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A Bad Patch of Agrilogistics: *Polysaccharides*  
by Szymon Szwarc\*

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Wyrolowani przez agrologistykę. *Cukry złożone* Szymona Szwarca

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**Abstract.** Putting into work the theories of Karen Barad (spacetime-mattering) and Timothy Morton (ecognosis), the author of the article investigates the volume *Polysaccharides* (2020) by Szymon Szwarc. The Polish poet, like Barad, notices the connections and entanglements between various actors of the world (although he uses the language of molecular biology rather than the language of quantum physics). The portrayal of these connections serves him as the basis for a poetic critique of “agrilogistics”, which, according to Morton, has been a perpetual pattern of human activity since the Neolithic Revolution. The author of the article analyzes these issues, especially with regard to the poem *Boiler Broad Bean*. He comes to the conclusion that Szwarc develops his own consideration regarding agrilogistics, which is close to new materialism.

**Keywords:** Szymon Szwarc, new materialism, Polish poetry, Karen Barad, agrilogistics, spacetime-mattering, ecognosis

**Abstrakt.** Autor artykułu przygląda się tomowi wierszy Szymona Szwarca *Cukry złożone* (2020), wykorzystując do analiz teorie Karen Barad (czaso-przestrzenio-znaczeniowanie) i Timothy’ego Mortona (ekognoza). Polski poeta, podobnie jak Barad, zwraca uwagę na powiązania i splątania

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pomiędzy różnymi aktorami pochodzącymi ze świata (choć wykorzystuje w swej pracy raczej język biologii molekularnej niż fizyki kwantowej). Ukazanie owych powiązań służy mu za podstawę do poetyckiej krytyki „agrologistyki”, która zdaniem Mortona stanowi nieprzerwany wzorzec działania ludzkości od czasów rewolucji neolitycznej. Autor artykułu analizuje te kwestie, interpretując zwłaszcza poemat *Bojler Bób*. Dochodzi do wniosku, że Szwarz rozwija własny, zbliżony do nowego materializmu namysł nad agrologistyką.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Szymon Szwarz, nowy materializm, poezja polska, Karen Barad, agrologistyka, czaso-przeźrzenie-znaczeniowanie, ekognoza

## 1. INTRA-DUCTION: DOWN THE LOOP HOLE

One of the most apparent traits of Szymon Szwarz’s poetry is its inaccessibility. Often associated with being under the auspices of Adam Wiedemann, Szwarz situates himself between thoroughgoing intellectualism and exaggerated camp, which results in unbalancing poems that lead readers down a blind alley. Consequently, what we struggle with while reading his texts is weird undecidability between an aphorism and a giggle, as if pure nonsense balanced out the temptation to put an allegorical interpretation on them (see: Partyka, 2021). Putting into work the thought of Karen Barad, who, among Timothy Morton, will serve me as a main co-thinker in this essay, we could say that in Szwarz’s poetry, sententious tones and mockery are cut together-apart (Barad, 2014), that means, entangled and differentiated in one move. I do not use this term figuratively, far from it. For cutting together-apart is the question of matter/ing, the work of matter that matters, as Barad explains. In Szwarz’s case, such matter/ing takes the form of the specific metric procedures which fill the poems to the brim with (self-)irony (see: Skurtys, 2020).

I would like to propose that the hermetic, riddle-like structure of Szwarz’s poetry can be understood as a kind of “ecognosis” – a form of ecological consciousness that is aware of the weirdness and strangeness of the world we are of. The term was coined by Morton who explains that ecognosis is:

a riddle. Ecognosis is like knowing, but more like letting be known. It is something like co-existing. It is like becoming accustomed to something strange, yet it is also becoming accustomed to strangeness that doesn’t become less strange through acclimation. Ecognosis is like a knowing that knows itself. Knowing in a loop – a *weird* knowing. *Weird* from the Old Norse *urth*, meaning twisted, *in a loop*. (2016, p. 5)

Now, there is a striking analogy between Morton’s and Szwarz’s taste for strange figures. Interestingly enough, they both use them to *literally* accustom ourselves to *strange figures* – human, non-human, in/animated entities that elude our cognitive and affective capacities, but at the same time capture us within a loop of

coexistence. For Morton, one result of ecognosis is simply laughter: “The world it discovers is nonsensical, yet perfectly logical, and that is funny” (2016, p. 110). The same goes, I will try to prove, for Szwarc’s tricksterish poetry. If it is nonsensical, it is not without reason, so to speak. For, it takes us down the rabbit hole, or, rather, down the *loop* hole. So, let me take a closer look at the volume *Polysaccharides* [*Cukry złożone*] from 2020.

## 2. BECOMING-MOLECULAR

In his review of the volume, Jakub Skurtys stated that “it is filled with pieces of non-committal waste of the critical thinking process which are composed or, rather, juxtaposed with each other, making a serious, though junk, poem” (2020). While it might sound like a re-run of post-modernism, Szwarc is more preoccupied with the art and possibility of living on capitalisms’ ruins where human beings are strongly interconnected with non-human actors, though alienated from the world (Such “pieces of waste” of anti-capitalist critical thinking can be seen in many poems from *Polysaccharides*, for example, *Who Ate Me?*, *Snails*, or *Deluge*.) Of great importance here is the work of form.

The volume *Polysaccharides* consists mainly of long poems stretched across several pages, with regularly (almost recursively) returning topics, threads, phrases, often quite absurd, matched by free associations, phonetic similarities, or cryptic puns. These associations link not only verses or parts of particular poems, but they also “jump” between different poems, creating entanglements and mutations between them. For example, the word “Boiler” from the poem *Boiler Broad Bean* (Szwarc, 2020, pp. 10–12) can be found in a different context, in the question “What is the Boiler?” from the poem # (Szwarc, 2020, p. 17), which, in turn, sends us back to *Snake’s Egg* where we read “What is the cat?” (Szwarc, 2020, p. 16); the poem \*\*\* [*I WANTED to protest*] (Szwarc, 2020, p. 15) finds it reverse in \*\*\* [*I WANTED to stroll*] (Szwarc, 2020, p. 31), etc.

One can say that in doing so, these small, not to say “elemental”, bits act like “jumping genes” on a molecular level: the DNA sequence discovered by Barbara McClintock that is able to relocate itself into a different position within a genome, often instigating some mutation on its way (see: Sitarz, 2021). Obviously, this “jumping genes” metaphor only works when we consider the volume to be one entity having one genome. Then again, if we see the subsequent poems as individual beings, another metaphor could refer to the horizontal gene transfer between ecologically interdependent organisms.

Again, these associations are something more than simply figures of speech. Taking a deeper dive into Barad's thought, I would say that the recursive bonds between different texts are one signal of an iterative "spacetime-mattering." As Barad explains, spacetime-mattering – the inseparability of time, space, and matter, but also the ongoing, meaningful relationalities among moments, places, and things –

*is not a set of static points, coordinates of a void, but a dynamism of differencing. [...] agential realism understands the very nature of matter and the very matter of nature as (iteratively re-) constituted through a(n iteratively reconfigured) multiplicity of force relations. (Barad, 2017, p. 110)*

Szwarc's spacetime-mattering, however, takes a specific molecular form, and this is how we can approach the title of the volume. Clearly, the structure of the long poems bears a striking resemblance to polysaccharide chains. One feature of the latter is that on the one hand, their linkages are provisional and unstable. In compliance with relational ontology, they are constantly moving, ready to come in the subsequent intra-actions,<sup>1</sup> as if incorporating on a molecular level the quantum "in/determinacy" that "is not the state of a thing, but an unending dynamism" (Barad, 2012, p. 8). Szwarc re-enacts such in/determinacy by many kinds of specific ruptures: enjambments that completely change the meaning of particular lines (or, indeed, make it un/decidable), catachrestic, ill-grounded metaphors, ellipses, links between phrases that do not fit together, or sequels to poems which never had their prequels. On the other hand, however, despite their unstable nature, polysaccharides are resilient to breakdown, especially those bonded by *beta*-linkages (hydrogen bonds providing them with mechanical strength.<sup>2</sup>) In Szwarc's poems, the role of such linkages is played by the already mentioned iterative repetitions that jump from text to text, riveting their structure.

What is the role of all these intricate measures? Well, if Skurtys is right that Szwarc branches off with the anthropocentric perspective (2020), it is the shift towards a molecular level that marks this move. Like Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Szwarc seems to be in favor of "becoming-molecular"

<sup>1</sup> For Barad, intra-actions are something completely different from inter-actions. The assumption behind the latter is that they always occur between the already existing particles or entities, whereas the quantum physics would have us to think that there is no such thing as separate phenomena. The entities are only established by intra-actions and are, so to speak, constantly unstable: "Intra-actions are practices of making a difference, of cutting together-apart entangling-differentiating (one move) in the making of phenomena. Phenomena – entanglements of matter/ing across spacetimes – are not in the world, but *of* the world" (Barad, 2012, pp. 7–8).

<sup>2</sup> What is more, humans, along with many other animals, lack the enzyme to break the *beta*-linkages. To be even more precise, they lack entanglements with the specific gut bacteria that would possess the required enzyme. Be it as it may, the polysaccharides equipped with hydrogen bonds elude the all-too-human need to conquer the world.

that replaces (or, rather, is constantly replacing) individual subjectivity with the affective, intensive multitude, especially that, as the French philosophers claim, the undecidability of becoming-molecular has an anti-capitalist potential: “Every struggle is a function of all of these undecidable propositions and constructs *revolutionary connections* in opposition to the *conjugations of the axiomatic*” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987, p. 473).

In favor of this anti-capitalist interpretation, we can add that the polysaccharides are colloquially considered “good” saccharides, as opposed to “bad” monosaccharides that are easily digestible and high in calories, often coming from highly processed food. In this regard, simple sugars can be read as a metonymy for the capitalist regime that increases work (and consumption) performance by changing the lifeworld, whereas polysaccharides (usually found in fruits and vegetables) mark not only a shift toward non-human perspective but also a discreet manifesto of political veganism and a preach for biodiversity.

To conclude the part about the form of Szwarc’s poems, I propose that he abandons the paradigm of re-flection, which is the way of situating the subject outside the world by introducing an ontology of separate entities and the pattern of re-presentation. Instead, he acknowledges his own diffractive position that forces him to speak *from* the world or to literally *interfere* with the world. The concept of a diffractive methodology, introduced by Barad in her *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007, pp. 71–94), is also explained in her conversation with Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin as

a method of diffractively reading insights through one another, building new insights, and attentively and carefully reading for differences that matter in their fine details, together with the recognition that there intrinsic to this analysis is an ethics that is not predicated on externality but rather entanglement. (2012, p. 50)

A diffractive methodology is not about some vague “entanglements” but specific, contingent intra-actions. In Szwarc’s case – and this is my final hypothesis I will try to defend – we are involved in intra-actions of the late effects of agrilogistics. According to Morton, agrilogistics is a long-standing pattern of the human enterprise that since the Neolithic Revolution forces human beings to domesticate the non-human world, overvalue binary thinking along with the Culture/Nature split, introduce social hierarchization, etc. It is important to notice that these processes are inseparable. The “moment” humans became sedentary cultivators instigated a profound state shift, and in the catastrophic time of the Anthropocene, we experience the late consequences of it (see: Morton, 2016).

## 3. BITTER SWEET SYNCHRONY

These initial statements on the formal aspects of Szwarc's poems are not without merit. One can refer to Rafał Skonieczny here, who noticed some non-human traits of the volume in his blurb accompanying *Polysaccharides*: "His poems are marked by the awareness of the gaze of a dog who, having been taught to think »humanly«, is painstakingly, even laboriously, word by word, sentence by sentence reconstructing language according to the naively understood rules of human semantics". What is more, in 2019, Szwarc himself made an important claim in his response to the survey on sacredness conducted by the Polish journal *EleWator*: "A forest that is being cut down by some damned Company becomes sacred. The animals that die before our very eyes become sacred. The temperature in August that allows you to function somehow is sacred, and sacred is the water in the rivers and in the pipes that is. The areas of sacredness lie outside our short-term interest" (2019; after: Skurtys, 2020). So, let us take a look at several poems from *Polysaccharides*, having in mind that in doing so, we inevitably break the linkages between them.

It is worth starting with the opening and closing poems that serve as a frame story, implying that the rest of the poems (intra-actions, no doubt) situate themselves within this framework:

THE LIGHT they had  
was only to be paid for  
(Szwarc, 2020, p. 5)<sup>3</sup>

GOODNIGHT, the light  
goes out for an undefined  
purpose.

It's nice here, and it's not  
really needed  
to look around.

And that would just be  
nothing at all.  
Just nothing anymore.  
(Szwarc, 2020, p. 49)

The first text is a fine example of Szwarc's quasi-aphoristic inclinations. We do not know who "they" are but we can assume that the word relates to (some or

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<sup>3</sup> All Szwarc's poems are quoted in my translations from Polish.

all) human beings. One obvious reading would be that the light here is a metonymy for the Enlightenment, for which we have to pay the double price: one that follows the famous dictum of Immanuel Kant: “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-imposed nonage”, imposing the need to shoulder the responsibility for independent thinking on the coming-of-age humans;<sup>4</sup> second reading that it is about the human disconnection from the living world that has been instigated by the Age of Reason. Here, the light begins to diffract. For, as Andrzej Marzec reminds us, playing both with Kant and Donna Haraway, the idea of *sapere aude* means that we neither make kin nor recognize kinship with the more-than-human world (2021, p. 41). The modern constitution (to use Bruno Latour’s term [1993]) means that instead of “making kin”, we introduce a fixed subject-object binarism in which we try to purify our world from all the “translations”. And, ironically enough, this is where “the light” begins to feel like the light pollution that conceals our entanglements with non-human agents. Since the Anthropocene marks the moment when we, along with the rest of the more-than-human world, finally see the consequences of that split, it is about time to pay the price.

As a result, a specter of decadence haunts us. Noticed by some critics in Szwarc’s *Polysaccharides*, as well (see: Skurtys, 2020), it does not, however, take the form of the common apocalyptic thinking. If Szwarc says “goodnight”, as in the closing poem, it is a farewell to the light (perhaps the light of modernity) and, as implied by the enjambment, to the world as a modern, all-too-human construct.<sup>5</sup> And if the light goes out without any particular reason, it is because the end of the world means (among other things) the end of teleology. Which is nothing at all like the apocalypse:

This end is precisely not an instant vaporization, but rather a lingering coexistence with strange strangers. For the end of the world is the end of endings, the end of telos, and the beginning of an uncertain, hesitating futurity. (Morton, 2013, p. 95)

I would argue that Szwarc’s thinking goes pretty much in the same direction. One trigger of his version of uncertainty is the contradictive phrase “It’s nice here, and it’s not”. It is as if we found ourselves in a superposition of many pasts, presents, and futures. Firstly, there is some hesitating futurity to this line anticipated by the enjambment (and the result of enjambment as a device often resembles, in

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<sup>4</sup> In relation to the Anthropocene, this is a path Clive Hamilton follows. In his *Defiant Earth* (2017), he disagrees with the proponents of post-humanism and opts for a “new anthropocentrism”, the distinctive feature of which would be taking full responsibility for the human impact on the Earth systems.

<sup>5</sup> In Polish, we should notice, “world” and “light” – *świat* and *światło* – are very close.

Szwarc's case, "the mutually exclusive conditions of im/possibility" of quantum physics [Barad, 2012, p. 5]). Secondly, the superposition of time means that it is still relatively nice here, at least in the Global North, because the end of the world extends itself in time (or, indeed, in spacetimemattering). At the same time, the end of the world, as Morton would have it, "has already occurred" (2013, p. 7) because the emergence of the Anthropocene had caused a state shift in the Earth systems: the deep future is already here, and it is rather appalling than appealing.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, there is some un/decidable futurity. When Szwarc un-fixes the expression "that would be all", changing it into "that would be nothing at all", it is another sign of decadence (yes, "our world" comes to an end, whatever it means). But this very decadence is dismissed by the literal meaning: as if "nothing" situated itself at the bottom of "all". In fact, according to Barad's interpretation of quantum physics, nothingness is far from being empty. Literally, there is a *thing* in the middle of no-thing-ness: "The void can hardly be thought of as that which doesn't matter!" (Barad, 2018, p. 232), "The void is a lively tension, a desiring orientation toward being/becoming. The vacuum is flush with yearning, bursting with innumerable imaginings of what could be" (Barad, 2012, p. 13). Moreover, the quantum im/possibility of nothingness questions the very law of non-contradiction which, according to Morton, is one of the three axioms of agrilogistics (2016, p. 47). So, decadence and futurity haunt us at the same time. They are cut together-apart.

One poem that takes on that hesitating futurity is *Hey Flower* where Szwarc's subject is caught up in a weird, strange intra-action with a plant. It is weird because all the signs point to a fact that it should not flourish in a current state of late-capitalist affairs:

Why are you growing, flower,  
when the soil from which you had,

let's say, the guarantee lies  
intoxicated, stimulating nothing

particular? Besides, the unfavorable  
settings in the air, water,

and the commitment at almost every  
level make you

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<sup>6</sup> No matter where we nail the "Golden Spike" marking the beginning of the Anthropocene, it is a past that has never ended, like the 8:15, September 6, 1945, when the atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima (see: Barad, 2018; Rogowska-Stangret, 2021).



fully entitled to feel  
cropped out?

What kind of success you'd like to achieve?  
What are you trying to prove?  
(Szwarc, 2020, p. 42)

The human subject is amazed by the flower's ability to grow in barren, intoxicated soil. At the same time, in posing a question to the flower, Szwarc points toward the "weird weirdness" Morton relates to ecological awareness: the awareness that something is constantly missing in our thinking of ecological interdependence. We do not see all the connections, all the entanglements. And this is because we, along with every other being, co-exist in a loop:

Ecological awareness is weird: it has a twisted, looping form. [...] Ecological awareness is a loop because human interference has a loop form, because ecological and biological systems are loops. And ultimately this is because to exist at all is to assume the form of a loop. The loop form of beings means we live in a universe of finitude and fragility, a world in which objects are suffused with and surrounded by mysterious hermeneutical clouds of unknowing. (Morton, 2016, p. 6)

Once again, it is a weird coincidence that Szwarc loops his poems, as well, activating recursive, iterative repetitions of certain phrases and threads (in one particular poem, as we will see below, he even uses the word "loop"). These operations certainly affect the hermeneutical incomprehensibility of his texts, exactly like the positive and negative feedback loops in Earth's climate that elicit the cognitive and affective "scalar dissonance" of the Anthropocene (see: Keller, 2017) – yet another way to formally hint at ecological issues outside the scope of representation.

Meanwhile, the flower is growing. What is noteworthy here is that it takes place despite the economic rhetoric that dominates the poem: warranty, stimulation, commitment, entitlement, and, last but by no means least, being "cropped out". The latter phrase indicates that for Szwarc, capitalist agriculture is an important factor behind wiping out the entanglements of the life forms (not to mention the wiping out of the life forms as such).<sup>7</sup> The flower is "cropped out" because it has to make space for monocultural crops. While we might associate this insight with the concept of the Plantationocene (see: Haraway, Tsing, 2019), I would argue that the roots of the whole process run deeper. Namely, "the interest at almost every level" is strictly connected to agrilogistics which started 12,000 years ago but accelerated

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<sup>7</sup> In Barad's term, capitalism "erases" the entanglements, as if it dealt with a completely empty void (deprived of all the fluctuations of virtual particles – something they discuss under the rubric of "quantum eraser") that only waits to be filled with crops (see: Barad, 2007, pp. 310–317).

in the modern era along with the introduction of capitalist industrial agriculture. Let me follow this *beaten* track since it looms large in the long, complex poem *Boiler Broad Bean* (Szwarc, 2020, pp. 10–12).

#### 4. UN/DOING OF AGRIOLOGISTICS

The poem starts like this:

Then think about the bottomless sky that you weren't  
able to scent.

That it is exactly the sky that will capture everything and will keep  
capturing, and that it will be

death which will work its way there. On the side, amid laughter,  
meters, he, filled up like an old clunker.

As if it did chance.

For sure, it is a weird text. From the very beginning, we find ourselves entrapped in the middle of something, within a strange loop. Since the piece begins with the word “then”, something must have happened before. Maybe it is only a reference (a linkage) to the previous poem that ends with the line “Eat a grenade in honor of what’s-his-name” (Szwarc, 2020, p. 9) (which may imply that the name under investigation is “Boiler Broad Bean”), or maybe we are in the aftermath of an important event, perhaps the extinction event. That second suggestion finds its confirmation in what follows. The sky appears to be bottomless (like a bottomless sink for the greenhouse gases it captures and accumulates)<sup>8</sup> because we are not able to scent it, meaning: to feel it, to acknowledge its importance.

Let me recall at that point that according to Morton, one of the functions of agrilogistics is to “eliminate fear, anxiety, and contradiction [...] by establishing thin rigid boundaries between human and nonhuman worlds and by reducing existence to sheer quantity” (Morton, 2016, p. 43). Hence, the laughter (frivolousness? ignorance?) and meter (economic measure? scientific data?), put into the poem *literally* out of nowhere. But, it turns out, the sky actually exists and will continue

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<sup>8</sup> It is possible that Szwarc plays here with the collocation “crass stupidity” which translates into Polish as “bottomless stupidity”. If the association is correct, then we might read it as a phraseological neologism based on the replacement of one of the elements. One possible implication of that would be that it is bottomlessly stupid to think that the sky is bottomless.

to exist (religious connotations with infinity might play a role here, as we will see) despite the death lurking there, like the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which quite clearly implies the sixth mass extinction caused by global warming. The closing line sounds peculiar and is hard to unpack, except for the expression “it did chance” by which we can understand that from the beginning, agrilogistics has been a hazardous enterprise missing the point that everything in the world happens *by chance* and it is impossible to eliminate contradictions and fear.

In the second part, we move into the deep past:

He was only doing. Confirming the shift of the forms. He didn't know  
what the crop was. What is

a loop. ...

I will be you. Having exhausted the deposits, humanity then posits to take  
from the bed made by its old man,

its old man is Broad Bean.

The first thing I would like to underscore with regard to this section is that in Polish, “broad bean” (*bób*) is very close to “God” (*Bóg*), and maybe that is why Szwarc writes it in capital letters, calling it the “old man” of humanity – an obvious periphrasis for God. So, one English equivalent for this pun might be “Broad Being”. But why fuss over it? Well, there is a strong reason. Broad bean was already grown in the Neolith and is not found in the wild. It has been strictly domesticated as early as in the Neolithic Revolution, the moment of the birth of humanity as we know it. What is more, we do not know neither the origins of the plant as such nor the etymological roots of the word “broad bean”, and this obscurity is a clear sign of the agrilogistic separation from the more-than-human world, the oblivion of coexistence with other beings.

Here the connection between “broad bean” and “God” (between “cultivation” and “cult,” if you want) becomes more noticeable. For the beginning of cultivation also initiated the institutional religions that, in turn, reinforced the social hierarchization and state violence. As Anna Tsing puts it, “*Cereals domesticated humans*” (2012, p. 145), not the other way round. The Neolithic Revolution was the main factor behind the whole new social arrangements, not only separating humans from the world but also instituting patriarchy, private property, and the state with its monopoly on violence, all of which were supported by different forms of religious faith. That “moment” of the establishment of agrilogistics has never ended. It has been looped. We still live within its confinements – yet another example of

the superposition where “space and time are subject to diffraction, dispersal, each moment is a multiplicity within a given singularity” (Barad, 2017, p. 106).

Importantly, before the Broad Bean, the man was not subjected to that loop, and he did not know what the crop was. Szwarc, likewise, treats that diffracted establishment of agrilogistics as a defining moment for humanity as we know it. Now, taking a small step across a few thousand years, he deals with the late consequences. The phrase “I will be you” could mean that “we are all in this together”, like in the clichéd slogan for the Anthropocene, but we can also read it in a more post-human manner, as an outcry for the re-connection between humans and non-humans. The reading we privilege notwithstanding, we face yet another defining moment where agrilogistics begins to eat its own tail (and yes, the Ouroboros is one of the images Morton uses in his thinking). When all the so-called externalities have been exhausted (on both sides of the system – the “natural resources” on the input, the dumping sites on the output), we turn to the so-called unconventional resources, only exacerbating the trouble we are in (one possible meaning of the idiom “make one’s bed”). Not to mention that we certainly do not want to stay with the trouble, as Haraway would advise (2016). Instead, in a desperately modern manner, we are constantly purifying:

How many him or times is that, as a spirit  
or you,

he curses the ground that he weeded out, watered  
and organized

for the sake of nothing but losses? Causing joy to the sky  
that takes the piss of stock market boom,

son: everything at a knockdown.

The passage continues with the biblical imagery, hinting at God’s words from Genesis 3:17 “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it”. Now, it is worth mentioning that for some anthropologists, the biblical myth of the fall from Eden is a narrative about the Neolithic Revolution and the related transition from hunting and gathering to sedentism (see: Merchant, 2003). As opposed to the dominant views, they claim it radically decreased the quality of life, privileging the quantity over it. That is why for Morton the third axiom of agrilogistics goes like that: “Existing is always better than any quality of existing” (2016, p. 47), clearly a very problematic line when we consider the structural causes of overpopulation in the Global South or the dramatic living conditions of the so-called livestock.

So, despite the gargantuan amount of human enterprise, it results only in losses. Here, the contrast between the ground and the sky enters where the sky, additionally, is weirdly anthropomorphic. One possible explanation would be that the sky is only a metonymy for evil demiurge who is happy about human failure. Then again, that demiurge himself is only a figure for the process Haraway calls “the astralization”: the civilizing efforts to ignore the chthonic powers by establishing astralized gods (2016, p. 48) or, as Morton would say, to exclude undomesticated lifeforms that are not part of our agrilogistic project (2016, p. 47). Thus, the joy of the sky Szwarc writes about is an ironic play with, let us say, astralized agrilogistics. The irony keeps going with the mocking of the language of economy. Commonly, the stock market boom is associated with the astralized images (get something off the ground, the sky is the limit, etc.), whereas what is going on *down there* are multiple knockdowns.

The original Polish expression used here by Szwarc (*dawać upust*) has two meanings: 1. to give a discount, 2. to give vent to something. In English, we can say that the capitalist economy grants us the knockdown prices (something that can be attributed to Jason W. Moore’s notion of “Cheap Nature” [see: 2016]), at the same time knocking down all the lifeforms. Or that the sky almost literally lets off steam, giving vent to the surplus greenhouse gases it accumulates and thus, by multiple positive feedback loops, disturbing the carbon cycle.

Finally, the word “son” appears to be less out-of-context, since according to anthropocentric religions, we are all the sons of God. Whether we like it or not, we are all heirs of the Neolithic Revolution. There is a little bean counter within everyone, so to speak. Hence, the ill-formed question “How many him”, as if we were all the “Anthropos” of the Anthropocene, incarnating itself from generation to generation over the last 12,000 years. It is rather a critique of the abstract discourse of the Anthropocene on Szwarc’s side than his approval of it. Since, as we read in the next paragraph: “Once upon a time, the world was being created, the business got off the ground, / and the tornado as well [...]”. Still with religious connotations in the background, we can say it is not about the world Barad has in mind when she speaks of “being *of* the world”. It is about being-in-the-world as a function of agrilogistics: “The very concept of »world« as the temporality region suffused with human destiny emerges from agrilogistic functioning. World, as Heidegger knew, is *normative*: the concept works if some beings have it and some don’t” (Morton, 2016, p. 46). Only when we think in such terms can we get the business off the ground, thus disrupting some entanglements in favor of others and, by the same token, instigating another loop, this time represented by the tornado.

Now, think once again about the body out of work:  
its transportation

to the gardens becomes more and more efficient,  
you make your way with it through bad crops

you carry it like vaccinated burgers, farcing for marching,  
marsh in which you'll multiply your species and gain.  
With an isotonic drink as a keynote,  
you'll finally ask:

is there a Broad Bean?

There are further references to agrilogistics in this fragment but set in a different context, as if we moved once again from the beginning of the Neolithic Revolution to its late consequences. For I suggest this part of Szwarc's poem handles the capitalist industrial livestock production. In other words, the body here is the animal flesh. While in terms of the actual physical work (perhaps something Karl Marx would call "living labour" [2006, p. 30]) it is incredibly productive, it may be called "out of work" since within the capitalist political economy its labor remains unpaid, as if it was a "free gift" from nature (Marx, 1977, p. 745; Burkett, 1999). At the same time, capital's "success" hinges on it at least as a source of cheap proteins that increase the efficiency of the work labor and, as a consequence, multiply the affluence.

However, it should not come as a surprise that Szwarc disrupts capitalist view by two disconcerting phrases: "vaccinated burgers" (maybe an allusion to the usage of antibiotics in the factory farming) and "farcing for marching" (maybe a prediction of climate wars in which humans will themselves become the flesh they eat, as in the expression "cannon fodder"). By all means, industrial livestock production can be called "farmageddon" (LyMBERY, Oakeshott, 2014), both because of the horrible conditions for the animals and the disorder in the planetary metabolism it creates.

Conceivably, Szwarc's association with the isotonic drink as a *keynote* derives from this point. If factory farming is only possible when we ignore crucial entanglements in the world, Szwarc brings us back to the molecular level where the solution is isotonic only when there occurs dynamic osmosis in the concentration of moles. So, at least metaphorically, it resembles the dynamic balance of ecosystems of the traditional ecology or, more up-to-speed with contemporary thought, the sympoietic systems Haraway advocates for (2016). From that perspective, it makes perfect sense to ask whether there is a Broad Bean (God) or was it only an all-to-human, hyper-tonic idea, sucking the life out of the world? Still, the ambiguity remains

since the isotonic *drink* rings more a consumerist than a molecular bell. It almost literally works like a *pharmakon*, a molecular medication and a consumerist poison at the same time.

Finally, the second word of the title, “Boiler”, becomes less incomprehensible. It is hard to make a decisive point about the meaning of its usage, but we can at least say that it is relatively close to the word for broiler chicken, both a symbol and one of the billions of material victims of industrial livestock production. Moreover, “boiler” and “broiler” are weirdly entangled in a different, crucial sense. Boiler as a device provides either power (in a steam engine, which connects it to the Industrial Revolution) or heating, exactly like broiler that is bred and raised as a cheap source of energy but (if I may use it as a metonymy for the whole factory farming) is also the main factor behind global warming (Goodland, Anhang, 2009; IPCC, 2019). So, while the connection between “boiler” and “broiler” may be a bit shaky (and, certainly, not as strong as the entanglement between “broad bean” and “God”), I believe the last part of Szwarc’s poem makes perfect use of it:

Now, think about the aim: its shift becomes  
systematic,

its old man has been getting hot like boiler, has been getting old  
and cold like a cheap boiler

its old man is a boiler filled with marsh, an exhausted  
deposit in which you’ll grub

off your shares, and when you go over to something more  
frugal, you’ll ask again:

when did Broad Bean exist?  
When did Boiler exist?

The beginning and the end of agrilogistics compress into an ontologically indeterminate superposition of different times (see: Barad, 2018). The original aim of eliminating fear and contradiction by separating humanity from the rest of the living world appears to be impossible to achieve. Moreover, its so-called side effects instigate a state shift in planetary living conditions, one of the best-known aspects of the Anthropocene (Steffen, Broadgate, Deutsch, Gaffney, Ludwig, 2015). It becomes systematic because, as we know, multiple feedback loops render climate change nonlinear (Budziszewska, Kardaś, Bohdanowicz, 2021; Dijkstra, 2013) so what we are facing with the climate catastrophe is not simply constant warming but rather a shift towards the “planetary *terra incognita*” (Crutzen, Steffen, McNeill,

2007, p. 614). Perhaps this is the reason for the contradictory phrase from the second verse: the old man of humanity (at this time we no longer know if it is a Broad Bean or a Boiler since they are intra-connected) has been getting hot (because global warming *does* progress) and cold (because the exhausted boiler of the capitalist regime can no longer operate in the shifting conditions).

Here, the fact that the boiler is “cheap” and that the “marsh” from the previous part has jumped into this closing excerpt might be meaningful. Broiler chickens are certainly paradigmatic examples of Moore’s “Cheap Nature” deprived of its non-quantitative features. It is no exaggeration to call chicken meat produced on industrial scale junk food, which is one possible association coming to mind along with the word “marsh”. For the last time, Szwarc plays for high stakes with the language of economy. Grubbing in the exhausted deposits for the unconventional fossil fuels or for the more and more difficult to extract minerals is compared to the loss of shares – not necessarily market shares, but everything humans share with the more-than-human non/living beings. Despite the end of the so-called external world (see: Altvater, 2016), business as usual continues.

However, at this point, something weirdly positive emerges out of *the blue*. Having exhausted all the shares, the “you” Szwarc talks to will turn to something more frugal, which indicates a shift from agrilogistics to something along the lines of ecological economics. The final questions mark a transition into the deep future (which may as well be the deep past) deprived of the astralized gods, where Broad Bean and Boiler are un/done.

## 5. WRAPPING (AGRILOGISTICS) UP

The poem *Boiler Broad Bean* is a material-discursive diffraction (rather than a re-presentation) of the long shadow of agrilogistics ranging across the geological scale. Much like Morton and Barad, Szwarc acknowledges that we are entrapped within this “hyperobject” (Morton, 2013), in the midst of these planetary entanglements. Thereby, he would agree that the distinction between “micro” and “macro” is “a line in the sand” (Barad, 2018, p. 214), although he uses the language of molecular biology instead of quantum physics, so perhaps better words here would be “the molar” and “the molecular” from Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987).

Nevertheless, the scalar dissonance of the Anthropocene (Keller, 2017) is a fact that the mainstream political and economical discourse is still trying to erase with a kind of “pseudo-quantum eraser”, ignoring – at its (and our) own peril – the entanglements we are in. As Barad says, “Attempts at erasure always leave material traces:



what is erased is preserved in the entanglements, in the diffraction patterns of being/becoming” (2018, p. 229). Since Swarc hints at many of those “material traces” in *Polysaccharides* (one another poem that would be particularly noteworthy here is *Proscenium*), I would say that in his own manner, he embodies Barad’s practice of the “un/doing of time” and “re-membering” (2018), inverting the tracks of agrilogistics and becoming a member of something else. Becoming-molecular would mean in his case reintroducing ourselves into a more-than-human community. So, if the necessary practice of agrilogistics is to part and parcel, Swarc is convinced that agrilogistics does not have to be part and parcel of the world we are of.

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