early, emerging from the multitude of variants and standing in opposition to each other, metaphorically the “cosmogonic” and “eschatological”. The first understands recycling as something that has been essential to culture from the beginning, the second as something characteristic of a particular stage in its existence, when a culture is undergoing fundamental change, a sort of “catastrophe” or “crisis of history” (as already noted by Moser [Moser 1996: 27–33]). The role of “the last times” is most often played by the post-industrial period, sometimes by the industrial period, that is, post-modernity and modernity.

Frequently, within the framework of this dichotomy, “recycling” is perceived either as a normal (“cosmogonic”) phenomenon, or as something anomalous and undesirable (“eschatological”). In the latter case, even if it is not openly denounced, it remains negative, because it marks a disruption to the order of things. At the same time, as we shall be able to convince ourselves, in the twenty-first century within the framework of the very “eschatological discourse”, clearly manifested already in the works of Jean Baudrillard [Baudrillard 1968; 1970], there is a palpable tendency towards refusing the negative evaluation of recycling and regarding it as natural.

The “cosmogonic — eschatological” opposition provides the axis around which multiple private discourses of “cultural recycling” coexist, and this in no way diminishes the significance of the observed diversity in individual “styles” of thinking about it. At times, the opposition between the two basic evaluations appears within the framework of a single context. We shall begin with a telling example of just this type.

The perspective of the postmodern

Contexts of memory

The 1980s saw an upswing of interest in the problems of memory, which by the millennium had made *memory studies* one of the most popular directions in the humanities. With time, the metaphorical term “cultural recycling” came to be required in this context. The collective work by members of the “Quebec” group *Passions du passé*:

recyclages de la mémoire et usages de l'oubli [Huglo et al. 2000], which came out in the liminal year 2000, fully reflects this tendency. As for their disciplinary framework, the compilers of the collection are closest, in their style, terminology and sources, to philosophy.

Huglo and Méchoulan start from the notion that a passion for the past takes for granted an equally passionate rejection of it: one thing is remembered just as well as everything else is forgotten. Moreover, according to Huglo and Méchoulan, this very passion is no less important than what people are aiming to remember: it is permissible to lose one's memory of almost everything, but nevertheless the very act of remembering can be very effective as a social mechanism [Huglo, Méchoulan 2000: 7, 11].

The word "recycling" first occurs in the authors' considerations as a private element. It is devoid of any theoretical processing, but the essence of what is meant is perfectly comprehensible. In outlining the specifics of their approach, Huglo and Méchoulan appeal primarily to Emmanuel Lévinas. Memory, examined in the manner of Lévinas, means something which exists in a fluid state. This kind of memory is binary: it informs us of something but at the same time its content escapes us and is only accessible in a mediated, reduced and reworked form:

De même qu'il y a le temps de la reprise, de la récupération, le temps qui assied la substance dans son essence, dans sa présence, dans son présent, il se forme une autre temporalisation qui opère, au contraire, dans le décalage qui creuse et dégage l'instant, dans la césure qui ouvre et ouvrage ce que Lévinas appelle le Dire: d'un côté, la mémoire comme recueil des présents, de l'autre, la mémoire encore, mais cette fois comme accueil du non-présent; ici, la mémoire qui ressasse, là, la mémoire qui recycle [Despite the fact that there is a time of repetition, recuperation, a time that establishes substance in its essence, its presence, its present, another type of temporality may be formed that, on the contrary, operates according to a type of rupture that undermines and decouples the instant, according to a caesura that opens, and a type of opening that is of the order that Lévinas terms Speaking: on the one hand, memory as recall of the present; on the other, memory that is still memory, but this time, welcomes what is not present; in the first case, memory that recurs, in the second, memory that recycles] [Huglo, Méchoulan 2000: 13].

It is important that so far Huglo and Méchoulan speak of recycling as part of the mechanism of memory in general, including Henri Bergson and Maurice Halbwachs in the discussion of it as well as Lévinas, that is, those who are primarily interested in universals, be they ontological, personal or social.

The authors do not, however, restrict themselves to the general and eternal dimension of memory and recycling. In the end they are interested in the present state of the collective memory, and moreover their present coincides with the period of the “new media” and globalisation. At this point the word “recycling” reappears in the authors’ discussion:

On constate aujourd’hui que l’espace collectif de la mémoire ne se construit plus sur une durabilité traditionnelle ni sur la rupture avant-gardiste avec le passé chère à une certaine modernité, mais se joue plutôt dans le recyclage culturel: reprises de clichés, reproductions digitales ou autres, parodie, allusions, “murmure” de la mémoire qui nous habite et que nous créons [It is taken for granted, these days, that the collective space of memory is not constructed on the foundation of traditional permanence, or for that matter upon a rupture, in the avant-garde style, with the past, of the kind dear to a certain type of modernity, but is far more inclined to engage in cultural recycling: retreads of clichés, digital or other types of replication, parody, allusion, a kind of ‘susurration’ of the memory that we inhabit and which creates us] [Huglo, Méchoulan 2000: 18].

It is not entirely clear at first sight how the “cultural recycling” of the new media era differs from the “recycling” that preceded it, save in its greater intensity. But for Huglo and Méchoulan the difference that the changed context has introduced into its meaning is definitely present, and it is connected with the topic of late capitalism and postmodernism, which are “apocalyptic”, one might add, *par défaut*.

The meeting of the two “recyclings” (which one might provisionally call the universal “recycling-tradition” and the local “postmodernist recycling”) reflects the by no means always obvious opposition between the two basic tendencies in the approach to the term and the evaluation of the phenomenon: has it always existed or has it only recently come about?

In Huglo and Méchoulan’s treatment, the opposing “postmodernist cultural recycling” and the earlier “recycling-tradition” are not neutral. The first willy-nilly passes into the class of negative, pejorative categories. The authors do not openly condemn recycling as a phenomenon of modern times, but there is no doubt that they find it problematic in the light of the question of the preservation of memory:

Seulement, nous habite-t-elle encore, la mémoire? Son murmure ne tourne-t-il pas à l’inassumable cacophonie? De quel espace collectif parlons-nous, au juste, dans un monde de circulation, de médiations, de vitesse? [Except, does it still live within us, memory? Is its susurration not now turning into an unbearable cacophony? Of what collective space may we justly speak, in this world of circulation, of multi-mediation, of acceleration?] [Huglo, Méchoulan 2000: 18].

The most markedly "eschatological" scenario is played out in a corpus of works where, besides those just mentioned, the *topoi* of nostalgia, trauma and everything retro are foregrounded, often caught up in the problems of the new media.

Between nostalgia and the new media

In this sense Simon Reynolds' book *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past* [Reynolds 2011] is indicative: it was inspired by its author's genuine surprise at the almost complete absence of novelty in his sphere of interest. When he speaks of "retro", Reynolds is not particularly concerned with defining recycling, though he mentions it constantly. He characterises the "retromania" that emerged at the beginning of the millennium as a triumph of nostalgia and recycling, both of which he decidedly evaluates as negative.

There were of course, as Reynolds notes, periods of obsession with the past in the past: the seventies looked back to the fifties, the eighties to the sixties, and the nineties to the seventies: each decade had its retro twin. But in the 2000s, seemingly, everything that had any chance of coming back came back into circulation [Reynolds 2011: 408]. Instead of offering one novelty after another, as had been the case only recently, contemporary popular art, including the music of the first decade of the century, was dominated by the prefix *re-*: "revivals, reissues, remakes, re-enactments. Endless retrospection" [Reynolds 2011: XI]. In the end, "[i]t's like we can't get *past* this past. Neophilia turns into necrophilia" [Reynolds 2011: 411]. The main question asked by Reynolds is formulated like this: "Is nostalgia stopping our culture's ability to surge forward, or are we nostalgic precisely because our culture has stopped moving forward?" [Reynolds 2011: XIV].

If we speak specifically of recycling, then it, according to Reynolds, is one of the means whereby retro-culture becomes possible. On the one hand, Reynolds speaks of the revival and renovation of genres and ideas from the past [Reynolds 2011: XI, XVII], that is, the ideal aspect of recycling, and on the other, of the replacement of the evolution of music by the evolution of music technology [Reynolds 2011: 411].

The connexion between cultural recycling and the postmodern era and new technology is rather resilient. The same dichotomies — nostalgia and new technology, the ideal and the material — lie at the foundations of Eduardo Navas's *Remix Theory* [Navas 2012], which came out a year later. Navas does not have "recycling" in his title, but it appears in the first few lines, and is immediately associated with "remix": "Remix," he writes, "at the beginning of the twenty-first century, informs the development of material reality

dependent on the constant recyclability of material with the implementation of mechanical reproduction. This recycling is active in both content and form” [Navas 2012: 3].

Here “remix” and “recycling” are practically synonymous for the author, though later on he refines the relationship between them and the meaning of *recycling* is restricted.

Navas distinguishes between Remix (with a capital letter) as discourse, which begins at the end of the nineteenth century, and “remix culture” (lower case), typical of the beginning of the twenty-first. At the same time “discourse” (understood in a Foucauldian sense) extends also to the media, that is, it does not only include spoken communication.

Remix as a principle, according to Navas, “sticks” cultural epochs together. “Metaphorically speaking,” he concludes, “postmodernism remixes modernism to keep it alive as a valid epistemological project” [Navas 2012: 4]. Navas’s concept is thus included in the explicatory model of the struggle between postmodernism and modernism and the absorption of the one by the other, with evident reference to Fredric Jameson and (as is not in the least surprising in view of his explication of the cultural meaning of machine production) Walter Benjamin. Though they were not “specialists” in “recycling” as such, Jameson and Benjamin had already in the twentieth century acquired a special weight for those people who use the metaphorical term as having a conceptual significance.

Navas measures the evolution of the cultural period that he studies in stages that aggregate different technologies of cutting, copying and recombining original material (one of the most important being sampling). They often overlap. The first three stages, from the 1830s to the 1980s, take in the period of mechanical reproduction. Navas calls the second of these, which begins in the 1920s, and the third, which covers the 1960s and 70s, stages of recycling, now using the word, as we see, in its narrow sense [Navas 2012: 18–21]. The first stage of actual recycling is technically linked with the spread of photocollage and photomontage, which were both based on the process of “cutting and pasting”. The second is orientated on the appearance of the new media [Navas 2012: 17]. It is again important that this is not only a technical process, but also a cultural one, conditioned by the evolution of the media.

In the 1960s and 70s mechanical reproduction begins to shift into the stage of remix. In the end the era of remix, according to Navas, replaces both modernism and postmodernism, while “Remix” itself is not liable to become an “ism”, that is, evidently, it is not localised. As he remarks, our ears instinctively reject the word “remixism” [Navas 2012: 126]. Conceptually this is not a period and not a form,

since it is ubiquitous, but a "state".¹ Navas's system is quite complex, but in effect a specific term from music technology, "remix", is used by Navas as nothing more than a substitute for the "inter-medial" term "cultural recycling", meaning a repeating and re-working, both in the technical and ideological sense, characteristic of a certain "final era", which in this case extends from modernity to the present day.

It is easy to see that the principle of Remix, as distinct from "remix culture", stakes a claim to totality, but it is not "cosmogonic", if one recalls the proposed metaphor, because it is universal only within particular historical frameworks.

As for the ethical evaluation of this stage of the culture of recycling / remix, it is certainly important to the author. Although Navas appears not to take it upon himself to demonstrate it, leaving this to the reader [Navas 2019: 9], from a rhetorical point of view this is no more than preterition, that is, in this case, an implied negative evaluation. In its rhetorical-axiological aspect the indecisiveness of his position is consonant with that of Huglo and Méchoulan.

It is interesting that the authors of both books seem not to have noticed a work that appeared ten years earlier, also conceptualising nostalgia, the new media and to a substantial extent cultural recycling, although its author made a very indicative attempt at a shift in the interpretation of the interconnexions between these phenomena and, at the same time, these categories.

In 2000, the year when Huglo and Méchoulan's *Passions du passé* came out, Paul Grainge defended his thesis on *Monochrome Memories: Nostalgia and Style in 1990s America*, published soon afterwards [Grainge 2000a; 2002]. Recycling is not the main category for Grainge, but it plays a substantial role in his concept. Grainge opens his book with a polemic against the understanding of nostalgia as a "mode" proposed by Jameson [Jameson 1984]. From the point of view of his authoritative critique of the postmodern, the nostalgia characteristic of the postmodern, being nothing more than a stylised nostalgia [Grainge 2002: 21], lacks any real relationship with the past or to actual memory: it replaces the past with "pastness". For Grainge, on the contrary, the link between the nostalgic present and the past is beyond doubt substantive in any circumstances. He decisively rejects the idea of a "crisis of memory", and at the same

¹ Navas's book seems to invite a parallel with the "metamodernism" of Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker [Vermeulen, van den Akker 2010]. There is no possibility of examining the specifics of this in depth at the moment; suffice it to say that there is a whole section in Navas's book entitled "Remix is meta" [Navas 2012: 133]. (He does not mention the inventors of "metamodernism".) When considering the combination of the concepts of retro, trauma and nostalgia, and recycling, it may be worth saying a word or two about Zygmunt Bauman's recent book *Retrotopia*. They are all used by Bauman, but the word "recycling" is devoid of any theoretical framework [Bauman 2017].

time is unwilling to reduce nostalgia as mode to nostalgia as mood or vice versa.

Grainge saw a significant manifestation of nostalgia in the black and white images (from advertisements to cinema posters) which emerged into the visual sphere somewhat unexpectedly in the last decades of the twentieth century, thereby indicating an “intertextual” connexion with the past and embodying a particular cultural memory. It is this sort of borrowing from the past that the author associates with “recycling”. In particular, Grainge writes that Jameson “gives little sense that meaningful narratives of history or cultural memory can be produced *through* the recycling and/or hybridization of past styles” [Grainge 2002: 6].

Grainge’s book contains a little chapter entitled “Recycling” [Grainge 2002: 47–53], mostly interesting because it contains neither a definition of the concept, nor any references to anyone else’s explanations of this matter as well.

For Grainge recycling, like the nostalgic style, is a manifestation that belongs not only, even not mostly, to the sphere of ideas and emotions. Grainge attaches the nostalgic period of recent American history to Reagan’s policies of “traditional values” of the middle of the 1980s: in particular, the twenty-four-hour cable station with the eloquent name of “The Nostalgia Network”, which became a symbol of the period, began to broadcast in the USA in 1985. However, Grainge acknowledges that the political impulse, and the “content” of nostalgia itself are secondary with regard to other factors that affected the project’s durability. He regards commercial circumstances as more important, even though they are not the main reason for the success of retro, too. In Grainge’s opinion, the main role here was played by the new technologies, which allowed old culture to be transferred easily to new bearers of information such as CDs, video and cable television.

In Grainge’s understanding of recycling as such there is also a subtlety that is not made explicit through definitions, but is recognised through usage. On the one hand he speaks of “cultural recycling”, that is recycling in the most general and, therefore, ideal sense [Grainge 2002: 43, 49], and on the other, when he uses the word, he often has in mind “media recycling”, i.e. recycling culture by means of new technology. (The concept of “Media Recycling” was even introduced into the title of the earlier version of his research [Grainge 2000b].) Thus cultural recycling is not, for Grainge, nostalgia, but a means of nostalgia, while “cultural recycling” in itself is, in present conditions, realised through “media recycling”.

It is hard to distinguish whether cultural recycling is for Grainge simply a repetition (for example, a quotation), or whether it pre-

supposes a possible reworking. The second is most likely the case. But in any case it is for him definitely the use of values that now belong to the past in a new historical-cultural context.

That Jameson's name should crop up in connexion with the theory of "recycling" is important, as is the polemic with him. Jameson himself did not often use the term, at least in his "classic" works on postmodernism, but, as we see, his critique of the corresponding period of history is perceived precisely in connexion with it. The same goes for Benjamin, speaking of the connexion between recycling and the period of modernity.

According to Jameson the nostalgia style, and, consequently, also the recycling that it presupposes, are negative, and also ethically negative, in the sense that they substitute simulacra for reality. Real history, or the history of the real, is thus brought to a close. Grainge's position (which was unusual for the beginning of this century) is an example of how "postmodernist recycling", connected with nostalgia and with a specific period of history, serves, by contrast, as a means of bridging the gap of memory and periods. One way or another, Grainge thinks in terms of the categories that we defined at the very beginning using the metaphors of cosmogony and eschatology: he examines the forms of recycling that are characteristic of the current moment, that is, speaking in those terms, of "the last day".

The three works examined above allow a few more terminological roots to be identified, signifying different forms of recycling: "nostalgic" (with the variants "pseudo-nostalgic" and "genuinely nostalgic"), and, as distinct from the recycling of ideas, "(inter) medial" and "technological".

Nostalgia vs. trauma

Obviously, whether we like it or not, at a certain point nostalgia and recycling became interdependent categories. Vera Dika, whose book *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The Uses of Nostalgia* came out two or three years after Grainge's dissertation [Dika 2003], turns this dichotomy into a triad, adding another popular concept to it.

As she brings together the two concepts named in the title of her book, Dika also refers to Jameson as one of the first critics who saw in the public's fondness for wallowing in the past a tendency that had a substantial effect both on high art and on popular culture since the 1970s. Dika sees the starting point for her own research in a question asked by Jameson: is there any form of resistance, are there any negative, critical elements in postmodernism as there are in the art of modernism? Jameson himself was sceptical in his expressions about this. But in her search Dika follows another active

participant in the polemic about postmodernism, Hal Foster, who recognised an element of resistance in this phenomenon, i.e. a critique of the existing order of things, and who, incidentally, unlike Jameson, made active use of the terminology of recycling [Foster 1985: 152].

Dika, evidently following Jameson, does not recognise any critical potential in nostalgia as such. However, following Foster's logic, she tries to discover some other subversive principle in the American "nostalgic" cinema of the 1970s–1990s. Moreover (and this is important), not only in the "avant-garde", like Forster, but in that aimed at a mass audience: if high art and the (neo-)avant-garde were never in principle separated from "critical art", she asks, is the "commercial" cinema really so hopelessly nostalgic or is it capable of embodying some other strategies? [Dika 2003: 3]

This is, understandably, a rhetorical question as far as the author is concerned. Dika comes to the conclusion that even popular cinema, when it is directed towards the past, is a traumatic, i.e. critical reaction to the present. For Dika, trauma is what is opposed to nostalgia in nostalgic cinema. As a result we are again confronted with an interpretative model — the "traumatic" — that is meaningful not only for making sense of nostalgia, but also for "the hermeneutics of recycling".

Of itself the concept of "recycling", even though it appears in the title, does not receive any extensive reflection from Dika, but her attitude towards it is clear in several respects. Firstly, according to her observations, recycling in the nostalgic cinema of the 1970s comes down to the re-use of former conventions, though this may be "fragmentary" [Dika 2003: 11]: this is what the production of the various genres is based on. It may be said that this is "genre recycling" and corresponds to the paradigm of its "cosmogonic" variants which have been inherent in culture from the beginning.

Secondly, without reflecting on the subject, Dika discovers a form of recycling in nostalgic cinema that may easily be accommodated in the three-phase scheme of "historical recycling", as one might call it, that appeared in the 1970s [Vyugin 2021: 20–21] and which presupposes a certain interval of time between the two stages of the circulation of the cultural product: topical — forgotten — topical again. We shall return to this more than once. In the case of the American cinema this interval is the 1960s, an exceedingly turbulent period for the USA, or more precisely the period from 1963 to 1973. Dika writes that it "skips a generation" in the 1960s [Dika 2003: 56], after which that recent, but already extinct period again becomes attractive.

It must be said that the concept of trauma, which became particularly popular in the 1990s, does itself recall the three-phase model of cultural

recycling of the 1970s. Cathy Caruth's work is considered pioneering in this area, and in its "historical" view of trauma goes back to the ideas of Freud, who identified a period of forgetfulness, after which the trauma, effectively, makes itself felt, that is, "return" [Caruth 1996: 15]. The essential difference between the two positions is that early models of recycling do without the psychoanalytic, indeed without any psychological (in the strict sense) underpinning at all. Dika brings together purely "historical recycling" and "traumatic" or "therapeutic recycling", which refers back to the psychoanalytic tradition.

Thanks to its "therapeutic" character, Dika's approach represents a rejection (resembling Grainge's efforts) of the perception of nostalgia and recycling within the framework of the concept of a "crisis of history", a discontinuity of periods, and consequently of negative, "eschatological" evaluations of these phenomena.

A remedy for decline?

An attempt at the "moral" rehabilitation of recycling can be traced in the collection *Recycling Culture(s)* edited by Sara Martin [Martin 2008]. Martin sees the basic problem (which the efforts of the contributors to the book are directed towards solving) as discerning how culture "survives today by means of constant recycling, in an optimistic attempt to overcome its own decadence in the 21st century" [Martin 2008: XI]. The authors did not set themselves the task of unambiguously defining what recycling is, but the articles in the book touch on many areas where the word has long been established: trash culture, invented identities, "upgrading" the body, hybridity, collage, pastiche and new media.

In this context it is worth mentioning two books edited by Wojciech Kalaga, Marzena Kubisz and Jacek Mydla: *Repetition and Recycling in Literary and Cultural Dialogue* [Kalaga et al. 2008] and *A Culture of Recycling / Recycling Culture?* [Kalaga et al. 2011]. The approach proposed by the initiators of the project clearly contains a characteristic duality which indicates, on the one hand, a weariness with the established stereotype that presupposes a negative evaluation of iterations in the situation of the postmodern, and, on the other, the impossibility of rejecting it.

In the 2008 book, beginning with the thesis of postmodernism as a reliable symptom of the exhaustion of culture, but seemingly not entirely trusting it, the compilers ask what is, in this sense, the cardinal question: "can repetition be creative?" [Kalaga et al. 2008: 7]. In other words, Kalaga, Kubisz and Mydla likewise do not see this category outside the context of the "good or bad" modality, as they try to find something positive in it, and, therefore, also in (decadent) postmodernism.

The distinction between the volume's key words "repetition" and "recycling" is, perhaps, only made explicit in one of the articles, tellingly entitled "Therapeutic Recycling / Uncanny Repetition" [Masłoń 2008]. The author, Sławomir Masłoń, speaks of "recycling" in the usual tone as an attribute of postmodernism, understanding by this the reproduction of masks without the possibility of any original in principle. According to this logic, any of a series of interchangeable identities, including those that were formerly censored, is permissible and has a cathartic and therapeutic, affirming effect. The author thinks of repetition in Kierkegaard's and Freud's terms as a destruction of the identity from within, when the familiar becomes unfamiliar and uncanny, *unheimlich*, as a result of the ideal (sc. original, genuine) breaking through into reality. Thus, for example, according to Masłoń, faith transforms Abraham. This is a somewhat different understanding of the therapeutic effect from Dika's, but in any case Masłoń's treatment returns us once again to the "eschatological" edition of the discourse on recycling.

The second book concentrates to an even greater degree on the confrontation between the unique and the banal. Furthermore, it contains a whole section with the title "The Theory of Recycling", which, it is true, appears to be deliberately intended to demonstrate the absolute impossibility of any such thing, if we mean an interconnected and more or less integral theory. Each attempt to define recycling is a separate treatment, even if it is correlated with already established invariables. It is, however, desirable to single out one particular article in the book, insofar as it is a reflection on the book's title — *A Culture of Recycling / Recycling Culture?* — and at the same time on the propriety of combining the terms "recycling and culture" at all.

Its author, Marek Kulisz, regards the word "recycling" as long established and comprehensible [Kulisz 2011]. It is, he thinks, the secondary use and recovery of rubbish. "Culture" is another matter altogether, being one of the hardest concepts to define. If it is treated broadly as the opposite of nature, the expression "culture of recycling" is logical and acceptable as identifying an artificial parallel to the natural process of the breaking down of the waste products of human activity — something that nature cannot manage by itself. In this case the expression "recycling of culture" is also acceptable, but only as a metaphor.

But, according to Kulisz, while the word "recycling" is not without meaning in respect of culture in its broad sense, applied to culture in its narrow sense — music, literature, painting, sculpture, theatre and cinema, that is, when the word is used as a synonym for "art" — recycling is an irrelevant concept. In this connexion Kulisz recalls T. S. Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", written in

1919. In his opinion Eliot was one of the first to realise that there is no progress in art, and that it, being the collected works of the great masters, which simply cannot be thrown away, by definition does not produce rubbish. Therefore by definition it cannot be re-used.

In practice, Kulisz's position is that of normativism: that which is acknowledged as great is art, that which is not ("rubbish") is not art. As a result the conversation returns yet again to the ethics and criticism of postmodernism: Kulisz opposes his position, and Eliot's, to postmodernist practices.

Eliot is perhaps not as often remembered in discussions about modernist and postmodernist recycling as Jameson and Benjamin, but he is certainly one of those who formed the corresponding ideology long before the term was established. This can be explained: he clearly articulated the contradiction inherent in the concept of "tradition" for the twentieth century.

The conflict between "the original" and "rubbish" is a particular concern in the discourses around recycling, and it remains for us only to trace, through some examples, how it is interpreted.

Rubbish

Among the *topoi* that are important for unfolding the topic of recycling, both in the previous and the present century, the idea and metaphor of rubbish, which is also to a large extent connected with the problems of the modern and the postmodern, plays a special part. The interest taken in it comprises a quite independent area which, like memory studies, borders upon and partially intersects with research into the culture of recycling, but does not entirely coincide with their subject. There is in turn within the framework of what we might term "cultural recycling studies" a whole tendency that studies cultural objects that have been "thrown away". In 2002, a little over two decades since Michael Thompson had published his "value" theory of rubbish [Thompson 1979], Brian Neville and Johanne Villeneuve combined "waste" and "recycling" in the title of a large collection of articles, *Waste-Site Stories: The Recycling of Memory* [Neville, Villeneuve 2002]. While we start from the previously mentioned scheme of cultural recycling, which includes three phases (initial value, loss of value, secondary discovery of value), Neville and Villeneuve mostly concentrate on only one of them — the phase of loss. This brings them to a significant turning-point: as they remark, as soon as any attention is paid to "cultural waste products" they immediately regain their value. In the introduction, eloquently headed "In Lieu of Waste", Neville and Villeneuve are essentially occupied in transferring "rubbish" and "decadence" into the set of categories with positive significance.

Moreover, as they throw together the concepts of “rubbish”, “memory” and “recycling”, they come to the conclusion that reflection on memory and forgetting inevitably leads to an understanding of recycling as a paradigm of contemporary cultural production [Neville, Villeneuve 2002: 6]. Of course, the authors’ approach also relates to the problems of the latest times. They agree that rubbish is a phenomenon of the present day, but at the same time, like Grainge and Dika (if we have in mind the authors discussed here), they remove “recycling” from the paradigm of positive and negative evaluation. Besides Benjamin, they are assisted in this by an appeal to Friedrich Nietzsche, who rehabilitated “rubbish” and “decline” and questioned the idea of the discreteness of history, that is, its “end” [Neville, Villeneuve 2002: 2–3].

There is a curious attempt to tie together memory, values and waste products, not altogether a typical one, in the collection *Kulturschutt: über das Recycling von Theorien und Kulturen*, edited by Christoph Jacke, Eva Kimminich and Siegfried J. Schmidt [Jacke et al. 2006]. Not all the authors, but the compilers at least are first and foremost interested in the role of “cultural rubbish” in the formation of personal and collective identities, while they propose their basic theoretical construct using Schmidt’s model of socio-cultural interaction.

Schmidt’s model, very broadly speaking, proposes the coexistence within culture of two institutionally fixed (upbringing, education, deliberate policies of fixing memory, and so on) strategies. One of these, which ensures its resilience, is fixed by means of the concept of *Wiederbenutzung*, re-use. The other, which assumes its renewal, is the concept of recycling, which means restructuring and recontextualising (*Umstrukturierungen und Rekontextualisierungen*) of knowledge as it is passed on [Jacke et al. 2006: 10–11].

The concept of Schmidt and of the authors of the book’s introduction is not limited to this simple scheme, but since the term in which I am interested receives an atypical interpretation, I shall allow myself to consider only a few things. Within the framework of the overall subject it is important as yet more evidence of the same general tendency. Whereas at the beginning, in the 1960s, with the rise of the ecological movement, the discourse of recycling was surrounded by positive connotations, very soon, largely in the context of the critique of the postmodern, the other, negative line became dominant. At the same time the ever increasing attention paid to the forgotten and discarded, what is characterised as “cultural rubbish” willy-nilly turned into a second re-evaluation of this material, its sublimation, which began again to strengthen the position of recycling amongst those cultural practices that have a positive evaluation.

Originality versus repeat: is the term necessary?

One effect produced by the collision or combination of the two perspectives, the "eschatological" and the "cosmogonic", the "(post)modernist" and the "universalist" is the fundamental doubt: is recycling not in fact a superfluous term? This sort of scepticism is often expressed citing the antinomy between the original and the secondary. Significant in this connexion is the 2003 collection *Recyclages culturels / Recycling Culture* edited by Hafid Gafaïti, Anne Mairesse and Michèle Praëger [Gafaïtiet al. 2003].

Recalling the well-known maxim "Rien ne se crée, rien ne se perd, tout se transforme," [Nothing is created, nothing is lost, everything is transformed], usually attributed to Antoine Lavoisier, Gafaïti, Mairesse and Praëger assert that the idea of cultural recycling is by no means new, but rather is as old as the world, and from this perspective they directly identify the laws of culture with those of physics. Recalling Rimbaud, Lacan, Foucault, Bachtin, Lévi-Strauss and a whole series of other thinkers who used the thesis of the power of the Other over creative individuality (to which series they could also have added Lévinas, with reference to whom the *Passions du passé* mentioned at the beginning of our discussion began), the authors of the introduction insist that the recently discovered "recycling" is nothing more than the confirmation of a very ancient principle [Gafaïtiet al. 2003: 9–11]. Gafaïti, Mairesse and Praëger oppose recycling to authorship, which, judging by their qualification of it, was only thought up by the romantics, and they de-legitimise (authorial) originality, regarding the romantic concepts of creativity and uniqueness as relative. Thus the compilers enunciate a position opposite to that which attaches recycling to a specific period of history — postmodernism and post-industrialism — although the works included in the volume reflect an extremely variegated spectrum of opinions on the subject.

In the introduction to the May 2007 issue of *Other Voices*, under the subtitle "Cultural Recycling" [Kendall, Koster 2007b], the compilers Tina Kendall and Kristen Koster [Kendall, Koster 2007a] set themselves the task of more precisely indicating the circle of phenomena that might be recognised as "cultural recycling", that is, to limit its volume.

In sketching the context of the circulation of the idea itself in the twentieth century, they mention Jameson and Benjamin, as expected, and alongside them Jacques Derrida (referring to the philosopher's diary for 1988, where he speaks of the deconstruction of history as a critical return to that which had been rejected and suppressed [Derrida 1989: 811–812]), and Ernst Bloch, who, in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (1938–1947), saw the foundation of Utopia in nostalgia (*Heimweh*) for the past. Their reasoning combines thoughts of the

negative effect of recycling in the context of capitalism and the positive effect that assumes a release from this condition. In the end Kendall and Koster define “cultural recycling” as “a material and aesthetic practice and a conceptual trope, as a means of thinking through the changing materiality of our present culture of consumption [Kendall, Koster 2007a].

The “commentaries” collected in *Other Voices* diverge seriously in their evaluation of the concept. Marilyn Randall, who calls her article “Recycling Recycling...” [Randall 2007], stresses from the very beginning that the re-use of cultural material is as old as the Roman practice of “translating” Greek culture, and asks whether “imitation”, “plagiarism”, “intertextuality” and “appropriation” are not simply euphemisms for a practice that has been known for ages. It is important, she remarks, that such a practice has always been connected with the question of bad and good art. And this, in her opinion, concerns the recipient more than the author, inasmuch as it is the recipient who establishes the legitimacy of the repetition. Recalling that for a very long time in classical and neoclassical art “translation” and “imitation” were the only means of legitimising art, that only the nineteenth century condemned explicit re-use, Randall tries to find a basis for thinking that post-modernist recycling corresponds very closely to the practice of cultural reproduction that has long been known. The fundamental unacceptability of the metaphor of recycling as applied to culture that leads to Randall’s conclusion consists in the supposition that it indicates some new phenomenon.

The critique of the concept of “recycling” (and therefore of forms of recycling — “translation”, “imitation”, etc.) can reach the point where not only it, but also the concept of primacy may turn out to be incorrect. In this sense the early considerations of Hans Gumbrecht, whose article “Being Authentic: the Ambition to Recycle” was printed in the collection edited by Neville and Villeneuve [Neville, Villeneuve 2002], are noteworthy.

What we call authentic, Gumbrecht notes, manifests itself as something “primordial” and “elemental”. However, the most suitable, if not the only means of imagining something as “primordial” and “elemental” is to recognise it as the result of cultural recycling. As a result recycling is the very means of producing authenticity. It turns out that this is nothing other than “false recycling” [Gumbrecht 2002: 121–122]. In other words Gumbrecht essentially does away with the dichotomy between authenticity and repetition (recycling) together with its elements themselves and the attributes ascribed to culture.

* * *

This point of the final deconstruction of the concept, which, however, does not disavow it (it is rather the idea of primacy than the idea of repetition and reworking that is called into question), makes us pause and draw certain conclusions.

Masłoń (though one can find similar observations in works by other authors) at the beginning of the article that we have cited [Masłoń 2008] traces the following intrigue very clearly. He draws attention to the special place of the era of romanticism in the development of the concept of recycling, stressing the fact that until a particular moment in history the problem of repetition / recycling simply did not exist, until romanticism with its worship of originality brought it to the foreground. According to Masłoń this was the first phase of a process that took quite a long time. The second phase was the era of modernity and was most clearly expressed by Eliot in *The Wasteland* and in "Tradition and the Individual Talent": he acknowledges that it is impossible to achieve originality / the absolute, and this is a tragedy for him. Thus he performs half the "postmodernist gesture". The second half is performed by postmodernism itself, which instead of perceiving it as tragedy is satisfied with it.

One might dispute the details of the proposed treatment, but one way or another it impels us towards a very simple thought. Recycling is not the *invention* of a particular period (romantic, modernist or postmodernist). "Cultural recycling", no matter what meanings the expression may contain, is a *discovery*, and that is how it should principally be understood.

We should by no means be embarrassed by the fact that the concept of recycling has an aesthetic branch in its pedigree and that in the twenty-first century art historians and historians of culture in general have paid far more attention to it than anthropologists, if we understand anthropology as a discipline founded upon the primacy of experience and the principle of participant observation and so forth. The recognised terms, and the theories of the modern and the postmodern, like many other general approaches towards explaining the life of the socium, are also substantially connected with the field of art, which does not stop them from influencing practically all fields of the humanities. It is moreover clear that the content of the term is not exhausted by this, but is also determined by another semantics, connected with the régimes of mankind's material existence, the primary material and symbolic practices of secondary use and reworking — with ecology and production. But the most important thing is that the problem of the term "recycling", which concentrates attention on the correlation of the repeat and the original, tradition and innovation, has an epistemological and logical character which is hardly capable of resolution by any individual discipline.

Contemporary concepts of cultural recycling, the roots of which, by all accounts, go back to the manifestos of the first romantics, have completed the discovery of the phenomenon of recycling and turned it into a serious problem for contemporary culture. Although the term itself appeared in the 1960s, this only happened in the twenty-first century, thanks to a recognition that the term “cultural recycling” was in principle synonymous with many terms that were known already, such as repeat, repositioning, assimilation, reworking / reinterpreting, etc. Although the metaphorical associations and terminology of recycling very often play an ancillary role within other perspectives, they do in themselves constitute a special explicatory model and at the same time an active principle of the construction of culture. In this sense the corpus of concepts of cultural recycling that have by now come into being, or, to put it another way, the “collective concept” of cultural recycling, which in particular includes all the aforementioned forms of it, despite being fragmentary, on various planes and scattered among different disciplines, has an independent significance.

Recycling as a universal

The discovery of cultural recycling, made as early as the 1960s by critics of the era of modernity and machine production, postmodernity and late capitalism, imbued it with negative connotations. The term, which described the production of copies or likenesses, which seemed to be supplanting the production of originals and which was perceived as an inalienable attribute of that time, acquired them, one might say, on the metonymic principle. At the same time, as we have seen, on the one hand, the process of the ethical rehabilitation of “cultural recycling” (and of what one might call “the culture of repetition and reworking” in general) began very soon, or even almost immediately. On the other hand, the very attention paid to the internal logic of the concept revealed the mutual conditioning of the original and the secondary. It turned out (although in fact this is a basic dialectical dichotomy) that without recycling it is impossible to speak of authentic value, without the simulacrum the original is unimaginable [Gumbrecht 2002; Gafaitiet al. 2003; Randall 2007].

At the same time a significant number of researchers into and practitioners of cultural recycling (in parallel with the followers of the ecological movement for recycling in the literal sense of the word) did not from the beginning (and still do not) see any problem either in its attachment to a particular period or in its universal character. Now I shall concentrate on such forms of positive or neutral recycling as a category of description.

Recycling as a technique

It is obvious that recycling becomes "eschatological" as a result of a particular intellectual reception: negative social or aesthetic criticism, behind which a utopia of the golden age may be glimpsed, that is, a retrotopia in the general sense. The position of the "recycler" him- or herself, whether a professional artist or an "amateur" such as Tressa Prisbrey, who built a village out of bottles in the 1960s, is by contrast in most cases either altogether devoid of that kind of connotation, or else far more complicated and contradictory. Unlike the theorists, the practitioners who specialise in the re-use of objects and materials that have been thrown away are interested in completely different problems. But the interpreters are also perfectly capable of detaching themselves from nostalgia or trauma. This often happens under the influence of the practitioners.

The volume *Esthétique et recyclages culturels: explorations de la culture contemporaine* [Klucinskas, Moser 2004], prepared by researchers from Quebec, is primarily devoted to the situation in contemporary art, and it is tellingly dominated by a positive axiology of recycling.¹ The compilers, Jean Klucinskas and Walter Moser, begin their introduction not with definitions but with illustrations. They recall the exhibits at the Berlin biennale dedicated to Mexican art, in particular Eduardo Abaroa's "Portable Broken Obelisk for Outdoor Markets" [Abaroa 1991]. Abaroa's sculpture is indeed a broken obelisk, which repeats in different materials Barnett Newman's "Broken Obelisk" [Newman 1969], which in turn references the obelisks that were brought from Egypt to Europe. This series of interlinked actions expresses what the book calls "aesthetic recycling" (*recyclage esthétique*), which includes repetition (*reprise*), transformation [Klucinskas, Moser 2004: 2] and even the simple removal of objects from one point in space to another.

Among the forms of aesthetic recycling Klucinskas and Moser name revival, remake, sampling, copy-art, *pastiche*, *parodie*, *plagiat*, *réécriture*, *recréation* and *reconversion* [Klucinskas, Moser 2004: 13]. All these techniques have more than once been the object of criticism as part of the culture of the postmodern, but in this case they are examined to a greater extent as a perfectly legitimate technique than as an indicator of decline and crisis. The technique is literally technical, but there is no opposition between technology and creativity, as there is in the "eschatological", "postmodernist" view of it.

Still, even the oldest means of repetition / reworking, that depend least on the change from old to new technologies, are quite capable

¹ Over the period of their work on the project, from 1992 to 2001, the group published five books: this was the last.

of being described in eschatological terminology. That was done at the very beginning, at the moment of the first expansion of the metaphor of recycling, and the same practice is characteristic of the twenty-first century.

From citation to intertext

Citation invites identification with recycling. As is proved, for example, by the experience of Elizabeth Wallace, the compiler of the anthology *Jesus Recycled: The Ultimate Sustainable Resource* [Wallace 2013], to equate the two concepts it suffices to put the new term into the title of a book containing a collection of sayings ascribed to the Son of God taken from the corpus of canonical and non-canonical gospels. Besides exact reproduction, a whole range of techniques that assume an approximate rendition of the text could equally well be assigned to the sphere of recycling. Thus David Bellos, whose work is entitled “Les Mots & Les Choses: Patchworking in Sartre and Perec” [Bellos 2003] defends the position that recycling is the oldest and most venerable instrument in any writer’s hands, and considers that it is instantiated in reminiscences, direct references and allusions, that is, in what can be comprehensively understood by the broad term “intertext”. In this connexion, on the one hand, Bellos’s field of view includes Jean-Paul Sartre and Georges Perec, on whose writing technique special attention is focused. On the other, he recalls as one methodological foundation Antoine Compagnon’s work on the quotation, *La seconde main: ou, Le travail de la citation* [Compagnon 1979], which contains a term that is synonymous with “recycling”. (This last appeared a year after Perec’s *La vie: mode d’emploi*, which was written using a “patchwork technique”.) In principle the term “intertextual recycling” applied to this sort of treatment appears perfectly suitable and convenient.

From time to time researchers become particularly concerned with distinguishing the types of operation belonging to the set of repetitions and reworkings: repetition as such, repetition with changes, reinterpretation and so on. In such situations competitors to the term “recycling” appear. Jean-Jacques Chardin has prepared several publications on recycling and similar concepts based on the results of the colloquia conducted at Strasbourg University.¹ The first of these was a special issue of the journal *RANAM*, where this topic was combined with the problem of convergence between high and popular culture, which may evidently also be examined as a variety of inter-discourse relations. This issue is entitled *Culture savante — culture populaire: reprises, recyclages, récupération* [Chardin 2010]. It does not explain what exactly is meant by the words

¹ They are connected with the work of the EA 2325 SEARCH Research Group at the University of Strasbourg from 2009 to 2012.

"reprises", "recyclages" and "récupération", but afterwards, in another issue of *RANAM* on the same topic — *Reprise, Recycling, Recuperating: Modes of Construction of Anglophone Culture* Chardin writes:

Although reprise, recycling and recuperating are rather shifting notions which often overlap, the book establishes fruitful distinctions and propounds fertile theorizations. Reprise can be described as all conscious forms of reference, citation, and intertextuality. Recycling texts, images, or even ideas has more to do with such operations as transforming, bowdlerizing, or even impoverishing, whereas recuperating implies that the transformation of the original material is the result of an ideological or political bias [Chardin 2012b: 5].

We are faced with one of those classifications which of course always have a right to exist, but which at the same time can hardly be considered compulsory. The most important thing for our discussion is that the different understandings of recycling that were enunciated both before and after the book's publication include all the elements indicated but are not confined to them. (The updating of the universalist model of recycling does not by any means mean that its adherents are totally incapable of involvement in discussions of the details of modernist and postmodernist culture, just that in the cases under discussion the one is easily separated from the other.)

Epigonism and remake

The opposition between original and copy raises the question of epigonism, theft, plagiarism or even — in a more shocking rhetorical cloak — cannibalism (see, for example, [Galvin 2014]), but the analysis of such practices is far from always denunciatory. Maria Loh's book *Titian Remade: Repetition and the Transformation of Early Modern Italian Art*, [Loh 2007] represents a model of analysis in which the historicity of evaluations of borrowings in art — their dependence of a particular cultural context — is clearly demonstrated.

Loh's work, whether she intended it or not, is opposed to the (post) modern interpretation of recycling and its attachment to the twentieth century, not least because it examines the Early Modern period. The book is devoted to Padovanino, an artist who is largely known thanks to his work being essentially secondary in respect of Titian's. As Loh shows, Padovanino was fully aware of the specifics of his work. She describes Padovanino's case as "a story about the construction of subjects and identities, about the repetition of others in order to become oneself — a self that was always already *other*" [Loh 2007: 3].

Against the background of such seventeenth-century masters as Caravaggio, Caracci, Poussin, Velázquez, Rubens and Rembrandt,

Loh reminds us, the artistic products of Padovanino's time are now characterised at best as eclectic and outdated, and at worst as parasitic. However, in his own time Padovanino was a highly respected artist and still had a good reputation even in the nineteenth century [Loh 2007: 4].

The task Loh sets herself is expressed in the following questions: "How did the same painter promoted as 'our rising Titian' come to be seen later as 'an effeminate copyist'? How did one of the 'best storytellers' of the seicento end up maligned as a producer of 'ham-fisted pastiches'?" In the end, she identifies "the unwillingness of scholars to value imitators as inventors and repetition as a form of originality" [Loh 2007: 7]. In other words, according to Loh, recycling is again, as in Gumbrecht [Gumbrecht 2002] identified with the authentic and primary, only this time there is no deconstruction or destruction to be seen.

Only a couple of times in the book does she use the word "recycling"; her leading term is "remake", taken from the world of cinema. However, remake, with its stress on transformation and repetition is the best example of recycling in art, altogether lawful and legitimate, and at the same time always very problematic at the time of its appearance.

The hero and the plot

Looking at narrative from the point of view of the hero and the plot allows another variant of cultural recycling to be identified. There is a telling example of this in the extremely diverse collection edited by Gafaïti, Mairesse and Praëger in 2003. In her article "Re-figurer la généalogie: *Teste and Co*" [Mairesse 2003], Anne Mairesse sets herself the task of demonstrating that despite their apparent heterogeneity, there is a common principle in the mass of discourses and facts characteristic of French culture of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, embodied in a particular type of cultural hero. According to Mairesse, the quintessence of this type is a character from Paul Valéry's little composition "La soirée avec Monsieur Teste" of 1896. M. Teste is representative of an unusual sort of people — unique, but completely unknown "minds", distinguished by their unwillingness to waste their energies on contacts of any sort and by their concentration on a secret semiotic order of the world that only they can discover. Being one of these, the image of M. Teste arose, in Mairesse's opinion, as a result of the recycling of other characters. Among his antecedents there are, directly, the detective Auguste Dupin invented by Edgar Allen Poe, and, indirectly, a whole series of figures, among them that remarkable figure of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries Robert de Montesquiou, J. K. Huysmans'

hero des Esseintes (thought to be based on Montesquieu), Stéphane Mallarmé and others. In turn, the genesis of the type of *hero* of which Teste is the quintessence is connected with the transformation of the adventure *plot* inside which the external intrigue is replaced by an intellectual intrigue.

This sort of recycling was, in Mairesse's opinion, described by Eliot in the abovementioned essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in 1919, and can be reduced to the thesis that any artist is inevitably dependent on his predecessors.

Attempts to discover one or another invariable in the diversity of actual narratives and characters cannot but remind one of Campbell's mythical 1923 work *Hero with a Thousand Faces* [Campbell 1949]. In principle Campbell, though long before the expansion of the ecological metaphor, also represents the concept of the recycling of characters, or, otherwise, "hero recycling". Of course, universalist genealogies look unconvincing today, but "local" ones, connected with a particular historico-cultural situation, may still be of interest.

Among the attempts to show how plots associated with a particular hero circulate, Sandra Beckett's monograph *Recycling Red Riding Hood* [Beckett 2002] is extremely illustrative. Beckett continues the work begun by Jack Zipes, whose book *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* [Zipes 1983] takes in the history of the plot from the seventeenth century to 1982. Beckett follows her predecessor by starting in the 1970s, describing the situation of the recycling of the story of the little girl and the wolf using Gérard Genette's term "hypertext", which assumes a reworking¹ of an earlier "hypotext", with the reservation that the "hypotext" or "pre-text" of the story is finally lost in oral tradition.

There are no other extensive reflections in this book on the concept in which we are interested. It seems that Genette himself does not use the word "recycling" either, but one cannot help noticing a certain logical similarity between the meaning that is usually ascribed to it and the constructions of that authoritative narratologist: it suffices to glance at the title of the book in which the relevant terminological toolkit is developed: *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* [Genette 1982].

The case of Beckett's monograph is telling in at least two respects. The first is connected with the lack of definitions. The fact that Beckett and other researchers neglect to give any direct definition of recycling by no means means that they do not explore its meaning — just that in such cases the meaning of the term is formed by the content of the conception itself and by the analysis of material,

¹ Not to use Genette's own metaphor, *se greffe*, "is grafted" [Genette 1982: 11–12].

by examples. The second concerns the discovery of recycling (see the previous section) and the question of the multiplication of entities / terms. The fact that Beckett, as distinct from Zipes, uses a new term in the name of a book devoted to the same subject is precisely a manifestation of the very fact of the discovery of recycling. In other words, Zipes, like Benjamin, Jameson, Genette and the others, one might say, did not yet know that he was studying a particular case of recycling or a special form of cultural recycling, but Beckett did.

Folklore and myth

The circulation of plots and heroes, which becomes the object of analytical interest, cannot but remind one of folklore and research into myths, but, strange to say, little has been written about it over thirty years, especially as regards extensive research of a monographic character.

Frank de Caro, the author of *Folklore Recycled: Old Traditions in New Contexts* [Caro 2013], means by the combination of words in his title the transformation and displacement of material into an alien, non-folkloric context — artistic, intellectual, scholarly etc. [Caro 2013: 3] Juxtaposing the concept of “re-cycling” with that of “re-situation” proposed by Roger Abrahams and Barbara Babcock [Abrahams, Babcock 1977: 415], Caro notes that contemporary Western society mostly encounters folklore (at least that part of folklore which, unlike the urban myth, is unconnected with the urban context) precisely thanks to recycling and resituation. Another category that can be related to recycling is for Caro “folklorism”, meaning the existence of folkloric *topoi* outside the authentic tradition. As an example of “resituative recycling”, if such an expression is possible, Caro alleges Colson Whitehead’s *John Henry Days* (2001), which exploits the image of a popular hero of American folklore.

The vagueness of the concept of “myth”, which is likewise not particularly extensively used in contemporary literature on recycling, although it does occur, is brought into play, in particular, in the collection *The Power of Form: Recycling Myths*, edited by Anna Fernandes and her colleagues [Fernandes et al. 2015]. The aim of the book is formulated as “to study how myths are inscribed and recycled within our individual and collective heritage, and to examine the personal and political implications of our multifaceted engagement with myths as one of the forms through which we try to make sense of our perplexities” [Fernandes et al. 2015: 1]. The concept of recycling does not itself undergo any noticeable reworking in this volume, and the subjects collected are in general eclectic, and by and large fit into paradigms that are already known from earlier works.

As for works that anticipated the conversation on cultural recycling without making use of the term, the notion of it was already familiar in the sphere or research into myths. In particular, as early as 1962 Claude Lévi-Strauss used the term *bricolage* (quite popular nowadays) in his book *La pensée sauvage*, in order to characterise the process of the creation of myth [Lévi-Strauss 1962: 26].

Between discourses and across cultures

Resituative recycling manifests itself in different ways. The concept of recycling is often used when it is a question of transfer between discourses, for example scholarly or popular scientific and fiction. Moreover, some outstanding figures definitely provoke a discussion of this aspect. As Timothy Unwin has demonstrated in his article "The Fiction of Science, or the Science of Fiction" [Unwin 2000], what one might call "inter-discourse recycling" is the essence of Jules Verne's method. Unwin remarks on how surprisingly dependent Verne is on other people's texts, calling him "an avid consumer of written sources" who constantly "restates, rewrites or recycles knowledge gleaned in the scientific, geographical and historical reviews of the day" [Unwin 2000: 46]. It is significant that, in saying this, he does not regard recycling as the sole prerogative of science fiction, but, on the contrary, places Verne alongside such writers as Flaubert and Zola. The difference between Verne and his fellow-writers is evident, according to Unwin, only in how intensively he recycles.

Attempts to view the term in this light are not unique. From among a number of interesting illustrations let us recall only one work, this time reflecting the relationship of fiction not with the discourses of the natural sciences, but with those of history. In his work "La Distillation littéraire de l'histoire chez Julien Gracq", Sylvain Rheault examines the "distillation" referred to in his title as recycling. The term is Gracq's, and is described in his collection of sketches *En lisant, en écrivant* [Gracq 1980]. Briefly, it consists of reducing historiography to a condition in which only the "spirit of history" (*l'esprit de l'histoire*) is left in it. Gracq writes about the Second World War. And since he was not himself a participant in the events, Rheault, who comments on his technique, excludes the writer's actual biographical experience from consideration, and sets himself the task being far from new of finding the historical sources that Gracq could have used and showing how he, essentially, "recycled" them in his literary remains [Rheault 2003: 131–143].

Resituative recycling is not, of course, restricted to transits between discourses, which by their very nature are often cross-cultural. In this respect Chardin's project, and the respective special issues of *RANAM* [Chardin 2010; 2012a; 2012b], are once again informative. For making sense of "cross-cultural recycling" as such, the experience

of *RANAM* is interesting in that, however different the objects and persons under discussion are, be it Sterne, Shakespeare, Hollywood cinema or Bob Dylan's blues, the centre of attention is always the translation of value from one, so to speak, "cultural chronotope" to another.

Recycling and anthropology

It is not hard to see that in the twenty-first century the term "recycling" is often used with application to literature and art and in more or less general historico-cultural concepts that describe periods and rules of cultural evolution on quite a large scale. Anthropology in its narrower sense, based on the principle of "participation" (concentrating primarily on everyday life and material culture, and on studying socially specific practices of behaviour linked to these régimes), originally, in the last century, also seemed to accept it as a heuristically useful tool [Greenfield 1986; Taylor 1993]. But the term could not take root in it to its full extent. Anthropologists continue in the twenty-first century to invoke this concept less frequently than their colleagues elsewhere in the humanities, though even here it seems that the situation has been changing in the most recent years. However that might be, attempts at anthropological interventions in our sphere of interest, which have nevertheless taken place and still do, are no less curious. All or most of them (at least of those known to the author, who is in a far from ideal position for library research) are connected with the Soviet and post-Soviet context.

Among anthropological studies, special attention should be paid to the comparatively short work by Sonja Luehrmann (2005), "Recycling Cultural Construction: Desecularisation in Postsoviet Mari El", the impulse for which were her observations of the surprisingly easy (from her point of view) change that took place in the republic after the disintegration of the USSR. It was manifested in the almost instantaneous rebirth of religious life and led to the re-profiling of secular space and habits, from buildings to "Soviet" professional skills, to meet the new religious needs. Without going into the history of the concept, Luehrmann formulated and at the same time reproduced one of its persistent treatments. "In order for something to be recycled, it must first be declared to be trash, and then reworked into something else that is regarded as useful" [Luehrmann 2005: 37].

Thompson's influence, and that of waste studies, are evident here, but it is something else that should be emphasised now. In discussing twenty-first-century literature, we have already come across such interpretations more than once. The principle of "three-phase recycling" (it was — it was forgotten — it was remembered) had one

way or another made itself heard before, explicitly perhaps for the first and only time in Leila Zenderland's work at the end of the 1970s [Zenderland 1978]. It seems, moreover, a regular feature that there is no reference in the article to previous experience of interpreting the concept, which once more underlines the "folkloric", "collective conception" of cultural recycling.

There was a polemical reaction to the article, though not immediately, and this undoubtedly helped to clarify the meaning of the term. Exactly ten years later, Jeanne Kormina and Sergei Shtyrkov published a work in which, evaluating the productivity of the approach proposed by Luehrmann, they expressed their doubts about some of its propositions. According to Kormina and Shtyrkov's observations, religion in the USSR, despite extensive efforts, never acquired the status of "rubbish": "In reality the religious enthusiasm of the early 1990s had been prepared for by a lengthy process of the legalisation of religion in Soviet times through its localisation in the sphere of 'culture'" [Kormina, Shtyrkov 2015: 9].

There is an evident rational kernel to such a critique, but it needs to be qualified in its turn. To start with, the relevance of the very formula of recycling (topicality — oblivion — return) was not an object of Luehrmann's opponents' scepticism. It was only its use in application to a particular situation that was questioned. But that may only have been because the specifics of the approach were not indicated precisely enough by its author.

The idea of recycling does not in principle suppose — nor can it — the complete disappearance of a cultural value. If it were to be annihilated, recycling (a cycle) as a principle of description would be impossible. Even utterly forgotten and physically lost values (such as the ideas and artefacts of antiquity, for example), seem to have continued to exist, even if they were beyond the bounds of knowledge. In other words, it is always only a question of their transfer for a longer or shorter time from one context — discursive, intellectual, social, material — to another, from the periphery to the centre of attention of that stratum of culture and the social group that is being described and analysed.

The terms "memory" and "forgetting", when transferred from the sphere of individual psychology and physiology to that of collective experience, like "recycling" when it is removed from the sphere of production and ecology, also lose their literal meaning. Cultural, collective, historical and other forms of social memory also necessarily suppose only a shift of attention from certain cultural values to others within a particular social context: what, for example, is remembered only by professional historians may at some point become the property of politicians and public opinion, and vice versa. Religion was by no means "forgotten" in the USSR, but it is

obvious that it lost the status of an institution openly promoted by the state, which allowed whole generations to grow up in a spirit of atheism. After the collapse of the Soviet Union it returned to a position at the centre of state and universal attention, or to put it another way, it was not only specialists that “remembered” it. So in a certain sense the question of recycling is no more than a question of the popularity of a particular idea or material object and its loss for some time in the eyes of a specific social group.¹

In the interval between Luehrmann’s work and the reaction to it there appeared another small anthropological work which openly referred to recycling. In 2013 there appeared an article by Zinaida Vasilyeva, the title of which speaks for itself: “Où sont les restes du communisme? Recyclage de la mémoire soviétique dans les expositions et les oeuvres d’art” [Vasilyeva 2013]. Later Vasilyeva defended a thesis on DIY practices in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia [Vasilyeva 2019].

Vasilyeva simultaneously separates and connects two régimes of recycling, if it may be so expressed. One of them concerns the intellectual and emotional sphere, the other, that of material things. (This contrast had previously been drawn, in the works that we have examined, for example by Kendall and Koster [Kendall, Koster 2007a].)

Analysing how post-Soviet people made sense of their Soviet past in the 2010s, that is at the height of their “work of recycling the past”, Vasilyeva aims to show that “in the post-Soviet context DIY operates as a medium for expressing and carrying individual, and, to a lesser extent, collective, attempts to make sense of the uncertainty and confusion related to memories of the Soviet and to ‘recycle’ the Russian past” [Vasilyeva 2019: 49]. According to Vasilyeva, DIY is a sort of “material language”, that is a language of material signs that refer to the past [Vasilyeva 2019: 49]. We may remark that the work’s proposed perspective, when the idea of the Soviet and things from the USSR go through a cycle from the phase of primary relevance to the phase of secondary relevance and reworking while “stagnating” in the phase of “oblivion” in the 1990s, in no way contradicts what Luehrmann said, and in this case her work is not forgotten.

The “anthropological” view of “cultural recycling” is distinguished by a certain kind of literalism, primarily expressed in its interest in material objects. When values are discussed, they will most often be

¹ A similar type of recycling, also relating to the Soviet experience in the post-Soviet period, is described by Francisco Martínez in his book about the urban environment in Estonia [Martínez 2018]. The term itself is found there regularly, but, in comparison with Luehrmann, without any noticeable conceptualisation.

material values. “Intelligibility”, the behavioural, ideal and discursive aspects, are undoubtedly also important, but still, largely in connexion with the thing. This is, however, not an absolute rule: what are by their nature educative practices may also be described in terms of recycling.¹ The possibility of getting away from literal meanings is important at the moment in the sense that it shows once again how easily a concept can migrate from one “régime” of culture to another — from the material to behaviour and ritual, discursivity and ideology.

The “anthropological” interest in recycling, if, at least, we have in mind the positions of the aforementioned researchers, is not connected with any negative ethical evaluations in the spirit of the postmodernist critique: the term assists in concentrating on local manifestations of widespread, and in that sense universal practices. At the same time the opposition between “recycling” as seen by anthropologists and other “recyclings” is, of course, provisional. One way or another it remains an interdisciplinary concept, as can be seen simply from the range of literature involved in its discussion.

The bounds of the universal: reception, mimesis and reincarnation

No excursus into the history of “cultural recycling” in the twenty-first century would be complete without some mention of the methods by which this metaphor is used and which amplify its content to such a degree that not much is left outside it. Judging by its title, the collection *The Recycled Bible*, edited by Fiona Black [Black 2006] should resemble the situation of quotation perceived as recycling, but its authors go further. The aim of the book, as formulated by Black, is to understand how culture and the Bible influence each other. In “recycling”, Black stresses the aspect of reworking, but not the type that might be most expected. It is not a matter of the “ontology” of the text, nor of textual repetitions, additions or omissions as such, but of its reception. Reading the Bible is always transformative both for the reader and the text [Black 2006: 1], and therefore, she thinks, it is recycling.

The other contributors to the volume are not so radical in their approaches to recycling, though an orientation on Black’s thesis is maintained overall. Whereas Deborah Krause, for example, confining herself to a structural approach, correlates “recycling” with Genette’s term “hypertext” [Krause 2006: 12], George Aichele follows Black in expanding it to *reading*, and evaluates in a special way contemporary methods of reusing classic texts, which he calls “postcanonical

¹ While in Anna Kozlova’s recent work this aspect is connected with a significant material object — the Artek Pioneer Camp [Kozlova 2021] — Yulia Sekushina’s work is concerned above all with the techniques of education [Sekushina 2021].

recycling” [Aichele 2006: 200]. The latter, in his view, comprehends principles both of instruction and entertainment.

Another tendency in the expansion of the concept of “recycling” may be the imitative nature of art, or, to put it another way, thematisation. We have already encountered a similar treatment in Mairesse’s work [Mairesse 2003] on M. Teste, where real historical personages are listed alongside fictional heroes as objects of recycling. But one can find more demonstrative attempts to go beyond purely intertextual, inter-genre, inter-discourse or inter-medium relationships, which are more and more often described using this term.

In her 2003 article “Cultural Critique and City Practice in Ponge and Aragon” [Harrow 2003], Susan Harrow, relying on the methodological patterns of Benjamin and Michel de Certeau, that is, on the critique of modernity and consumer capitalism, multiplied by the critique of contemporary urbanism, compared in this light the artistic strategies of Francis Ponge and Louis Aragon. Harrow defined Ponge’s technique as “critical (non-transformative)” recycling, and Aragon’s as “meliorative” recycling [Harrow 2003: 146].

Life in the capitalist city, as described by Ponge, is routine, a series of clichés, second-hand language, and work that swallows up the individual. In Ponge’s text man is described with scatological metaphors, likened to waste products, imagined against a background of putrescence and disease. According to Harrow, Ponge’s book *Douze petits écrits* (1926), on which she focuses, anticipates Benjamin’s position, affirming that poetry must place itself in opposition to the world of consumption. But whereas Ponge’s texts are enclosed within a static régime between the indignation of the narrator and of the language itself and their hero’s acquiescence, Aragon’s *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926), which is a sort of “prototype” of both Benjamin’s and Certeau’s projects, transforms the previous form of “revolt” into new urbanistic and textual practices [Harrow 2003: 153]. Central among them is “walking the gaze”. In its inherent freedom, in the seeking of pleasure from risky things and breaking rules cultivated by Aragon Harrow sees an emotive force that is a forerunner to Certeau. Surrealist recycling of this kind, “meliorative” and “transformative”, destroys the resilience of the social system, and in this it differs from Ponge’s recycling.

If we try to define the principle according to which Harrow names the discursive phenomena that she describes in terms of recycling, we find that unlike intertext or Rheault’s inter-discourse recycling, Harrow understands it as the very relationship of art to reality, expressed in specific poetics and ideologies, that is, she practically places recycling in the group of primary aesthetic categories, making

it a synonym of “mimesis”. It is understandable that such an ideological analysis fully deserves to be examined among the variants of (post)modernist concepts of recycling, but at present we are interested in its affinity with the universalist model.

Finally, to draw the conversation about extreme expansions of the concept to a close, we should consider Julie Chajes’s recent book *Recycled Lives: A History of Reincarnation in Blavatsky’s Theosophy* [Chajes 2019], from the very title of which it follows that the author has no intention of examining either “the culture of recycling” or “the recycling of culture”. Nevertheless Chajes’s case is telling: it confirms that the ecological metaphor retains its popularity to this day.

* * *

These seem to be the main collisions that have taken place around the concept of “cultural recycling” in the twenty-first century. It goes without saying that the picture that has been drawn is not all-embracing and one should not be led astray by its relative orderliness. The reality is much more chaotic. Not one of the treatments mentioned could be called generally accepted or even dominant, although the series of typical paradigms that lie behind them may indeed, as we see, be discerned.

In the twenty-first century there has come to pass that which Walter Moser thought of in his pioneering publication (speaking of attempts at a theory of recycling) in the 1990s [Moser 1993: 433], but it has come to pass not thanks to that article, which hardly anybody remembers, but, as it were, all by itself. “Cultural recycling” has acquired the status of an umbrella designation, simultaneously generalising, for a multitude of highly diverse terms for repetition and reworking, and the research into the problems connected with it in many if not the majority of cases neither dissociates itself from, nor opposes itself to other descriptive strategies, but is rather in solidarity with them, sometimes subordinating itself to them, sometimes subordinating them to itself.

The interpretative evolution of the concept in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is summed up in a characteristic manner in *Recycled Theory: Dizionario illustrato / Illustrated Dictionary* [Marini, Corbellini 2016], compiled by participants in the large-scale project “Recycle Italy. Nuovi cicli di vita per architetture e infrastrutture della città e del paesaggio” (2013–2016). On the one hand, the definition of the term given in it returns us to a metaphorical hermeneutics typical of the time when the word “recycling” was only just establishing itself in the language, i.e. of the second half of the 1960s: Renato Bocchi, the author of the dictionary entry for “Recycle”, explains the principle of this cultural mechanism by the

example of the life of the sea cucumber, which reproduces by division [Bocchi 2016: 479]. On the other hand, the dictionary defines seventy or so other concepts which are quite independent of the one in its title. Out of those that are operationally close to “recycling” it finds a place for “amnesia”, “archive”, “cycle”, “difference”, “duration”, “ecology”, “heritage”, “hybrid”, “mythomania”, “remix”, “simulation”... At the same time many entries — “norm”, “reality”, “sleep” “time”, “Utopia”— do not have such specifics.

Diversity and heterogeneity in the understanding of the term are to a large extent determined, on the one hand, by the disciplinary diversity of the research into culture within which it is used and interpreted, without, moreover, discounting the theorising of practitioners, such as artists [Marowitz 1991]. On the other hand, it is dependent on the interests and presuppositions of the contemporary fundamental approaches to culture that run through many disciplines. Among them the foreground is occupied by socio-cultural research into late capitalism, postmodernism and modernism, memory, nostalgia and trauma. In such a situation the interdisciplinary view is perhaps the only means of finding something in common within this mixture of subjects and principles of cultural analysis.

If we recall again the basic varieties of recycling (and its understanding) that we have encountered in the course of the discussion, and unite them for greater convenience under certain general criteria, we get the following picture, which is still not particularly orderly.

Recycling can be understood as a mechanism of cultural memory in general. “Historical (three-phase) recycling”, and recycling that is identified with tradition and its continuity, are in this case particular variants of this treatment. One may speak of “aesthetic recycling” and, in particular, the recycling of genres and plots, “hero recycling” (i.e. the recycling of characters), of recycling as imitation and, finally, of recycling as mimesis or thematisation. Attention paid to the semantics of transitivity, which allows “resituative recycling” — between genres, texts or discourses — to be separated as a special category, is very important. Simply moving a thing from one space to another, for example, from its original milieu to a museum, also falls into this category. No one denies the connexion between cultural recycling, in any of its manifestations, and reinterpretation. That is, as well as anything else, any repetition / reworking is also, so to speak, “hermeneutic recycling”. It does not, of course, only presuppose the “distillation” of ideas à la Gracq. In the end, any reinterpretation is capable of being described using the term “recycling”. “Material recycling”, i.e. the resituation or

reworking of things taken as such, is contrasted with but cannot do without reinterpretation. At the same time the notion of the recycling of ideas is also quite widespread. To these universalist models is opposed the paradigm of (post)modernist recycling, and in particular of recycling as a basis of mass culture, descended from the time of the industrial revolutions, recycling as the totality of those technologies that replace creativity, as pastiche in the post-modernist understanding of the word, and so forth. Thanks to the corresponding popular tendencies in cultural studies, "traumatic" and "nostalgic" recycling can be identified. It is probably permissible to define appropriation and re-use as "economic recycling". Recycling treated as a specific form of education is distinct from all these, in many cases linked to the specifics of late capitalism and the technologisation of culture.

All these variants are to a large extent united only by the idea of repetition, supplemented in each individual case by some other meanings. The most frequent of these are the ideas of removal from one environment, be it material or contextual, the "ideal", to another, and of reworking, which in turn are usually accompanied by other connotations.

Is the term "cultural recycling" operational, and is it not a pleonasm? An obvious, immediately discernible heuristic benefit from the expansion of the range of terms, one might think, is palpable when a previously known concept, in our case referring to the semantics of repetition (citation, allusion, intertext, reproduction of the subject, pastiche, parody, the activation of a cultural value or *topos*, tradition, reinterpretation and so on) is not simply replaced, but at the same time supplemented with connotations that endue it with exclusivity, for example, speaking of the universalist, "cosmogonic" model in combination with the idea of three-phase recycling, which undoubtedly possesses certain specifics.

The "eschatological" approaches, which view recycling as an attribute of the era of postmodernism and modernism, are also specific from this point of view, inasmuch as they use the term to identify a particular historico-cultural situation. Not only that — the critical struggle around "(post)modernist recycling" is interesting for its own sake: it both reflects and produces a situation when repetition is brought into play and turned into a problem. It begins to be acutely perceived either as a threat to culture, or, for example by the "recyclers" themselves, as an instrument of success. As early as 1996 Silvestra Mariniello rightly drew attention to the fact that by no means every culture, while it unflinchingly returns to resources that have already been used, is so active in making the relevant practices into a topic for discussion [Mariniello 1996: 7]. Other authors, whose experience we have considered, have come to the

same idea in the twenty-first century [Gafaïti et al. 2003; Masłoń 2008].

It is nevertheless significant that unlike such terms, for example, as trauma, nostalgia, the era of the postmodern or the modern, or late capitalism, all of which assume certain analytical ideologies with their own presuppositions that dictate a particular logic and evaluation, the term “cultural recycling” does not of itself depend on them, since it can take root in the most diverse contexts without the slightest problem. It is a more general mechanism of culture and a more general category for its description.

The heuristic potential of the metaphor with its ecological pedigree can already be seen in that it enables the most diverse cultural practices, as well as the vocabulary for describing them, to appear as parts of a whole. In the end, use of the term “cultural recycling” means nothing more than a recalibration of the “optics”, thanks to which another interpretative perspective is discovered. In this respect even the extreme restrictions or expansions of the concept are justified. Recycling is not just a phenomenon or a totality of phenomena; it is also a reflection, an “aspect”, a view of culture that focuses our attention on repetition / reworking. Borrowed from the discourse of ecology and industrial production, this metaphor / term makes us perceive culture as a whole a little differently. Herein, seemingly, is the most substantial meaning of the term “cultural recycling”, and that contradictory agglomeration of concepts, if you like, that “philosophy” that has coalesced around it. To understand what “cultural recycling” is, an elementary etymological study to find the meaning of the metaphor as such is no longer enough: it is important to take the history of this “philosophy” into account.

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