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Environmental Doctoral Studies, 2023

SUMMARY OF ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE DOCTORAL THESIS
– REMEMBERING PLACES:

VIRTUAL SPACES OF DEATH EXTENSIONS AS A MANIFESTATION OF ECSTATIC TRUTH.

1.ABSTRACT

The issues of Remembering Places concern contemporary technological forms of prolonging life and creating digitized forms of memory of the deceased, with animals as the subject. I do not treat the practical part of the doctorate as a finished work, but as a proposal for a new creative method for digital forms of memory. Death extensions are a term that I unde stand as a visual and linguistic utopia, as well as a narrative space, in which the dead animal body is at the centre. If we assume that technological life extensions are an extension of the activity or representation of the dead as living, and death extensions extend the fact of death of someone who was once alive, then paradoxically life extensions tend to produce associations related to death, while death extensions ignite thoughts about life. Being with the alive again, in the form of a chatbot or its virtual representation, over time I realize that I am spending time with someone/something different, confirming the fact of their death.

The aim of the death extensions is to bring the dead body back to the attention zone thanks to the possibilities and at the

same time limitations offered by virtual reality. Remembering Places are proposed as a substitute for virtual cemeteries. Ultimately, the intention of Remembering Places is to familiarize and elevate the death of an animal. I see the need for such an experience in thanatopsis: in romantic and contemporary fascinations with journeys to places associated with death. Remembering Places are places of memory; a virtual place to visit a deceased animal devoted to the landscape. Its subjetification through the aestheticization and fabrication of the representation of the dead body in virtual space. I seek the methods for this enchantment in the concept of ecstatic truth proposed by Werner Herzog, according to which it is the truth of cinema that allows the viewer to feel *erhaben* - sublimity, which can only be experienced through the stylization of facts. In Remembering Places, death is taken to another level through virtual reality, revealing the dead animal's body.

2. FORMAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICAL PART

The practical part of the doctoral thesis is a simulation game-created using the Unity engine. It consists of three levels: *Anonymous Head Bay*, *Lucian's Tomb*, and *Diana's Island*. Each of the levels is a landscape representation created in the engine. The three-dimensional models that make up the game world have been placed in the engine are original creations or belong to assets previously purchased and owned by me. Each of the three animal models placed in the game is a three-dimensional scan of a real dead animal made using photogrammetry technology. The use of this technology was crucial due to the simplicity of generating a 3D model from photos. The simultion game world can be experienced using a head-mounted display (HMD) system that allows experiencing virtual reality through VR goggles.

3. THEORETICAL PART

I. LIFE EXTENSIONS

Part One of the doctoral dissertation consists of six subchapters.

In Alive again I introduce the myth of Hippolytus, a Greek/Roman hero who is brought back to life as a new person, Virbus. The myth will serve as a metaphor for technological life extensions in further chapters.

Miyeok-guk is dedicated to the Korean documentary film *Meeting You* produced by Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation. It tells the story of Na-yeon, a tragically deceased girl who is brought back to life through virtual reality technology.

[*] concerns the role of cyberspace in bringing death back into the public domain. In the text, I rely on many case studies, the most important of which are: virtual diaries - posthumous user accounts on Facebook with the *In Memoriam* status.

Virtual Cemetery - this analyses the phenomenon of virtual cemeteries, and in particular the Polish e-cemetery: http://wirtualnycmentarz.pl.

Penny describes the phenomenon of death spectacle and the participation in experiencing loss on the portal youtube.com, based on the case of Timothy Birmingham - a user of youtube com who accidentally uploaded a video with his deceased wife Penny.

Thanatocorporations explains and outlines the issue of thanatocorporations - present, but primarily future institutions

commercializing contemporary and postmodern death. As an example of such an institution, I mention the Korean Sooam Biotech Research Foundation, which deals with commercial cloning of animals. In the subchapter, I describe four cases shown in the program *I Cloned My Pet*: Blue, Double Trouble, Kabuki, and Lancelot Encore.

II. DEATH EXTENSIONS

Part Two consists of three subchapters.

Expectations is a sketch of the concept of death extensions and Remembering Places as a form of demarcation between the practical work and the thanatotechnological life extensions described in the previous chapter. I direct my thoughts on death and the corpse towards Edmund Husserl. Referring to Husserlian habitual structures, I point to expectations and similarities that the dead body creates in mental content. Finally, I draw attention to the opposition of associations generated by life extensions, for example in the form of a chatbot.

l'Escargot describes the way of building a new life through reduction and subtraction, using the example of the film A *Zed & Two Noughts* by Peter Greenaway and the work of Joel-Peter Witkin.

The Worshipper of the Image - based on an urban legend - The Unknown Woman of the Seine presents the phenomenon of death masks and the case of creating new life (in cultural space) that was born out of the need for the image of a dead body.

III. VIRTUALITY AND THE NEW ROMANTICS

Part Three consists of two subchapters.

Super Me. In this subchapter, terms such as virtuality, immersion, cyberspace, and pre-virtuality are introduced. Using these terms, I present the breakdown of the binary division between the original and the copy as a product of the ongoing convergence of information technology. I also analyse the copy in the context of Jean Baudrillard's *simulacrum and simulation* with examples: Jorge Luis Borges' story *On Exactitude in Science* and the film *Apocalypse Now*.

In **New Romantics** by introducing the cultural figure of the flâneur and its similarity to the contemporary game player, I move on to the idea of the new romantic, outlined by Ryszard Tadeusiewicz as a virtual wanderer who wants to experience through virtual reality what their historical counterparts wanted to experience. I seek dependencies between new romantics and thanatotourists, using A.V. Seaton's thesis on thanatopsis. In the final part of the text, I analyse the similarity of Remembering Places to the categories of thanatotourism described by Seaton.

IV. FICTION IN THE MAGNIFICENT GLOW

I look close at Werner Herzog's *Minnesota Declaration* from 1999 and the concept of ecstatic truth proposed by the German director. Based on Herzog's concept, I present the need for fiction and stylization of a dead animal's body in virtual Remembering Places.

V. LANDSCAPE AND TIME

Part Five consists of two subchapters.

Landscape is based on the analysis of James Benning's film *Landscape Suicide*.

Time describes the creative method of James Benning, who tries to understand and represent history through the observation of time and landscape. The creative strategy employed by Benning is essential in the analysis of the practical part of the doctoral work, especially in regards to the nature of time and landscape in the context of virtual reality.

VI. THERE

The chapter is a response and a dialogue with the text by Izolda Topp: *Czy wirtualność i hiperrealność stanowią dzisiejsze odpowiedniki zaświatów? I czy są one ich odzwierciedleniem na równi z religijnymi wizjami piekła bądź raju, czy tylko pełnią ich funkcje. (Do virtuality and hyperreality constitute today's equivalents of the afterlife? And are they their reflections, along with religious visions of hell or paradise, or do they just fulfill their functions?)* I try to define contemporary forms of the afterlife, pondering on the evolution of the cultural approach to death.

VII. BODY WITHOUT A HEAD

Part Seven consists of four subchapters.

In **Gates of Heaven** I undertake the analysis of the phenomenon of pet cemeteries using the film *Gates of Heaven* as an example.

Cities of Death present the concept of heterotopia based on the example of a cemetery proposed by Michel Foucault, supplemented with quoted fragments from the film *Gates of Heaven*.

In **Body** I describe the problem of capitalist appropriation and functionality, drawing on the thoughts of authors such as Mark Fisher, Rem Koolhaas, and the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Head. In the last part of this chapter, I introduce the word *animot* proposed by Jacques Derrida, which I place in the area of utopia. I present Remembering Places as a hypothetical unwanted utopia situated between personal history and capitalist appropriation.

VIII. BEYOND THE RAINBOW BRIDGE

Part Eight consists of four subchapters.

Rainbow Bridge describes groups operating on the Facebook platform: *Beyond the Rainbow Bridge, After the loss of a dog - beyond the rainbow bridge, and Beyond the Rainbow Bridge -* a support group for pet owners, which are examples of participating in experiencing loss after the death of a beloved pet.

I DIED IN THE NAME OF „ART" concerns the fluid subjectivity of animals and the critique of anthropocentric perspective based on the texts by Dorota Łagodzka: *Podmiotowość zwierząt w sztuce (Animal subjectivity in art)* and *Śmierć zwierząt w sztuce współczesnej na przykładzie Piramidy Zwierząt Katarzyny Kozyry (Animal death in contemporary art, exemplified by Katarzyna Kozyra's Animal Pyramid)* and artistic works such as *Dogs That Cannot Touch Each Other* by Sun Yuan and Peng Yu, *Exposición No 1* by Guillermo Vargas, and *Helena* by Marco Evaristti.

In **Composition for Four Voices** I present the genesis and significance of the term *companion species* proposed by Donna

Haraway, which is essential for describing the phenomenon of interspecies relationships, especially in the context of human-animal relations. Then I return to Łagodzka and Kozyra's *Animal Pyramid* to address the topic of reconceptualizing the notion of death as liberation from the pathogenic myth of human exceptionality, referring to the texts by Chloë Taylor and Val Plumwood.

Remembering Places — epilogue

IX. ISLANDS

Part Nine consists of three subchapters: **Bay of the Anonymous Head, Lucjan's Tomb**, and **Diana's Island**.

Documentation of the practical part of the doctoral work supplemented with author's own, short texts.

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