
BRUNO JASIEŃSKI

His Evolution
from
Futurism to
Socialist
Realism

Nina Kolesnikoff

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Bruno Jasiński was a bilingual Polish-Russian writer who died in exile in Siberia in 1939. This volume traces his literary evolution. The introductory biographical sketch is followed by a discussion of Jasiński's contribution to Polish poetry, specifically the Futurist movement which, like its parallels in Russia and Italy, revolutionized poetic language. An analysis and evaluation of Jasiński's prose work sheds light on the relationship between politics and literature in early twentieth-century Poland and Russia. Most of Jasiński's novels and short stories were written in the approved Soviet tradition of Socialist Realism. His *Man Changes His Skin* is considered one of the best Soviet industrial novels of the 1930s.

The author's comprehensive and skillful treatment of Jasiński's literary production, the first to appear in English, also makes a valuable contribution to the knowledge of Futurism in Eastern Europe and Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union. The volume contains numerous quotations from Polish and Russian literature, both in English translation (prepared by the author) and in the original. It will be of interest to students of Slavic literature, comparative literature, and the literature of ideology.

Nina Kolesnikoff holds the Ph.D. degree in Comparative Literature from the University of Alberta. She is currently Assistant Professor in the Department of Russian, McMaster University. Her articles have appeared in Canadian Slavonic Papers, Slavic and East European Journal, and Russian Language Journal.

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2,3 M. V. Dimić and E. Kushner, with J. Ferraté and R. Struc, eds. *Proceedings of the VIIth Congress of the ICLA/Actes du VII^e Congrès de l'AILC* [Montreal-Ottawa, 1973]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó; Stuttgart: Kunst und Wissen, 1979. Pp. 562 and 728; DM 213.00 (prepublication subscription price \$50.00)

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Introduction

The purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive study of Bruno Jasiński, a Polish-Russian writer, who in 1939 perished in one of the Siberian camps. Like many other Soviet writers, he was a victim of the Stalinist purges.

For political reasons, Jasiński was doomed to obscurity for almost two decades. His books were withdrawn from bookstores and libraries, and his name was never mentioned in critical studies. The situation changed, however, in 1956, when Jasiński along with many others was posthumously rehabilitated. His works were republished and his name attracted the attention of critics and scholars. Since then many valuable studies on Bruno Jasiński have appeared both in Poland and in the Soviet Union, but, as a rule, they tend to bisect his literary production according to the language in which the works were written.

The only exception is Anatol Stern's monograph, *Bruno Jasiński*, which embraces the totality of Jasiński's works.¹ The book makes very interesting reading, thanks to Stern's first-hand knowledge of Futurism and his personal acquaintance with Jasiński. Unfortunately, the emphasis is on the biographical data at the expense of an analysis of the literary works. A completely different approach was chosen by Edward Balcerzan, author of the second Polish monograph on Bruno Jasiński. His *Style and Poetics of the Bilingual Writings of Bruno Jasiński* investigates Jasiński's poetics as a reflection of the poet's peculiar

1 Anatol Stern, *Bruno Jasiński* (Warszawa, 1969).

semiological attitude, where the Reality becomes the Transmitter and the role of the writer is to be a Contact between the Transmitter and the Receiver.² There are also two interesting articles on Jasiński's poetry by Marian Rawiński. The first one, "The Sources of Bruno Jasiński's Early Poetry," discusses Jasiński's early poetry written under the impact of Igor Severianin and Vladimir Maiakovskii; the second, "Bruno Jasiński's *The Lay of Jakub Szela* and Folklore," gives a perceptive analysis of *The Lay* and its ties with Polish folk poetry.³

If Polish scholars restrict themselves primarily to the investigation of Jasiński's poetic achievements, their Soviet colleagues concentrate on his prose, especially on the later novels. B. I. Pruttsev's dissertation "The Literary Career of Bruno Iasenskii" is very representative in this regard.⁴ Pruttsev dismisses Jasiński's Futurist poetry as "formalist, anti-realistic, reflecting the disintegration of the bourgeois culture." He makes an exception, however, for *A Song of Hunger*, a poem which, in his opinion, indicates "the victory of the realistic tendencies." The core of Pruttsev's dissertation is devoted to Jasiński's prose and the degree to which the writer meets the requirements of the doctrine of Socialist Realism. Pruttsev examines problems of "typicality," "partisanship," and "the positive hero" as reflected in Jasiński's Russian novels, and concludes that the writer successfully adopted the method of Socialist Realism. The same conclusions were reached by N. G. Shafer and E. M. Khoroshukhin, authors of two more dissertations on Bruno Jasiński. Both "The Novels of Bruno Iasenskii" and "The Prose of Bruno Iasenskii" deal exclusively with the ideology of Jasiński's prose and overlook its structural and stylistic peculiarities.⁵

Until the present there has been no monographic study evaluating Jasiński's literary production as a whole. The task of this book is to fill this gap by assessing Jasiński's contribution to both Polish and Russian literature and by giving a critical appreciation of his literary evolution. The study is based primarily on Jasiński's literary works, with the major emphasis on those that reveal the impact of Futurism on his poetry and of Socialist Realism on his prose. Jasiński had begun his

2 Edward Balcerzan, *Styl i poetyka twórczości dwujęzycznej Brunona Jasińskiego: Z zagadnień teorii przekładu* (Wrocław, 1968).

3 Marian Rawiński, "U genezy wczesnej twórczości poetyckiej Brunona Jasińskiego," *O wzajemnych powiązaniach literackich polsko-rosyjskich* (Wrocław, 1969), pp. 196-228; "Słowo o Jakubie Szeli Brunona Jasińskiego wobec folkloru," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 62 (1971), 81-118.

4 B. I. Pruttsev, "Tvorcheskii put' Bruno Iasenskogo," Dissertation, Moskovskii gos. pedagogicheskii institut imeni V. I. Lenina 1966.

5 N. G. Shafer, "Romany Bruno Iasenskogo," Dissertation, Kazakhskii pedagogicheskii institut imeni Abaia 1968; E. M. Khoroshukhin, "Khudozhestvennaia proza Bruno Iasenskogo," Dissertation, Leningradskii pedagogicheskii institut imeni Gertsena 1969.

literary career as a Futurist, and this determined the nature of his poetic experiments in *A Boot in a Buttonhole*, *Earth Leftward*, and *A Song of Hunger*. His literary career in the Soviet Union coincided with the origin of the theory of Socialist Realism, which left a strong impact on the structure of his Russian novels *Man Changes His Skin* and *A Conspiracy of the Indifferent*.

In order to do full justice to Jasieński's achievements, his works will be set in the context of the conventions of the period. Postwar Polish poetry as well as the Futurist trends in Italy and Russia will provide a background for an analysis of his poetry. His Russian novels will be compared with the most representative "industrial" novels of such Soviet writers as Fedor Gladkov, Leonid Leonov, Valentin Kataev, Il'ia Erenburg, and others.

The present monograph is the first work on Jasieński in English. For the benefit of English-reading readers, all prose quotations are given in translation. Quotations from Jasieński's verse appear in the original, but a prose translation of his selected poems is provided in the Appendix.

A Biographical Sketch

Wiktor Bruno Jasiński was born in 1901 in Klimontów, a small town near Sandomierz, Poland. His father, Jakub Zysman, was a country doctor who in order to conceal his Jewish origin had changed his name to Jasiński. In an autobiography written in 1931, Jasiński described his background:

I was born in a small town, later renowned for the number of soldiers massacred by both valiant armies in the world slaughter. My father was a country doctor who spent his whole life in this remote corner located thirty-five versts from the nearest railroad station. He treated peasants, who were starving most of the year, for nothing, and for this was known as an eccentric. He was disliked by the local officials, and especially the druggist, who could not forgive him for refusing to prescribe expensive medicine to the peasants.¹

At an early age, Bruno left his native town, first to attend school in Warsaw, and then to continue his education in a Polish high school in Moscow. He spent the years 1914-1918 there and witnessed the events connected with the 1917 Revolution. Unfortunately, little is known about Jasiński's stay in Moscow, and the writer himself made no mention of it in his autobiography quoted above.

Jasiński returned to Poland in 1918 at a time when heated artistic discussion coincided with the rise of different poetic schools. Jasiński, then a student of the Jagellonian University in Cracow, became fasci-

1 Bruno Iasenskii, "Chto-to vrode avtobiografii," reprinted in *Izbrannyye proizvedeniia* (Moskva, 1957), I, 3.

nated with Futurism, a movement which rejected the past in the name of the future. Together with Stanisław Młodożeniec and Tytus Czyżewski, he organized a Futurist club, "Katarynka," whose aim was to promote new poetry and to "futurize" life in old-fashioned Cracow. "Katarynka" was a place of turbulent poetry readings and literary discussions that often resulted in public scandals. The Cracow group established a very close relationship with the Warsaw Futurists Anatol Stern and Aleksander Wat, and together they toured the country. Their reception by the public is vividly described by Jasiński in his preface to *The Legs of Izolda Morgan*:

When in September 1921 in Zakopane I was returning from my poetry reading, where I read my best poems, and the audience was accompanying me with a volley of stones, big enough to split the head of an average or even a non-average mortal, I thought that the opinion of the elite of our public, expressed on the spot that evening, was too flattering to me. In 1921 I did not have any aspirations of being stoned to death.²

In 1921 Jasiński's first book of poetry, *A Boot in a Buttonhole*, appeared. It was distinguished by a peculiar mixture of decadence with urbanism, and traditional poetics with bold formal experiments. On the one hand, Jasiński depicted the elegant life of high society and the extravagancies of the artistic Bohemia, and, on the other, he spoke of the city proletariat, its drunkards, thieves, and prostitutes. The urban landscape depicted in "The City" and "Teeth" included a group of drunkards walking in the rain, the rushing of an ambulance, and the corpse of a woman found in the river. There was no commentary, no ideological interpretation, just a simple juxtaposition of scenes and episodes. In order to transmit the dynamics of city life, Jasiński employed such formal devices as unfinished sentences, elliptical constructions, and the free juxtaposition of words.

A similar combination of urban themes and Futurist poetics characterized Jasiński's next two works, his long poem *A Song of Hunger* and the collection of verse *Earth Leftward*, published together with Anatol Stern. But, unlike Jasiński's early poetry, these two works were distinguished by a clear revolutionary ideology. Jasiński offered here a vision of the proletarian revolution which would sweep away all poverty and injustice and bring about equality and happiness. The poet identified himself with the working people and chose the revolutionary path in order to help them. The revolutionary theme was combined here with specific poetics, often based on biblical stylizations, using symbolism and hyperbole. *A Song of Hunger* marked an important stage in Jasiński's literary evolution—a transition from formal experiments to "engaged" literature. The poet evaluated it thus:

2 Bruno Jasiński, *Nogi Izoldy Morgan* (Lwów, 1923), p. 4.

Despite its ideological vagueness, the poem *A Song of Hunger* was in postwar Polish literature the first important work glorifying the socialist revolution and the dawn kindled in the east. But the remains of petty-bourgeois idealism, like an ill-fitting shoe, prevented me from taking a decisive step.³

According to Jasiński, "liberation" came from outside in the form of the unexpected shock that followed the uprising of the Cracow workers in 1923:

Twenty-four hours spent in the city free from police and troops thoroughly shook my not yet reshaped beliefs. When on the following day, owing to the betrayal of the social-democratic leaders, the workers were disarmed and the uprising crushed, I clearly understood that the fight was not over, and that my place was among the defeated of today.⁴

For Jasiński the man "liberation" meant active participation in the communist movement. He moved to Lwów to become the literary editor of the communist newspaper, *Trybuna Robotnicza*. But for Jasiński the artist the years 1923-1924 were years of inner crisis. He refused to write in the old way, but "to write in the new way he did not yet know how."⁵

That he overcame this crisis was evident in *The Lay of Jakub Szela*, in which Jasiński successfully combined the avant-garde technique with elements of folk poetry to embody the theme of social revolution. Whereas *A Song of Hunger* offered a vision of the future, *The Lay of Jakub Szela* had for its subject a historical event from the past, namely, the Szela rebellion of 1846. To Jasiński the rebellion symbolized the long peasant fight against social injustice. He wrote in his preface:

Even if the historical Szela had not existed, one would have had to invent him for the benefit of the peasant class consciousness. Even if the existing Szela had not been a hero, one would have had to make a hero out of him in the name of peasant martyrdom and injustice. The more so because he existed.⁶

The Lay of Jakub Szela appeared for the first time in Paris, where Jasiński had moved in 1925. The reasons for his emigration were not too clear. The writer himself spoke of his "desire to travel,"⁷ but more likely he left Poland because of the constant harassment from the police and government authorities. He described it in his preface to *The Legs of Izolda Morgan*:

3 *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, I, 4.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 Bruno Jasiński, *Słowo o Jakubie Szeli* (Paris, 1926), p. 3.

7 Cf. Jasiński's letter to A. Mikułka quoted by Anatol Stern in his *Bruno Jasiński* (Warszawa, 1969), p. 71.

Hostile manifestations in different cities, the cancellation of my poetry reading in Warsaw by the police, the interpellation by the members of the Cracow city council to forbid my recital in the City Theatre, my expulsion from Krynica, where I wanted to organize a poetry reading, because my stay there was considered "undesirable to the interest of the Polish Republic," the tearing down of my posters by the public and the members of Parliament (Dymowski), the efforts of the national-democratic students not to allow my lecturing in Lwów, etc. were for me clear indications that I had not strayed from the right path.⁸

While in France Jasiński continued to participate actively in the communist movement. First of all, he organized among the Polish workers a theatre group, for which he adapted his *The Lay of Jakub Szela*. Despite denunciations from the Polish Embassy and persecution from the police, the play was staged in several centres and was very well received by the public. The workers' theatre also played an important political role. When the police prohibited foreign workers from holding meetings, the theatre organized improvised plays that functioned as meetings. The stage was a platform and the actors sat in the audience giving clues, and calling upon the audience to speak out. The evening would usually end with the acceptance of an appropriate resolution. From a legal point of view it was difficult to forbid such "improvised plays."

In 1928 Jasiński wrote his novel *I Burn Paris*, which was published in French in the columns of *L'Humanité*. This utopian novel depicting the collapse of the capitalistic society and the rise of a proletarian commune became so popular that the following year it was published by Flammarion. It was the first such success of a Polish writer in France.

The ideological connotations of *I Burn Paris*, in addition to Jasiński's participation in the communist movement, aroused the anxiety of the French government, which subsequently ordered the writer's deportation to Germany in 1929. Forty French intellectuals, among them Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland, signed a petition asking the government to revoke its decision. The Minister of Justice agreed, but when Jasiński arrived at the French Consulate in Frankfurt to get his entry visa he was refused. As a result he decided to cross the border illegally:

Three days later I was in Trier. In the evening I took the opportunity to look over the city where Marx was born. The following morning I crossed the bridge that separates Germany from the "independent Duchy of Luxemburg" without being noticed by hiding myself behind a truck. That same day in the evening, or rather at night, I was on the other side of the border that separates Luxemburg from France, and after reaching the first French railroad station by foot, I simply took a train to Paris.⁹

8 *Nogi Izoldy Morgan*, p. 4.

9 *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, I, 6.

After three weeks of illegal residence in Paris, Jasiński was warned by his friends that there was a second warrant for his arrest and was advised to disappear for some time. The second intervention of the French intellectuals on his behalf resulted in a delay in his deportation until May 15. As it turned out, it was a trap. On the night of April 13 he was arrested and sent under escort to the German border. Since "the German Republic had no desire to shelter him,"¹⁰ he boarded a ship and sailed to Leningrad.

On May 19, 1929, Jasiński arrived in Leningrad, where he was welcomed by a large crowd, which included many reporters and writers. In his first speech in the Soviet Union he said: "On this free Soviet land I want to earn the name of a private of the proletarian cause."¹¹ He settled in Moscow, where he soon became involved in the artistic and political life of the capital. He joined the Polish section of the VOAPP (All Union Consolidation of the Associations of Proletarian Writers), which entrusted him with the job of editing *Kultura Mas*, a journal published in Polish and aimed at the creation of a Polish proletarian literature. In June 1930 he was elected to the Secretariat of the MAPP (Moscow Association of Proletarian Writers), and became one of the organizers of the International Congress of Revolutionary Writers, which took place in Kharkov in the fall of 1930. It was resolved at the Kharkov Congress to establish a periodical devoted to world proletarian literature, and Bruno Jasiński was chosen as its chief editor. The periodical, *Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii*, was published in four languages—Russian, German, English, and French.

Jasiński's first work written in the Soviet Union was *The Ball of Mannequins*, a grotesque play that scoffed at Western social democracy. He continued to use the grotesque in his stories "The Chief Culprit" and "The Nose." The former discredited the jurisdiction of postwar Poland, and the latter scoffed at anti-Semitism in Fascist Germany.

If the grotesque was used by Jasiński as a means of political satire, the "industrial" novel served as a medium to glorify the achievements of Soviet reconstruction. Jasiński's first "industrial" novel *Man Changes His Skin* was published in 1934 and became an instant success. During the years 1934 and 1936 there were nine editions of the novel, and the name of Bruno Jasiński became well known in the Soviet Union. The success of the novel was due largely to its engaging plot, based on the devices of the detective genre, and the use of local colour in the depiction of the construction of an irrigation canal in Soviet Tadzhikistan.¹²

10 Ibid.

11 Quoted in M. Stępień, *Bruno Jasiński* (Kraków, 1974), p. 25.

12 *Man Changes His Skin* is the only work by Jasiński that has been translated into

Jasieński's second "industrial" novel *A Conspiracy of the Indifferent* was never finished. In 1937 Jasieński was arrested and accused of encouraging nationalism and deviating from the Party line. The arrest did not dishearten him, for he knew he was innocent and believed that "sooner or later the Motherland would notice her terrible mistake." These words come from Jasieński's poem written in the Butyrki prison:

I don't blame you, my Motherland, for anything.
 I know that only by losing faith in your sons
 Could you have believed such heresy
 And broken my song like a sword. . . .
 But you, my song, forge the thunders in your smithy.
 Don't weep that we have to lie in this kennel.
 Our fame is shameful, but sooner or later
 The Motherland will notice her terrible mistake.¹³

But the Motherland noticed her mistake only eighteen years later. In 1956 Jasieński along with many other Soviet writers was posthumously rehabilitated. In 1938, however, he was found guilty and exiled to Siberia. In Vladivostok, he became infected with typhus and died on December 16, 1939.¹⁴

English. It was translated in 1935 by H. G. Scott, and published first in Moscow, and the next year in New York.

13 Bruno Iasenskii, *Słowo o Iakube Shele: Poemy i stikhotvoreniia* (Moskva, 1962), p. 117.

14 This date is usually given by Polish sources; cf. *Słownik Współczesnych Pisarzy Polskich* (Warszawa, 1964), II, 32; Bruno Jasieński, *Utwory poetyckie, manifesty, szkice* (Wrocław, 1972), p. 25. Soviet sources, on the other hand, give another date—October 20, 1941; cf. *Kratkaia Literaturnaia Entsiklopediia*, 8 (Moskva, 1975), 1122.

Polish Futurism: Its Origin and Aesthetic Programme

In the development of twentieth-century Polish literature the years 1917-1923 are marked by the rise of several poetic schools, each of which grouped together a number of poets who, despite their differences, united in order to promote new trends in literature. Each of the schools formulated its own programme, often opposite and antagonistic to the others. Ryszard Matuszewski and Seweryn Pollak, the authors of a survey of Polish poetry in the years 1914-1939, noted:

When one examines the literary products of these groups from the perspective of forty years, none of them seems to be free from links with the past. Moreover, none of them, at least at the beginning, seems as different from the others as their contemporaries seemed to think. The borderlines between groups become fluid and the elements of different poetics co-exist in the writings of those who initiate individual movements.¹

The remarks of Matuszewski and Pollak are undoubtedly true in regard to the poetic practice of individual poets initiating different poetic schools, but as far as the official programmes are concerned, the disparities are much greater than the similarities.

One of the first poetic schools to establish itself in postwar Poland was the Poznań Expressionist group which in 1917 founded its own literary review, under the name *Zdrój*.² The editor was Jerzy Hulewicz, and the

1 Ryszard Matuszewski and Seweryn Pollak, "Główne nurty rozwojowe liryki dwudziestolecia," *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 6 (1969), 39.

2 *Zdrój* was published in the years 1917-1922. Jan Stur's article "Czego chcemy" appeared in *Zdrój*, nos. 5-6 (1920). For a detailed study of "Zdrój" see J. Ratajczak,

chief contributors were Jerzy's brother Witold, Adam Bederski, Jan Stur, Józef Wittlin, and Emil Zegadłowicz. Their programme was best formulated in their manifesto "What Do We Want," written by Jan Stur. The true essence of reality, emphasized Stur, lies in the metaphysical experiences of the soul, not in the outer forms perceptible by our senses. The task of the arts is to penetrate the phenomena of inner sensations in order "to give the most faithful and the most direct expression of the bare soul." In order to express all the sensations, both conscious and subconscious, the artist has the right to deformation, illogicality, and formal novelty. But the form of a work of art is not an autonomous entity and has to be subordinated to the content it carries. Content in the arts is what matters, not form.

Some of the Expressionist assumptions were adopted by "Czartak," a group organized in 1922 by Emil Zegadłowicz, which included Edward Kozikowski, Janina Brzostowska, and Tadeusz Szantoch.³ But "Czartak," with its explicitly anti-urban programme, laid the principal stress on the cult of Nature. The city was regarded as a symbol of evil: "a monstrous swarm of the worst instincts." The only salvation for mankind was a return to Nature which would bring back "hope, love, and belief." In short, the vision of "Czartak" embodied the familiar utopia of the idyllic life close to Nature, and determined its attitude towards folklore, regarded as a true source of artistic inspiration.

If primacy of content over form was the battle cry of Expressionism, exactly the opposite view was expressed by the Formists.⁴ The only great value of poetry, argued Leon Chwistek, a theoretician of that group, lies in its perfect form, and the task of the poet is to modify the

"Programy 'Zdroju,'" *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, no. 1 (1967), pp. 83-128; J. J. Lipski, "Expressionism in Poland," in *Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon*, ed. U. Weisstein (Paris, 1973), pp. 299-314; E. Kuźma, *Z problemów świadomości literackiej i artystycznej ekspresjonizmu w Polsce* (Wrocław, 1976); E. Polanowski, "O poezji polskich ekspresjonistów," *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, no. 2 (1976), pp. 29-46.

- 3 The name of the group originated from the name of the old building in Muchawa, a residence of Emil Zegadłowicz. In 1922 the group published the first issue of *Czartak*, which was intended as a regular publication. The plan did not work out and the group published two almanacs instead: *Czartak: Zbór poetów w Beskidzie* (Warszawa, 1925) and *Czartak: Zbór poetów w Beskidzie* (Warszawa, 1928). The history of the "Czartak" group was recalled by one of its members, Edward Kozikowski, in "Emil Zegadłowicz i grupa Czartaka," *Między prawdą i plotką* (Kraków, 1961). An analysis of the "Czartak's" poetic programme was carried out by Jan Prokop in "Prymitywizm w kręgu Czartaka," in *Problemy literatury polskiej lat 1890-1939*, ed. A. Żabicki (Wrocław, 1972).
- 4 Leon Chwistek, "Formizm," *Formiści*, no. 2 (1920). *Formiści* appeared irregularly. After the publication of the first issue in October 1919, there were only two more issues published the next year in April and November. A thorough study of the Formist group was given by J. Szczepańska in "Historia i program grupy 'Formiści polscy' w latach 1917-1922," *Materiały do studiów i dyskusji*, 3-4 (1954), 201-250, and by J. Pollakówna in *Formiści* (Wrocław, 1972).

content in such a way that the form is predominant. The logician changes the form in order to reach the invariable content, while the poet changes the content to achieve the perfect form. This is due to the differences in the function of language in science and poetry. Whereas science aims at the sentence with the clearest meaning, poetry aspires to ambiguity of meaning which allows its formal features to come to the fore. Chwistek's programmatic article "Formism" was published in the second issue of *Formiści*, a periodical edited by Chwistek himself and Tytus Czyżewski, the most representative Formist poet until he joined the Futurist movement.

In January 1920 another literary periodical made its appearance. This was *Skamander*,⁵ the official organ of the "Skamander" group, whose leading poets were Julian Tuwim, Antoni Słonimski, Jan Lechoń, Kazimierz Wierzyński, and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. The first issue of *Skamander* opened with an introductory article by Wilam Horzyca, which outlined the policy of the group not to have a definite programme. But in the next sentence Horzyca spoke of "Skamander's" attachment to the present and of its desire to extol contemporary life in all its manifestations. Recognizing the importance of poetic form, the "Skamandrites" promised to be honest poetic craftsmen, who would accomplish their work exceptionally well. The idea of the poet as craftsman did not exclude the notion of inspiration; the article emphasized "Skamander's" belief in "the sanctity of good rhyme, the divine origin of rhythm, the revelation of images, born in ecstasy and chiselled by work." The above-mentioned article was the only theoretical statement made by the "Skamander" poets; the group was otherwise devoid of doctrine.

Unlike "Skamander," the Cracow group "Zwrotnica" from the beginning gave great weight to theoretical considerations. The elaboration of an aesthetics was for "Zwrotnica" as important as poetic practice. The chief theoretician of the group was Tadeusz Peiper, who in 1922 founded the periodical *Zwrotnica*,⁶ which united a number of talented poets: Julian Przyboś, Jan Brzękowski, and Jalu Kurek. Peiper's basic assumption was that the change in modern life, transforming as it does both the physical conditions and the psychology of modern man, must also influence the development of the arts. "Em-

5 The title of the periodical referred to the name of the river in Wyspiański's drama *Acropolis*. *Skamander* was published in the years 1920-28 and was resumed in 1935-39. There exists a rich critical literature on the "Skamander" group. The most interesting works are M. Głowiński, "Grupa literacka a model poezji: Przykład Skamandra," *Z problemów literatury polskiej XX wieku*, 2 (Warszawa, 1965); J. Stradecki, *W kręgu Skamandra* (Warszawa, 1977); J. Zacharska, *Skamander* (Warszawa, 1977).

6 After the publication of six issues in the years 1922 and 1923 *Zwrotnica* was suspended, to reappear in 1926-27.

brace the present" was his slogan, suggesting the need to introduce new themes: "the city, the crowd, the machine, and their derivatives—speed, inventiveness, novelty." But to "embrace the present" also demanded the transformation of the forms of artistic expression. Peiper explored the problems of the new poetics, elaborating a whole system of principles dealing with the functions of rhyme, rhythm, metaphor, and poetic composition.⁷ In "Metaphor of the Present" he justified the hegemony of metaphor as one of the most efficient means of transforming existing reality into poetic reality with a minimum of verbal material. In "Modern Rhythm" he argued against traditional metric systems in favour of free verse based on the natural rhythm of a sentence and distinguished by the use of rhyme. In *New Lips* he advocated the principle of "blooming composition," in which an initial part presents a condensed expression of all motifs to be developed in the following parts. Each consecutive part would contain a fuller representation of the basic motif, enriched by new elements and shown in a more detailed way. Peiper's poetic theory, embracing a settled and closed system of norms, was distinguished by an inner coherence and consistency which placed "Zwrotnica" among the most interesting schools of twentieth-century Polish literature.⁸

The same could not be said of the Futurist programme, which was often contradictory and vague. One of the reasons for the meagreness of Futurist theoretical output and its lightweight quality was the lack of

- 7 Most of Peiper's theoretical articles were published in *Zwrotnica*, "Punkt wyjścia" in no. 1 (1922), "Miasto, masa, maszyna" in no. 2 (1922), and "Metafora terażniejszości," in no. 3 (1922). They appeared later in book form, entitled *Tędy* (Warszawa, 1930). Earlier Peiper had published a book, *Nowe usta: Odczyt o poezji* (Lwów, 1925). In the first phase of "Zwrotnica" development Peiper had a monopolistic privilege to formulate the programmatic propositions. The theoretical pronouncements of other "Zwrotnica" poets were in full agreement with his ideas. Later, this homogeneous system was replaced by diversified opinions of individual members, who often disagreed with Peiper's assumptions and postulated their own solutions. Cf. J. Brzękowski, *Poezja integralna* (Warszawa, 1933); "Integralizm w czasie," *Pion*, no. 39 (1937); "Wyobraźnia wyzwolona," *Pion*, 18 (1939); and J. Przyboś, "Idea rygoru," *Zwrotnica*, no. 12 (1927). There are excellent studies on "Zwrotnica" by J. Stawiński, *Koncepcja języka poetyckiego Awangardy Krakowskiej* (Wrocław, 1965), and by A. Lam, *Z teorii i praktyki awangardy* (Warszawa, 1976), as well as studies on its leading poets: S. Jaworski, *U podstaw Awangardy: Tadeusz Peiper, pisarz i teoretyk* (Kraków, 1968); J. Kwiatkowski, *Świat poetycki Juliana Przybosia* (Warszawa, 1972).
- 8 In our review of the most important poetic schools in the 1920s we have restricted ourselves to the years 1917-23, i.e., the years of the origin and development of Polish Futurism. Of necessity, we had to disregard all the poetic schools that established themselves after 1923—"Reflektor," "Kwadryga," "Trzy salwy," "Żagary." Information about these schools can be found in W. Szymański, *Neosymbolizm: O awangardowej poezji polskiej w latach trzydziestych* (Kraków, 1973); S. Jaworski, *Między awangardą a nadrealizmem: Główne kierunki przemian poezji polskiej w latach trzydziestych na tle europejskim* (Kraków, 1976); *Literatura polska w okresie międzywojennym*, ed. J. Kądzioła et al. (Kraków, 1979).

a theoretician of the stature of Tadeusz Peiper or Leon Chwistek. Neither Anatol Stern nor Bruno Jasiński, authors of the Futurist manifestos, nor Kordian Gacki, editor of *Almanach Nowej Sztuki*, had the intellectual capacity to evolve a coherent aesthetic theory. Stern and Jasiński were simply poets who wrote the manifestos to stress the need for a new poetry. Their manifestos were often intended to baffle the audience rather than to clarify issues. Kordian Gacki was an acute interpreter of Futurist poetry, but he failed to elaborate a system of concepts which would function as a comprehensive Futurist aesthetics.⁹

It is characteristic that Polish Futurists have never established their own literary periodical. For a while it seemed that *Nowa Sztuka* might have become their official organ, but it ceased to exist after the publication of two issues.¹⁰ When *Almanach Nowej Sztuki* was founded in 1924, it was already too late. The process of the disintegration of Futurism was well advanced and there was no way to stop it. The lack of a periodical was certainly a drawback to the effective dissemination of Futurist ideas, but Futurists solved that problem by publishing so-called "jednodniówki," occasional publications containing Futurist manifestos as well as a selection of their poetry.¹¹ The first Futurist "jednodniówka" appeared in Warsaw in December 1920, and was entitled *Honk: The First Polish Futurist Almanac*. Its authors, Anatol Stern and Aleksander Wat, opened the publication with a manifesto, "The Primitivists to the People of the World and Poland." Its general tone was noisy and aggressive, and its aim was to outrage public opinion as much as possible. It began with a denunciation of all tradition: civilization should be dumped into a junkpile and all tradition should be renounced:

CIVILIZATION, CULTURE, WITH THEIR DISEASES—INTO THE JUNKPILE.
we choose simplicity, coarseness, gaiety, health, triviality, laughter. . .

WE REJECT HISTORY AND POSTERITY.

also rome tolstoi, criticism hats india bavaria and cracow.¹²

- 9 Kordian Gacki's reviews of Futurist poetry were published in *Almanach Nowej Sztuki*: "List do Anatola Sterna," no. 1 (1924), pp. 25-26; "Ziemia na lewo," no. 2 (1925), pp. 49-50.
- 10 The first issue of *Nowa Sztuka* appeared in November 1921 and named as its editors Anatol Stern and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. The name of the latter disappeared from the second issue, published in February 1922; the editorial board included Leon Chwistek, Tadeusz Peiper, and Anatol Stern.
- 11 The most important Futurist "jednodniówki" were *Gga: Pierwszy almanach poezji futurystycznej: Dwumiesięcznik prymitywistów* (Warszawa, December 1920), *Jednodniówka futurystów* (sic) (Kraków, June 1921), *Nuż w bzuhu: Druga jednodniówka futurystów* (sic) (Kraków, November 1921).
- 12 "Prymitywiści do narodów świata i Polski," in *Gga: Pierwszy polski almanach futurystyczny* (Warszawa, 1920), reprinted in *Polska awangarda poetycka*, II, 170-172. An

Laughter and nonsense were pronounced the essential elements of life: "nonsense is splendid, while logic marks the constraint and cowardliness of the intellect." The essence of art, according to the authors of the manifesto, lay in primitiveness and laughter. Art had to go on the streets and become a part of a live circus performance for huge crowds of people:

art is only that which gives health and laughter.

THE ESSENCE OF ART IS MANIFESTED IN A CIRCUS SPECTACLE FOR HUGE CROWDS OF PEOPLE.

its features are external form and universality, and unmasked pornography.

As for poetry, it should dispense with grammatical forms, spelling, and punctuation, while preserving rhyme and rhythm. The manifesto called for a new approach towards the word, understood as phonetic material deprived of its meaning: "The meaning of a word is secondary and does not depend on the idea attached to it. It should be treated as phonetic material USED IN A NON-ONOMATOPOEIC WAY."

On the whole, the slogans introduced in "The Primitivists to the People of the World and Poland" had more in common with Dada than with Futurism, espousing as they did an anarchistic negation of all values and apotheosizing nonsense and laughter. "Dada means nothing," wrote Tristan Tzara in "Le Manifeste Dada 1918":

Every product of disgust capable of becoming a negation of the family is Dada; a protest with the fists of its whole being engaged in destructive action: Dada; knowledge of all the means rejected up until now by the shamefaced sex of comfortable compromise and good manners: Dada; abolition of logic, which is the dance of those impotent to create: Dada; of every social hierarchy and equation set up for the sake of values by our valets: Dada. . . .¹³

The same praise of illogicality and nonsense was expressed in "To the People of Poland: A Manifesto Concerning the Immediate Futurization of Life," written by Bruno Jasiński and published in 1921. The manifesto called for liberation from logic and the rule of nonsense and humour:

We, Futurists, want to show you the way out of this ghetto of logic. Man ceased to be joyful because he ceased to expect. . . .

A flood of marvels and surprises. Nonsenses dancing in the streets.¹⁴

attempt is made here to reproduce the original typography of the Polish manifestos, in which a daring variety of typefaces appeared.

13 Tristan Tzara, "Dada Manifesto 1918," in L. Lippard, ed., *Dada on Art* (New York, 1971), p. 20.

14 "Do narodu polskiego manifest w sprawie natychmiastowej futuryzacji życia," in *Jednodniówka futurystów* (Kraków, 1921), reprinted in *Polska awangarda poetycka*, II, 208-214.

In order to reach the masses, the artists had to go into the streets and organize concerts and exhibitions at the factories, on the trams and in the railway stations, in the parks and on the balconies. The crowd had to become engaged not only as an audience but also as an active participant:

We break once and forever with the fiction of so-called "pure art," "art for art's sake," "art as absolute." Art has to be primarily and above all human, i.e., for the people, popular, democratic, and universal. . . .

Anyone can be an artist.

Theatre, circuses, shows in the streets, performed by the public itself. We call on all poets, painters, sculptors, musicians, actors to come into the streets.

This new mass art was supposed to replace the art of the past, which had outlived itself and had to be dismissed. Jasiński urged that the classics, symbolized by the names of Mickiewicz and Słowacki, be discarded. Paying homage to Romantic poetry for its national character, Jasiński promised to disparage its epigones, presumably the poets of "Młoda Polska," described in the manifesto as the "phantoms of Romanticism."

Contrary to "The Primitivists to the People of the World and Poland," Jasiński's manifesto approved of modern civilization. Technology with its economy, purposefulness, and dynamics was regarded as an art in itself. The telegraphic apparatus seemed to Jasiński a thousand times greater as a work of art than Byron's *Don Juan*:

Technology is an art the same way as painting, sculpture, and architecture are.

A good machine is the finest example of a work of art thanks to its perfect combination of economy, purposefulness, and dynamics.

Surprisingly, Jasiński completely disregarded purely aesthetic questions in "To the People of Poland." His neglect was intentional, for he was to apply these general assumptions to the arts in his next manifesto.

"A Manifesto Concerning Futurist Poetry" was Jasiński's ambitious attempt to provide the Futurist movement in Poland with some aesthetic foundations. First of all, Jasiński insisted on the autonomy of art, which was regarded as a self-contained process that did not bear any causal relation to philosophy or psychology. Futurist art, wrote Jasiński, was not to be a reflection and an anatomy of the soul (psychology), nor a manifestation of our aspiration towards the other world (religion), nor an analysis of the eternal problems (philosophy).

Every work of art, emphasized Jasiński, is determined by its inner dynamics and each component has its value precisely in terms of its relations to every other component and to the totality:

A work of art is an accomplished fact, concrete and physical. Its form is determined by its own intrinsic need. As such it agrees with a whole set of forces which compose it, . . . all the individual elements are co-ordinated in relation to each other and to the totality.¹⁵

Without using the term "structure," Jasiński came very close to the structural approach, viewing the work of art as a complex, multidimensional structure, integrated by the unity of aesthetic purpose. Jan Mukařovsky, for instance, later gave such a definition of structure:

The mutual relationships of the components of the work of poetry, both foregrounded and unforegrounded, constitute its structure, a dynamic structure including both convergence and divergence, and one that constitutes an undissociable artistic whole, since each of its components has its value precisely in terms of its relation to the totality.¹⁶

Foregrounding meant to Mukařovsky the act of relegating to the background the communicative function and placing the act of expression in the foreground. Foregrounding in poetry, according to Mukařovsky, is set over against two norms, that of the standard language, and that of the traditional aesthetic canon.

Similar insistence on novelty as the necessary quality of art characterized "A Manifesto Concerning Futurist Poetry." Jasiński was convinced that the core of artistic value lay in divergence from the prevailing tradition. He was merciless even in regard to Futurist art; the achievements of Italian Futurism were for him outdated. Consequently, Polish poets, he felt, starting in 1921, did not intend to repeat what was done in 1908.

Distinguishing poetry from the other arts, Jasiński drew an analogy between its use of words on the one hand and the use of shapes in plastic art and of sounds in music on the other. Poetry, stressed Jasiński, is a verbal art, since a word is its basic material. Both aspects of the word, the phonetic and the semantic, are equally important to poetry. As for Futurist poetry, it should reject syntax and grammar, but preserve a perfect composition; in other words, allow a "maximum of dynamics with a minimum of material." Jasiński called for the destruction of the sentence, which he regarded as accidental, random composition joined by the weak glue of petit-bourgeois logic. It should be replaced by the condensed and consequent juxtapositions of words, not restrained by any rules of syntax, logic, or grammar. As to the subject matter of the new poetry, it should reflect the changes taking place in society, and speak of the city, the crowd, and the machine: "We glorify life, which keeps changing perpetually and strenuously, movement, mob, canalization, and the city."

15 "Manifest w sprawie poezji futurystycznej," in *Jednodniówka futurystów* (Kraków, 1921), reprinted in *Polska awangarda poetycka*, II, 215-218.

16 Jan Mukařovsky, "Standard Language and Poetic Language," in *A Prague School Reader in Linguistics*, compiled by J. Vachek (Bloomington, 1964), p. 22.

Jasiński wrote two more manifestos. The first, "A Manifesto Concerning Artistic Criticism," called on all authors to become critics of their own writings, while the second, "A Manifesto Concerning Phonetic Spelling," proposed orthographic reform in order to make spelling simple and phonetic.

Although far from being a coherent aesthetic theory, Jasiński's manifestos provided Polish Futurism with a constructive programme. But despite the insistence on total originality, the programme launched in *The Futurist Almanac* was in many ways similar to those of both Italian and Russian Futurism. The antagonistic and uncompromising anti-traditionalism, the cult of civilization, the search for new forms of artistic expression—all these elements of Jasiński's manifestos were to be found in those of the Italian and Russian Futurists. It will be instructive to examine these earlier manifestos and note the striking similarities, which far outweigh the points of difference.

The initial manifesto of Italian Futurism, written by Filippo Marinetti in 1909, repudiated all authorities and all established standards, social, ethical, and aesthetic, directing its strongest attack towards the cultural and literary tradition:

It is from Italy that we launch through the world this violently upsetting, incendiary manifesto of ours. With it, today, we establish *Futurism* because we want to free this land from its smelly gangrene of professors, archaeologists, ciceroni, and antiquarians. For too long has Italy been a dealer in secondhand clothes. We mean to free her from the numberless museums that cover her like so many graveyards.¹⁷

Similarly, the first Russian manifesto, published in 1912 and bearing the characteristic title, "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste," declared the past "too narrow" and the Russian Academy and Pushkin "more incomprehensible than hieroglyphics." And if Jasiński considered Mickiewicz too narrow-minded and Słowacki incomprehensible, this Russian manifesto was for "throwing Pushkin, Dostoevskii, Tolstoi, and others from the steamer of modern times."¹⁸

In addition to proclaiming a complete break with the "stifling past," Marinetti announced the cult of modern civilization and technology:

We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicoloured, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervour of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts,

17 F. T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, trans. R. W. Flint and A. Coppotelli (New York, 1971), p. 42.

18 "Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu" (Moskva, 1912), reprinted in V. Markov, ed., *Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov* (München, 1967), p. 50.

flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives whose wheels paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd.¹⁹

Marinetti continued in this vein in his "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature," in which he advocated a "lyric obsession with matter."²⁰ The new poetry was to discover the activity of matter, and to sing of the instincts and sensitivity of ores, stones, and wood. But the only way to grasp the essence of matter was to rely on intuition, not on intellect or logic. Here we encounter the same contradictions that were present in Jasiński's manifestos—the cult of technology as opposed to the cult of intuition; the fascination with both modern civilization and with earlier times when primitive instincts supposedly held sway; the admiration for the precision and accuracy of the mechanical world along with the appeal for illogicality and nonsense.²¹

But it became obvious to Marinetti, as it was to Jasiński, that a change in subject matter and a reliance on intuition could not carry Futurist poetry very far, and that the revolution would have to be directed into the field of poetics as well. Thus his "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" called for the abolition of traditional syntax, the elimination of punctuation, and the repudiation of metrics. Adjectives must be discarded since they drag and introduce unnecessary nuances. Verbs must be used in the infinitive only for a faster speed. And nouns must be juxtaposed freely with one another to show the analogies between different phenomena. Punctuation, a corollary of syntax, must be abolished and partly replaced by mathematical and musical notations. And rigid metric schemes must be repudiated in favour of free compositions of words, to which Marinetti gave the term "parole in libertà."

An identical concern for the innovation of poetic form was expressed by the Russian Cubo-Futurists, who firmly believed that genuine novelty does not depend on content but on form. Their second manifesto, which opened the second volume of *A Trap for Judges*, formulated a detailed constructive programme for "new principles of creation."²² Chief among these were a disregard for syntax and all grammatical rules, the rejection of orthography and punctuation, the rec-

19 Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," p. 42.

20 F. T. Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature," in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, pp. 84-89.

21 These inconsistencies and contradictions within Futurism were pointed out by Helena Zaworska in her book, *O nową sztukę: Polskie programy artystyczne lat 1917-1922* (Warszawa, 1963), p. 100.

22 *Sadok sudei*, II (Petersburg, 1913), reprinted in *Manifesty i programy russkikh futuristov*, pp. 51-53.

ognition of the role of prefixes and suffixes, the enrichment of the poetic vocabulary, the abolition of traditional rhythms, and finally, and least important, the introduction of new themes. The Russian Futurists elaborated the theory of the "word as such," understood as a self-sufficient entity, not as a means to convey ideas and emotions. The word had been too long in chains by being subordinated to meaning, argued Aleksei Kruchenykh in "The New Ways of the Word."²³ The task of Futurism was to free it from this traditional subservience to meaning. "The word is broader than its meaning," he insisted, and urged the creation of a trans-rational poetry or "zaum'," formed exclusively on the basis of sound with a total disregard for meaning.

A similar demand to free the poetic word from meaning was put forward in *Honk: The First Polish Futurist Almanac*, which also advocated the abolition of grammatical forms, spelling, and punctuation. The latter requirement was also repeated by Jasieński in his "A Manifesto Concerning Futurist Poetry." Like their foreign counterparts, Polish Futurists were convinced that the elaboration of a new poetics was one of the most important tasks of Futurism. But in comparison with the detailed programmes of Russian and Italian Futurism, the Polish programme was quite vague and insufficient.²⁴

So far in our comparison of the theoretical pronouncements of Polish, Italian, and Russian Futurism, we have concentrated on the aesthetic programmes. But the Futurist movement sprang out of a certain interpretation of extra-artistic reality. The Futurists regarded art not as an independent form, but as a means to change contemporary life. Depending on the conditions where the movement developed, as well as the ideology it served, each Futurist school determined the function of art in a different way.

In the case of Italian Futurism, the emphasis was on violence and militarism. Violence, cruelty, and injustice were pronounced the necessary ingredients of art—"no masterpiece without aggressiveness." War was considered the only "health giver of the world"; hence the slogan to extol militarism, patriotism, and the destructive arm of the Anarchist.²⁵

Marinetti's militarism and nationalistic discipline were completely foreign to Russian Futurists, who had begun as spokesmen of anarchist freedom, but progressed towards revolution. When the October Revolution took place, Futurist poets declared themselves on its side

23 Aleksei Kruchenykh, "Novye puti slova," *Troe* (Petersburg, 1913), reprinted in *Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov*, p. 65.

24 It seems almost certain that the Polish Futurists were familiar with the basic postulates of both Italian and Russian Futurism. Marinetti's manifestos were translated into Polish as early as the fall of 1909; see I. Grabowski, "Najnowsze prądy w literaturze europejskiej: Futuryzm," *Świat*, no. 2 (1909). The Russian manifestos were probably read in the original since all the Polish poets knew Russian.

25 *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, p. 41.

and proclaimed their art "the left front in arts" and themselves "the drummers of the revolution."²⁶ "To the streets, Futurists, drummers, and poets," exclaimed Vladimir Maiakovskii in "An Order to the Army of Art," and this slogan of the artists going to the streets suggested the necessity of bringing art closer to the people.

Bruno Jasiński, who insisted that art must be "mass, democratic, and common," had much in common with Maiakovskii, though the Pole emphasized the entertainment value of art rather than its educational function, so important to the Russian. Jasiński's lack of concern for a definite social programme was characteristic of the Polish Futurists, who, by comparison with their Russian and Italian counterparts, were the least determined and the most abstract in their enunciation of desirable social changes.

Some of the contemporary Polish critics, however, considered Futurism a manifestation of "bolshevism," a "purposefully destructive work laying the foundation for the revolution." After the publication of *The Knife in a Belly*, Wierziński wrote in the newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*:

"A Knife in a Belly." These letters appeared on Warsaw walls, they screamed at pedestrians from a huge paper rag covered with the products of so-called "Futurist poets,"—the products of the foul exhalation of Bolshevism. These are not free and innocent jokes, nor literary routines performed for money, but a purposeful, planned, and clever destructive work. . . .²⁷

Futurism also brought strong criticism on itself from the respectable literary critics. Karol Irzykowski wrote an article entitled "The Plagiaristic Character of Literary Changes in Poland," which accused Futurism of unoriginality and plagiarism. A multitude of artistic movements, in his opinion, appeared in Poland unexpectedly and without any justification for their development. A reliance on foreign models secured for them from the beginning a level of maturity that would have otherwise required a long period of development on native soil:

And this, which swarmed out today from everywhere like a spring beetle, smelled from a distance like plagiarism. These creatures came out too unexpectedly, without justification and without a developmental need; they immediately reached a level of sophistication that could not be secured without long explorations. . . . People who by themselves would have never thought of dadaism, nor futurism, do not have the right to imitation, and should be only translators and faithful mediators of foreign novelties.²⁸

26 Cf. Maiakovskii's evaluation of Russian Futurism in "Za chto boretsia Lef," in *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moskva, 1955), XII, 41.

27 M. Wierziński, "Głupota czy zbrodnia," *Rzeczpospolita*, December 13, 1921.

28 Karol Irzykowski's article "Plagiatowy charakter przełomów literackich w Polsce" appeared simultaneously in three papers, *Kurier Lwowski*, nos. 25, 31 (1922); *Robotnik*, nos. 29, 31 (1922); and *Naprzód*, nos. 26, 28 (1922). Irzykowski's article initiated

Stefan Żeromski, a famous Polish writer, also criticized Futurism for copying foreign ideological and artistic attitudes, instead of taking up great social issues:

The news that supposedly "batters with the butt of rifles" at all windows and doors is snobbish news, a literary formula transferred from Russian into Polish books together with a whole system of foreign accessories. It is, therefore, a literary movement, read over, played over, rejected by the local snobbery and replaced by new movements.²⁹

These charges of unoriginality, as we have seen, were to a great extent justified. The Polish Futurists often copied the flamboyant slogans developed by their Italian and Russian predecessors. Although not original in their theoretical thinking, the Polish poets nevertheless did formulate a number of propositions that were later used by their successors, especially by the Cracow "Zwrotnica."

What is more important, Polish Futurists did not restrict themselves to theoretical pronouncements, but applied these principles to their poetry. It is difficult to agree with the opinion of Helena Zaworska that their poetic practice was less interesting than their theoretical programmes.³⁰

To prove that it was otherwise will be the task of the next chapters, which investigate the Futurist quest for a new poetic language. The emphasis will be on the poetic experiments of Bruno Jasiński, who employed all possible means to renovate poetic language—euphony, neology, colloquial vocabulary, and syntax, as well as new rhythms and metaphors.

a long and offensive polemic. Anatol Stern wrote a reply: "Emeryt meteorizmu: Z powodu ostatniego artykułu Irzykowskiego pt. 'Plagiatowy charakter przełomów literackich w Polsce,' czyli jeszcze o wiatrologii," *Skamander*, no. 17 (1922). Bruno Jasiński responded with an article published in *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, no. 37 (1922).

29 Stefan Żeromski, *Snobizm i postęp* (Warszawa, 1923), pp. 45-46.

30 Helena Zaworska, *O nową sztukę*, p. 261.

The Poetry of Bruno Jasiński and the Futurist Quest to Renovate Poetic Language

In 1923 when Bruno Jasiński drew up his “balance” of Polish Futurism, he boasted that the Futurist movement in Poland had originated as early as 1914 with the publication of the poems of Jerzy Jankowski, a “tragic forerunner and the John the Baptist of Polish Futurism.”¹ Jerzy Jankowski’s first Futurist poems were, indeed, published in 1914,² but the true development of Futurist poetry took place in the years 1919 to 1921. The year 1919 saw the publication of Jerzy Jankowski’s *A Tram Across the Street* and Anatol Stern’s *Futureses* (sic), followed in 1920 by Tytus Czyżewski’s *A Green Eye: Formist Poetry, Electric Visions*. In 1921 several books by other authors were published, among them Bruno Jasiński’s *A Boot in a Buttonhole*, Stanisław Młodożeniec’s *Strokes and Futuresques* (sic), and Anatol Stern’s and Aleksander Wat’s *The Immortal Book of Futureses* (sic).

Despite obvious dissimilarities due to the individuality of each poet, all the above-mentioned books shared some characteristics stemming from adherence to the Futurist programme,³ which presupposed the renovation of poetic language as a prime goal of the new poetry.

1 Bruno Jasiński, “Futuryzm polski (bilans),” *Zwrotnica*, no. 6 (1923), reprinted in Andrzej Lam, ed., *Polska awangarda poetycka* (Kraków, 1969), II, 390.

2 Jerzy Jankowski, “Spłon lotnika,” *Widnokrąg*, no. 25 (1914).

3 We agree with Krystyna Pomorska that the basis for the concept of a poetic school is adherence of the individual members to the programme, and not the mutual similarity. See Krystyna Pomorska, *Russian Formalist Theory and Its Poetic Ambiance* (The Hague, 1968), p. 47.

Renovation of poetic language was reflected on all levels of their poetry. On the level of sound it meant a rich "orchestration," with a particular interest in consonant instrumentation.⁴ On the lexical level it presupposed an orientation towards neology as well as prosaisms, and vulgarisms. In regard to syntax it led to the maximal condensation of a sentence, based on frequent use of ellipsis. Finally, it included experiments with new rhythms and rhymes, as well as new types of metaphors.⁵

EUPHONY

"Orchestration," or the manipulation of the sound quality, has always been regarded as an integral part of the poetic process, but Futurism attached to it a special importance. The Italian Futurists were fascinated with expressive sounds, understood as a direct imitation of physical sounds (direct onomatopoeia), or as the expression of subjective responses to external conditions (indirect onomatopoeia).⁶ The Russian Futurists focused their attention on sound patterns, playing with the repetition of identical or associated sound qualities. Consonant instrumentation became their favourite poetic device.⁷

For the Polish Futurists, "orchestration" meant the use of both imitative sounds and sound patterns. Contrary to their theoretical state-

- 4 "Orchestration" is a translation of the Russian term "instrumentovka" given by René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York, 1956), p. 159. "Instrumentovka" was a key concept in the theory of Russian Formalists, who regarded phonetic texture as the underlying principle of poetic language. See L. Iakubinskii, "O zvukakh poeticheskogo iazyka," and O. Brik, "Zvukovye povtory," in *Poetika* (Petrograd, 1919); also Roman Jakobson, *Noveishaia russkaia poezia* (Praha, 1921), p. 68.
- 5 The problem of Polish Futurist poetics still awaits thorough investigation. The existing critical studies of the Futurist movement in Poland deal primarily with its theoretical programme, and not with its poetic practice. Cf. H. Zaworska, *O nową sztukę: Polskie programy artystyczne lat 1917-1922* (Warszawa, 1963); A. Lam, *Polska awangarda poetycka: Programy lat 1917-1923*, 2 vols. (Kraków, 1969); G. Gazda, *Futuryzm w Polsce* (Wrocław, 1973). There are, however, a number of articles discussing individual Futurist poets. See J. Sławiński, "Poezje Młodożeńca," *Twórczość*, 15, no. 5 (1959), 21-25; K. Wyka, "Z ławy metafor," *Rzecz wyobraźni* (Warszawa, 1959), pp. 323-345; J. Lipski, "O poezji Tytusa Czyżewskiego," *Twórczość*, 16, no. 6 (1960), 63-68; M. Wyka, "Tytus Czyżewski," *Twórczość*, 16, no. 6 (1960), 63-68; M. Wyka, "Tytus Czyżewski," *Twórczość*, 34, no. 1 (1978), 90-102; A. Zieniewicz, "Zawijasy Młodożeńca," *Poezja*, 13, nos. 7-8 (1978), 74-79.
- 6 Cf. the remarks by Rosa Clough, *Futurism: The Story of a Modern Art Movement* (New York, 1961), p. 50.
- 7 The Russian Futurists' orientation towards consonant instrumentation was mentioned by V. Markov, *Russian Futurism: A History* (Berkeley, 1968), and D. Chizhevskii, "O poezii futurizma," *Novyi zhurnal*, no. 73 (1963), pp. 132-169, but the most detailed account was given by Z. Folejewski, "Novelty and Convention in the Poetics of Russian Futurism Alliteration," *Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the International Comparative Association* (The Hague, 1966), II, 1310-1316.

ment, Polish poets remained faithful to the device of onomatopoeia. Czyżewski's poetry is a treasury of onomatopoeia, imitating the sounds of birds and animals. Stanisław Młodożeniec's onomatopoeic formulations were not restricted to individual words; in some cases they comprised whole stanzas or even poems. In "Moscow" the ringing of church bells reverberates throughout the poem. The cumulative effect of the words "tu" and "tam" is to transmit the sound of bells. But at the same time they express the poet's longing for Moscow—he is simultaneously "here" and "there" (these being the original meanings of "tu" and "tam"):

tu-m czy-m ta-m?
tam-tam TAM ———
TU-M ——— ———
tam-tam TAM tam-tam-tam TAM
TU-M TU-M
czy-m tam-tam? tam-tam?czy-m tam?
TAM-M? TU-M?
czyli-m tam? ——— jeżeli-m tam to i tu-m
TUM-TUM
a i tam a i tum ——— ———
oj-ja JJAJ tam a i tu-m ———
to-m i tam i tum
TUM⁸

Like their Russian colleagues, Polish Futurists were extremely fond of consonant instrumentation. Their poetry abounds with consonant alliteration, based on the repetition of either a single consonant or a group of sounds. Anatol Stern's "Nymphs," for instance, introduces alliteration of the sounds *b*, *p*, *m*, *n*:

wabio balwieża baby oblane ponsem
i muwio my sie boim czy nuż nas nie potnie
a na to balwież szczerzący plomby złotne
ja gołę baby tylko swym blondynnym wąsem⁹

The function of alliteration in Stern and Młodożeniec did not go beyond sound ornamentation. Bruno Jasieński carried alliteration one step further and developed "semantic alliteration," in which the euphonic effects were strengthened by semantic associations between phonetically similar words.¹⁰ He was not concerned with sound as a

8 Stanisław Młodożeniec, "Moskwa," *Kreski i futureski* (Kraków, 1921), reprinted in *Polska awangarda poetycka*, II, 179.

9 Anatol Stern, "Nimfy," *Nieśmiertelny tom futuryz* (Warszawa, 1921).

10 As Zbigniew Folejewski has pointed out, the Russian Futurists developed "semantic alliteration," where the euphonic effects were strengthened by semantic associations. The new unexpected possibilities of semantic relationship were suggested by

means of pure ornamentation; the sound patterns were of interest to him only if they suggested new, unexpected possibilities of semantic associations. To be sure, there are examples of phonetic experiments in Jasiński's poetry that do not get beyond mere sound repetitions, but they are relatively rare. One has to search for verses like: "nosze stały szeregim nieruchome, nakryte/noga przy nodze." More often the function of consonant alliteration is to create an onomatopoeic effect. The accumulation of the sibilant consonants and the repetition of *krz* in the poem "Morse" transmits the harsh noises of the city: "słyszysz słów różnogwarych nieustanny szum,/szyk skrzyżowanych krzywo krzyków—kling i klangor." The repetition of the word "dzwon" (bell), which carries an onomatopoeic effect in itself, creates the impression of ringing bells in "dzwony dzwoniły i w dzwonach ich krzyk nił."¹¹ It should be noted that onomatopoeia was very seldom used by Jasiński; he was faithful to his declaration of breaking away from onomatopoeia, understood as the actual imitation of physical sounds.

The distinguishing feature of Jasiński's euphonic devices is the emphasis on the interrelation between sound and meaning. One such device is paronomasia, a play on words with similar sounds but different meanings. In "Marseillaise," for example, Jasiński introduces a metaphor "gdzie przepływ w portach liże barki barek," where "barki barek" means "barges' barks." And again, in the opening lines of "To the Futurists" the paronomastic effect is created by juxtaposing two similar names, Platon and Plotinus, and by introducing a pun on the name of Charlie Chaplin:

Już nas znudzili Platon i Plotyn,
i Charlie Chaplin, i czary czapel—
rytmicznym szczękiem wszystkich gilotyn
piszę ten apel.

The pun is based on the phonetic similarity between the Polish words and the foreign name, exactly the same as in:

Poezjo! Utrzymanko eleganckich panów!
Anemiczni, nerwowi, błdzi masturbanci!
Precz! Chcę dziś sławić czarnych, ordynarnych chamów,
co nie potrafią France'a odróżnić od francji!

Velimir Khlebnikov's verses "Lesz lysz/lesz obezlosili, lesz obezlisili." See Z. Folejewski, "Novelty and Convention," p. 1315.

- 11 Jasiński's onomatopoeia is much less sophisticated than the imitation of church-bells in Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer's "Dzwony," where the sound of ringing bells is depicted not by the sound of a single word, but by the sound of an entire stanza. See K. Przerwa-Tetmajer, "Dzwony," *Wiersze polskie wybrane*, compiled by M. Brydzewski (London, 1948), p. 195.

The title of Jasieński's first book, *But w butonierce*, is a play on words; "butonierka" (buttonhole) starts with exactly the same sequence of sounds as in "but" (boot), which might suggest a semantic affinity between them. Despite phonetic similarity, however, there is no semantic relationship between the two words.

Another device often used by Jasieński in order to show the contrast between sound and meaning is the juxtapositioning of words to bring out the potential ambiguity of identical word components:

kłOSy na włOSy bOSo na rOSy
z brUZDy na brUZDy jAZDy bez UZDy
słOńce uLEwa zaLEwa na LEwo
na LEwo na LEwo na LEwo prOSTo
OSTy na mOSTy krOST wodorOSTy
tuPOTy koPYT z łoPOTem oPADł
oPADł i łoPOT i łoPOT i POT.

The words are grouped here on the basis of their phonetic affinity; they share a certain sequence of sounds, while on the semantic level there exists a diversity of meaning. This phenomenon might also be described as "false etymology," since the similarity of the phonetic structure of the words creates the impression of etymological affinity as well.

Jasieński's "false etymology" is often combined with a tendency to impose the meaning of one word on another and thereby to create a metaphor. In "On a River" the word "dola" (fate) gains a new value in relation to "dolina" (valley), as does "czoło" (forehead) in relation to "czułem" (I felt):

na fale fal len na leny lin
nieczułem czołem czułem
od doli dolin do Lido lin
zaniósł wiośła mułem.

Again, in "A Post-War Psalm" the meaning of the word "żelazny" (iron) is imposed on the word "żaluzje" (shutters): "spuszczają z ciężkim hukiem żelazne żaluzje."

Jasieński's fascination with "false etymology" is probably most apparent in his compound rhymes, where the homophony of the words is contrasted with the semantic difference: "zza grud/zagród," "przednim/przed nim," "nastu/nas tu." As a result, a single multisyllable word like "przednim" (foremost) looks like a composite of two words, "przed" (in front of) and "nim" (him). *The Lay of Jakub Szela* is overloaded with such rhymes: "grzyw dym/krzywdy," "kop z kim/chłopskim," "żyw da/krzywda," "uznasz/wóz nasz," "fabryk/bab ryk."

Rhymes, in general, provide us with the most interesting material, illustrating Jasiński's attempts to renovate the poetic language. Besides the traditional perfect rhymes, there are innumerable examples of approximate rhyme, of assonance, and of consonance. Jasiński's first collection of verses, *A Boot in a Buttonhole*, is dominated by perfect rhyme: "bemole/stole," "jesiennosc/kamienność," "niedbała/umiała." Jasiński tries to avoid grammatical rhymes; they are the easiest to find, since their similarity of sound results from the use of the same inflectional endings. In "Marching" the rhyme "pobiegły/cegły" contains a verbal form confronting a noun, while in "biała/przelicytowała" an adjective is juxtaposed with a verb; in "kantem/chryzantem" the two nouns differ in case and number. Agrammatical rhyme confirms the thesis of the necessary presence of two elements in rhymes, similarity and dissimilarity.¹² Similarity results from phonetic recurrence, while dissimilarity might occur on the grammatical level, as seen in the variety of grammatical suffixes in the above examples, or on the lexical level. In Jasiński's poem "Renia's Funeral," rhymes sanctified by tradition such as "księżyc" (moon), "łabędzie" (swans), "fiołki" (violets) are juxtaposed with very prosaic words like "przeżyć" (to stiffen), "obłądzie" (madness), and "stołki" (stools). A similar semantic relationship characterizes rhymes in "To the Futurists," in which "rokoko" (rococo) and "poetyczności" (poetic) from the lexicon of art are contrasted with the medical term "gonokok" (gonococcus) and with the harsh neologism "wkrości" (to pileple).

Even rhymes based on tautology reveal subtle semantic differences. In "Marching" the word "krew" (blood) appears four times in a rhyming position, and each time its meaning varies, depending on the context:

Co? ... Co? ... Leży ... Krew ...
 Łapia ... Kapia. Liście. Z drzew.

 Krzyk. Popłoch. Włosy. Drżą.
 Krew ... W krwi ... Pachnie.
 Krwią ...

 Tu. I tu. I na rękach. Krew.
 Bydło! Dranie! Ścierwy! Psia krew!

In the first verse "krew" is a metonymy; it describes the blood-stained body, not just the blood. The tautological rhyme "krew/krew" juxtaposes the word "krew" with an idiomatic phrase "psia krew," a common swear word in Polish, where it has lost its proper sense.

12 Edward Stankiewicz, "Poetic and Non-Poetic Language," *Poetics, Poetyka, Poetika* (Warszawa, 1961), p. 15.

Perfect rhyme, however, did not satisfy Jasieński, who was searching for new forms, and he turned his attention to assonance and consonance. Assonance as used by Jasieński is based on the alternation of the inner consonants: "rozpędzie/gałęzie," "gorączce/pieniądze," or on the alternation of the final consonants: "żabim/Skriabin," "listach/pisał," "ostrych/ostryg."

In most examples of consonance the alternation occurs between the unstressed vowels, as in "przeleżć/czeluść," "zlepek/epok," "kobiet/obiad"; but there are also instances of consonance with the change of the stressed vowels: "pstrej/ryj," "odpuścić/nieprawości," "francuscy/bliscy."

Jasieński's innovations in the field of rhyme are particularly noticeable when compared to the rhyming technique of his contemporaries. The majority of the "Skamander" poets followed the rhyming tradition of "Młoda Polska," which demanded a complete identity of all sounds, starting with the stressed syllable. It is true that there were attempts to abolish this rule. One recalls the use of assonance by Tuwim, or the juxtaposition of feminine rhymes with masculine in Iwaszkiewicz, but such deviations were not widespread.¹³

Surprisingly, many Futurist poets were also attached to traditional rhyme. Jankowski utilized perfect rhymes in most of his poems published in *A Tram across the Street*; the same was true for Czyżewski's book *Night—Day*. More innovative were the rhyme schemes in Stern and Młodożeniec.

The culmination of Jasieński's experiments in the phonetic stratum are his two poems "Spring-like" and "On a River," in which sound becomes a dominating element in the poetic structure. An elaborate sound pattern occurs in "On a River":

o trafy tarów żyrafy raf
ren cerę chore o ręce
na stawie ta wie na pawie staw
o trące tren terence.

The alliteration *raf* in the first verse is reinforced by the repetition of the sounds *t* and *y*. The second line is dominated by fourfold repetition of the sequence *re*, as well as the anagram "cerę/ręce." It also has a peculiar phonetic framework: the line begins and ends with the same

13 The presence of the unusual rhymes in the poetic practice of the Skamander poets was for Julian Krzyżanowski a sign of their novelty in this field (*Dzieje literatury polskiej* [Warszawa, 1969], p. 575). But, as Kazimierz Nitsch's study has shown, the number of inaccurate rhymes in the "Skamander" poetry was rather small; they occupy 27, 12, and 5 per cent in the poetry of Tuwim, Słonimski, and Wierzyński, respectively. See K. Nitsch, "O nowych rymach," *Wybór pism polonistycznych* (Wrocław, 1954), I, 33-77.

sequence of *rence* sounds. In the third line each consecutive sequence repeats the sounds from the word “stawie,” and the whole line alternates the vowels *a* and *e*. Finally, the last line introduces the alliteration *tren*, thus reinforcing the alliteration pattern of the initial verses. The sound pattern of this stanza is achieved with the help of the existing vocabulary, but it is only the sound-expressiveness of the words that is important, not their meaning. On the semantic level, there is no meaningful relation between words; even if we regard “żyrafy raf” (giraffes of reefs) as a metaphor, the juxtaposition of the words “trafy tarów” and “ren cerę” is completely nonsensical. The same process takes place in the remaining lines of “On a River,” in which the paranomastic pattern overshadows the meaning. We could, however, speak of an allusion to meaning in the poem as a whole, which results from an accumulation of semantically related words evoking a certain image. The poem might be read as a description of the movement of water stirred by an oar, because of the recurrence of words from the same semantic field: “pluski” (splashes), “wiosłobryzgi” (spatters of an oar), “fale” (waves), “wiosła” (oars), all referring to a river. Such an interpretation is also suggested by the title of the poem, as well as by its beginning, “na rzece rzec ce na cerze mrze” (on the river, on [its] surface [someone’s] voice is dying). This allusion to meaning does not contradict the supremacy of the phonetic stratum in “On a River”; euphony is an underlying principle of the poetic structure, and therefore the poem could be described as “zaum’.” Jasiński never went as far as the Russian “zaumniki,” who postulated the creation of a transrational language formed exclusively on the basis of sound with a total disregard for meaning. Kruchenykh’s poems consisted of arbitrary combinations of sound, divorced from meaning:

Zok zok zok
iuk iuk iuk
 pm pm
dr dr rd rd
 u u u
kn kn lk m
ba! ba! ba!¹⁴

His famous “dyr bul shchyl,” composed of analogical, meaningless sound sequences, was supposed to express the Russian soul much better than all of Pushkin’s poetry.¹⁵

14 Aleksei Kruchenykh, “Ispugannaia meshchanskaia pesnia,” *Anfänge des russischen Futurismus*, ed. D. Tschizhevskij (Wiesbaden, 1964), p. 84.

15 See Aleksei Kruchenykh and Velimir Khlebnikov, “Slovo kak takovoe” (1913), reprinted in V. Markov, ed., *Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov* (München, 1967), p. 55.

The only Polish Futurist who practised this extreme version of trans-rational poetry was Aleksander Wat. His "Namopaniki," a name he gave to his trans-rational poems, were based on the phonetic aspect of the word with no regard for semantics or logic. The dominating structural device of his "Namopanik Barwistanu," for instance, is alliteration, introduced in the title itself. The *barw* sounds are repeated endlessly in the poem, either in a sequence of four or as a repetition of individual sounds:

baarwy w arwah arabistanu wrabacają
 wracają poowracają racają na baranah
 w ranah jak na narah araba han. abraam
 w myrrah z bramraju wybieera nab bogawę
 narrawę byh nad boogawotami boogo watami
 trombowali barwiotacze oracze barwiotucze
 obrucze barwotęcze obręcze . . .¹⁶

The poem consists almost entirely of neologisms, diversified in their structure and semantic connotations. First of all, there are neologisms formed as arbitrary combinations of sounds deprived of any meaning: "arwa," "narrawa," "byh," "wikroby." Secondly, a great number of these words are derivatives from common roots, but vague in meaning: "barwiotacze," "pyszanawa," "bogawa." Finally, existing words are transformed into neologisms by a slight difference in spelling: "baranah," "baarwy," "poowracają," "wybieera." Despite the clear meaning of these words, as well as the obvious semantic value of a few standard words such as "araba," "obręcze," "czary," the poem as a whole is obscure. Its meaning is overshadowed by a phonetic pattern which dominates the poetic structure. One interesting aspect of this phonetically dominated composition of words is its similarity to the sounds of a foreign language. The accumulation of the consonants *r* and *h*, the repetition of vowels, and the introduction of some exotic words, such as "myrrah," "han," "arabistan," create the impression that the poet is actually rendering an Arabic language.

The use of this technique of rendering foreign languages by means of trans-rational poetry was a widespread tendency among the Russian Cubo-Futurists. Kruchenykh and Kamenskii imitated the sounds of Turkish languages in "Khosmochai" and "Konstantinopol," while Khlebnikov attempted to restore the proto-slavic language.

In Polish poetry similar attempts were made by Julian Tuwim, whose *Stópiewnie* successfully imitated the melody of foreign languages. His "An Old-French Ballad" reproduced French sounds, while "About Russian Speech" conveyed the softness and melodious harmony of

16 Aleksander Wat, "Namopanik Barwistanu," *Nieśmiertelny tom futuroz* (Warszawa, 1921).

Russian.¹⁷ Tuwim's "Śłopiewnie" illustrated the impact of the Futurist theory of word autonomy on modern poetry. Tuwim, a non-Futurist, became fascinated with the phonetic aspect of the word and produced "zaum'" poetry based on euphonic effects.

LEXICON AND SYNTAX

"Orchestration," that is, manipulation of sound qualities, was one of the means used by Futurists to renovate poetic language. Equally important in this regard was a tendency to renovate the poetic lexicon, which presupposed the use of neology as well as opening the door to colloquialisms and augmentatives.

Neology was considered a very effective means to "disautomatize" language¹⁸ and it was put forward by the Russian Futurists in their first manifesto, "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste." Russian Futurists were the unsurpassed masters of neology. Maiakovskii introduced more than two thousand neologisms, all of which were varied in their structural and stylistic functions.¹⁹ Khlebnikov's fascination with neologisms is widely known, due to his poem "Incantation by Laughter," which consists almost entirely of newly coined derivatives from the root *smekh*.²⁰

The same interest in derivatives was also characteristic of Futurist poetry in Poland. The majority of neologisms invented by Aleksander Wat or Anatol Stern are derivatives from a common root. In Wat's "The Lives," for instance, there are many derivatives from the root *plon*:

i kosujka płonąc tak i płomyki płomień
rozpłonecznionych bezpłonić dopłonąć, dopłonąć,
płonacze i płonaczki spłonący płomieńczarze
białouście! daj białouściech! Gdzie
kosujka płonęła płomieniem płonących płon?

17 Julian Tuwim, *Śłopiewnie* (Poznań, 1935).

18 The concept of "disautomatization" was developed by Victor Shklovskii in his "Iskusstvo kak priem," *Poetika* (Petrograd, 1919). On the level of the representation of reality it stood for divergence from the actual. On the level of language, it meant a departure from current linguistic usage. On the plane of literary dynamics, it implied a deviation from prevailing artistic tradition. Cf. Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine* (New York, 1965).

19 See thorough studies on Maiakovskii's neologisms by V. Vinokur, *Maiakovskii—novator iazyka* (Moskva, 1943), and by Assya Humesky, *Majakovskij and His Neologisms* (New York, 1964).

20 Velimir Khlebnikov, "Zakliatie smekhom," *Sobranie sochinenii* (München, 1968), II, 35. Khlebnikov's inventiveness in the field of neology was discussed in Roman Jakobson, *Noveishaia russkaia poezii* (Praha, 1921); V. Gofman, "Iazykovoe novatorstvo Khlebnikova," *Zvezda*, no. 6 (1935), pp. 209-236; V. Markov, "O Khlebnikove," *Grani*, no. 22 (1954).

21 Aleksander Wat, "Żywoty," *Gga: Pierwszy polski almanach futurystyczny* (Warszawa, 1920), reprinted in *Polska awangarda poetycka*, II, 170.

Stanisław Młodożeniec's neologisms are also predominantly derivatives, with the emphasis on the inner derivational opposition between the roots and the affixes. Most of the neologisms in "Futurobnia," for instance, are nominal verbs, whose tension arises from the juxtaposition of a noun or adjectival root with a dynamic verbal suffix: "upapierzać," "poemacić," "skieszenieć," "liścić," "nózkować," or "łaskawiczyć," "serdeczniejąc," "podserdecznia." A similar process takes place in neologisms like "umojony," "odmojony," "siebiepewny," where the pronoun forms are transformed into adjectives. The tension between two components occurs in the compounds "księgodajca," "mojobytnia," "nogoszycbę," where the existing word is combined with a neologism. As a result the compound itself acquires a touch of novelty:

uchodzone umyslenia upapierzam poemacę
i miesięczę kaszkietując księgodajcom by zdruczyli skieszeniem
księgosłalnia kolejując porozwszechnia wzdalczenia
niewieściatko z długowłosa żrenicuje umojone strofowania
wsłodyczeniu liści do mnie²²

Młodożeniec's neologisms, as a rule, retain a clear meaning, due to the presence of semantically univocal roots, in addition to the subordination of the neologisms to the morphological and syntactic rules of Polish.

In contrast to the predominantly word-derivation neology practised by Polish Futurists, Jasieński's neologisms are based on compound formations. These compounds constitute three-quarters of his neologisms. The majority of newly coined nouns are compounds that unite two nouns or an adjective with a noun, with the aid of the linking vowel *-o-*: "tangoszal," "oknoramy," "parkocięć," or "cichopłacz," "cicholas," "złotogłówka," "złotozamki." Compounds also predominate among the adjectival neologisms, as in "miękkostopi," "smagłośliska," "nizkodacha." The word "egzokwintny" belongs to the same group, and despite the shortened forms of both its components, it is not difficult to read it as a composite of two adjectives, "egzotyczny" and "wykwintny." The non-compound neologisms "kolny" and "rozłśniewny" utilize the adjectival suffix *-n-*, as in "śpiwny" or "szkolny."

More diversified is the structure of verbal neologisms, most of which are nominal verbs that transform a noun into a verb with the help of the suffix *-owieć*, sometimes together with the affix *za-*: "kołowieć," "zmysłowieć," "fiółkowieć," and "zalistowieć," "zaechowieć." This slightly different verbal suffix (the typical one is *-ować* as in "zartować," "pracować") adds freshness and originality. This is especially notice-

22 Stanisław Młodożeniec, "Futurobnia," *Kreski i futureski* (Kraków, 1921), reprinted in *Polska awangarda poetycka*, II, 179.

able in a form such as “zakołowieć,” where the suffix *-owieć* changes the verb “zakołować” into a neologism. The productive verbal suffixes are utilized in the neologism “wkrościć się”: *w-* as in “wleźć” and *-ić* as in “pościć.” The verbs “oszaleć” and “rechotać” are changed into the reflexive: “niech się Pani oszali” and “aż rechoce się serce.” Two neologisms, “poezowią” and “poezawią,” seem to underline the difference between the perfective and imperfective verbs. The foreign name of a dance (two-step) is given verbal affixes *-ić* and *za-* to make it sound like a Polish word “zatwostąpić” (note that *two-* is pronounced here as in “twoja,” not as in English “two”).

From the point of view of their stylistic function, the majority of Jasiński's neologisms have a concrete, non-metaphorical meaning. The words “tangoszal,” “parkocień,” or “oknorama” refer to very concrete objects, the additional feature of the object being included in the second component: “tangoszal” is a shawl that is being worn to dance the tango, “parkocień” is shade in a park. The original neologisms “ofutrzonny” and “zakrepiony” function as epithets describing the objects: “ofutrzonny szofer” is a driver wearing a fur coat, while “zakrepione ulice” suggests that the streets are creped.

Some of the neologisms, however, are used in a metaphorical sense, mostly in the case of verbs; “zatwostąpią latarnie” suggests that the street lamps are going to dance, while “słońce w niebo się wkrości” transmits an image of the sun, which will “pimple” into the sky. The original neologism “przeraz” is a metaphor representing horror. The expression “tak mojo,” formed in contrast to the idiom “nieswojo,” very successfully depicts the poet's feeling of happiness.

On the whole, Jasiński's innumerable neologisms are conventional, formed in agreement with the rules of Polish grammar. Jasiński did not invent any new morphemes or disobey the rules of phonology. Owing to the prevalence of compounds, which are widespread in modern Polish, his neologisms lack novelty and originality.²³

Far more striking in their novelty are the prosaisms and augmentatives used abundantly by Jasiński. The first attempts to lower poetic language were made by the “Skamander” poets, who frequently used prosaisms and colloquialisms. The “democratization” of poetic discourse was continued by the Futurists, who, in fact, replaced the elevated poetic diction with everyday language.

Jasiński's contribution in this field was immense. He utilized all the resources of the standard language—lexicon, phraseology, syntax, intonation—in order to renovate poetic discourse. The impact of colloquial language on his poetry was probably strongest on the lexical level.

23 The analogical fascination with compounds in Italian Futurism had a totally different effect, since compounds are quite unusual for Italian. Cf. the remarks of Rose Clough, *Futurism: The Story of a Modern Art Movement* (New York, 1961), p. 162.

He made use of an unpoetic, common vocabulary, including such words as "karetka" (ambulance), "nosze" (stretcher), "piwnica" (basement), "zrobić burdę" (to kick up a row), "zezować na księżyc" (to squint at the moon), as well as vulgarisms like "szlagon" (a country bum), "cięci" (plastered), "żreć" (to devour). In some of his poems the most repulsive epithets are accumulated in order to describe the repugnant, inhuman life of the city proletariat:

O ekstatyczny tłumie żarty przez syfiliś!
 Zaropiałe, cuchnące, owrzodzone bydło!
 Kiedy w czarnym pochodzie nade mną się schylisz?
 Wszystko mnie już zmęczyło i wszystko obrzydło!

This stanza comes from "A Tongue Tired Me Out," the poem which in many ways coincides with Julian Tuwim's "Spring." Both poets present the city as governed by sexual impulses. In "A Tongue" the crowd "throngs like a huge snake, impregnating the big-bellied, fat-breasted bitches." In "Spring" the spring turns people into animals, and their animal-like behaviour is indicated by the terms "samiec" (a male animal) and "samica" (a female animal):

Wiosna!! Hajda!—pęcznijcie! Trujcie się ze sromu!
 Do szpitalów gromadnie, tłuszczo rozwydrzona!
 Do kloak swe bastrzęta ciskaj po kryjomu,
 I znowu na ulice, w jej chwytne ramiona!!!²⁴

Hundreds of bastards will be born, writes Jasieński, and the fate of these children is predicted by Tuwim: "throw your bastards to the sewer." Venereal disease spreads, turning the city into a "monstrous pimple," full of "festering, stinking, ulcerous people." Significantly, both poets use the most augmentative language to describe the crowd, which in Jasieński is identified with "black and coarse boors," and in Tuwim, with the "ragtag and bobtail," and "rampant rabble."

Common phraseology, idiomatic expressions, stock sayings, and proverbs were other sources of Jasieński's poetic discourse. The description of a cold and miserable night in "The City" is founded on two common sayings, "deszcz leje jak z cebra" (it's raining cats and dogs) and "psa wygonić szkoda" (one wouldn't even chase a dog out):

Noc zimna.
 Zła.
 Przejmująca. Czarniawa. Chłodnista.
 Nie widać ani żdźbła,

24 Julian Tuwim, "Wiosna," *Sokrates tańczący* (Warszawa, 1920), reprinted in *Wiersze zebrane* (Warszawa, 1971), I, 140-142.

Deszcz leje, jak z cebra,
 Na rogu policjant-statysta

 Bębni po ceracie woda.
 Raz . . . raz . . . pach-pach-pach . . . raz . . .
 Woda . . .
 Eh, czas!!
 Psa wygonić szkoda!

Other proverbial constructions function as lapidary comments on events: "też diabeł dał to" (an evil deed) expresses a feeling of dissatisfaction, while "w imię Ojca i Syna" (in the name of the Father and of the Son) underscores a moment of fear.

But Jasiński was not content with merely using idiomatic expressions unchanged. He also reinterpreted them, and in so doing rejuvenated them and gave them new life. The expression "pójść do nieba" (to go to heaven) acquires humorous subtleties by specifying the exact direction: "prosto Marszałkowską pójdziemy do nieba." A common saying "łzy na rzęsach" (tears on one's eyelashes) is comically transformed into "łzy na wąsach" (tears on one's moustache). More sophisticated are Jasiński's attempts to bring a new meaning to an idiom or to restore the original meaning to an idiomatic expression. The literal meaning is restored to the idiomatic expression "zapierać dech" (to take away one's breath) by linking it with the action of the wind: "wiatr zapierał w piersiach dech." The same process occurs with the metaphor "ruins show teeth of blind windows," based on the literal meaning of the phrase "to show teeth," not on its idiomatic connotation "to laugh." And in the metaphor "już myśli jak kobiety wałęsają się z nóg" an abstract concept is animated—the thoughts "fall over their feet."

The influence of colloquial language on Jasiński's morphology and syntax is best seen in his poem "Marching." The poem contains the ungrammatical, colloquial inflections of an uneducated laundress or seamstress:

Panna. Płacz:—Idą. Na wojnę.
 Takie. Młode. Takie. Przystojne.—

Instead of the correct plural form of the adjectives referring to masculine personal nouns, "tacy młodzi, tacy przystojni," the colloquial form is used: "takie młode, takie przystojne." Direct speech continues in the line "Eh by. Było. Młodych. Mam!," based on the elliptical construction so characteristic of spoken language. Ellipsis is the underlying feature of the whole poem; a single word replaces a whole sentence in "Praczk. Szwaczki. Okrzyki. Kwiatki" or "Ludzie. Ludzie. Skłębienie. Potok." The words are freed from syntactic subservience. They function as independent entities.

The poem successfully reproduces the intonation of spoken language:

Co? . . . Co? . . . Leży . . . Krew . . .
 Łapią . . . Kapią. Liście. Z drzew.
 —Puśćcie! Puśćcie! Puśćcie! Ja nieechcę!—
 Kurz. Kłębem. W zębach. Łechce.

Typical cadences and habits of common speech are present here: the rising intonation of a question, elliptical constructions, and short emphatic words. Some of the words are repeated: "Puśćcie! Puśćcie! Puśćcie!" Others, such as "nieechcę," are rendered phonetically.

The same influence of colloquial language on poetic discourse distinguishes Vladimir Maiakovskii's poetry. Maiakovskii, more than any other Russian poet, was responsible for the transformation of the highly conventional poetic language into everyday language. He renovated the lexicon and stock of idioms of Russian poetry by introducing common words and augmentatives. He opened wide the door to colloquial morphology and syntax, characterized by the frequent use of elliptical constructions and the omission of conjunctions, prepositions, and pronouns.²⁵

Maiakovskii's renovation of poetic language impressed Jasieński a great deal, and the Polish Futurist attempted to bring about the same kind of renovation in regard to Polish poetry. In doing so, he often relied on the Russian Futurist's model. The extent of Maiakovskii's influence on Jasieński will be discussed in the next chapter.

METAPHOR

In 1922, in the third issue of *Zwrotnica*, Tadeusz Peiper wrote: "All contemporary poetry vibrates with a storm of metaphors. Never was the metaphor such a prevalent artistic device as today."²⁶ These accurate remarks from "Metaphor of the Present" were the starting point for the introduction of his theory identifying poetic language with the use of metaphor. Peiper regarded the metaphor as a basic form of poetic expression because of its two salient features: anti-realism and economy. First of all, the metaphor transforms existing reality into a new poetic reality. Secondly, the transformation is achieved with a minimum of artistic means, because of the metaphor's condensed expression. Peiper's views were representative of the aesthetics of the

25 The problem of the influence of everyday language on Maiakovskii's poetry was discussed by V. Trenin and N. Khardzhiev, "Poetika rannego Maiakovskogo," *Literaturnyi kritik*, no. 2 (1935), pp. 171-189; and by V. Gofman, "O iazyke Maiakovskogo," *Zvezda*, no. 12 (1936), pp. 197-215.

26 Tadeusz Peiper, "Metafora terażniejszości," *Zwrotnica*, no. 3 (1922), reprinted in *Polska awangarda poetycka*, II, 325.

Cracow "Zwrotnica," which regarded the metaphor as the best means of removing the literalness of standard language and creating poetic ambiguity.

The reconsideration of the function of the metaphor was undoubtedly the most important contribution of "Zwrotnica" to the development of modern Polish poetry. However, some attempts in this direction had already been made by the Futurist poets. It was primarily the economy of the metaphor that attracted the attention of the Futurists. "A Manifesto Concerning Futurist Poetry" called for "a minimum of material with a maximum of dynamics," and the metaphor was an ideal form to amplify the meaning without increasing the amount of verbal space required. The Futurists never developed a theoretical foundation for the use of metaphor, but they readily utilized it in their poetry. This widespread use of metaphor is especially characteristic of two Polish Futurists, Bruno Jasiński and Anatol Stern.

Stern's adherence to metaphor was noticed by Kazimierz Wyka in an article entitled "From a Lava of Metaphors." Quoting Stern's poem "The Women of my Dreams," Wyka writes: "such an alloy, such a lava of metaphors appears everywhere in *Futureses*, and still predominates in *An Angelic Boor*."²⁷ The underlying feature of Stern's metaphors is their strong biologism, which endows the whole surrounding world with the characteristics of living organisms. Nature is often described in terms of the human body; inanimate objects are animated; even technical objects share the properties of the human world. In his metaphors Stern eliminates the antinomy between the animate and the inanimate, between the imaginable and the unimaginable: "Short-circuits of words and ideas that have never met before, and the clashes of entire semantic fields, are so unexpected that they create the feeling of a surrealist surprise, even though their basis is not irrational and accidental, but ingenious and intellectual."²⁸ Indeed, Stern comes close to Surrealism in his unusual linking of words, but contrary to Surrealism, his metaphors are products of the intellect, not of the irrational or coincidental.²⁹

The only other Polish Futurist equal to Stern in the use of metaphors was Bruno Jasiński, whose mature poetry is highly metaphoric. Jasiński's metaphors are diversified in their formal structure, with a

27 Kazimierz Wyka, "Z lawy metafor," *Rzecz wyobraźni* (Warszawa, 1959), p. 329.

28 Ibid., 338.

29 According to the Surrealist theory, the poetic image was not to be directed by thoughts, but by creative intuition. The writer was supposed to listen to the voice of the subconscious and to write down whatever it dictated. As a result the Surrealist metaphor was composed of elements that had no logical relationship with each other. It was based on divergence and contradiction. For a detailed account of the Surrealist metaphor see A. Balakian, *Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute* (New York, 1959), and J. H. Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism* (Pennsylvania, 1965).

predominance of the substantive, verbal, and adjectival. Many of his substantive metaphors are on the borderline between metaphor and simile. It has been generally accepted that the simile compares two essentially different items and indicates the comparison by such terms as "like" or "as," whereas metaphor is an implied analogy which identifies one thing with another. In his book *Metaphor*, Terence Hawkes observes that "where metaphor assumes that the transference is possible or has already taken place, simile proposes the transference and explains it by means of terms such as 'like,' 'as if,'"³⁰

Many of Jasiński's juxtapositions of words cannot be univocally determined. Formally they may resemble metaphors, since they lack the typical simile indicators "as" or "like," but semantically they are closer to similes in that they compare two things rather than identify one with another. A typical form on the borderline between metaphor and simile is a rhetorical equation which combines two nouns with the help of the copula "to be" or a combination of two nouns without any syntactic subordination. The juxtaposition of words in "a small man is a central singing station," or in "night—a miraculous quack," or "city—a factory of people" does not lead to the emergence of a new meaning; there is still a clear demarcation between the two contexts. The same is true for the substantive metaphor linking two concrete nouns in a genitive construction like "lamps' apples" or "a torrent of the street." A basis for these constructions is the similarity of both objects; the shape of a lamp resembles the shape of an apple, the busy street produces a noise similar to that of a torrent. In all cases the duality of meaning is preserved.

A totally different effect is achieved by the juxtaposition of an abstract noun with a concrete one, based on divergence rather than on analogy. Such combinations of words as "a cloud of fear," "acid of insomnia," or "the sea of imagination" create new shades of meanings, clearly distinguished from the meanings of their components. The unexpected linking of words having no logical relation with one another becomes the foundation of many of Jasiński's metaphors.

Very distant semantic concepts are often juxtaposed in a metaphor by connecting a concrete object with an abstract notion: "a spoon of warmth and love," "lining made of harm"; by attaching a concrete epithet to a general concept: "smooth and sticky wind"; or by linking a general concept with a concrete action: "a yelp was climbing," "I shake my anger." The juxtaposed words evoke such diverse and contradictory associations that they prevent the formation of a clear image. Not referring to an observable world, these metaphors are autotelic; hence unimaginable and visually inconceivable.

In Jasiński's poetry the verbal metaphor is as frequent as the substantive one. Jasiński prefers to use the intransitive verb which is metaphorical in relation to a subject, as in "sorrows sat down," "silence walks." As a rule the subject is either animated or personified, but sometimes an inanimate object is changed into another one, as in "words shiver and flicker" or "the houses spilled." The words behave like flags—they "flicker"—while the houses are linked with the flood—they "spilled." A change from one object into another also occurs in metaphors utilizing the intransitive verb in relation to an indirect object, though such a metaphor as "no one will spit a bullet in your face" is very rare in Jasiński's poetry.

The transitive verb, although less frequent than the intransitive, also occurs in his metaphorical expressions. It is usually metaphoric in relation to both the subject and the direct object, and it animates the subject and changes one inanimate object into another: "twilight chased out thoughts," "a night laid a moon egg." Likewise, the transitive verb is often metaphoric in relation to a direct object. In "I shake my anger like the cones from a tree," the abstract concept "anger" acquires the features of a concrete object.

Most of Jasiński's verbal metaphors describe accomplished actions. He prefers to use the past or present tense; there are instances of the use of the future tense, but in such cases the action always promises to be completed: "you will scatter [like] the sea, multicoloured and mottled," and "my cry will spill and shake the city like a girder."

The third group of Jasiński's metaphors is the adjectival metaphor, in which the adjective implicitly changes the noun it qualifies. The metaphoric use of the adjective, like the verb, implies the change either from abstraction to personification: "horror-stricken nights," or from thing to person: "stanzas drunk with rhythm." Seldom is there a transformation from one object into another, as in "velvet hands" or "suede eyelids." The last two examples border on simile, since they suggest a comparison rather than a new quality; "velvet hands" suggests hands soft as velvet, "suede eyelids" compares the eyelids with suede.

The metaphoric use of the adjective is characteristic of Jasiński's mature poetry; in his early poems the adjective functions as a merely descriptive epithet. He was especially fond of triple constructions such as epithet-epithet-object. In "Ipecacuana" we find, for example, "eyes, sunken, so huge and distant," "long, blue eyelashes," "white, suede eyelids," "big, slimy sarcoma," "sad, blue lady."

Most of Jasiński's metaphors result from the juxtaposition of two items, but some of the verbal metaphors are transformed into metaphoric sentences based on a number of phenomena. A description of the rain in *A Song of Hunger* is achieved by a group of metaphors bringing together two contexts, that of a city and that of a cry:

Krople czarne, maleńkie, natrętnie
 wyrzucone z krwią razem z powrotem
 z płuc
 po czarnej pooranej szynami twarzy
 spłynęły łzami tramwajów.

The equation of raindrops with "trams" which "flow on the face plowed with rails" refers to the same sphere of associations, and this uniform organization of secondary associations produces a suggestive metaphor.

This technique of introducing several metaphors, all referring to the specific feature of the described object, was also utilized in the long poem "The City," where the city at night is described by a sequence of metaphors involving dancing street lamps:

Na skrócie ulic
 Lampy migocą.
 Lampy. Lampy. Lampy.
 Wysypały z za węgla łańcuchem.
 Białe. Oszalałe.
 Biegną gdzieś, uciekają gdzieś, lecą parami
 Ulicami. Bulwarami.

 Przeleciały armią szybką, stulicą
 Nad zziębniętą ogłupiałą ulicą.
 Zarzuciły tyse głowy
 na bakier.

The entire sixth part of the poem is an expanded metaphor personifying the lamps. They gather for a meeting, run through the streets and avenues, and dance. But it is a very desperate dance.

Indeed, as we turn to the content of Jasieński's metaphors, we notice a desperation so keen that even Nature is degraded and de-poetized by metaphors setting up vulgar associations. The cosmos itself becomes the object of deliberate attack. The moon is identified with a gonococcus, and the sun with a pimple. The night resembles a drunken woman: "the night drunk from champagne and lips" and "the night had bulging breasts." Nature is endowed with animal features, as in "day dies in the west," "the dawn's red tongues," "the night's gaping jaws," "the trees whine."

On the whole, Jasieński characterizes Nature rather meagrely, confining himself to the more general aspects—the times of the day, the seasons, the sky, and only occasionally specific trees and flowers. For him Nature is primarily the urban landscape, the landscape that can be seen from the window of a city apartment. His urban metaphor, as a rule, animates the city, either by juxtaposing the city with a part of the

human body or its organs, as in "streets' arteries," "street's throat," "stomach of the cities," or by endowing it with the qualities characteristic of the living world: "the streets were bowing," "the black walls are growing." Some of the urban metaphors, however, convey a vivid description of the city by linking the elements of a city with inanimate objects, as in "the oceans of streets," "roadway's stream," "the Saharas of cities."

Many industrial metaphors are constructed in the same way: "eyes' semaphore," "cinematograph of spokes," "the earth's propeller." Animation of machines is found in rare instances, such as "a train was cleaning the windows with a cloth of smoke." Frequently, Nature is endowed with the properties of concrete material objects, as in "sky's asphalt," "the sun's tin plate," "a sidewalk of clouds."

Surprisingly, there are very few metaphors based on the analogy between man and the machine, so popular in Futurist poetry. A few instances of such metaphors appear in the poem "Morse," which identifies man with a telegraphic apparatus: "each of us is a relay station," or "a small man is a central singing station."

A content analysis of Jasiński's metaphors reveals the poet's reliance on technology and urban life. As befitted a Futurist, Jasiński turned to the life of the city where he sought relationships and identities shocking in their incongruity. He based his metaphors on earthy, concrete objects, rather than on abstract concepts so popular with the poets of "Młoda Polska."

PROSODY

One of the striking features of Jasiński's poetry is the frequent use of traditional metric forms. Contrary to the Futurist slogan repudiating metrics, Jasiński is still attached to regular rhythmic structure. All three basic systems of Polish prosody are represented in his poetry: the syllabic, the accentual, and the syllabo-accentual. At the same time he boldly experiments with *vers libre*.

The first volume of Jasiński's poems, *A Boot in a Buttonhole*, is very characteristic in this regard, with almost half the poems cast in the traditional metric pattern, the rest in free verse. The syllabo-accentual system predominates in this collection, especially in one of its trinary forms, the anapaest. The poems "Boot in a Buttonhole," "The Vomiting Statues," and "Corpses with Caviar," among others, are almost classic examples of the four-foot anapaest with the caesura after the seventh syllable, and with the constant hypercatalexis in the caesura and in the clausula of every even line. The verses are divided into quatrains with alternating *abab* rhymes:

Ālē tē/rāz, jēdnāk/zē, //niēch siē Pā/nī ōszā/lī,—
Nāwēt lō/kāj drēwniā/nŷ//jūz ōsmiē/lā siē śmiēc . . .

Dzīs bēdziē/mý pō pār/kū//nā wýsci/gĩ biēgā/lĩ
ĩ nā ľaw/kĩ pādā/ľĩ// zādýszā/nĩ nā smiērc.

Such a regular rhythmical pattern has, nevertheless, its shortcomings. It creates a monotony of rhythm that reminds one of the music of a hand-organ. To avoid this pitfall most of the poets consciously break down the regularity of the rhythm by diversifying the line-length, by shifting the stress, and by eliminating the caesura in certain verses.

Jasieński does this also, intentionally introducing certain deviations in rhythm into his anapaestic poems. In "The Vomiting Statues," for instance, the rhythmic variations are achieved by inserting additional stresses, by shortening the line, or by shifting the caesura. The third stanza has every line beginning with a "heavy foot." Besides the regular stress on the third syllable, there is an additional stress on the first one:

Pānĩ dzi/siāj, dōprāw/dý, //jěst klāsýcz/niē . . .
niēdbā/ľā . . .
Pānĩ, ktō/rā tāk zĩm/nō//grā sērcā/mĩ w cērceāu,
Tākā sztýw/nā ĩ dũm/nā . . .//tāk cūdōw/niē ũmiā/ľā
Nāwēt pūs/cić się z szý/kiēm//pō trzēch szklāch/cūrācāo.

The regular alternation of fourteen- and thirteen-syllable verses is broken by the introduction of a shorter line, as in "I napięra się głośno cacão-chōix," which is shortened by two syllables. The elimination of the last syllable before the caesura in "Co śród/i piątki//w Pāni biā/łym salō/nie" produces an amphibrach instead of an anapaest.

Besides anapaest, many other syllabo-accentual forms occur in Jasieński's poetry. The dactyl is used for the poem "The Infected," in which the three-foot lines with the catalexis in the clausula alternate with two-foot lines:

Twārżē ō/brzēktē, zrō/piālē ĩ/ dūżē
Rēcē bēz/ksztātnē jāk/ z pniā
Nōcā przý/bici nā/ krzýżach swých/ łóżek
w mēcē czē/kāmý dniā.

The iambic and trochaic rhythms are chosen for "Marseillaise" and "A Rain," respectively. "Marseillaise" has the rhythm of the five-foot iamb, with the caesura after the fifth syllable and with a hypercatalexis in the clausula of every even line. The iambic rhythm is occasionally disrupted by the omission of stress or by the replacement of the iambic foot by the trochaic:

niē bē/dę wiē/cěj// stā/wł zād/něj z dām
ānĩ/ jēj ĩ/miē// w śpiēw/ných strō/fāch piēs/cł
ōdkāđ/ũjrzā/łēm// ciē/ rāz piēr/wszy tām
w tým dziw/ným nīg/dý// niē/ wĩdziā/ným miēs/ciē.

"Maidens in a Forest" is a perfect example of the four-foot third paeon with the caesura after the second foot and with the catalexis in each first and last line. The occasional deviations from the paeonic rhythm occur in the last two lines of each stanza, in which the paeonic feet are replaced by the trochaic ones:

Zālistōwiāt/ cichōsēnniē// w cichōpłāczū/ cichōlās,
 Jāk chōdzitŷ/ nīm pāniēnkī, // piērwośniānkī, / ěkstāzērķī,
 Kōtŷsātŷ/ siē, schŷlātŷ, // rwātŷ/ grzŷbŷ/ w bōmbōniērķī,
 Ātlāsōwē/ zōltē/ grzŷbŷ, // tē, cō/ rōsnā/ tŷlkō rāz.

In comparison with his wide use of syllabo-accentual verse, syllabic and accentual verse are rather infrequent in Jasiński's poetry, but there are poems utilizing some of them. "Mothers" has the rhythm of thirteen-syllable verse with a caesura after the seventh syllable, while "Ipecacuana" and "March" represent verses with three and four accents, respectively.

The use of traditional metrics was also characteristic of other Polish Futurists. Jankowski's collection *A Tram across the Street* contains many syllabic poems, notably "From the Pub" and "A Tram across the Street." The syllabo-accentual forms dominate Młodożeniec's *Strokes and Futuresques* (sic); iambic rhythm is used in "Shouts," the trochaic in "A Refrain," and the paeonic in "XX century."

The occurrence of traditional systems of versification in Futurist writings is understandable in view of the fact that regular metrics still figured prominently in twentieth-century Polish poetry. Accentual verse was just in its prime. Kasprówicz's *The Book of the Poor*, the first complete volume demonstrating the triumph of the accentual system, was published in 1916; many young poets such as Wierzyński, Iłakowiczówna, and Tuwim tried to exploit the possibilities of this new system. Syllabo-accentual verse was cultivated not only by the epigones of "Młoda Polska," but also by such talented poets as Staff and Leśmian and the "Skamander" poets. Syllabism also had a tremendous vitality. It survived the invasion of other systems and was still flourishing in the "Skamander" poetry of Iwaszkiewicz, Wierzyński, and Lechoń. Of course, there were sporadic attempts to acknowledge the values of free verse, like Słonimski's "Life and Death" or Iwaszkiewicz's "To Dionysus," but the dominance of traditional metrics was indisputable.³¹

The situation changed drastically after the rise of *Zwrotnica*, which united young Cracow poets searching for new forms of poetic expres-

31 See the investigations of twentieth-century Polish prosody by Z. Kopczyńska and R. Mayenowa, eds., *Sylabizm* (Wrocław, 1956); M. Dłuska and T. Kuryś, eds., *Sylabotonizm* (Wrocław, 1957); M. Giergielewicz, *Introduction to Polish Versification* (Philadelphia, 1970).

sion. The problem of *vers libre* was at the centre of their attention, and they eagerly investigated its possibilities in relation to Polish poetry. Tadeusz Peiper and Julian Przyboś were the most outspoken proponents of free verse. But if they were unanimous in their belief in the primacy of this form over traditional versification, they disagreed as to the structure of free verse.

Peiper espoused sentential verse that was totally dependent on syntactic structure. The verse division was to endorse the syntactic order. The rhyming clausulas were to emphasize the pauses between the sentences or the independent syntactic elements. The stanzas were to make apparent the composition of the discourse.³²

Przyboś' version of free verse assumed the dependence of verse on intonation, not on syntax. Instead of following syntactic divisions, verse should be a means of reinterpreting the relations between words. Punctuation should be an important structural element, making apparent the poet's reinterpretation of a sentence.³³

Both versions were fully elaborated in the theoretical statements as well as in the poetic practice of the "Zwrotnica" poets. "Zwrotnica" is rightly given credit for the establishment of free verse in modern Polish poetry,³⁴ but the efforts of some Futurist poets in this regard should not be overlooked. The original and powerful free verse poetry written by Jasieński and Stern paved the way to full recognition of this form.

Jasieński began to experiment with free verse very early—almost half the poems in *A Boot in a Buttonhole* have free rhythm. His *vers libre* could be described as "syntactic," since the verse division is subordinated to the syntactic relations within the sentence. The end of the line always coincides with the end of the sentence or the end of the independent syntactic phrase, as at the beginning of "A Morgue":

Przyjechali czarną, zamkniętą karetką.
Wnieśli coś ciężkiego, nakrytego płachtą.
Postawili nosze na kamienie.
Robili rzecz zwinnie.

The same principle underlines the structure of such poems as "They Ran Over," "Morse," and "Teeth." Only occasionally is this harmony disturbed to carry over the phrase to the next line:

a nikt nie wie, że każdy z nas, papieży sekt,
to po prostu ubrany w miękkie pless

32 Tadeusz Peiper, "Rytm nowoczesny," *Kwadryga*, no. 3-4 (1929-1930); "Droga rymu," *Przegląd Współczesny*, no. 91 (1929).

33 Julian Przyboś, "Rytm i rym," *Linia*, no. 2 (1931); "Kataryniarze i strofkarze," *Linia*, no. 1 (1931); "Formy nowej liryki," *Linia*, no. 3 (1931).

34 Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, "Wiersz awangardowy XX-lecia międzywojennego," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 56 (1965), 424-446.

aparat
systemu Morse.

.....
Mały człowiek, jadący tramwajem,
prowadzący na dansingu tango
jest centralną rozśpiewaną stacją
słów szybujących z świstem w powietrzu, jak piłki,

In both passages, the enjambement occurs in the lines that carry the most important idea of the poem: the comparison of a man to a telegraph station relaying information sent in by the surrounding reality. The violation of the syntactic harmony of the line suggests the unusual significance of the metaphor equating man with the telegraph apparatus.

Jasiński's free verse preserves, nevertheless, a certain rhythmical organization that forbids us to regard it as prose. This rhythmical organization is achieved by a number of devices, among them rhyme, stabilization of the intonation pause in the clausula, and stylistic parallelism.

In "A Morgue" two-thirds of the lines end either with rhymes—"biało/stało," "sień/cień," "piwnicy/ulicy," or with assonances—"latarnią/przepadło," "latarnią/przystanął." They are not noticeable at first glance, since many of them are separated by a number of lines. The poem contains many instances of stylistic parallelism—the repetition of single words as well as of word phrases:

Klucz zgrzytnął w zamku . . .
Jeszcze ciche oddalone głosy . . .
Jeszcze kroki cichnące na górę . . .
(. . . Jak myśli . . . jak myśli . . .)
.....
Zostawili SAMĄ, zupełnie SAMĄ . . .
Samą jedną na uboczu.

Certain verses of "A Morgue" have a noticeable metric pattern, like the anapaest rhythm in the lines:

Cóś czárnĕ/gõ mĭgnĕ/łõ . . . przĕpăd/łõ . . .
Môżĕ szczūr?/. . . Môżĕ ciĕń/ z ũlicy? . . .
Jĕdĕn śwĭc/ciĕ lătăr/niă. Przĕstă/năł.

A different type of free verse was used by Jasiński in his long poem *A Song of Hunger*, dominated by a syntactic verse which cut the sentence into its components, according to the poet's interpretation. Disintegration of a sentence into its components was regarded by Jasiński as a means to introduce new relations and a new hierarchy between the words. The following lines from the prologue of *A Song of Hunger*

illustrate this principle of the reorganization of the syntactic relations within a sentence:

w rubryce nadzwyczajnych wypadków
są małe, niewyraźne wzmianki,
o śmierciach
jakiś niewiadomych ludzi.

The word “śmierć” (death) is somewhat freed from syntactic subordination. As part of the direct object it should follow the word “wzmianki” (mentions), but the poet assigned it a separate line, thus emphasizing its importance for the meaning of the sentence.

And again:

z odrzuconymi bezwładnie
rękami
ulic
leżało Miasto krzyżem.

Here the most vital elements of the metaphor, “rękami” (arms) and “ulic” (streets), are given separate lines to give a shocking illustration of the crucified city.

Sometimes the smallest syntactic component acquires a special value; note the emphasis on the conjunction in:

cztery okna
i
trrah!

The free rhythm of *A Song of Hunger* comes close to Przyboś' model, where verse structure opposes the syntactic pattern. But unlike Przyboś, Jasieński relies on the use of rhyme and assonance, which underline the rhythmic organization of the poem. What is more important, Jasieński's *vers libre* is not altogether free; the basic free rhythm is frequently replaced by the regular syllabic pattern. The graphic arrangement of the lines is often deceiving. A stanza which looks like free verse might have, in fact, a distinct metric organization:

Szli księża z kadzidłami, jeden długi gest rąk,
i związek literatów w cylindrach i krepie,
i cech z chorągwiami,
w tużurkach,
z orkiestrą,
a potem tłum się czarny na rogach doczepiał.

Here we have a thirteen-syllable quatrain with the caesura after the seventh syllable. The syllabic organization is strengthened by the assonances “rząd/orkiestrą” and “krepie/doczepiał.”

Both types of Jasiński's free verse, the syntactic and the asyntactic, co-ordinate verse structure with syntax, either by retaining the agreement between the two or by opposing one to the other. But there was also the possibility of ignoring syntax altogether by introducing "words at liberty," i.e., words not constrained by any rules of syntax, logic, or grammar.³⁵ One way of doing this was to accept the phonetic composition, based on the juxtaposition of words according to their sound analogy, and not according to their syntactic subordination. This was done by Jasiński in his poem "Spring-like," where the syntactic relations are replaced by phonetic kinship. Instead of a syntactic unity there is a chain of single words. The syntactic anarchy is further emphasized by the absence of any punctuation:

TARAS koTARA S TARA raZ
biAle pAnny
poezjAnny
poezOwią poezAwią
poezYjne poezOSny
MAKI na haMAKI na sOSny
rOSnym pełnowiOSnym rAnem

Another type of "words at liberty," introduced by Jasiński, was a composition of words based on ellipsis or alleged ellipsis. In "Marching," for instance, every verse looks like a conglomerate of elliptical constructions, because periods are placed after each syntactic unit:

Ktoś się. Rozpłakał. Ktoś. Bez czapki.
Liście. Kapią. Jak gęsie. Łapki.
W parku. Żółtknie. Gliniany. Heros.
Chłopak. Z redakcji. Pali. Papieros.

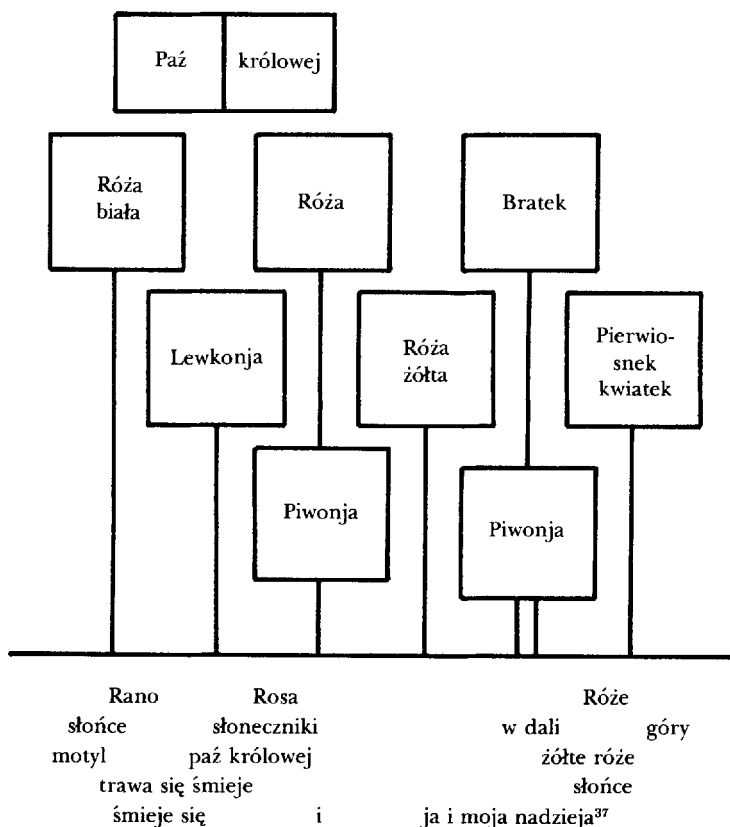
The only inconsistency in Jasiński's version of *parole in libertà* was a noticeable rhythmic organization imposed on these asyntactic and alogical combinations of words. The four-accent verse dominates in "Marching," while "On a River" has a distinct iambic rhythm. "Spring-like" comes close to syllabic verse by equalizing the number of syllables in every line: eight in the first half of the poem, then ten. There are also numerous rhymes and assonances.

More consistent instances of "words at liberty" are represented by Tytus Czyżewski's poems "A Hymn to the Machine of My Body" and "A

35 The phrase "words at liberty" was put forward by the Italian Futurists. At first they turned to free verse, but even free verse, maintaining syntax and producing rhythmic responses, seemed to them too inadequate for modern poetry, so they went one step further and proclaimed the principle of "parole in libertà," i.e., the poetic composition free from metrics, syntax, and punctuation. See Filippo Marinetti, "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura," *Manifesti del Futurismo* (Milano, 1914).

Mechanical Garden." The first glorifies the human body in terms of a complex electro-magnetic system. The terms describing human organs are juxtaposed with electrical terms without any syntactic subordination. The syntactic ambiguity is intensified by the typographic devices: the words of the first stanza are typed in perpendicular columns, suggesting a grouping of the words in such an order, rather than in the usual linear sequence:

kwiat	pepsyna	kwiat
żołądek	serce	kwiat
pulsują	biją	natężone
zwoje	mych	kiszek
	mózg ³⁶	



36 Tytus Czyżewski, "Hymn do maszyny mego ciała," *Jednodniówka futurystów* (Kraków, 1921), reprinted in *Polska awangarda poetycka*, II, 225.

37 Tytus Czyżewski, "Mechaniczny ogród," *Noc-Dzień: Mechaniczny instynkt elektryczny* (Kraków, 1922).

Among Polish Futurists, Czyżewski was probably the boldest experimenter in using typography as an element of artistic expression.³⁸ He employed a variety of typefaces, arranged his words vertically, and interpolated arresting signs like ➡ ➡ ➡. In "A Mechanical Garden" he is not content with merely juxtaposing names of flowers, but types them in special squares, located on the top of vertical lines, that remind us of the flower form. The name of a swallow-tail is typed in two squares that imitate the wings of a butterfly (see preceding page).

Jasieński's experiments with typographic devices are restricted to a few poems. In "Spring-like" the phonetic affinity between words is made visual by the use of capital letters for similar sound sequences:

kłOSy na włOSy bOSO na rOSy
z brUZDy na brUZDy jAZDy bez UZDy
słONce uLEwa na LEwo
na LEwo na LEwo na LEwo prOSTo

More interesting is his poem "The Sea," in which the word arrangement imitates the sea-waves:

Fale o olbrzymie o brzuchate o i o mokre
ciężko o sapaly o powalone o na o plecy
słońce o ogromne o i o walone o jak o okręt
gniotło o ich o ciała o śniade o kobiece
słońce o huśtało o się o bezwstydnie o dymiąc
w o spazmach o rozkoszy o słabnąc o i o fal o rósł
gdy o ssaty o wodę o krzyk o diugi o wymion
krtań o im o laskotał o czarnych o fallus.³⁹

This plastic arrangement of words reminds us of Apollinaire's visual art. One thinks of the words arranged as falling drops of rain in "It is Raining" and the visual images of a necktie and a watch in the poem of the same name referring to these objects.⁴⁰

38 Among the Russian Futurists Vasilii Kamenskii was the most enthusiastic exponent of typographic devices; his "Zheleznobetonnnye poemy," published in *Pervyi zhurnal russkikh futuristov*, nos. 1-2 (1914), employed different typefaces as well as geometrical figures and lines. Marinetti used different typographic devices in *Zang-tumb-tumb* (Milano, 1914), and emphasized that this new array of type and the variety of colours enabled him to increase the expressive power of words.

39 Bruno Jasieński, "Morze," *Zwrotnica*, no. 2 (1922).

40 Guillaume Apollinaire, *Calligrammes* (Paris, 1918).

BRUNO JASIEŃSKI AND RUSSIAN FUTURISM

Faithful to his pledge to create new art, Jasieński, as we have seen, eagerly experimented with new forms of poetic expression. In doing so he often relied on models elaborated by the Russian Futurists.⁴¹ Jasieński's acquaintance with Russian Futurism dated back to the years 1914-1918, when he attended a Polish high school in Moscow. These were the years in which Russian Futurism flourished, and Jasieński was probably a witness to some of their scandalous public appearances.

Jasieński's first idol was Igor Severianin, the leader of the Ego-Futurist group. Following Severianin, Jasieński idealizes the aspirations and dreams of the average townsman—fashionable restaurants, beautiful women, and elegant clothes. In "The Vomiting Statues" and "Corpses with Caviar" he equates the luxury and comfort of high living with gourmet food and the fine perfumes of voluptuous women, in exactly the same manner as Severianin does in "The Coach of a Courtesan" or "Kenzei."⁴² Easy love affairs fascinate Jasieński's heroes; they involve sophisticated ladies entertaining guests in their literary salons, and expensive courtesans. Jasieński's heroine from "Lili Is Bored" is a full sister of Severianin's Zizi or Nelly from the poems of the same names. They spend their time reading Maeterlinck and Hauptmann, drinking liqueurs, and going for exciting car rides. The automobile is considered by both poets a symbol of modern living, and many of their poems describe the excitement of driving a car. This is the case with Jasieński's "Love on a Car," which is a paraphrase of Severianin's "July Midday." Like Severianin, Jasieński animates Nature, and the images of "running fields, forests, and marshes" reflect the changing landscape seen from the moving car:

Było złote, letnie rano w szumie kolnych heksametrów.
Auto szło po równej szosie, zostawiając w tyle kurz.
Zbity licznik pokazywał 160 kilometrów.
Koło nas leciały pola rozpluskanych, żółtych zbóż.

Koło nas leciały lasy, i zagaja, i mokradła,
Jakaś łąka, jakaś rzeka, jakaś w drzewach skryta wieś.
Ja objąłem Panią ręką, żeby Pani nie wypadła.
Wicher zdął mi czapkę z głowy i po polach poniósł gdzieś.

And in Severianin:

Элегантная коляска, в электрическом биении,
Эластично шелестела по шоссе по песку;

41 The question of the influence of Russian Futurism on Bruno Jasieński was briefly discussed by Marian Rawiński, "U genezy wczesnej twórczości poetyckiej Brunona Jasieńskiego," *O wzajemnych powiązaniach literackich polsko-rosyjskich* (Wrocław, 1969), pp. 196-228, and by Edward Balcerzan, *Styl i poetyka twórczości dwujęzycznej Brunona Jasieńskiego: Z zagadnień teorii przekładu* (Wrocław, 1968).

42 Igor Severianin, *Gromokipiashchii kubok* (Moskva, 1913).

В ней две девственные дамы, в быстро-темном
упоении,
В ало-встречном устремлении -- это пчелки к
лепестку.

А кругом бежали сосны, идеалы равноправий,
Плыло небо, пело солнце, кувырчался ветерок,
И под шинами мотора пыль дымилась, прыгал
гравий,
Совпадала с ветром птичка на дороге без
дорог.⁴³

In "Love on a Car" Jasiński develops the image of Severianin's "somersaulting wind" into an image of the mischief-making wind, which "tore the hat off the head and carried it away." He transforms Severianin's metaphor "to get drunk on the wine of delight" into a picture of a drunken world which "went mad as if on wine." The verses "You were laughing happily in a lightning tremolo/splashed with your laughter, the golden summer day laughed" paraphrase Severianin's "laughter fresh as the sea, laughter, hot as a crater," conveying the same feeling of happiness.

Jasiński's dependence on "July Midday" was not restricted to the use of identical motifs and images. "Love on a Car" also imitates the metric pattern of the original—a four-foot third paeon with the caesura after the eighth syllable, the catalexis in every even line, and the rhyming scheme *abab*. The Polish poem, however, has more interruptions in the rhythm; many paeonic feet are replaced by trochaic.

It seems that Jasiński was truly fascinated with the metric elegance of Severianin's poetry, based on a regular and flowing rhythm, often combining two different metres, usually a paeon with one of the trinary forms. Half the poems in Jasiński's *A Boot in a Buttonhole* have a traditional prosody, the paeon and the anapaest being the most frequent forms.

Jasiński also adopted the neological technique of the Russian Futurist. Severianin's profuse coining of new words was based on compounds and denominal formations. He built his compounds by connecting two existing words, with the help of the linking vowel: "klenokhod," "chernoles'e," "sontsev'iuga." His derivatives, on the other hand, utilized the noun roots to form new verbs, adjectives, and adverbs: "okaloshit'," "vesenit'sia," "I'dis'," "ofialchen," "grozovo," "tundrovo."

Following Severianin, Jasiński introduced into his poetry numerous Gallicisms, including new terms as well as those that had already established themselves in Polish. As in Severianin, the semantic range of his foreign vocabulary is determined by two spheres of life—clothing and drink. Thus, Jasiński often speaks about "chapeau," "dessous," "crêpe

de chine," and "cacao-choix," "curaçao," "Clicot," "Cordial-médoc." The flavour of exoticism is also evoked by the use of foreign names—those of famous artists, and of business firms, like "Pate & Co.," "Piedmont," "Mur & Merilis." Many of the Gallicisms are placed in the rhyming position, which assures them visibility and importance:

Na klawiszach usiadły pokrzywione bemole,
Przeraźliwie się nudzą i ziewają Uaaaa . . .
Rozebrana Gioconda stoi w majtkach na stole
I napiera się głośno cacao-choix.
.....
Pani dzisiaj, doprawdy, jest klasycznie . . . niedbała . . .
Pani, która tak zimno gra sercami w cerceau,
Taka sztywna i dumna . . . tak cudownie umiała
Nawet puścić się z szykiem po 3 szklach curaçao.

And in Severianin:

Безумно шло моторное ландо
По „островам“ к зеленому „пуанту“,
И взор Зизи, певучее рондо,
Скользил в лорнет, тожил колени франту.⁴⁴

Jasieński's inventiveness in the field of rhyme, discussed earlier, had its parallel in Severianin too. The Russian poet was very fond of unusual rhymes, especially of assonance and compound rhymes. The best example of his great skill in this regard is his poem "At Dawn" in which he exhausted all the vowel resources of one combination: "kedr/eskadr/bodr/mudr/vydr."

If Severianin's poetry was the model for Jasieński's earlier poems, that of Vladimir Maiakovskii was the model for the later ones. Like Maiakovskii, Jasieński turns to city life, but this time it is the life of the city proletariat, not of the frequenters of salons and restaurants. "I want to glorify the coarse, black roughnecks," proclaims Jasieński in his "A Tongue Tired Me Out," and he does so in such poems as "Hostages," "City," and *A Song of Hunger*. From now on he speaks about hungry people, cheap prostitutes, rapes, and accidents. The night life of a city is depicted in "City." It includes prostitution and sexual deviation, thievery and murder. An old man rapes a seven-year-old girl, and the body of a drowned pregnant woman is found. The whole city turns into a huge sexual orgy:

Po burdelach, hotelach, po chambre garnie
Tysiącem tłoków w rytmie krwi
Pracuje gigantyczne Dynamo.

Jasiński's poem reminds us of Maiakovskii's "Great Big Hell of a City":

И тогда уже -- скомкав фонарей одеяла
Ночь излюбилась, похабна и пьяна,
А за солнцами улиц где-то ковыляла
Никому ненужная, дряблая луна.⁴⁵

The city evokes in both poets feelings of distaste and dissatisfaction, and so does Nature. The night is identified with a drunken woman. In Maiakovskii: "night loved itself out, lewd and drunk"; in Jasiński: "night drunk from champagne and lips." The moon is depicted by Maiakovskii as an "unwanted flabby moon," and as a "gonococcus" by Jasiński. Nature is thus degraded, de-poetized by metaphors setting up vulgar associations intended to shock a complacent public.

The similarities mentioned above could easily be explained by the fact that both poets were Futurists. Their affiliation with the Futurist movement could have been responsible for both the "brutal" urbanism and the anti-aestheticism of their poetry. But there is also evidence that Jasiński borrowed directly from Maiakovskii. He wrote *A Song of Hunger* under the direct influence of Maiakovskii's *A Cloud in Trousers*.⁴⁶ The impact of *A Cloud* on Jasiński's poem is evident on all levels.

The parallelism of the systems of motifs is most apparent in the first part of *A Song*, which has the same plot line as the Russian poem. The protagonist of *A Song* is alone in his room and experiences a hallucination: the room resembles a gigantic mouth, which attacks him. Driven to extremity, he jumps from a window, but bounces like a ball. He is surrounded by a crowd; the people at first try to help him, but eventually turn hostile and kill him. The parallel with the first part of *A Cloud* is evident. Maiakovskii's hero is also close to insanity; his nerves "jerk and dance," his "I is too small for him." The cause of his suffering is an unhappy love affair. His heart is aflame, and the expression "heart's fire" evokes an image of real fire and of firemen, who want to rescue the burning poet. Unfortunately, "one cannot jump out of one's heart." Jasiński, however, provides a totally different motivation for his hero's tragedy. His protagonist's hallucination results not from unrequited love, but from starvation. He is consumed by a hunger fever, and so begins his conflict with the rest of the world.

The remaining parts of *A Song of Hunger* are more distant from the Russian poem. Unlike *A Cloud*, where the importance of the plot declines, Jasiński's poem is still plot-oriented. It is based on a series of events narrated by the author. Jasiński transforms the original from the lyric into the epic mode, clearly preserving its ideological connota-

45 Vladimir Maiakovskii, "Adishche goroda," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moskva, 1955), I, 55.

46 Vladimir Maiakovskii, *Oblako v shtanakh* (Moskva, 1915), reprinted in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, I, 173-196.

tions. Following Maiakovskii, Jasieński proclaims: "Down with your art! Down with your religion! Down with your social system!" The only element lacking in *A Song* is "Down with your love!" The erotic theme does not appear in Jasieński at all.

The rejection of traditional art is best expressed in the prologue of *A Song of Hunger*. "I don't read Strindberg, nor Norwid," announces Jasieński. "Poets are not needed any more":

poeci, jesteście niepotrzebni!
ja nie czytam strindberga, ani norwida,
nie przyznaję się do żadnego spadku.
czytam świeże, pachnące farbą dzienniki,
z bijącym sercem przeglądám rubryki wypadków.

This denunciation of poetry springs from the conviction that real poetry is to be found in reality. The same conviction was formulated in *A Cloud*:

Что мне до Фауста,
Феерией ракет
скользящего с Мефистофелем в небесном
паркете!
Я знаю --
гвоздь у меня в сапоге
кошмарней, чем фантазия у Гете!

Like Maiakovskii, Jasieński challenges existing religion. God has no compassion for the common people, so the crowd of black, ragged workers lynches Christ:

kułakami, laskami, zabili, załukli.
poturbowane, umęczone ciało
upadło pod razami spracowanych rąk.

In *A Cloud* the poet himself fights with God:

Видишь, я нагибаюсь,
из-за голенища
достаю сапожный ножик.

In both poems, anti-government tendencies are connected with the division of people into the poor and the rich, or rather into the hungry and the satiated. Satiety is for Maiakovskii a synonym of something ugly and repulsive:

лопались люди,
проевшись насквозь,
и сочилось сквозь трещины сало,
мутной рекой с экипажем стекала
вместе с иссосанной булкой
жевотина старых котлет.

A Song reverses Maiakovskii's approach. Instead of speaking of the well-fed bourgeoisie, it describes the starvation of the poor people:

brzuchy nasze zielone, granatowe, sine,
takie lekkie przedziwnie, ciężą nam, jak więzy.
w dzień żujemy niesmaczną słodkockliwą ślinę,
a w nocy ssiemy własny zskorupały język.

The impact of *A Cloud* on *A Song* was probably strongest on the level of stylistic devices. Many of Jasiński's metaphors explicitly paraphrase Maiakovskii. The metaphor depicting the clouds as "organizing a meeting on earth" corresponds to Maiakovskii's clouds "proclaiming a strike against the sky":

Вдруг
и тучи
и облачное прочее
подняло на небе невероятную качку,
как будто расходятся белые рабочие,
небу объявив озлобленную стачку.

a czarne ściany rosną,
ciągną do góry,
zasłoniły całe niebo
zakryły szczyty,
jak gdyby ogromne ołowiane chmury
na niebie urządziły meeting.

Jasiński's image of "my dead body, bloody, trampled, red like a rag, from which they will perhaps tear off a clout for a flag" is a direct paraphrase of Maiakovskii's "I will pull out my soul, big, bloody and flaming, a banner for you to lift on high":

И когда,
приход его
мятежом оглашая,
выйдете к спасителю --
вам я
душу вытащу,
растопчу,
чтоб большая! --
и окровавленную дам, как знамя.

idziecie!
krzyczeć nie mogę!
ogromni w zorzy pożodze.
trup mój
krwawy,
stratowany,
czerwony,
jak łachman,
z którego może szmatę na swój sztandar udrą,

w śmiertelnym zapatrzeniu leży wam na drodze,
po której przechodzicie
w JUTRO!

Such a direct paraphrase, however, occurs infrequently. More often the original metaphors are subjected to complex transformations based on the substitution, inversion, reduction, or elimination of certain elements. Maiakovskii's image of the "jerking and jumping nerves" which are so tired that they "fall over their feet," is transformed by Jasieński into a metaphor describing "tired thoughts": "the thoughts, like women, are falling over their feet." The description of the building which moves under the influence of the hero's sufferings in "the plaster fell down on the lower floor" is a starting point for Jasieński's expanded metaphor depicting the room as if it were the mouth of a person:

wolno tynk się na ścianach rozdwoił,
jakby pokój wargami mlasnął.
ścian rozmokniętych bezzębne dziąsła
poruszyły się wolno.

Here Jasieński makes use of another metaphor from *A Cloud*, that of the "chattering doors":

Двери вдруг заляскали,
будто у гостиницы
не попадает зуб на зуб.

Even more complex transformations occur in Jasieński's treatment of the rain motif, where the compact metaphor "muzzling against the rain, my face pressed against its pitted face, I wait splashed by the city's thundering surf" is expanded into a series of metaphors. Maiakovskii's image of the "city's surf" is transformed into a picture of the city buildings "fed by rain":

domy czarne, obślizgłe, karmione deszczem
napęczniały, jak gąbki
napuchły,
rozlały się, rozpetły rozdęte, stulice
wystąpiły na chodniki z ciemności,
zsunęły się,
przecięły krzyczącą ulicę.

The metaphor of the rain attacking the human face is repeated in "it is better to strike the face with the rain." The pitted face of the rain in *A Cloud* is replaced by the image of the face of the city, flooded with "trams' tears":

krople czarne,
 maleńkie,
 natrętne,
 wyrzucone z krwią razem z powrotem
 z płuc
 po czarnej pooranej szynami twarzy
 spłynęły łzami tramwajów.

The influence of *A Cloud in Trousers* on *A Song of Hunger* was so great that the Polish scholar Edward Balcerzan rightly considers *A Song* a latent translation from the Russian original.⁴⁷ There is, however, a basic difference between the poems as to the idea of the poet's role: the artist as prophet, not understood by the people, as opposed to the artist as servant, at one with the people and serving their interests. If Maiakovskii declared himself on the side of the artist as individualist, aloof from the rest of the world, Jasiński believed in the opposite. The Polish Futurist was convinced that the role of the poet was to serve the people, and he initiated a dialogue with his Russian colleague. *A Song of Hunger* offers a vision of the artist who is a part of the masses, who blends with them into one whole:

Z życiem rozgranym pod ręce na świata szerokie trakty
 wyszliśmy rano, śpiewając, z płachtą koloru flamingo.
 paszcz wytoczonych mitraliez suche rytmiczne antrakty
 w krtąń zabijemy z powrotem kulą wypłutą z brauninga.

kto nam, kto nam teraz drogę zagrodzi samym?
 wszystko zmiążdżymy butami piękni, ogromni i ludzcy.
 miejsca! gromada idzie, proletariacki samum!
 czapkami drogę wymościł taneczny krok rewolucji.

As Edward Balcerzan has pointed out, the Polish poem in a way "corrects" the ideological shortcomings of *A Cloud in Trousers*, but artistically it does not match the original.

To summarize, we should point out that the influence of the Russian Cubo-Futurist on Bruno Jasiński proved very fruitful. Under the impact of Maiakovskii, Jasiński concentrated on the renovation of the Polish poetic language. He succeeded in transforming the highly conventional poetic language into everyday language and in developing a new type of metaphor based on earthy, concrete objects. He wrote original and powerful free verse depicting the life of the city's proletariat. Like Maiakovskii, Jasiński became convinced that the only way to change the world is by revolution, and he used his poetry to propagate his revolutionary ideas.

47 Balcerzan, *Styl i poetyka*, p. 220.

The Lay of Jakub Szela and Folklore

The cult of technology and modern civilization, responsible as it was for the modernization of themes and the transformation of the forms of artistic expression, was contradicted by another Futurist tendency; namely, its interest in folk art. The Polish Futurists derived many of their themes from folk poetry, imitated its song-like rhythm, and reproduced its simple but awkward forms.

Recognizing the contradictions between the cult of technology and the presence of folk stylizations, Jerzy Jankowski wrote in an introduction to the second part of his *A Tram Across the Street*:

The author of *A Tram* included here works close to Symbolism, not because of his attachment to this movement, but because of his considerations for the development of poetic forms. The author's homeland, Lithuania, is only beginning to sense urbanism, neo-humanism and cosmic awareness—those integral elements of Futurism.¹

The backwardness of Lithuania was, for Jankowski, a sufficient reason to justify his interest in folklore, an interest that was directed primarily towards the exploration of legendary motifs, rather than that of traditional folklore poetics. The only attempt to reproduce the formal structure of the folk song was his "A Forest Cry," a poem about the love between a mad girl and an oak tree, which resulted in the birth of Dęborug, a god of Nature. The first part of the poem successfully

1 Jerzy Jankowski, *Tram w popszek ulicy* (Warszawa, 1920).

imitates the form of a "dajna," a Lithuanian folk song. It begins with incantation-like verses, followed by a motif of interdiction, whose violation marks the beginning of the story. Stereotyped folk devices are utilized here: negative parallelism, fixed epithets, affective suffixes, and all kinds of repetition:

Nie słuchała matuli rodzonej
Nie słuchała matuli kochanej
Posłuchała złej doli—tęsknicy
Posłuchała zwodnicy
Poszła w las samiuteńka.²

If the economic backwardness of Lithuania was a justification for Jankowski's use of folklore, Tytus Czyżewski's motivation was just the opposite. His *Bucolics* grew out of a fear of the disastrous consequences of modern civilization. Folklore, with its sensitivity and imagination, was for Czyżewski the best means to save man and the arts from mechanization and urbanization. The imaginative rituals of the Polish Highlanders were the source of his "bucolics," highly stylized Christmas carols. As in the Christmas puppet show (*szopka*), the newborn Christ is greeted by the three kings, led by the guiding star, and by shepherds and animals. The shepherds are dressed like typical Podhale carollers:

z krzywemi rogami
z czornemi kudłami
zebrali się Chłopy
i przyszli do szopy³

The kings wear crowns and rich clothes embroidered with gold. All of the visitors bear gifts, and the choice of gifts is very characteristic: the shepherds bring lambs, honey, and cheese; the birds bring down for a blanket; and the kings present Christ with chests full of gold and silver coins.

The form of *Bucolics* is distinguished by a striking simplicity, imitating the awkward form of folk Christmas carols. Many poetic devices are used to strengthen the musical harmony: refrains; synonymic expressions; repetition of single words, phrases, or even whole lines. The folk stylization is also apparent on the lexical level; the "bucolics" abound in dialecticisms, often depicting a regional inflection:

zlecieli się do stajenki wszyscy ptakowie
leśni grajkowie muzykantowie,

2 Ibid.

3 Tytus Czyżewski, *Pastorałki* (Paryż, 1925).

zleciały siwe sokoły, orłowie,
zięby, czyżyki i dzięciołowie.⁴

A true folk poet among Futurists was Stanisław Młodożeniec, whose *Strokes and Futuresques* and "Peasant Measures" manifested the poet's desire to "folklorize" Futurism. He wrote typical Futurist poems and poems containing a strong folk element, like "A Wedding," "A Funeral," and "A Shepherd." Most of these folk stylizations, sustained in a lyric mood, depict a clear-cut situation, and the type of ritual or activity determines the rhythmic organization of the poem. "A Wedding," for instance, follows the rhythm of the traditional wedding songs and dances, while the wistful tones of the shepherd's pipe are heard in "A Shepherd." The song-like rhythm of these poems is achieved by means of refrains, rhythmical particles and interjections, and numerous repetitions:

Dziewiętnaście jej lat zmarniało—
poszła— —umarła—
... oj-ta, oj-ta, oj-ta dana! ...
Ojciec—matka—i pies sie ostał—
była jedyna—
... oj-ta, oj-ta, oj-ta dana! ...⁵

In a sense, Młodożeniec's folk poems are not too different from the analogical attempts introduced by the "Czartak" poets, who expressed the total rejection of modern civilization in favour of primitive Nature.⁶ But Młodożeniec's attitude towards modern civilization was more complex. As a true Futurist, he was fascinated with technology, but at the same time he feared its consequences and turned towards folklore as the only sphere that had preserved unspoiled human nature and the simple forms of life. Thus, he explored the resources of the folklore tradition and used them in his poetry in an attempt to enrich twentieth-century civilization with the values preserved within that tradition.

Jasieński's use of folklore in his poem *The Lay of Jakub Szela* had a totally different purpose. Folklore was used here as a means to transmit dissatisfaction with social injustice and to provide slogans of revolution in the forms closest to common experience. In this poem Jasieński set himself the difficult task of rehabilitating the Szela rebellion of 1846,

4 Ibid.

5 Stanisław Młodożeniec, *Kreski i futureski* (Kraków, 1921).

6 The "Czartak" poets regarded folk stylizations as the most suitable forms to express their cult of primitive life. Emil Zegadłowicz's *Powsinogi beskidzkie* (Wadowice, 1923) and *Kolędziołki beskidzkie* (Wadowice, 1923) clearly illustrate "Czartak's" adherence to the folklore tradition.

regarded as a shameful incident in Polish history. During this rebellion the peasants, apparently abetted by the Austrians, rose against the landlords and thus prevented a national insurrection. Jasiński interpreted this event very differently. The Szela rebellion, in his opinion, resulted from social injustice and symbolized the peasant fight against serfdom. Szela himself was, for Jasiński, a leader who served his fellow man.⁷

In order to make his interpretation convincing, Jasiński turned to the resources of folklore, which had always embraced common experiences in the simplest forms. He decided to produce an illusion of an anonymous folk creation expressing the views and opinions of the peasants. In the introduction he gives the impression that this song about Szela has a very long oral tradition. His own task was simply to "collect" the song and bring it to the people:

W białe noce, od rżysk i gumien,
porośniętych i mchem, i mgłą
pobierałem tę pieśń, jak umiem,
i przynoszę skrwawioną i złą.

The song, "collected from the stubbles and barns," is about Jakub Szela, cast in the role of a folk hero. It is told by Jasiński in a narrative composed of two threads, the first dealing with Szela's personal life, and the second describing Szela's involvement in the peasant revolt. As Edward Balcerzan has pointed out, the plot of *The Lay* is distinguished not only by a striking simplicity, but also by its similarity to the stereotyped plot of folk tales.⁸ Jasiński's dependence on the narrative of the fairy tale is especially noticeable in the second and third parts, where each happening corresponds to one of Propp's "functions":⁹

Szela goes to Lwów to see the governor. For several weeks he appears in the governor's office and finally succeeds in seeing him. After his return home Szela is imprisoned by the landlord. The subprefect Breinl orders Szela freed. Breinl persuades Szela to revolt against the landlords and promises the abolition of serfdom. The revolt takes place. The emperor orders the peasants to stop their fighting and return to serfdom. Szela refuses to obey the orders and is sentenced to death.

The hero leaves home
The hero is tested and
interrogated
More struggles

The villain deceives his
victim

The villain is exposed

7 Bruno Jasiński, *Słowo o Jakubie Szeli* (Paryż, 1926).

8 Bruno Jasiński, *Utwory poetyckie, manifesty, szkice* (Wrocław, 1972), p. 68.

9 See V. I. Propp, *Morfologia skazki* (Leningrad, 1928).

The end of the poem does not correspond to the usual optimistic ending of the fairy tale, where the villain is punished and the hero rewarded. Instead, *The Lay* ends with the protagonist's death.¹⁰ By condemning Szela to death Jasiński has elevated his hero to the level of a martyr who has sacrificed his life for his fellow man.

But Szela's death is only the finishing touch in the process of the hero's mythologization, which takes place throughout the duration of the whole poem. One of the first episodes showing Szela's transformation into a hero is the peasants' meeting, where the decision is made to send an emissary to the emperor's governor. This decision is based on a deep belief in the justice and generosity of the emperor, and here one notes the folk tendency to portray the monarch in a favourable light. Szela is the only volunteer willing to perform the mission. His journey to Lwów develops the popular folk-tale motif of the hero's journey. Throughout his testing and interrogation and his imprisonment he behaves with heroic steadfastness, strength of will, and pride, surmounting all obstacles to achieve his goal.

The mythologization of the hero reaches its climax in Szela's encounter with Jesus Christ. Szela does not succumb even to God himself. On the contrary, he accuses Christ of great injustice. He is only concerned with the rich and does not give a damn about the poor:

Nie biegałeś, jak się naszych
krzywd przelała kwartał
Widać garnca pańskiej kaszy
chłopska krew nie warta.

Nie cenileś ty krwi chłopskiej
za złamany szeląg!—
Czemużeś się, Panie Jezu
tak o pańską przeląkł?

This "verbal duel" between Szela and Christ ends with Szela's victory. Frightened by the danger of the peasant's vengeance, Christ gives up his intention of helping the landlords and returns to heaven.

This long narrative, with its many characters and well-defined plot, is compressed into the framework of the folk lyric. *The Lay of Jakub Szela* is sustained in the tradition of Polish folk songs; its motifs, images, stylistic figures, and metric form were all inspired by folk couplets and ditties.¹¹

10 Jasiński's condemning of Szela to death was a means of ennobling the protagonist. In reality, Szela was just transferred to another district, where he lived for twenty more years. Jasiński's deviations from the historical truth are analyzed by Anatol Stern, in *Bruno Jasiński* (Warszawa, 1969).

11 While writing *Słowo o Jakubie Szeli*, Jasiński had at his disposal several collections of Polish folk songs, among them P. Żegota's *Pieśni ludu polskiego w Galicji* and

The adaptation of the lyric schemes of folk songs is most obvious in the first part of the poem, describing Szela's marriage to Marysia. The happy mood of the groom and other guests is contrasted with the grief of the young bride, and the reason for her grief is obvious: she is marrying an old widower. According to Jasiński's poem, Szela had already buried three wives before he married the fourteen-and-a-half-year-old Maryś; in reality Szela was married only twice. Here Jasiński repeats the warning from the wedding and love songs (the motifs from folk poetry are set on the left, passages from *The Lay* on the right):

Wyrośla rutka z jałowca
Nie chodź dziewczyno za wdowca.¹²

Wdowiec-mruk, będzie tłuł,
o tym każdy parch wie—
Złakomiłś ty się, Maryś,
na ten zagon marchwi.

A gdzieżeś ty chłopcze
swoje oczka podział
Coś tego kulasa na żoneczkę obrał?¹³

A gdzieżeś ty, Maryna,
miała oczy, powiedz,
że ci się uwidziało
na młodego wdowiec?

Nie chciało ci się rutki siać
Kazałaś se cepiec wdziąć
Nie chciałaś chodzić w rucianym
Chodź teraz w wicianym.¹⁴

Weź se, Maryś, czepek nasadź,
jak nie chciałaś gęsi pasać,
jak nie chciałaś statków myć—
idźże za mąż, idźże, idź!

Szela's marriage to Maryś proves unsuccessful. Maryś finds herself a lover, the farm hand Wicuś. Such a triangle is well known in folk songs:

Latali gołębie
Pływali karasie
Kiedy jeden kocha
To drugiemu zasię.¹⁵

U karasia kare skrzela,
u szczupaka—siwe.
Nie udało ci się, Szela,
to kochanie kliwie.

For a long time Szela is unaware of his wife's unfaithfulness, but when he finds out, he starts a fight with Wicuś. Jasiński's description of the fight is based on the folk song:

Jeden ciął go wedle pasa
To za ciebie, siostró nasza.

Jak uderzył Szela raz,
przyklął Wicuś, zgiał się w pas.

Z. Gloger's *Pieśni ludu*. Cf. Stanisław Brucz's reminiscences in A. Stern's *Bruno Jasiński* (Warszawa, 1969), p. 68.

12 Oskar Kolberg, *Dziela wszystkie* (Wrocław, 1961), II, 128.

13 Z. Gloger, *Obrzęd weselny polski z pieśniami* (Warszawa, 1907), p. 104.

14 Kolberg, *Dziela wszystkie*, II, 39.

15 Z. Gloger, *Pieśni ludu polskiego* (Kraków, 1907), p. 78.

Ciał go drugi wedle szyi
Jasio krew jak wodę pije.¹⁶

Jak uderzył Szela drugi—
poszły nosem krwi dwie strugi.

Folk-song motifs are also used in the remaining parts of the poem. Probably the best illustration of this is a description of a rebellion and of one of its participants, the shepherd Waluś. The image of a half-wit peasant was inspired by a folk song about a crazy Janek:

A gdzie to ten kusy Janek
co chodził z toporem
Przepasał się z osędką
podpierał się worem.
Miał studzienkę za piecem,
nosił wodę przetakiem,
Łowił ryby widłami,
strzelał wróble gajdami.¹⁷

Był tam Waluś—pastuch,
w zimie chodził boso,
siekierką się opasywał,
podpierał się kosą.

Janek's craziness becomes, however, very meaningful in the context of the revolt. His axe and scythe are to be used in the fight with the landlords, and his carrying water with a sieve is transformed into a suggestive image of peasants extinguishing the fire with butter and bringing water in the basket-wagons:

—A chłopcy siedliscy
gaszą ogień, aż piszczy,
w rozskrzypienie kół gorzkim
wożą wodę półkoszkim.

The bloody nature of the peasant rebellion is depicted in a distich which paraphrases a folk ditty:

Ej, karbowym orać
ekonomem włóczyć
oj, poczekaj ekonomie
będziemy cię uczyć.¹⁸

Hola na pola orki się uczyć,
orać karbowym, rządcą nawłóczyć!

Jasiński's dependence on folk songs is also apparent in the description of the life of the serfs, given at the beginning of the second part of *The Lay*:

Oj, dobry nasz pan dobry
i dobrze mu się dzieje
Oj, ludzi ze wsi wygnał
i sam się ledwo chwije.¹⁹

Oj, ni ma to chłopu,
ni ma jak pańszczyzna,—
żyje sobie wesół,
drugim się nie przyzna.

16 Ibid., p. 112.

17 Kolberg, *Dzieła wszystkie*, XXV, 152.

18 Ibid., I, 366.

19 Ibid., I, 410.

As Marian Rawiński has rightly pointed out, the extraordinary suggestiveness of this fragment results from the unusual contrast between the lively rhythm of the "krakowiak" and the seriousness of its content:

the lively rhythm of the krakowiak, the popular refrains taken from the folk dances and ditties, . . . and finally, the phraseology that evokes a cheerful and care-free mood—all of this creates a formal obstacle that the true and explicit content has to overcome before it can attack the reader's imagination.²⁰

The rhythm of the above stanzas about serfdom is patterned after the popular rhythm of folk ditties: a six-syllable verse with a rhyme scheme *abcd*. Indeed, throughout the poem as a whole Jasiński adheres to the syllabic schemes most popular in folk poetry. The most frequent rhythm juxtaposes the six-syllable line with the eight-syllable in two combinations 6,6,8,6 and 8,6,8,6. Every line has a caesura after the fourth syllable and one pair of feminine rhymes:

Latała krzyczała
siwa gęś nad wodą
Nie zmawiają się po karczmach,
idźta chłopcy, do dom.

Another frequently used rhythm combines eight- and seven-syllable verses, using the rhyme scheme *aabb*. As a rule, two paroxytonic eight-syllable lines are either preceded or followed by two oxytonic seven-syllable lines:

Tańcowała izba, stół
cztery konie, piąty wół.
Tańcowały krowy z obór,
Jak w tancerkach był niedobór.

The homogeneous seven- and eight-syllable stanzas occur in *The Lay* rather seldom and have a noticeable trochaic rhythm. Seven-syllable verse with a caesura after the fourth syllable and masculine rhyme is chosen for the distichs depicting the rebellion, as in "Tańcowali cztery dni/ani więcej, ani mniej." Eight-syllable quatrains using the rhyme scheme *aabb* appear in the wedding scene:

A cóż ci to, Maryś, co ci,
że ci w oczkach się markoci,
że ci jakoś oczki puchną
co przemówisz z którą druhną.

Jasiński was also influenced by the traditional folklore device of parallelism, derived from a feeling of unity between the human world

20 Marian Rawiński, "'Słowo o Jakubie Szeli' wobec folkloru," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 62 (1971), 101-102.

and the world of Nature. In *The Lay of Jakub Szela*, the mood of the people is often foreshadowed by some event in the world of Nature. Szela, led to his execution, is mourned not only by the people, but also by Nature: the night is running away, the stars fall down, and the wolves eat one of the gendarmes.

As in folk poetry, inanimate objects and abstract phenomena are animated; everything is moving—flora, furniture, atmospheric phenomena, and abstractions. At Szela's wedding everything dances—room, corridor, table, violin, horses, cows, storks. Elsewhere in the poem nightfall "walks in the fields," day "crawls," and rain "kneads the dough of the roads." Abstract concepts are endowed with life: pain "has to go begging" and happiness "splashes the fools with a jug." Even Szela's song becomes a living thing. It hides in the fields to catch the poet and force him to preserve it for posterity:

Raz ta pieśń—zaszła mnie w życie, za łąką,
powaliła, przynioła, kazała służyć!
i wyrwała mi język jak płony kłóć,
a miast niego wetknęła mi nóż.

To return to the question of parallelism, it should be noted that its use is restricted to a few instances, but its appearance always marks the most dramatic moments in the poem. Juxtaposition of man and Nature occurs in the final scene describing Szela's execution. Another parallel sequence predicts the dramatic outcome of the love affair between Maryś and Szela's farm hand, Wicuś:

U karasia kare skrzela,
u szczupaka siwe.
Nie udało ci się, Szela,
to kochanie ckliwe.

The device of parallelism also marks the meeting at the inn which is the beginning of the peasant unrest and the emergence of Szela as a leader. Imprisoned by his landlord, Szela withstands all the hardships imposed on him. His strong will and obstinacy are emphasized by a tetrastich:

W sadzie drzewa grube,
w bożym lesie grubsze.
Nie wypędzić życia z chłopca,
jak się przy nim uprze.

The same kind of psychological insight into the hero is achieved by negative parallelism, where, despite negation, the image of Nature metaphorically describes the feelings of the protagonist. Szela's dialogue with Christ, for instance, is introduced by a tetrastich:

To nie topól w niebo strzela,
to nie pohuk sowi—
Odpowiada Jakub Szela
Panu Jezusowi.

“To nie topól”—this is not a poplar, “to nie pohuk sowi”—this is not an owl hooting, this is Jakub Szela’s voice. Despite the negation “to nie” (this is not), the metaphorical relation is maintained. The image of a poplar suggests straightforwardness, while the “owl’s halloo” metaphorically describes Szela’s angry voice. The same device of negative parallelism, formally refuting the metaphorical state in favour of the actual, is introduced in the lines preceding Christ’s speech:

To nie słowo miodem tchnie z ust
jako flet z kapeli,
to skłaniając się Pan Jezus
odpowiada Szeli.

Also used in *The Lay* is grammatical parallelism, based on the recurrence of identical syntactic constructions to connect consecutive lines or stanzas:

Weź se, Maryś, czepek nasadź,
jak nie chciałaś gęsi pasać,
jak nie chciałaś statków myć—
idźże za mąż, idźże, idź!

In a similar fashion Szela describes his love for Maryś. The syntactic parallelism is strengthened here by semantic parallelism. In both stanzas Szela says that Maryś has cast a spell over him:

A musiałaś ty, Maryś,
jakiś zadać czar mi,
że się niczym już, jak tobą,
głód mój nie nakarmi.

A musiałaś ty mi zadać
jakiś zdradny napój,
że mię pali, choć go stamtąd
nożem powydrapuj.

The repetition of identical grammatical constructions as well as the repetition of individual words and phrases lends the poem symmetry and adds to the distinctive rhythmical pattern.

In the rhyme technique the influence of folk poetry expresses itself in the use of both inexact and compound rhymes. *The Lay* is overloaded with such rhymes, but they lose their original comic connotations and

harmonize with the pessimistic tone of the poem. On the whole, however, Jasiński's sophisticated system of rhymes departs from the simple, often grammatical, rhymes in folklore. In this respect he preferred to manifest his virtuosity rather than follow folk tradition.

The folk stylization of *The Lay of Jakub Szela*, so evident in the sphere of stylistic devices, was assisted by linguistic means. Numerous dialecticisms introduced into the poem reflect the phonetic, morphological, and syntactic differences between dialect and standard language. The dialect pronunciation is rendered in such words as "wideński cysarz," "po miemiecku," and "letki." Forms like "roków," "sieliśwa," "idźta" illustrate the dialect inflection. The grammatical disagreement between the subject and the verb in "choćbyście zorały," "nie słuchały chłopcy," and "wyszli wilcy" reflects the dialect confusion between the masculine personal and non-masculine forms of the past tense. Most of the dialecticisms occur in direct speech. Szela and the other peasants, as one might expect, speak in dialect. But interestingly enough, so do the emperor and Christ. The emperor uses the dialect inflection "kazujemy chłopom przestać ferii," "dosyć leli łez," "jażem krzywdom ich nie winien," while Christ uses the dialecticisms "powidźcież," and "ponoś." Such subjugation of the language of all characters to the dialect transcription witnesses Jasiński's deep understanding of the peasant mentality. It is a well-known fact that folklore does not differentiate between individual speech, but forces all persons to speak the same peasant language.

Almost all the reviews that appeared after the publication of *The Lay* commented on the folk influence to be found in the poem. But at the same time the critics accused Jasiński of thematic plagiarism²¹ of new Russian poems about Razin and Pugachev.²²

It is true that, like Kamenskii in *Sten'ka Razin: The Heart of the People* and Esenin in *Pugachev*, Jasiński picked up the theme of a bloody peasant rebellion and set himself the task of rehabilitating the movement and its leader. Like Kamenskii and Esenin, Jasiński intentionally departed from the historic truth and the usual literary interpretation of this event. If Esenin set his poem against Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*, Jasiński's poem was a polemic against Stanisław Wyspiański's *The Wedding* and Stefan Żeromski's *Turoń* ("Turoń" refers to a

21 See J. Chrzanowski, "Próba apoteozy Jakuba Szeli," *Głos Narodu*, December 25, 1926; W. Broniewski, "Poemat o Szeli," *Wiadomości Literackie*, no. 48 (1926); A. Stawar, "Słowo o Jakubie Szeli," *Dziwigar*, no. 1 (1927).

22 The poems in question are Vasilii Kamenskii's *Serdtsie narodnoe Sten'ka Razin* (Moskva, 1918) and Sergei Esenin's *Pugachev* (Moskva, 1922). It is unlikely that Jasiński knew Khlebnikov's exploitations of the Razin theme, "Razin" and "Ustrug Razina." "Razin" was written in 1920, but published only in Khlebnikov's *Sobranie sochinenii v pi'ati tomakh* (Moskva, 1928-1933). "Ustrug Razina," written in 1921, appeared in the journal *Lef*, no. 1 (1923), not in book form.

Christmas mummer disguised as an animal). Both Wyspiański and Żeromski regarded Szela as an atrocious man who led the peasants to a fratricidal struggle. In *The Wedding* Szela appears as a ghost repenting his sins, while in *Turoń* he is portrayed as the cruel leader of a bloody clash between peasants and landlords. Jasiński, on the other hand, idealizes both Szela and the rebellion. Like the Russians, he depicts his protagonist as a selfless leader with a deep sense of mission to help his fellow man.

But thematic and ideological similarity can hardly be described as plagiarism, considering that the rebellion theme finds a different artistic realization in each poem. Kamenskii's *The Heart of the People* is a loose conglomeration of songs and poems taken from his earlier published novel, *Sten'ka Razin* (1915).²³ Kamenskii concentrates on the figure of Sten'ka, whose soul, the author believes, "lives in each one of us." The emphasis is on Sten'ka's artistic and passionate nature, which reveals itself in the numerous "folk songs" supposedly written by him. The revolt itself is of secondary importance, being depicted only in a few crowd scenes conveying the anarchistic flavour of the movement. Esenin's *Pugachev* is a lyric poem composed of a series of monologues expressing the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of Pugachev and his fellow rebels. The story of the revolt serves only as a loose frame for the lyrical outpourings and the descriptions of Nature. *The Lay of Jakub Szela*, on the other hand, is an epic poem, describing the Szela rebellion through a series of events; it has a well-defined plot and dynamic action.

The accusation of plagiarism was certainly groundless; nevertheless it is true that Jasiński drew general inspiration from the Russian poems, and even borrowed directly. A comparative analysis of *The Lay of Jakub Szela* and *Pugachev* reveals a striking similarity of images, especially of images related to Nature. In Esenin, the image of autumn stands in the centre of the collision between Pugachev and his fellow rebels. In order to evoke feelings of uneasiness and the expectation of something strange, Esenin turns his attention to such elements as grey clouds, bare trees, chilled animals and birds:

Тысячу чертей, тысячу ведьм и тысячу
дьяволов!
Экий дождь! Экий скверный дождь!
Скверный, скверный!
Словно вонючая моча волон.
Льется с туч на поля и деревни.
Скверный дождь!
Экий скверный дождь!

23 In discussing Kamenskii's *Serdtshe narodnoe Sten'ka Razin* we refer to the first publication of this poem, not to his subsequent exploitations of that theme in 1927, 1932, 1939, and 1948, which are considerably different.

Как скелеты тощих журавлей
Стоят ошипанные вербы.²⁴

In Jasiński, autumn imagery also symbolizes the upcoming bloody events. Esenin's horrid rain that "stinks like bull's urine" is transformed into "rain that falls from a goat's udder":

Rozwiczrzonych nad polem grzyw dym
kapie deszczu wymieniem koziem

And, as in *Pugachev*, the crippled alder-tree foretells the tragic end:

Oj, ty, drogo, nieschodzona, daleka!
Oj, ty, drogo, nieschodzona, niebliska!
Cztery wierzby i olszyna-kaleka,
i na plecach ciężka nieba walizka.

Jasiński's de-poetization of the moon by means of vulgar associations also derives from Esenin's poem. In *Pugachev* the moon is identified with the "horse's skull"; in *The Lay* the moon "stinks with manure." Both poets animate the moon by suggesting an analogy between the moon and a rider. In *Pugachev* the moon rides a "Kirghiz carriage"; in *The Lay*, a "gelding":

a wieczorem-zmierzchem
jechał księżyc wierzchem
w srebrnych był sandałach,
siwy pod nim watach.

These direct borrowings confirm the influence of *Pugachev* on the poetics of *The Lay*.²⁵ But in addition Jasiński followed Esenin's technique in the construction of the images themselves. He intensified his tropes by means of unexpected associations and vulgar comparisons. Rain is described as "all in sweat, kneading the dough of the roads with his wet hands"; the bare tree branches look like "bony fingers covered by the itch of the sparrows":

Otrute słońca bułką z zakalcem
zdychają zmierzchy pod lament wierzb.
Wychudłym drzewom kościste palce
osypał nocą wróble świerzb.

24 Sergei Esenin, *Pugachev*, in *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moskva, 1966), II, 1964.

25 The question of Esenin's influence on Bruno Jasiński was discussed in W. Piotrowski, "Jesienin a Bruno Jasiński," *Sprawozdania z posiedzeń PAN*, nos. 7-12 (1966), pp. 396-399, and in M. Rawiński, "U genezy wczesnej twórczości poetyckiej Brunona Jasińskiego," *O wzajemnych powiązaniach literackich polsko-rosyjskich* (Wrocław, 1969), pp. 196-228.

Such elaborate tropes occur throughout the poem, but especially in the author's commentaries, and as in Esenin their function is to transmit the idea of the work in a vivid and new form.

It is much harder to determine the extent of Kamenskii's influence, since the stylistic convergence of the poems has no confirmation in direct borrowings. The only fragment of *The Lay* that reminds us of *Sten'ka Razin* is the description of the revolt. But even here the similarity is mainly in the tone rather than in the motifs or images:

Dość chciał nam dopiec
kopic i wał—
Hulaj, gromada, wiatrom na
schwiał!

W polach odprzęgaj konie
od landar,
Żaden nie pośmie bruździć ci
zandarm!

Hulaj, wychylaj głowy zza
wnęk!
Byli-ubyli, jechał ich sęk!
Hoła na pola orki się uczyć,
orać karbowym, rządca
nawłóczyć!

Hejże! a nuże! hala! a haj!
Wozy z dobytkiem do zagród
pchaj!
Klamki złociste do wsi
poznoścież!
Rygle otwarte—ziemia na
oścież!

K-r-r-r-r-aj!

Сарынь на кичку,
Ядреный лапоть,
Чем затылок у перса-пса.
Зачнем с низовья
Хватать -- царапать.
И шкуру драть -- парчу с купца.
Сарынь на кичку,
Кистень за пояс.
В башке зудит разгул до дна.
Свисти. Глуши. Зевай. Раздайся.
Слепая сволочь, не попадайся.
Вввв.²⁶

In these passages of the Russian and Polish poems stylistic convergence rests on the mixture of Futurist poetics and folk stylization. In *Sten'ka Razin* the Futurist trend is expressed in crowd scenes, where the verses are built from single words and short phrases, often merely shouts and curses. It is also in the "zaum'" songs, composed of meaningless sounds allegedly rendering the melody of a foreign language. But Kamenskii also included in *Sten'ka* a great many epic and lyrical songs in the stereotyped forms of Russian folklore.

A few fragments of *The Lay* also show the influence of Futurist poetics, as in this example of word economy and skillful orchestration:

Szedł śnieg. Brał mróz.
Biegł zbieg. W mróz wrósł.
Z ust krew—as kier.
Znad drew mgła skier.

But, on the whole, Jasiński's poem is sustained in the modes of the folklore tradition. Was the idea of the folk stylization suggested to Jasiński by Kamenskii's poem? It is difficult to establish this, but even if it was, it does not diminish the great artistic value of the poem. *The Lay of Jakub Szela* is undoubtedly Jasiński's best work, and it marks a turning point in his literary career. In it he moves away from Futurism and searches for new forms of artistic expression which can more adequately express his revolutionary ideas.

I Burn Paris—A Utopian Novel

In 1928, in the pages of the French Communist newspaper *L'Humanité*, there appeared another work by Jasiński, a novel, *Je brûle Paris* (*I Burn Paris*).¹ The title of the novel was patterned after “Je brûle Moscou,” the title of a short story by Paul Morand, one of many anti-Soviet squibs that appeared in France in the 1920s.² Morand’s story shocked Jasiński with its mocking portrayal of Vladimir Maiakovskii, whom he considered the greatest poet of the twentieth century. “Je brûle Moscou” was, in the opinion of Anatol Stern, “a defiance of Jasiński’s ideals,” and the Polish writer accepted the challenge by answering Morand’s “I Burn Moscow” with *I Burn Paris*.³

The plot of “I Burn Moscow” revolves around the erotic adventures of a French diplomat in Moscow. At one of the avant-garde theatres the protagonist meets a Russian girl, who complies with the rule that “Russian women surrender at once; it is only afterwards that the difficulties begin.”⁴ Vasilissa gives herself to the Frenchman that same evening and invites him to her apartment the following day. Only there does the diplomat learn that his beloved shares the apartment with her husband, Ben Moiseevich, and a prominent “red poet,” Mordecai Goldvasser. A great deal of attention is devoted to Goldvasser who, around 1914, had published some poems under the influence of Apollinaire, but after the Revolution took to writing “political pieces, atheistic songs for children, patriotic hymns, odes to agricultural manure, calligrammes in the shape of the hammer and reaping hook, puffs for the state industry.”⁵ Like a true artist, Goldvasser is not free of

- 1 Bruno Jasiński, *Je brûle Paris*, *L'Humanité*, September 14–November 13, 1928. The text of *Je brûle Paris* that appeared in *L'Humanité* was a translation from the Polish original. The translation was very good: it faithfully reproduced not only the ideas of the original, but also its highly metaphoric style. Equally successful was the Russian translation, *Ia zhgu Parizh*, which was published in Moscow in 1928. The first Polish edition of *Pałę Paryż* appeared in Moscow in 1929, and was then published in Poland with a preface by Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski.
- 2 Paul Morand’s “Je brûle Moscou” was first published in *Demain* (April 1925), and later incorporated into *L'Europe galante* (Paris, 1925).
- 3 Anatol Stern, *Bruno Jasiński* (Warszawa, 1969), p. 127.
- 4 Paul Morand, “I Burn Down Moscow,” *Europe in Love*, trans. G. Chapman (London, 1926), p. 17.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

neurosis; he is afraid of contamination: "this Communist cleaned every object he touched, sterilized his knife and fork, wore rubber gloves, and opened doors at a height which no one could reach."⁶ It is not difficult to guess who Goldvasser represents; he is undoubtedly Vladimir Maiakovskii, and the couple with whom he shares the apartment are Lili and Osip Brik.

Such a mocking portrayal of Maiakovskii and his relations with the Briks could not but shock Jasiński. The Polish writer was also indignant at Morand's anti-communism and anti-Semitism. "Je brûle Moscou" proclaimed the abolition of personal freedom in the Soviet Union and equated all bolsheviks with Jews.

Although "I Burn Moscow" could justly be described as the stimulus for Jasiński's novel, its influence was limited only to the similarity of title.⁷ There is, however, a great deal of similarity between *I Burn Paris* and "The Crusade of the Children," another of Morand's stories. "The Crusade of the Children" is an anti-utopian satire on the Universal Revolution, which extended the Dictatorship of the Proletariat over the whole of Europe.⁸ Like all of the other European states, France was turned into a Soviet Republic, but the new rulers found themselves powerless against the local population. The reason was that French society was stripped of its children and youth, and the older generation was not susceptible to change. In order to win over the remaining young people, the Soviet government decided to hand France over to the children. All of the high posts were filled by youngsters: an eight-year-old Armenian was nominated to the Prefecture of the North, a little Jew to the Administration of the Territories of the East, and a young Russian girl, Polia, was appointed the Military Governor of Touraine. Polia proved to be an excellent governor until she met Mr. Garapain, an old Frenchman, who taught her how to play and amuse herself. As a result she neglected her duties; there were no more requisitions, and the prisons opened. Touraine turned into a happy province where everybody played.

Thus the story conveys Morand's firm belief in the superiority and immovability of the bourgeois way of life, which would triumph over communist ideals. Morand juxtaposes the happiness of the traditional way of life with the rigidity and strict order of the communist dictatorship. Morand's point of view was not acceptable to Jasiński, and the

6 Ibid., p. 28.

7 There is a widespread tendency amongst the critics to consider "Je brûle Moscou" a stimulus for *Pałę Paryż*. See N. T. Shafer, "Stilisticheskoe svoeobrazie romana Iasenskogo 'Ia zhgu Parizh,'" in *Filologicheskii sbornik* (Alma-Ata, 1963); E. Khoroshukhin, "Kompozitsiia i siuzhet romana Bruno Iasenskogo 'Ia zhgu Parizh,'" in *Materialy respublikanskoi nauchno-teoreticheskoi konferentsii molodykh uchenykh i aspirantov* (Samarkand, 1968); A. Stern, *Bruno Jasiński* (Warszawa, 1969).

8 Paul Morand, "La Croisade des enfants," *L'Europe galante* (Paris, 1925).

Polish writer counteracted it with the idea of the inevitable end of the capitalist system. Unlike "The Crusade of the Children," *I Burn Paris* offers a utopian vision of the universal revolution, in which a happy and just society flourishes under the rule of the proletariat.

The third literary work that influenced Jasiński was Il'ia Erenburg's *Trust D. E.*, a novel about the extermination of Europe by American capitalists.⁹ The destruction is carried out according to the plan of Ens Boot, a frustrated European who decides to take revenge on a corrupted Europe. After his arrival in the United States, Boot organizes "Trust D. E." whose task is the complete annihilation of Europe. The destruction of Europe takes place gradually: first the French army destroys Germany, then Poland and Rumania attack the Soviet Union. The remaining Russians march on Poland and bring with them an epidemic of leprosy which kills all the inhabitants of Eastern Europe. Various epidemics are also responsible for the death of all the Italians, Scandinavians, and Dutch. The British die of hunger. Finally, it is France's turn. There is a dramatic decrease in the birth rate, then the Revolution breaks out, and all the French perish in a civil war. By the year 1940 the population of the whole of Europe is exterminated.

Jasiński shared Erenburg's hatred for the mercantile European society based on success, money, and egotism, and like the Russian writer, he forecast its inevitable fall. *I Burn Paris* offered the spectre of a plague that would kill all the inhabitants of Paris except the proletariat. Contrary to *Trust D. E.*, where the collapse of Europe was final, the destruction of Paris in Jasiński's novel marks the beginning of a new era under the rule of a Proletarian Commune.

The motif of the plague was probably suggested by Erenburg's novel. Jasiński also borrowed from Erenburg two family-conflict motifs. The first is the uncle-and-nephew conflict, personified in *Trust D. E.* by the soulless French dictator, Felix Brandevo, and his nephew, a devoted Socialist. In *I Burn Paris*, the conflict is between an American millionaire, David Lingslay, and his nephew Archie, who carries on communist propaganda in his uncle's factories. The second is the husband-and-wife conflict, transformed by Jasiński into a conflict between Pierre and his fiancée. Both Lucy in *Trust D. E.* and Jeannette in *I Burn Paris* ask for new pairs of shoes, but neither Jean nor Pierre can fulfill their requests. The first is bankrupt; the other has lost his job and is penniless.

The similarity between *I Burn Paris* and *Trust D. E.* goes beyond the similarity of the motifs. The resemblance is also apparent in the wealth of adventure, the frequent use of the fantastic, and in the episodic composition. Both novels are composed of a number of stories loosely

9 Il'ia Erenburg, *Trust D. E.* (Berlin, 1923).

connected to each other. Many of these stories could exist independently, abstracted from the whole. The "coupling" of all these fragments is more evident in Erenburg's novel, where the figure of the protagonist runs throughout the book. In the case of *I Burn Paris*, each fragment has its own set of characters, its own protagonist, and its unique plot. What unites all these stories is the motif of the plague, which divides Paris into different sectors.

The narrative of Jasiński's novel opens with the portrayal of a bourgeois Paris, where thousands of poor live in the streets. One of them is Pierre, who, after losing his job, has joined the ranks of the beggars. In a short time Pierre learns the feeling of hunger: "And a bitter taste in his mouth for the first time slipped through his mind, knocking at the door with stubborn, patient hiccups. He understood and smiled at his own dull brain. It was hunger."¹⁰ Hunger is accompanied by despair, caused by the loss of his girlfriend, who gave him up for richer men. Revenging himself on the people who robbed him of Jeannette, Pierre poisons the city's water conduit with the plague bacillus.

The outbreak of the plague initiates the central action of the novel—the organization of independent sectors uniting people of the same nationality or the same political outlook. The first to organize an independent republic are the Jews, who hope that by barricading off the rest of the city they will escape the plague. Their example is followed by the English and the Americans, the French Monarchists, and the Russian émigrés. The Chinese students, led by P'an Tsiang-kuei, take over the Latin sector and proclaim the formation of a Chinese Republic.

Although the description of each of the sectors constitutes a semi-independent story, there is a striking similarity in plot organization. First of all, the narrative always centres around the figure of the protagonist, who is either the leader of a sector or a prominent member of the sector's administration. The protagonist is usually introduced at the beginning of the story, and his short characterization is followed by flashbacks into his past. The description of the hero's past reveals the development of his character and the basic traits of his personality. Sometimes the flashbacks into the past are rather brief, while other portrayals—those of Boris Solomin and P'an—develop into independent stories. The description of the childhood of P'an resembles a didactic children's story, showing the hero's development into an active revolutionary. The story of Solomin, on the other hand, reminds one of a film script. When Boris recalls his own life he is struck by its

10 Bruno Jasiński, *Pałę Paryż* (Warszawa, 1974), p. 15. This edition of *Pałę Paryż* will be used hereafter, unless stated otherwise.

similarity to a typical trite movie, and the analogy is emphasized by the form, which imitates a film script:

Son of a staff officer. From mother—an estate near Moscow. Childhood (usually it is shown in a prologue): toys, tutors, governesses. Boyhood: a grammar school, books and stamps. In summer—duck hunting in the country. First amorous encounters. Mostly farm girls under supervision of an experienced steward. And everything else as it should be.

University. "Moscow at night." Bridging gaps in erotic education. And suddenly, in the most stimulating moment one can say—mobilization [p. 151].

If flashbacks into the past serve as a means for direct characterization of the protagonist, present actions provide the means for indirect characterization. All of the protagonists play a decisive role in the present events; they organize the sectors and direct the fight against the plague.

The Jews attempt to conquer the epidemic by following the Rabbi's interpretation of Biblical precepts. At first the Rabbi orders them to abolish the traditional burial procedures and to leave the houses struck by the plague. When this does not help, he recommends that the Jewish sector be cordoned off from the rest of the city. Finally, he decides to follow the example of Moses and remove the Jewish people to the Promised Land. His plan involves bribing the French military cordon, chartering a ship, and obtaining the help of an influential American millionaire in persuading the coast guards to allow the ship to dock in one of the American harbours.

All the efforts of the White Russian Republic are directed towards the recovery of the members of the Soviet Mission captured by the French Monarchists. The Russian émigrés are filled with thoughts of vengeance for all the offences of the bolsheviks. The recovery of the Soviet diplomats proves very disappointing, however, since they are all infected with the plague.

In their struggle for survival, the Chinese conform to the strictest rules; they kill all the infected as well as the people who hide them. At the same time they establish a research laboratory, where bacteriologists work twenty-four hours a day to produce a serum against the plague. But the epidemic spreads wildly, and P'an himself catches the infection. Faithful to his own ruthless decree, he shoots himself.

The same fate awaits the other protagonists as well. Boris Solomin dies when, in a drunken state, he boards the truck with the infected bolsheviks. David Lingslay and Rabbi Eleasar are killed by missiles from the American coast guard. Lingslay, who at first collaborated with the Jewish plot, sends a cable to the American authorities warning them about the true nature of the coming ship. The death of the protagonists

signifies the collapse of all the republics. By the first of September, there is not a single person left in the territories of the ten republics.

At first, the destruction of Paris seems final, but soon the reader learns that not all the city's inhabitants were killed by the epidemic. The plague spared the prisoners, who used a different water system. The ex-prisoners organize a Proletarian Commune, but continue to inform the rest of the world about the spread of the epidemic and the fights between the different sectors of the city. The existence of the Commune is discovered accidentally when a lost American pilot sees a perfectly functioning city with a great number of radio towers and fields full of ripening wheat. When the Western governments decide to attack the Commune, their workers declare themselves on the side of the Parisian proletariat. The Proletarian Commune initiates a worldwide revolution that establishes the rule of the proletariat. Thus, the novel proclaims the inevitable end of the capitalist system and the coming of a new era. Paris, the symbol of Western bourgeois society, has to be destroyed so that the workers may build a new world.

Although it might seem inconsistent, this univocal political ideology is transmitted by an elaborate system of artistic devices. First, there is a constant "estrangement" of the presented reality. "Estrangement" is, according to Victor Shklovskii, the essence of art, which tears the object out of its habitual context, and presents it as if it were seen for the first time. Our perception of reality, argued Shklovskii in "Art as a Device," is based on a chain of habitual associations and automatic responses. The task of art is to break this automatic perception by presenting the habitual in a novel light, an unexpected context. Only then are we able to "see" things instead of merely recognizing them.¹¹

I Burn Paris abounds in passages where the author "refuses to recognize" familiar objects and describes them as if they were seen for the first time. Here is the description of a city in which tall buildings look like many-storeyed boxes: "Somewhere, many, many leagues away, there are huge, monstrous cities where white people live in many-storeyed boxes, and in these boxes instead of stairways run small mobile boxes, transporting tenants to the highest floor in a second" (p. 76). On the streets run "glass wagons" and "queer carriages" that move without rails, without horses, just by touching a mysterious "sticking-in-the-air wheel." These queer carriages are obviously cars, or as P'an calls them, "Auto Mo-biles," with such strange names as "Bra-Sey," "Dai-Mler," "Re-Nault," "Mer Ce-Des."

Significantly, the "estrangement" is motivated by Jasieński in terms of verisimilitude and psychological plausibility. In the examples quoted above, Jasieński reproduces the perception of a small Chinese boy

11 V. Shklovskii, "Iskusstvo kak priem," *Poetika: Sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo iazyka* (Petrograd, 1919); *Khod konia* (Moscow, 1923).

whose vision has not been spoiled by automatic responses. Many objects are “made strange” due to P’an’s perception of the world.

As the years go by, P’an stops being amazed by the objects of the surrounding reality and begins to wonder at different ideologies. After being accepted at an orphanage he is introduced to Christianity. At the sight of a “flat piece with three corners and with a small naked man nailed to it” he concludes that that must be the way the white people punish thieves. In a short period of time he learns that the man nailed to the wood is God, who came to earth to suffer for all people. P’an is sceptical: “Why should a white man, even if he is God, suffer for the Chinese?” His interpretation of Christianity is quite different from what he is taught:

No, P’an did not like this humble God. Evidently, He was bribed by the rich and the kings so that He would persuade people to be obedient. As an example, He certainly could have allowed himself to be beaten endlessly. After all, if He was God, He wouldn’t have felt any pain. And He could have died as many times as He wanted. No, one cannot believe such a God. Such a God is a cheat [p. 85].

The same device of “making it strange” is used by Jasiński in the description of socialism. When P’an reads about the “heresy of socialism,” he draws an analogy between socialists and the early Christians:

There are people, a sect who decided to measure everything according to one’s worth. Like St. Paul, they have a rule: “Whoever doesn’t work will not eat.” One should take all the wealth from the rich and make it public property. After eliminating private property, one should give to everyone according to his worth [p. 90].

The presentation of the child’s innocent vision of the world is one of the methods of “estrangement” employed in *I Burn Paris*. Another is the metaphorical description of the surrounding reality, in which familiar objects are transferred into a new sphere of perception. This type of “estrangement” abounds in the opening chapter depicting the city landscape. The following is a picture of Paris flooded with rain:

Towards evening the rain started to pour, and in the splashing streams of water the hard contours of objects wavered softly. . . .

In the wide gully of the river bed, to the rune of the elastic scales of tires, swam a crowded school of strange, iron fish with burning, bulging eyes, lustily rubbing each other’s sides amid clouds of a bluish spawn of gasoline.

Lead-footed people under heavy covers of umbrellas moved with difficulty along the steep banks like divers in transparent jelly [p. 14].

In general, the city resembles the sea; its noise and constant movement recall the rise and fall of the tide. Like the waves of the sea, the

crowd carries away helpless individuals. This happens to Pierre on the fourteenth of July, when Paris celebrates the anniversary of the Great French Revolution: "The incoming crowd jostled him onto the street, the incoming cars pushed him onto a stony island" (p. 70). "The warm waves washed him away like a splinter and carried him blindly without a compass" (p. 71).

On the whole, the metaphoric system of *I Burn Paris* is sustained in the same Futurist tradition that determined Jasieński's early poetry. Jasieński emphasizes the hostility of the city by equating it with a jungle where "savages bury their spears in the hearts of the lanterns," and where the pavement is made of the "scalped skulls of the crowd buried alive":

A bare, rough pavement—the bold scalped skulls of the crowd buried alive—will meet them with a prolonged scream passed from mouth to mouth across the endless length of the street. Black people with long spears will run along the sidewalks, burying their spear heads in the flickering flame-like hearts of the lanterns [p. 13].

As in his earlier poetry, Jasieński "degrades" Nature by means of appropriate prosaic associations. Thus, the sky is described as "an American flag with stars as the stars," or as a white space "licked by the tongues of searchlights." Nature is often endowed with animal features: the rain "touches Pierre's face with its wet paw," while the raindrops are identified with "the cold spray falling down from the Great Bear, when she shakes her fur after her evening bath." This last metaphor is a play on the two meanings of the words "Wielka Niedźwiedzica," a female bear, and the name of a constellation.

Although most of the metaphors introduced into *I Burn Paris* describe the urban landscape, there are also metaphors that serve as a means of characterizing the protagonists. The portrayal of Rabbi Eleasar, for instance, is based on an analogy with a flat-fish. Like the flat-fish whose eyes look upwards, the Rabbi always looks towards the sky:

Rabbi Eleasar ben Cwi has a pair of close-set eyes always looking upward; dispassionate, small, twin eyes turned toward heaven, where they always seem to see things noticeable only to them. If an organ is not used, it disappears. Rabbi Cwi sees many things not perceived by the human eye, but he does not see the simplest things; he has only one side, the one turned towards heaven, and he does not have the other side turned towards earth [p. 126].

A series of metaphors about fear depicts the feelings and the inner state of David Lingslay. Every morning he wakes up with the animal-like fear that he has caught the plague:

Every morning he woke up with the instinctive fear of a healthy, muscular body, dreading the moment when, one morning, he would be awakened by a severe pain at the bottom of his stomach.

The fear, like a released spring, jumped to his throat, and had to be pushed back by his fist into its closet, where it stayed till the following morning [p. 137].

The fear is so strong that it causes a peculiar split in his personality. On the one hand, he is a forty-year-old man, governed by animal instincts, while, on the other, he is Mr. Lingslay, obedient to the accepted rules of behaviour. The sober and logical Mr. Lingslay accepts his fate, while the forty-year-old man "bristles up," and "gives a long howl like an animal":

The forty-year-old gentleman was not able to argue with Mr. Lingslay's logical reasoning, but with a dull animal instinct he began to search for something which he could grasp onto, and like a mollusc, feeling the coming of a wave which will wash him away, would frantically look for a ledge on a rock to cling to in order to survive [p. 232].

Elsewhere, metaphors create more complex characters. The desperate situation of a jobless Pierre is emphasized by a number of metaphors about hunger. When Pierre begins to feel hunger he compares it to "a dog charging at the door of his mind and scraping at it with its paw." Later on, when he is completely beset by hunger, he thinks of hunger as building a nest in the cords of his guts: "In the cords of his innards, like a seagull in the tangled cordage of an abandoned ship, the old, domesticated hunger built itself a nest and did not leave it even for a moment" (p. 41). Jasiński conveys Pierre's feelings of isolation and complete disorientation by metaphors that describe the actual workings of his mind. His thoughts are "tangled and winding like the city streets on which he roams." Or: "His dull thoughts, idling on the surface like lazy breezes, were instinctively slipping by this place on tiptoe, as if they were afraid to find a vacuum" (p. 46).

In his description of the desperate thoughts of his protagonist, Jasiński is close to Knut Hamsun's treatment of the hunger theme in *Hunger*.¹² Centring on the psychological experiences of a young writer practically starving to death, *Hunger* portrays all the phases of hunger, from its first symptoms to the eventual hallucinations. In comparison with Jasiński, Hamsun is more naturalistic in his description of hunger; he stresses the physical sensations of a starving person: "Hunger put in its appearance afresh, gnawed at my breast, clutched me, and gave small, sharp stabs that caused me pain."¹³

Moreover, Hamsun is not interested in the social aspect of hunger, but in its effects on the psychology. *Hunger* abounds in passages de-

12 Knut Hamsun's *Sult*, which was originally published in 1890, was very popular in the 1920s. Jasiński might have read it in either the Polish or the French translation.

13 Knut Hamsun, *Hunger*, trans. G. Egerton (New York, 1920), p. 94.

scribing the protagonist's mind, some of them similar to those in *I Burn Paris*. Jasiński's metaphor of Pierre's "dim and feverish thoughts which fly away like flushed pigeons, leaving a complete emptiness and a flapping of wings in his temples," corresponds to Hamsun's "whenever I had been hungry for any length of time it was just as if my brains ran quite gently out of my head and left me with a vacuum" or "I felt a scorching heat in my head, and something pulsated in my temples."¹⁴

There is also some similarity in the erotic description of city life, which illustrates the hostility of the city towards the protagonists. In *Hunger* the protagonist is appalled by the sensual laughter and panting breaths, which turn Carl Johann Street into "a swamp, from which hot vapours exuded."¹⁵ In *I Burn Paris*, the whole of Paris turns into a sexual orgy. The cars resemble rutting dogs, and the stars look "like the advertising lights of distant sky motels inviting into its doors souls lost in space and longing for love" (p. 42).

Surprisingly, the Soviet literary critics excused the formalism of Jasiński's artistic devices on account of "the ideological clarity of the content." *I Burn Paris* was praised for its "exposure of the capitalist world which showed the necessity of political struggle."¹⁶ The main objections concerned the unperceptive portrayal of the working class. The reviewers criticized Jasiński for the unjustified isolation of Pierre from the rest of the workers, and for "schematism in the depiction of the proletarian collective":

The events are given through the perception of a declassed proletarian, thrown by unemployment into the streets of Paris; this is one of the book's shortcomings. An evaluation of events from the point of view of the proletarian collective would considerably increase the value of the book.¹⁷

Far more critical of the book were the Polish leftist critics, who considered *I Burn Paris* "an attempt to indoctrinate the proletariat with foreign ideology." Such was the opinion of Jan Wolski, who drew an analogy between *I Burn Paris* and the Biblical Apocalypse, equating Paris with Babylon, the plague with the pestilence sent by God, and the communists with the chosen people. He concluded that Jasiński's book was a warning to the bourgeoisie against coming disasters: "It was intended as a revolutionary novel, but appeared as an Apocalyptic book, very well suited to the bourgeoisie as a moralizing warning against coming disasters."¹⁸

14 Ibid., pp. 23, 64.

15 Ibid., p. 139.

16 Review of Iasenskii's *Ia zhgu Parizh, Oktiabr'*, no. 3 (1929), p. 185.

17 A. K., review of Iasenskii's *Ia zhgu Parizh, Rezets*, no. 23 (1929), p. 1.

18 Jan Wolski, "Apokalipsa wg. Brunona Jasińskiego," *Kultura Mas*, nos. 4-5 (1930), p. 66.

Under the influence of such criticism Jasiński decided to correct the ideological shortcomings of his novel and in 1934 published a new, revised version with the Russian title *Ia zhgu Parizh*.¹⁹ He accepted the Marxist belief that fiction had to reflect the rules that govern objective reality, and subordinated the material of *I Burn Paris* to the Marxist interpretation of the class struggle.

The most drastic changes involved the plot of the novel. First, Jasiński revised the plague motif. In the original publication the plague was started by a desperate individual, while in the second version it was spread by the French government, which did not hesitate to use the most drastic measures to strangle the revolution. In the 1934 version Pierre becomes a blind instrument of the government; he is not even aware of the contents of the test tubes which he is ordered to empty into the aqueduct. The meaning of this transformation is obvious: the true perpetrator of the plague turns out to be the bourgeoisie, and not the worker. Thus, the revolution does not begin with the revolt of an individual but is a result of the class struggle.

The second major change involved the origin of the Commune. In the first version, the Commune is established by the ex-prisoners, who escaped the plague because they drank water from a different aqueduct. The choice of the prisoners as the builders of the Commune risked a vicious interpretation—the identification of the revolution with the revolt of criminals. In order to avoid such an interpretation Jasiński excluded the prisoners and depicted the Commune as the work of the proletariat, guided by the Communist Party.

The same concern for ideological clarity made Jasiński revise the characterization of some of the protagonists. In the case of P'an, Jasiński excluded the racist attitude towards the whites. According to the original, P'an issues a decree to exterminate all whites, as carriers of the disease. In the new version, this decree applies only to the white Fascists, while the rest of the white population is allowed to stay in the Chinese Republic.

Along with the major changes in plot, the second version contains a number of new details which bring the action of the novel closer to contemporary events. These include, among others, some references to the Fascist ideology, the secret deals of Western governments, and the role of the French newspaper *L'Humanité*.

On the whole, the second version is inferior to the first. The changes made because of purely political considerations often weaken the artistic effect. The plot of the 1934 version develops so straightforwardly that from the beginning it is obvious who the characters are and what

19 *Palę Paryż* was translated into Russian as early as 1928 and then republished in 1929 and twice in 1930. The second version appeared in 1934, and was later incorporated into Iasenskii's *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moskva, 1957).

the outcome of the story will be. The second version contains an unnecessary second prologue which tells the reader what is going to happen. The artistic effect is also weakened by the exclusion of many metaphoric descriptions and passages that "estranged" reality and added to the novel's unique and original style.

I Burn Paris was Jasiński's first novel that was completely subordinated to the task of political propaganda. Jasiński himself wrote in his autobiography:

A growing desire to participate actively in class struggles by means of the irresistible weapon of the artistic word forced me to abandon poetry and switch to prose. As a result of three months work, my first prose work, the novel *I Burn Paris*, appeared.²⁰

Here Jasiński claimed that *I Burn Paris* was his first prose work, when in fact it was preceded by *The Legs of Isolde Morgan*, a story published in 1923.²¹ Jasiński's "renunciation" of *Legs* reflected his new attitude towards literature. By 1931 he had become convinced that literature had to serve utilitarian tasks, and since *Legs* was free of any social or political issues, he simply "forgot" to mention it.

Nevertheless, *The Legs of Isolde Morgan* was an important work in Jasiński's literary career. It reflects his definite break with Futurism. In it he indicates his disapproval of the Futurist cult of technology by showing how the materialistic world disintegrates under the impact of an explosive thought or experience. Engineer Berg begins as a devoted admirer of the machine, but eventually comes to fear it. The cult of the machine leads to insanity.

As Edward Balcerzan has pointed out, in *Legs* Jasiński criticized Futurism from the perspective of Expressionism. Expressionism provided him with an opposing ideology that allowed him to "annihilate" Futurism. But while criticizing Futurism from the perspective of Expressionism, Jasiński did not declare himself in favour of the latter. He simply showed that the antinomy between the two was not absolute—mysticism and insanity, the integral elements of Expressionism, are also present in the Futurist ideology.²²

Expressionism left an impact, not only on *The Legs of Isolde Morgan*, but also on Jasiński's later works, especially on *The Ball of Mannequins* and "The Nose." Like *Legs*, they are based on the grotesque deformation of reality, and play with absurdity. But now the grotesque is subordinated to didactic purposes. As befits a Socialist Realist, Jasiński uses literature as "a weapon of the class struggle."

20 Bruno Iasenskii, *Izbrannnye proizvedeniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moskva, 1957), I, 5.

21 Bruno Jasiński, *Nogi Izoldy Morgan* (Lwów, 1923), reprinted in *Nogi Izoldy Morgan i inne utwory* (Warszawa, 1966), pp. 15-35.

22 Edward Balcerzan, "'Nogi Izoldy Morgan' Brunona Jasińskiego," *Opowiadanie, nowela, gawęda* (Warszawa, 1974), pp. 220-239.

Bruno Jasieński and Soviet Literary Life 1929-1934

Jasieński arrived in the Soviet Union in the middle of 1929, at a time when many of the literary groups that had come into being during the 1920s still existed but were gradually being absorbed by the powerful RAPP, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers.¹ Claiming to be an organization that "carried out a line in literature closest to the line of the Party,"² RAPP had assumed leadership of the whole proletarian movement and had laid down policy for the whole of Soviet literature.

Applying the principles of dialectical materialism to literature, the RAPP critics insisted that realism was the literary expression of materialist philosophy and that the dialectical requirements meant that life had to be shown in movement. Literature was required to portray reality objectively and to reveal the inherent contradictions in society and in man himself. The writers had to comprehend the world from the point of view of the proletariat and to influence the reader in accordance with the tasks of the working class.³

- 1 For a detailed account of the literary situation at the end of the 1920s see V. Ivanov, *Formirovanie ideinogo edinstva sovetskoi literatury 1917-1932* (Moskva, 1960); A. Romanovskii, *Znamenitaia vekha* (Moskva, 1970); S. Sheshukov, *Neistovye reshiteli: Iz istorii literaturnoi bor'by 20-ykh godov* (Moskva, 1970); H. Borland, *Soviet Literary Theory and Practice During the First Five-Year Plan 1928-1932* (New York, 1950); E. J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature 1928-1932* (New York, 1971).
- 2 "An Editorial," *Pravda*, December 1, 1929.
- 3 "Kulturnaia revoliutsiia i sovremennaia literatura: Rezoliutsiia I Vsesoiuznogo S"ezda proletpisatelei po dokladu L. Averbakha," *Na literaturnom postu*, nos. 12-14 (1928), p. 5.

The most important task of Soviet literature, according to the RAPP critics, was to aid the proletariat in the building of socialism. At a time when Soviet society was working on the first Five-Year Plan, the role of the artist was to help raise mass consciousness and to mobilize the masses for socialist construction. The RAPP critics advocated the theory of "social command," understood as specific assignments to be executed by writers, who were urged to go to industrial construction sites and collective farms and to describe them in factual sketches or novels.⁴ The new literature had to reflect all aspects of the Five-Year Plan—the industrialization, the collectivization, but above all the formation of the new man. The depiction of the "living man" became the top priority for Soviet writers. Literature was expected to show the complex human psychology, with its contradictions and conflicts, instead of the schematic portrayal of stereotyped human characters. Since the "living man" was considered a complex of contradictory qualities, the task of the new literature was to reflect both the good and the bad sides of his character. The writers were urged to "tear off the masks"⁵ from the bad in man and to reveal the "old" psychology that still existed in the new man. The slogan "tearing off the masks" encouraged the writers to show not only the achievements but also the shortcomings of the new Soviet society.

The slogans "social command," "for the living man," and "to tear off the masks" were devised in order to guide and inspire the proletarian writers, but in fact they soon became the aesthetic criteria used by the RAPP critics in evaluating the whole of Soviet literature. The writers who subscribed to RAPP theory were praised and glorified, while those who did not were denounced as "counter-revolutionaries," "class enemies," and "traitors." In 1931 RAPP put forward a slogan "Ally or enemy," suggesting that neutrality and non-political views in an author were a mere excuse for evading active participation in the construction of socialism. The fellow travellers⁶ were given an ultimatum, either join

- 4 The theory of "social command" had originated among LEF members, who believed that the writer was simply a craftsman of words who had to produce literary works satisfying the demands of his client, the proletariat, who awaited clear and factual works. "Literature of fact"—sketches, biographies, diaries—was considered the highest form of literary creation. Cf. O. Brik, "Ne teoriia a lozung," *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, no. 1 (1923); V. Maiakovskii, "Za chto boretsia LEF?" *Lef*, no. 1 (1923). LEF's theory of social command received the approval of the RAPP leaders, for whom it was a means of enlisting literature in the service of the first Five-Year Plan. See H. Borland, *Soviet Literary Theory and Practice During the First Five-Year Plan 1928-1932* (New York, 1950).
- 5 The term "tearing off the masks" was taken from Lenin's article on Leo Tolstoi, in which he spoke of Tolstoi's "tearing off the mask of reality." See V. Lenin, "Tolstoi kak zerkalo russkoi revoliutsii," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed. (Moskva, 1958), XVIII, 206-213.
- 6 The term "fellow travellers" (*poputchiki*) referred to the non-proletarian writers who, while loyal to the Soviet state, wanted to be free to express their personal views.

RAPP or be classified as enemies.⁷

RAPP's clannishness and intolerance towards outsiders and especially towards fellow travellers were the main reasons for the liquidation of RAPP by the Decree of April 23, 1932. While recognizing RAPP's important contribution to the development of Soviet literature at a time when literature was still under the influence of certain alien elements, the Central Committee of the Communist Party decided that "now that the cadres of proletarian literature have had time to grow, and the new writers have come forward from factories, plants, and collective farms, the framework of the existing literary organizations has become too narrow and holds back the serious growth of literary creation." The Central Committee resolved to liquidate the Association of Proletarian Writers and to unite all Soviet writers into a single Union of Soviet Writers.⁸

The task of working out practical measures for creating the Union of Soviet Writers was entrusted to the Organizing Committee, whose members represented various creative groups and movements, with Maxim Gorkii as honorary chairman. The committee initiated a long and heated discussion on the character of the future Union and on the method of Soviet literature, which culminated in the first Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow in August 1934. The Congress officially accepted Socialist Realism as a method of Soviet literature and defined it as "a truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development."⁹ Such a definition was suggested by A. A. Zhdanov, the chief Party spokesman at the Congress. Zhdanov stressed in his speech that the Soviet writer has "to know life in order to depict it truthfully in works of art, to depict it not scholastically, not lifelessly, not just as 'objective reality,' but to depict real life in its revolutionary development."¹⁰ Truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic depiction, continued Zhdanov, had to be combined with the task of the ideological remoulding and re-education of the working people in the spirit of socialism.

The basic requirements of Socialist Realism were reflected in the term itself, combining the literary concept "realism" with a political

The fellow travellers were not an organized group, but individual writers, such as B. Pil'niak, L. Leonov, A. Tolstoi. Sometimes the term "poputchiki" was used in regard to the writers belonging to the "Serapion Brothers," "Pereval," or "Literaturnyi Tsentr Konstruktivistov."

7 B. Ker, "Ne poputchik, a soiuznik ili vrag," *Na literaturnom postu*, no. 2 (1931), pp. 39-40.

8 "O perestroike literaturno-khudozhestvennykh organizatsii: Postanovlenie TsK VKP (b) ot 23 apreliia 1932," *Pravda*, April 24, 1932.

9 "Ustav SSP SSSR," *Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi S'ezd Sovetskikh Pisatelei: Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moskva, 1934), p. 716.

10 A. A. Zhdanov, "Rech'," *Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi S'ezd*, p. 4.

term "socialist." The choice of realism as the artistic method for Soviet literature was determined by the Marxist premise that the prime function of art is the cognition of reality. The task of literature was the truthful depiction of reality, based on the principles of verisimilitude and probability. But what was even more important, literature had to reflect the contradictions of social development and the future directions of its evolution. This last requirement was enclosed in the concept of "typicality," taken from Engels' definition of realism: "Realism, to my mind, implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances."¹¹

If "realism" in "Socialist Realism" stood for the truthful depiction of reality, the adjective "socialist" implied the necessity of the critical evaluation of reality, and the expression of the interests of the working people.¹² Soviet literature had to be tendentious, argued Zhdanov, since in the epoch of class struggle there could not be any "classless, non-tendentious, and apolitical literature":

And it seems to me that any and every Soviet writer may say to any dull-witted bourgeois, to any philistine, or to any bourgeois writers who speak of the tendentiousness of our literature: "Yes, our Soviet literature is tendentious and we are proud of it, for our tendentiousness is to free the working people—and the whole of mankind—from the yoke of capitalist slavery."¹³

Jasiński was not an indifferent observer of all that was happening in Soviet cultural and literary life during the years 1929-1934. Immediately after his arrival in the Soviet Union, he became actively involved in political and organizational work. Without any hesitation he joined the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers and was elected to the Secretariat of the Moscow section. In 1931, when RAPP established *Proletarskaia literatura*, a new journal devoted to the problems of Marxist literary theory and criticism, Jasiński became a member of its editorial board.¹⁴ But Jasiński's most fruitful association

11 F. Engels, "Letter to Margaret Harkness," in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Literature and Art* (New York, 1947), p. 41.

12 For a thorough presentation of the principles of Socialist Realism see L. Timofeev, *Osnovy teorii literatury* (Moskva, 1955); A. I. Ovcharenko, *Sotsialisticheskii realizm i sovremennyi literaturnyi protsess* (Moskva, 1968); *Aktual'nye problemy sotsialisticheskogo realizma* (Moskva, 1969); S. G. Asadullaev, *Istorizm, teoriia i tipologiia sotsialisticheskogo realizma* (Baku, 1969); S. M. Petrov, *Vozniknovenie i formirovanie sotsialisticheskogo realizma* (Moskva, 1970); H. Ermolaev, *Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934: The Genesis of Socialist Realism* (Berkeley, 1963); C. Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory* (New York, 1973); E. Mozejko, *Der sozialistische Realismus: Theorie, Entwicklung und Versagen einer Literaturmethode* (Bonn, 1977).

13 Zhdanov, "Rech'," p. 4.

14 *Proletarskaia literatura* was published during the years 1931-1932; its editorial board included such prominent RAPP critics as L. Averbakh, V. Ermilov, and A. Fadeev.

with RAPP was his work in the International Section, called MORP (Mezhdunarodnoe Ob'edinenie Revoliutsionnykh Pisatelei).¹⁵

At first, Jasiński co-operated with the Polish section and was in charge of its periodical, *Kultura Mas*, whose task was to involve the Polish minority living in the U.S.S.R. in the creation of a new proletarian literature.¹⁶ *Kultura Mas* was to educate the young Polish workers and peasants to become conscious proletarian writers. The periodical published the best works of the young writers and offered friendly criticism of their defects and shortcomings, especially of any language containing Russicisms or ungrammatical expressions.¹⁷ *Kultura Mas* devoted much attention to the development of Polish literature in Poland; it praised works expressing "progressive ideas" and exposed the Fascist ideology in others. While working as the editor of *Kultura Mas*, Jasiński often expressed his scepticism as to the possibility of the formation of a Polish proletarian literature in the Soviet Union. He believed that true Polish proletarian literature could be created only in Poland itself, and not abroad. His views were considered reactionary and "national-opportunistic,"¹⁸ and in 1930 he was replaced by Jan Nejman.

Jasiński's departure from *Kultura Mas* coincided with his taking over the post of chief editor of *Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii*, an official organ of MORP, established at the Second Conference of Revolutionary Writers in Kharkov in November 1930. During its two years of existence, *Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii* proved itself an orthodox executor of the MORP policy. It accepted for publication only the works of so-called "proletarian" writers, above all those dealing with

15 The International Association of Proletarian Writers (MORP) originated in the middle of the 1920s. At first it was known as the International Agency of Revolutionary Writers (MBRP), but the Kharkov Conference changed its name to the International Association of Proletarian Writers. In 1930 MORP had seven sections—German, Hungarian, Austrian, Czech, American, Polish, and Japanese—and it published four periodicals: *Vestnik inostrannoi literatury*, *Die Linkskurve*, *Kultura Mas*, and *Sárlo és Kalapács*. The period 1931-33 was the heyday of MORP development; by that time the Association had fifteen foreign sections, uniting hundreds of writers. MORP ceased to exist in 1935. For detailed information about MORP see volume 81 of *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Moskva, 1969).

16 Cf. the editorial "O kulturę mas," *Kultura Mas*, no. 1 (1929).

17 Bruno Jasiński wrote a number of articles calling for the freeing of the Polish language in the Soviet Union from Russian borrowings; see "O rewolucję językową," *Kultura Mas*, nos. 1-2 (1929), pp. 11-13; "Twórzmy polski język proletariacki," *Kultura Mas*, no. 2 (1930), p. 5. In addition, *Kultura Mas* carried a regular section "Chwasty językowe" (Language Weeds) which pointed out the most dazzling Russicisms.

18 Cf. the article discussing the results of the Conference of Polish Proletarian Writers held in Minsk in August 1930: "Wyniki zjazdu mińskiego," *Kultura Mas*, no. 2 (1931), p. 14.

certain "proletarian" themes, such as the life of the workers, episodes of the class struggle, and the gloomy existence of the jobless.¹⁹ The editors were always eager to emphasize the proletarian origin of the published authors and the social meaning of their works. Most of its critical articles dealt with proletarian literature in different countries and with the way many "progressive" writers had eventually become proletarian.²⁰ The periodical also repeatedly criticized *Le Monde* and its chief editor, Henri Barbusse. One of the severest critics of *Le Monde* was Bruno Jasiński himself, who was convinced that the French newspaper had changed "from a bastion of revolutionary thought into a petty bourgeois auction of ideas."²¹ The aggressive tone of Jasiński's article reflected the typical MORP tendency to criticize ruthlessly any deviations from its general policy for international proletarian literature. Like RAPP, MORP had assumed dictatorial powers and had laid down the policy which all proletarian writers had to follow. After the disbanding of all literary organizations by the Decree of April 23, 1932, Bruno Jasiński self-critically spoke of a special "MORP-ish clannishness which in some respects had been possibly stronger than that of RAPP."²²

Jasiński's involvement in political and organizational life did not leave him with much time for creative writing. Besides, he needed some time to learn about Soviet life and to overcome his language problem.²³ After three years in the Soviet Union he published his first Russian work, a play, *The Ball of Mannequins*, which was followed later by a novel, *Man Changes His Skin*. The first work was a pungent satire on capitalist society; the latter glorified the building of socialism in Soviet Tadzhikistan. *Man Changes His Skin* was one of the first novels to depict

- 19 Among the novels published in 1931 issues of *Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii* were W. Hotopp's *Barkas*; H. Marchwitza's *Sturm auf Essen*; W. Bredel's *Maschinenfabrik N. U. K.* The proletarian poets represented in *Lmr* were L. Aragon, J. Becker, D. Hidas, W. Broniewski, and others.
- 20 Cf. the following articles: M. Gold, "Literatura sovremennoi Ameriki," *Lmr*, no. 1 (1931); S. Stände, "Polskaia proletarskaia literatura," *Lmr*, no. 8 (1931); G. Bakalov, "Revoliutsionnaia literatura Bolgarii," *Lmr*, no. 10 (1931).
- 21 Bruno Iasenskii, "Po naklonnoi ploskosti," *Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii*, no. 1 (1931), p. 99.
- 22 Bruno Iasenskii, "Rech'," *Sovetskaia literatura na novom etape: Stenogramma I Plenuma Organizatsionnogo Komiteta Soiuza Sovetskikh Pisatelei* (Moskva, 1933), p. 215.
- 23 It is safe to assume that Jasiński knew Russian quite well even before he moved to the Soviet Union. He undoubtedly learned Russian during his school days in Moscow from 1914 to 1918. In the 1920s he translated a great deal of Russian poetry into Polish. Cf. his translations of Sergei Esenin published in *Zwrotnica*, no. 3 (1923), and of Maiakovskii in Włodzimierz Majakowski, *Wybór poezyj* (Warszawa, 1927). But he needed some time to perfect his Russian before he could start writing in it. In addition to Russian, Jasiński knew French and German well; see the remarks by A. Hidas in his introduction to Bruno Iasenskii, *Slovo o Iakube Shele: Poemy i stikhotvoreniia* (Moskva, 1962).

the economic transformation taking place in the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1930s.

Man Changes His Skin and the Industrial Novel

At the beginning of the 1930s there appeared in the Soviet Union a great number of novels depicting the construction of new industrial projects. Responding to the RAPP slogan "Literature should help the Five-Year Plan," many Soviet writers had joined various construction sites and produced literary accounts of the country's industrial achievements. In 1931 Marietta Shaginian published her novel *The Hydro Electric Plant*, after having first worked for two years at the construction of the Mizinges Hydro Station. In 1932 there appeared, in the pages of *Novyi mir*, Fedor Gladkov's *Energy*, the story of the construction of the Dneprostoi Dam. The same year saw the publication of Valentin Kataev's *Time, Forward!*, and of Il'ia Erenburg's *The Second Day*. Both authors glorified the work of the industrial plants they had visited; Kataev the Magnitostroi Chemical Combine, and Erenburg the Kuznetsk Metallurgical Plant.

POETICS OF THE INDUSTRIAL NOVEL

The early Soviet industrial novel developed under the influence of two Western authors, Pierre Hamp and Bernhard Kellermann. Pierre Hamp (1876-1962), a French novelist, followed Zola's literary techniques as well as his social concerns. Between the years 1909 and 1922 he wrote several novels, combined in the series *Human Drudgery*. Most of them were translated into Russian in the middle of the 1920s,¹

1 *Len* (Le Lin) appeared in Russian translation in 1924, and was followed the next year

and aroused the admiration of Soviet critics, who called upon the proletarian writers "to learn from Hamp." Hamp fascinated them with his choice of themes and his restriction of the plot to the technology of different types of industry. In *The Wine of Champagne* he depicted the French wine industry, and in *The Flax*, textile manufacturing. In *The Rail Tracks* he described the details of railway transportation, including the job and the daily problems of railroaders, while in *Song of Songs* he offered a literary account of the perfume industry. In all of these novels the emphasis was placed on the description of the production and technological processes characteristic of the given type of industry. The technical data were incorporated into the narrative in the form of statistics, technical calculations, and tables.

The second writer who influenced the development of the Soviet industrial novel was Bernhard Kellermann (1879-1951), author of *The Tunnel*, a science-fiction novel glorifying the creative labour which allows for the realization of the most daring plans.² The plot of the novel centres on the construction of a trans-Atlantic tunnel which would connect America with Europe. The tunnel is being built by masses of people, under the supervision of Mac Allan, an engineering genius. The climax of the novel is the catastrophe which kills many workers and delays the completion of the project. But *The Tunnel* ends on an optimistic note: the tunnel is completed and its official opening is witnessed by crowds of people.

Following the tradition established by Hamp and Kellermann, the Soviet industrial novelists constructed their plots around the description of construction projects or technological processes. Technical matter plays a major role in the plot of *Time, Forward!*, which is essentially a chronicle of the breaking of a world record for concrete mixing. A detailed description of the technology of pouring cement is incorporated into the narrative. Kataev not only informs his reader about the general technology of concrete mixing, but also acquaints him with the latest achievements in this field. He goes as far as inserting an authentic, highly specialized article dealing with the production of high-grade concrete:

It is likewise necessary to consider that the plasticity of the concrete diminishes with less mixing, and therefore it is more difficult to handle.

True, the necessary plasticity may be obtained by adding water, but as is well known, this considerably lowers the durability of the concrete (the addition of 10 per cent water lowers the durability of the concrete, on the average, 10 per cent). Mixing for 15 seconds

by *Svezhaia ryba* (Marée fraîche), *Shampanskoe* (Le Vin de Champagne), *Rel'sy* (Le Rail), and *Pesn' pesnei* (Le Cantique des cantiques).

- 2 *Der Tunnel* (1913) was published in Russian translation in 1930 in Bernhard Kellermann's *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (Moskva, 1930).

instead of 1 minute decreases the durability of the concrete by 20 per cent and more, and for 30 seconds—by 10 per cent and more.³

A typical industrial novel, *Time, Forward!* depicts the work of the collective rather than of the individual. The image of the collective, selflessly working in the most appalling conditions, appeared in every industrial novel written at the beginning of the 1930s. As in *The Tunnel*, Nature is the antagonist against whom the workers must struggle. The taiga, the steppe, and the rivers resist men, and their opposition comes in the form of floods, gales, or extreme cold. The image of the flood endangering construction appears most significantly in *Sot'*, *The Hydro Electric Plan*, and *The Second Day*. In *The Second Day* the river returns to its old bed and endangers the dam. Even stronger is the resistance of the taiga:

The taiga was stubborn, it didn't allow people to approach. It was enclosed by a blank wall. It met people by throwing up its gigantic trunks. It was grasping at them with the bushes. It sent swift streams to reconnoitre, and these streams carried everything away. In winter the taiga was guarded by snow, and in summer by swarms of midges. The taiga felt that people wanted to destroy it and it didn't want to give up.⁴

"The taiga was stubborn," writes Erenburg, "it withstood mankind. . . . But more obstinate than the taiga were men." The work at the Kuznetsk Plant continues even at fifty below zero, when metal burns the fingers. The people are dropping from exhaustion, but they continue building.

Since the work at the industrial projects is a struggle with Nature, the writers tend to depict it as a military battle. Like Kellermann, the Soviet novelists portray the construction as a front line, where workers "fight" for higher industrial tempos. "People were living as they did during the war," writes Il'ia Erenburg in *The Second Day*:

They were blasting rock, cutting trees, and stood waist-deep in ice-cold water while fixing the dam. Each morning the newspaper printed communiqués about victories and breaches, about the firing of the dam and the new deposits of ore, about an underground tunnel and the capacity of a Morgan crane. They were establishing new records, and in the hospitals they lay silently with frost-bitten extremities.⁵

At this point the similarities between the Soviet industrial novel and its Western counterpart end. The basic difference originates in the replacement of the glorification of technological progress by the

3 Valentin Kataev, *Vremia, vpered!* (Moskva, 1932), reprinted in *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moskva, 1969), III, 252-253.

4 Il'ia Erenburg, *Den' vtoroi* (Moskva, 1932), reprinted in *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moskva, 1969), III, 355.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 153.

apotheosis of labour under socialism. The Soviet writers stress the educational value of labour, which transforms workers into conscious builders of socialism. The workers slowly change their attitude towards labour, from the commercial to the ideological and unselfish.

The process of re-education through labour involves, first of all, large masses of peasants who, by participation in collective labour, can be changed into industrious workers. Such a process of transformation is depicted in Gladkov's *Energy*, where the seasonal peasant workers are won over by a team of young Komsomol members who arouse their pride in achievement with praise and encouragement, and shame the lazy ones by example. The easiest to win over are, however, the young peasants, for whom work at the project is the beginning of a new life. In *Energy* Prokop leaves his father's home and goes to the construction site, while in *The Second Day* Grunia, the daughter of a kulak, joins the Komsomol and becomes a conscientious worker.

The satisfaction derived from creative labour transforms not only backward peasants and workers, but also some members of the old intelligentsia. This is the case with engineer Kriazhich, who is transformed from an indifferent observer into an enthusiastic builder of the Dneprostroi Dam. His transformation begins with his participation in manual labour when all the administrators and technicians help the workers dig a foundation pit. Kriazhich joins the others unwillingly, under pressure put forth by public opinion, but soon realizes the satisfaction gained from manual labour:

Somehow without noticing it, he began to taste the work, he flushed, his heart began to beat energetically and resiliently, and he felt physically happy. . . . There was a moment when he realized to his amazement that he was working with pleasure, and that at this moment he did not resemble that Kriazhich who had scornfully grouched an hour ago.⁶

The Soviet novel also differs from the Western novel in the subordination of literary material to propaganda purposes. Almost all Soviet novels introduce a conflict with political enemies. At each of the construction projects there is a group of people engaged in counter-revolutionary activities. In Il'enkov's *The Driving Axle* engineers organize the production of intentionally useless axles. In *Energy* the wreckers attempt to weaken the dam by using the wrong mixture of concrete; they also set fire to one of the construction sectors. Arson and the demolition of machinery seem to be the favourite methods of industrial saboteurs. Arson occurs in *Energy* and *Sot'*, while the deliberate destruction of machinery takes place in *The Driving Axle* and *The Second Day*. Although the aim of the sabotage is to stop production or

6 Fedor Gladkov, *Energia*, *Novyi mir*, nos. 1-10 (1932), reprinted in *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moskva, 1958), III, 248.

construction, it succeeds only in causing temporary delays and slight damage. Sooner or later the saboteurs are exposed and duly punished.

All industrial novels have happy endings: the wreckers are unmasked, the work of the strong-willed heroes ends in triumph, the building is completed, the plan overfulfilled or the record broken. The happy endings were inevitable because of the propaganda purposes which were imposed on the industrial novel. At the time of the first Five-Year Plan the aim of literature was to "raise the mass consciousness and to organize the mass will and enthusiasm for socialist construction and the great reforms being carried out."⁷ Literary accounts of industrial achievements in one area were to provide incentives for workers in another; the image of dedicated and strong-willed shock-workers (workers who overfulfill their quotas) was to set an example for all to follow.⁸

THE INDUSTRIAL THEME IN *MAN CHANGES HIS SKIN*

Like many other Soviet writers, Jasiński paid tribute to the first Five-Year Plan by writing a novel glorifying industrialization. In 1932-33 he published his *Man Changes His Skin*, which depicted the construction of a new system of irrigation on the Vakhsh river.⁹ He gathered the material for the novel during his two trips to Tadzhikistan, first in 1930 as a member of the Government Commission of Demarcation between Tadzhikistan and Uzbekistan, and later as head of a group of foreign writers who visited Tadzhikistan in 1931.

The main theme of *Man Changes His Skin* is the building of an irrigation canal which will provide the Vakhsh valley with water, thus changing this arid land into a cotton plantation. The task of digging for a distance of 150 kilometres has to be carried out in a short period of time, in order that the sowing of cotton may begin early in the spring.

The action begins with the arrival at the construction site of three American engineers, Clark, Murray, and Barker.¹⁰ At their first meeting they learn about the difficulties hindering the progress of the construction—delays in the delivery of the excavators, the inefficiency

7 B. Ettinhof, "Art in the Five Year Plan of Cultural Construction," *VOKS Bulletin*, nos. 10-12 (1931), p. 4.

8 For a more detailed account of the poetics of the industrial novel see S. Shput, *Tema sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva v proze 30-ykh godov* (Moskva, 1963); T. K. Trifonova, *Russkaia sovetskaia literatura 30-ykh godov* (Moskva, 1963); L. F. Ershov, *Russkii sovetskii roman: Natsional'nye traditsii i novatorstvo* (Leningrad, 1967).

9 Bruno Iasenskii, *Chelovek meniaet kozhu*, *Novyi mir*, nos. 10-12 (1932); nos. 5-10 (1933).

10 Jasiński's use of American engineers as foreign specialists working in the Soviet Union reflected the fact that in the 1920s the Soviets were particularly interested in the United States, with whom they were attempting to establish some technical co-operation.

of the transportation system, and the shortage of manpower. They discover incompetent leadership and, worse still, sabotage. The plot revolves around these difficulties and the way in which they are finally overcome.

The first action taken to overcome the crisis is to get rid of the old management, which does not believe the canal can be completed on time. The new director, Morozov, and the chief engineer, Kirsch, know how to motivate the workers and how to promote the socialist competition which leads to an increase in labour efficiency. Thus, the commercial attitude is slowly replaced by an unselfish attitude towards work. For instance, two teams of operators of power shovels interchange every eight hours, thus dividing their time between work and sleep, and a team of Komsomol volunteers works overtime without pay.

As in a typical industrial novel, the emphasis is placed not on the deeds of individuals but on the work of the collective. Each individual appears as a member of an organized group, and the work of such a group is the centre of Jasieński's interest. The description of the work at the foundation pit is very significant in this regard. The men begin by blasting, then they start breaking the rock: one team of workers loads the wheelbarrows with rock, another wheels them towards the power shovels, yet another puts the load into the bucket of the shovel and finally dumps it into the river:

At this point workers would leap down into the canal bed and commence blasting the rock with ammonal. Three times a day the whining screech of whistles would resound from the canal bed, and a crowd of men would clamber hurriedly up over the loose stones. . . . Others would come running up behind them, heap the broken stone onto wheelbarrows and set off at a run, pushing the wheelbarrows forward along the narrow strip of planking. . . .

Taking a running start, they went careening along the plank and emptied out their wheelbarrows with a loud rattle; the load of stones was deftly caught up by other workers, who loaded it into the bare-toothed shovel of the excavator.¹¹

Like most industrial novelists, Jasieński portrays the work as an industrial battle, not very different from a military one. Like the artillery barrage that precedes an attack, the sound of the explosion gives the signal to the workers to rush down to the pit and "stab the rock with a pick as if it were a bayonet":

Then would come the first explosion from down below, after it the second, third, fourth—dull and measured like muffled cannon shots. This was the brief artillery bombardment before the attack. And when the sixteenth explosion had thundered out, the men would rush headlong down the slope, with mattocks held like bayonets, to break up the loosened earth [p. 273].

11 Bruno Jasieński, *Man Changes His Skin*, trans. H. G. Scott (New York, 1936), p. 273. This edition will be used hereafter.

And, as in a military battle, there are casualties. During the work at the rocky embankment the cliff slides down, killing one worker and injuring three others. The body of the victim is honoured by a wail from the sirens of the eighteen power shovels, like a military salute:

The sirens of eighteen excavators sounded together in a long-drawn-out wail. And suddenly, as if at a given signal, the eighteen booms of the excavators with their empty shovels swept upward and remained still as if in salute. The body in the brightly coloured gown slowly mounted to the top [p. 679].

Thus, the construction of the Vakhsh canal is depicted in *Man Changes His Skin* as a front line where people have to fight, and the chief opponent is Nature itself. Nature seems resistant to the people's onslaught. The desert and the roads try to defend themselves by demolishing the springs and the wheels of the trucks:

Three years ago the intractable roads had still tried to offer resistance. They tossed and turned truculently under the wheels of the bullock waggons, gored the radiators of automobiles with ruts and holes, broke springs and wheels, as a man breaks the shin of an enemy rushing at his throat [p. 324].

The fight against the forces of Nature is accompanied by a fierce political and economic fight with class enemies who do not hesitate to use any methods to stop, or at least to delay, the completion of the construction. The sabotage begins with the planning agencies, which supply faulty geological data. Next, there is a wrecking ring at the construction site itself. The saboteur Nemirovskii deliberately obstructs the work of the mechanical section, while Krushonykh directs the sabotaging activities of the blasting crew. Instructed by Krushonykh, one of the workers systematically adds more ammonal to increase the power of the explosion and thus cause the canal banks to slip. As a result, on the eve of the official opening of the canal, there is a landslide on Kata-Tag Mountain. When the damage from the slide is eradicated, the saboteurs decide upon an open attack on the construction site. A group of counter-revolutionaries crosses the Tadzhikistan-Afghanistan border and attacks one of the sectors. The aim of this attack is to open the sluices and flood the valley, where the fields have been prepared for planting cotton.

Needless to say, all these attempts to damage the construction project come to nothing, and the novel ends in triumph. The Vakhsh canal is built, and official guests and foreign journalists watch the opening of the dam.

As in the typical industrial novel, the characters of *Man Changes His Skin* are crudely drawn in black and white; they are either good, conscientious workers or saboteurs and wreckers.

The members of the sabotage ring are not all in it for the same reason; motives vary. Some of them are zealous enemies of the Soviet state, ready to do anything to overthrow the present system. This group is represented by the engineers Nemirovskii and Krushonykh, both members of the old intelligentsia, now involved in counter-revolutionary activities subsidized by foreign spy agencies. Nemirovskii and Krushonykh succeed in recruiting into their ring people like Kristallov and Parfenov; the first helps them for monetary reasons, the other is a moral wreck to whom alcohol means more than anything else.

The group of positive characters includes, first of all, a number of strong-willed communists who are in charge of the construction. They are the new director, Morozov; a Party secretary, Sinitsyn; and a Tadzhik engineer, Urtaev. All of them are bolsheviks of the old guard who fought for the revolution in 1917 and who now put their lives into the service of the construction project. They appear as excellent leaders and organizers, whose dedicated work permits the completion of the canal on time.

When Morozov comes to the construction site, he spends many days inspecting different sections, learning about both the people and the machinery. He is concerned about every machine, but, above all, about every person. His concern for the people becomes apparent when, after the rockslide, he forbids the diggers to work in the endangered area, despite their insistence on doing so. Morozov's only weaknesses are revealed in his personal life. This rigid man falls in love with a girl of bad reputation and, afraid of losing prestige, he hides their relationship. Offended by Morozov, Dar'ia, seven months pregnant, leaves the construction site and, despite all Morozov's efforts, cannot be found.

The second group of positive characters in *Man Changes His Skin* is represented by the enthusiastic young Komsomoltsy, among them Kerim Nusreddinov, Anvarov, and Galtsev. They are portrayed as dedicated workers, ready to fulfill the most difficult tasks. They are sent to build a railway, where they work eighteen hours a day in appalling conditions, living in tents and plagued by mosquitoes and rain. Despite heavy rain and a shortage of building materials, they finish their work on time, thus advancing the completion of the construction project. The leader of the Komsomol team is Kerim Nusreddinov, the son of a poor Tadzhik peasant who was killed by the local "kulaks." The boy's greatest dream had been to go to school, so he was sent to Stalinabad to study. After finishing high school, Kerim decides to work a couple of years at the construction project, and then to continue his education. His plans cannot be realized, however: Kerim is killed while defending the canal. Nusreddinov represents a new type of Tadzhik youth—a conscious builder of socialism. The same could be said of Urunov, who has left his village and joined the construction

project against his father's wishes. Urunov's father, a deeply religious person, cannot forgive his son for co-operating with the godless Russians, so he comes to the construction site to punish him.

A similar father-and-son conflict is depicted by Jasieński in his portrayal of the young Tadzhik engineer, Said Urtabaev. Because of his religious convictions, the elder Urtabaev joins the forces of the counter-revolution, which are, in his opinion, the true defenders of Islam. When Said learns of his father's connections with the counter-revolutionaries, he himself delivers his father to the GPU, a punitive organ prosecuting the political enemies of the Soviet state.

Together with the conscious Komsomol and Party members, Jasieński introduces a few ordinary labourers, whose political ignorance does not prevent them from doing selfless work. One of them is a nameless operator of a power shovel who shows up for work despite an attack of malaria. Another is an old carpenter, Klimentii, who voluntarily works a night shift with a Komsomol brigade. But the most interesting character in this category is Dar'ia Shestova, the leader of a female digging team, who challenges the men to socialist competition. Dar'ia herself is a shock-worker who overfulfills the norms set for the diggers: instead of the standard nine cubic metres she empties twenty-six. However, her high efficiency is not matched by her moral standards. Dar'ia has a bad reputation as a girl who has too many love affairs. She changes her lifestyle after falling in love with the construction director, Morozov.

As a typical industrial novel, *Man Changes His Skin* emphasizes the influence of labour on the character of the people. Under the new circumstances of socialism, believes Jasieński, people are gradually rejecting the old ideas and replacing them with new attitudes and relations; in other words, they are "changing their skin":

We are the generation which has destroyed the capitalist society in order to enter into the socialist one, and for the present, we are still changing our skin. This is a big and painful process. The relations between people and the state have all changed. The scales of every individual personality have widened, the old skin of capitalist relations has burst asunder. We are exchanging it for a more roomy one, in which it is easier to breathe. This is only the first step towards that communist society in which man will finally cast off, like a husk, his whole skin of conventional ideas, in which he will first find his full personality, the potentialities of which will become unbounded [p. 162].

The best illustration of "a man changing his skin" is Jim Clark, an American engineer who, in the process of working on the Vakhsh canal, is transformed from a dispassionate outsider into a dedicated participant in the construction project. The motives for Clark's coming to Tadzhikistan are simple: he lost his job in the States and was forced to look for a job abroad. He comes to the Soviet Union to earn some money. At first he is amazed at the new attitude towards work, but

gradually he himself becomes involved and develops a new approach. The first step in this direction is shown in the episode in which Clark replaces a sick excavator man and operates a machine during the night shift. He also volunteers to work with other diggers in a dangerous area. On the basis of such actions Clark is accepted as an equal member of the collective. While recovering from an accident Clark learns Russian and begins to read *The Problems of Leninism*. His teacher is Masha Polozova, a young student appointed as his interpreter. She is the author's mouthpiece, pronouncing the long, didactic speeches that acquaint Clark with the basic assumptions of Marxist ideology. Predictably, Clark falls in love with his mentor and they get married. His study of Marxist theory and his participation in socialist construction convince Clark that socialism is the only right path for the future. From a petty-bourgeois he changes into a conscious builder of socialism.

THE DETECTIVE PLOT

If its thematic components make *Man Changes His Skin* a typical Soviet industrial novel, its originality lies in the arrangement of this material within the structure of the conventional detective story. Jasiński chose the form of the detective novel with a series of criminal episodes that pose the puzzles Who, Why, and How. The clues for the solution are presented inconspicuously and in sequences purposely dislocated so as to conceal their connections. To gather these clues and to draw from them the inevitable conclusions is the detective's function. The discovery comes as a surprise to the reader and thus forms the dramatic climax of the novel.¹²

The series of criminal episodes in *Man Changes His Skin* begins with threatening letters received by the American engineers. The message contained in them is clear: leave the construction project or you will be killed. Only one of the Americans takes this threat to heart and goes back to the States; the other two decide to stay. A few days later they are subjected to another trial: they find in their rooms matchboxes containing poisonous scorpions; fortunately, no one is bitten by the insects. The next attempt is even more dramatic: Jim Clark is pushed into a deep canal, and only by chance escapes death.

Occurring simultaneously with the attempts on the lives of the American specialists are a series of acts of sabotage on the construction site. As mentioned before, the saboteurs try to stop the construction by breaking the machinery, causing the landslide, and attacking the canal on the eve of the official opening.

12 Cf. studies on detective fiction: H. Haycraft, ed., *The Art of the Mystery Story* (New York, 1946); A. E. Murch, *The Development of the Detective Novel* (Port Washington, 1958); J. Symons, *Mortal Consequences: A History from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel* (New York, 1972),

It is the task of the investigating agencies to expose the saboteurs and halt their activities, as well as to find out the people attempting to kill the American specialists. The chief investigator is Komarenko, an employee of the State Political Administration. As befits a good detective, Komarenko gathers clues and does not draw hasty conclusions. Unlike most of his colleagues, he is not led astray by information against the Tadzhik engineer, Said Urtaev. According to a letter signed by Isa Khodzhiarov and a number of Tadzhik workers, Urtaev is a counter-revolutionary agent, collaborating with the enemies of the Soviet state. During the civil war Urtaev allegedly surrendered his Red Army detachment to the enemy, and now, working as an engineer on the Vakhsh canal, is falsely accused of being the head of the wrecking ring. Urtaev is a typical "false clue," a device often employed in detective fiction. Suspicion is fixed on the wrong character, thus delaying the discovery of the real criminal.

The true culprit is unmasked at the end of the novel. He is Mr. Murray, a disguised British Intelligence agent, posing as an American specialist.¹³ Colonel Bailey, alias Murray, had first come to Tadzhikistan in 1918 and, as a member of the British military mission, had tried to organize an insurrection against Soviet rule. The mission did not succeed, and Bailey was forced to flee to Afghanistan. He returns to Tadzhikistan at the beginning of the 1930s to master-mind the sabotage at the Vakhsh canal, and in this way to discredit the Soviet government in the eyes of the local people. First of all, Bailey decides to get rid of the American engineers, so he sends them threatening letters. He organizes a sabotage ring and recruits Krushonykh and others by offering them large sums of money. He also establishes contact with Isa Khodzhiarov, a member of a counter-revolutionary organization with headquarters in Afghanistan. It is Khodzhiarov who denounces Urtaev and who instructs the kulaks on how to fight Soviet rule. Khodzhiarov is also the person who pushes Clark into the canal. After Clark's recovery and his report to Komarov, Khodzhiarov flees to Afghanistan, where he organizes a group of counter-revolutionaries to attack the construction project.

Although the exposure of Murray comes as a surprise to the reader, Khodzhiarov's participation in the counter-revolutionary activities is somehow expected. He is portrayed as a typical shady character, whose appearance alone evokes suspicion: he has only one eye and his distorted face has a sinister look. The portrayal of Murray, on the other hand, meets all the requirements of the conventional detective story.

13 The choice of Murray as the culprit reflected the obsessive fear the Soviets had of Western spies, especially of British intelligence agents. Cf. *Shpion Kent*, the purported diaries of a British master-spy, published anonymously in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

He is introduced early in the story and is depicted as an honest foreign specialist, sympathetic to the Soviet system. He is never under suspicion, and his exposure comes as a surprise to the reader, thus forming the dramatic climax of the novel.

The publication of *Man Changes His Skin* aroused an animated discussion on the question of the place of the detective genre in Soviet literature. Some critics argued that the outwardly engaging plot obscured the social and psychological significance of the events described and should therefore be avoided. Such was the opinion of E. Tager, who wrote in his review: "Thus, unintentionally, the central interest of both the author and the reader moves from the depiction of the typical phenomena of our social reality to the outwardly engaging game with its plot situations."¹⁴

But the majority of the critics spoke in favour of the skillful utilization of the detective plot to depict Soviet reality, as long as it was subordinated to the actual political and social tasks. N. Rykova wrote in *Literaturnyi sovremennik*:

We, the Soviet readers, can accept the Soviet detective genre only if, without losing any of its clarity and fascination, it would fulfill the same requirements that we prescribe for our literature, i.e., it would give an artistic depiction of objective reality as well as an artistic depiction of man.¹⁵

Jasiński himself defended the use of the conventions of the detective genre, provided they acquire new meaning and show new relations characteristic of Soviet reality. In his speech to the First Congress of Soviet Writers he argued against Il'ia Erenburg's view that the plot novel had outlived itself and that the novel had to come closer to the factual sketch. The plot novel, Jasiński insisted, was the best means of attracting the reader and forcing him to accept the ideas promoted by the author:

To disregard the plot is to disregard the reader, and an attempt to ease his comprehension of that immense content that we are obliged to give him. The engaging plot is a means to attract the reader to the book, and to force him, not by compulsion, but often against his own will, to absorb and accept the ideas promoted by the author.¹⁶

14 E. Tager, "Chelovek meniaet kozhu," *Literaturnyi kritik*, no. 4 (1933), p. 129.

15 N. Rykova, "Chelovek meniaet kozhu," *Literaturnyi sovremennik*, no. 5 (1934), p. 154. The same opinion is shared by contemporary Soviet critics who praise Jasiński for his skillful use of the detective plot; see T. A. Chernysheva, "O romane Bruno Iasenskogo 'Chelovek meniaet kozhu,'" *Trudy Irkutskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta imeni Zhdanova*, 28 (Irkutsk, 1959), 121-146; G. V. Verves, "Shliakh Bruno Iasenskogo do sotsialisticheskogo realizmu," *Zhivoten' i zarubizhni slovianski literatury* (Kyiv, 1967), pp. 194-256; B. Prutsev, "K voprosu o romane Bruno Iasenskogo 'Chelovek meniaet kozhu,'" *Uchenye zapiski Orlovskogo pedagogicheskogo instituta*, 19 (Orlov, 1963), p. 125-174.

16 Bruno Iasenskii, "Rech'," *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei* (Moskva, 1934), p. 278.

LOCAL COLOUR AND STYLE

Another quality that distinguishes *Man Changes His Skin* from typical industrial novels is its regionalism. The novel is set in Tadzhikistan, and much attention is devoted to descriptions of the Tadzhik locale, customs, and history. The description of Tadzhikistan is not, however, mere decoration. It is an intrinsic part of the novel, whose function is to contrast the new Soviet Tadzhikistan with its recent feudal past.

The past of Tadzhikistan is introduced in remarks by the author, in comments by the characters, but above all in short novellas, called "pauses," which have their own plots and are very loosely connected with the main story. They somehow "retard" the development of the basic plot and are accordingly called "pauses," peculiar forms of digression in which Jasiński expresses some generalizations. He first develops a theme in a number of chapters, then summarizes it in a pause. The pauses function as journalistic commentaries on the problems brought up earlier in the novel.

Throughout all these pauses runs the theme of the astonishing changes taking place in Tadzhikistan. These changes become evident in the first pause, "About Fakirs," describing the discovery of rich oil reserves and the building of a chemical plant in the Tadzhik steppe. The industrialization motif is reinforced in the main story-line depicting the construction of a new system of irrigation on the Vakhsh river.

From the construction of the canal the action moves to the nearby villages, where the local peasants learn how to farm collectively. The process of collectivization is portrayed by Jasiński as an attack on the old ways of life. In the pause "About One Member of the Collective," Jasiński describes the feudal order that prevailed in the Tadzhik village and contrasts it with the new Soviet reality. Shokhodbin, the richest man in the area, is deprived of his property as well as the prestige he had among the peasants. The board of the collective is composed of poor peasants, the former farm labourers.

Equally instructive is the pause "About the Stolen Land," telling how a rich peasant stole land from his poor neighbour. The theft occurred in a mountain village where peasants had to "make" their own fields by bringing soil from the lower valleys. When a flooded stream washed away the soil from the field of a rich peasant, Ali Mukhutdin, he stole soil from Nusreddin. Only the intervention of the district Party Secretary helped Nusreddin recover his land.

Thus new conditions, emphasizes Jasiński, change the life of the Tadzhik people. Kerim Nusreddinov, the son of a poor peasant, goes to school in Stalinabad. After graduating from high school, he joins the Vakhsh construction workers and becomes the leader of a Komsomol team. The widow Zumrat, who only a year before had stopped wearing a veil, is chosen to sit on the board of the collective. Said Urtaev, the

former student of a seminary, becomes the first Tadzhik engineer. Said's education in the Mir Arab seminary and his involvement in the revolutionary movement are depicted in the pause "About One Dzha-did."

The changes taking place in Tadzhikistan are very apparent in the faces of the cities, especially of Stalinabad, the new capital of the republic. A few years ago,

a great expanse of steppe, intersected by dusty roads, stretched over this spot; over the steppe came camels hauling huge beams from far-off Termez, and slant-eyed Kirghizians, rocking to and fro on the backs of the camels, which looked like hunch-backed lions with their long manes and beards, chanted their doleful songs in a strange tongue.

Today, along the line traced across the desert by the first beam of the first camel, from Termez to Dushambah, stretched the road bed of the railway like a swollen scar, and at night time the long howl of the locomotive's whistle scared away the jackals [p. 323].

The dusty roads were conquered by stonemasons who "arrived from the distant North. Sitting down on the chest of the rebellious roads, they hammered and pounded till the roads were still and numb. Then they nailed up signboards at the crossroads with names upon them, and the nameless roads became streets" (p. 324).

For the first few years the new city co-existed with the old "kishlak." The main street merged with the old bazaar, crowded with clay stalls and shacks:

Beyond the square the main street narrowed and passed into the old bazaar. Here was a cluttered chaos of clay shanties and booths, tiny tea-shops and taverns. At the entrance to the taverns stood bearded men wearing aprons over their faded gowns—strange human penny-in-the-slot machines, with moneyboxes in place of heads. With one hand they ladled out stuffed pies with a huge spoon from a cauldron of seething mutton fat, stirred up the rich steaming *pilau* and deposited a portion in the outstretched *kossa*; with the other they lifted their skull-caps, as glossy as a smooth bald head, and slipped in the greasy bills [p. 326].

But soon the new city moved a step ahead and forced out the old Asia. The old bazaar was superseded by a wide modern street:

The new town was marching onward, and the old Asia of the bazaar, gathering up its hawkers' trays, slunk off beyond the Dushambah river. Not even the lingering smell of mutton remained behind. It was as if a great wind from the avenue had swept it all away [p. 328].

From the point of view of its language the description of Stalinabad is highly metaphoric. Jasiński endows the city with the qualities of a living person. Like a young boy Stalinabad keeps changing: during one year it "grew, matured, and spoke with a deep voice." The streets

became “overgrown” with houses, and the houses, “like women, tired by the sun and the heat, opened their green umbrellas of trees and the fans of gardens”:

She had not seen the town since last year. She had known it previously, in the period of its none too distant infancy, when it was still a great straggling village. During the past year it had spread out on all sides; it had grown up, as it were, to man's estate, and was talking already in the deep bass tones of motor-bus hooters. Slender poplars had shot up on either side of the main street, outstripping their last year's growth twice over [p. 322].

A similar abundance of metaphors distinguishes the description of Moscow, given in the first chapter of the novel. Moscow looks like a giant construction site:

The street was flanked on both sides by rows of houses. Hunchbacked and stunted by nature, they raised themselves stubbornly aloft on rough-hewn stilts of scaffolding. This was not a street like all other streets in the world—an immovable defile of houses. Rather it resembled a gay parade of athletes, for the houses were all in motion; new stories were scrambling acrobatically onto their flat shoulders [p. 8].

The street comes out onto a square that looks like a dollar bill: “green and rustling.” The church standing on the corner resembles an old market woman with her hair twisted into a bun on the top of her head: “They drove out onto a square intersected by a boulevard. From the boulevard, as though from an open window, a soft spring wind was blowing. The boulevard lay there like a dollar at your feet—green and rustling” (p. 12).

Significantly, such metaphoric language appears in those fragments of the novel in which Jasiński renders the point of view of his characters. The changes in Stalinabad are observed by Valentina Sinitsyna, who perceives the city in a peculiar “double vision”; her memories preserve the image of a small town from six years ago, which she constantly compares with the new face of Stalinabad. In the description of Moscow Jasiński renders the impressions of Jim Clark, who has come to the Soviet Union for the first time. Being a foreigner, Clark perceives everything in a new light, and the novelty of his perception is reflected in numerous comparisons and metaphors.

The metaphoric style is also characteristic of the narrative parts reflecting the author's point of view. The author's language abounds in metaphors, often striking in their originality. Jasiński is especially fond of short metaphoric descriptions of Nature, most of which depict morning or evening landscapes. An example is this image of a street bathed in the light of the morning sun: “In the lemon-rose light of the rising sun, the street lay before him in dazzling nakedness after immersion in the font of night; not yet muffled in a quivering blanket of heat,

it seemed to be breathing in the last atom of the waning darkness" (p. 101). The image of a brisk morning, which "washes away the web of sleep" from the face of Jim Clark, corresponds to the happy mood of the protagonist. In another instance, the image of a bright morning is contrasted with the pessimistic mood of Said Urtabaev, accused of sabotage:

With dawn came a shower of rain and besprinkled the dusty earth, like a thoughtful host who expects the arrival of a guest. Day came out of the East, from Kashgar, with a flood of light. Roofs glistened like enamelled pots and pans, and even the foliage on the trees seemed to billow like new gowns hung out to tempt the eye of the customer [p. 425].

Equally metaphoric are some descriptions of the construction site. Throughout the novel Jasiński animates the excavator machines. He depicts them as animal creatures, "pasturing in the ravine," "chewing stones," and "drinking" gasoline:

Up against the earth wall, poking its snout downward, stood a solitary excavator. Wheezing and grunting, it was patiently biting into the dirt. Having crammed its mouth full of stone, it craned its giraffe-like neck at the surrounding countryside, spat out the rubble that stuck in its gorge, gave a prolonged yawn, and once more set to work with an air of indifference [p. 128].

In contrast with the metaphoric style of the narrative, the dialogues are written in colourless, standard language. All characters speak the same stereotyped language, saturated with stock phrases and political terminology. The following is a fragment of a heated ideological discussion between Jim Clark and Masha Polozova:

"I only wanted to say one thing: there are many contradictions in what is taking place here. You want to create a new society here, founded on the abolition of private property. Well and good. It seems to you that you can enlarge every individual's potentialities to infinity. Isn't that so? The age-old conflict between the individual and society is decided by you, the enemies of individualism and upholders of the interests of the collective, in favour of the individual and to the detriment of society. It's paradoxical, but that's how it is. One encounters this contradiction at every turn here" [p. 160].

The discussion has to be conducted in English, since Clark at this point does not understand Russian, and Polozova is assigned to him as an interpreter. Later on Clark learns Russian, and his difficulties with pronunciation and grammar are reflected in his speech. He mispronounces Russian words, uses wrong genders, and forgets to inflect nouns. Frequently, he uses English structures while speaking Russian. Such individualization of Clark's language, however, does not last long. Already in the next chapter he speaks correct Russian without a single mistake.

Unlike other Soviet writers, Jasiński refused to transmit national characteristics with the help of distorted language, filled with local words and ungrammatical inflections.¹⁷ Only occasionally does Jasiński differentiate the language of his Tadzhik heroes, by introducing local words and imitating the intonation of Tadzhik. One of the best examples is the language of an old Tadzhik, Farkhat, who tells the story about the "mirab" deceiving the poor peasants:

There came a waterless year. Nothing but yellow mud oozing in the *ariks*. And all knew there would not be enough moisture to water the fields. Now there were two *kishlaks* which from time immemorial had drawn their water from the same *arikh*. One *kishlak* was a big *kishlak*, and there were three *bais* living there—ah, what rich *bais* they were! And in the other *kishlak* there were only poor peasants and *charikors* holding poor plots of land [p. 86].

By using short sentences, by repeating certain phrases to reinforce the effect, and by introducing Tadzhik words, Jasiński reproduces the intonation of the Tadzhik language. But such instances occur infrequently. Jasiński's Tadzhiks, as a rule, speak simple yet grammatical Russian.

While considering the language of *Man Changes His Skin* it should be noted that Jasiński's Russian is remarkably proficient. Contrary to what one would expect, there are no Polonisms, either in lexicon or in syntax. It seems almost certain that Jasiński's novel was edited by a native speaker of Russian, most likely by Anna Berzin', the writer's second wife.

17 This trend in Soviet literature could be illustrated by F. Berezovskii's novel *V stepnykh prostorakh* (Moskva, 1926), p. 167.

Socialist Realism in “Bravery” and *A Conspiracy of the Indifferent*

Man Changes His Skin was Jasiński's first work completely sustained in the tradition of Socialist Realism. It was followed by a short story, “Bravery,”¹ and an unfinished novel, *A Conspiracy of the Indifferent*,² both subordinated to the utilitarian requirement that literature should offer didactic illustrations of ideological premises and patterns of behaviour. If Jasiński's first Russian novel was centred on the theme of industrialization and the new attitudes towards labour, “Bravery” and *A Conspiracy* depicted the psychological changes that these new social and economic conditions had brought about in the Soviet people. Instead of glorifying the latest achievements in the field of industrialization, Jasiński now explored the new morality and the new relations between people.

The moral problem facing Sergei Onufriev, the protagonist of “Bravery,” is very simple. It has to do with basic honesty. Should he reveal the truth about how his life was saved in a plane crash? When the pilot died of a heart attack, the four passengers had to decide who was to use the only parachute. Should it be Misha Pokaliuk, the owner of

1 Bruno Iasenskii, “Muzhestvo,” *Novyi mir*, no. 2 (1935), pp. 5-16. This edition will be used hereafter.

2 According to Anna Berzin', Jasiński began work on *Zagovor ravnodushnykh* in 1937, and continued until he was arrested in 1938. Anna Berzin' preserved the manuscript and published it in *Novyi mir* in 1956. *Zagovor* was later incorporated into Iasenskii's *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moskva, 1957), I, 231-429. This edition will be used hereafter.

the parachute, or Varia Kashchenko, who, besides being the only woman, is pregnant? Or should it be one of the two factory heads—Onufriev, the director, or Losev, the chief engineer? To make the story more intriguing Jasiński does not describe how the decision was reached; he simply informs the reader that it was Onufriev who used the parachute. It is up to Onufriev to reveal what happened.

The central theme of *A Conspiracy of the Indifferent* is the moral responsibility of every person for events taking place in the world. To be indifferent, believes Jasiński, is to encourage more killing and betrayals. "Do not be afraid of your enemies," he wrote in his epigraph to the novel; "the worst they can do is kill you. Do not be afraid of your friends; the worst they can do is betray you. Be afraid of the indifferent; they do not kill or betray, but because of their silent consent betrayal and murder exist on earth."³ The theme of the indifferent runs along two parallel lines of action, one describing the underground work of socialists in Fascist Germany, the other depicting political purges taking place in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. The novel opens with the description of a Party purge in one of the secret factories, located "somewhere in the snowy fields of the U.S.S.R." Garanin, a young newspaper editor, is accused of Trotskyism, and, because of the indifference of his colleagues, is arrested. Jasiński's vagueness about the place of action suggests that similar "cases" could have happened in any factory or in any city in the Soviet Union.

But at the same time Jasiński introduces into his novel a wealth of factual material, such as advertisements, radio programmes, and newspaper headlines. Whereas in his earlier novels the newspaper articles were highly stylized, in *A Conspiracy of the Indifferent*, they are perfectly authentic and could have been found in any daily Soviet paper published in the middle of the 1930s:

"The First Plenary Session of the Moscow Council." "The results of the Fifth Plenary Session of the All-Union Council of Trade Unions." Here they are—the inner reserves! "The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Laval, arrives today in Paris at 8:30 P.M." Here is the exact information, to the minute! "A strike underground. . . . The striking miners took over the mine and refuse to come up, asking for guarantees that they will not be left without jobs. A few miners were poisoned by gas. . . ." "An international chess tournament in Hastings. In the game against Mitchell, Botvinnik has a chance to win . . ." [p. 260].

The function of this factual material is to "objectivize" fictional reality and to convince the reader of the authenticity of the events and characters described.

It goes without saying that Jasiński subjects both his works to the rule of probability by choosing fictional elements that have frequent

3 Zagovor, p. 231.

analogies in real life, and by carefully motivating all the happenings. This painstaking verisimilitude is responsible for a certain amount of schematism in Jasiński's depiction both of the characters and of the surrounding reality. Although he gives his last works an industrial setting, it is often so abstract that the reader is not even aware of the type of industry depicted by the author. Moreover, he continues to confront his readers with standardized types of "positive" heroes clearly distinguished from "negative" characters. The latter, as might be expected, are the vacillating intellectuals. Some, like Losev, are dispassionate outsiders; others, like Relikh, are foreign agents in disguise. The positive characters are, without exception, high-ranking officials—a factory director in "Bravery," Party secretaries in *The Conspiracy*. They are all excellent leaders, and the higher they are in the Party hierarchy, the more outstanding are their personal qualities. Thus, Filiferov, the second secretary of the district committee, is portrayed as a good worker but easily influenced by others. By contrast, Karabut, the first secretary, is a man of principle, who always stands by his convictions. But it is Adrianov, the secretary of the regional committee, who at first seems a model of a Party functionary. He is enthusiastic about the work he is doing and infects others with his enthusiasm. He combines the practical talents of a leader with a visionary idealism. While developing industry in his backward region, he dreams about transforming it into a health resort area. But Adrianov proves to be one of the indifferent when it comes to Garanin's case. He chooses to believe in Garanin's guilt rather than sacrifice his own authority.

The only person who has the moral courage to defend Garanin is Karabut. Intended as a vehicle for the moral norm, he lacks, however, the depth and complexity needed for a fully rounded character. It is possible that the flatness of Karabut's character is due to the fact that *A Conspiracy* is an unfinished novel. Jasiński did not have an opportunity to develop his characters fully and show their inner development.

Nevertheless, he did succeed in conveying the inner life of some of his protagonists. Whereas in *Man Changes His Skin* he was concerned about such things as work quotas, technical problems, and sabotage, in "Bravery" and *A Conspiracy* he records the emotional lives of characters and explores their mental activity.

Jasiński's growing concern for the inner experiences of his protagonists was responsible for a change in his narrative technique. As in *Man Changes His Skin*, he continues to use the omniscient narrator, which enables him to impose on the reader his own system of values and appreciations, and to eliminate ambiguity in favour of a clear evaluation of all facts and characters. But now he frequently combines the omniscient narrator with a concealed one, or with the stream-of-consciousness technique.

In *A Conspiracy* he reduces the function of the narrator's comments in favour of dialogues and interior monologues, presenting the point of view of a character either as orderly utterance or as disjointed stream of consciousness. In comparison with *Man*, the dialogues are better individualized, although some still sound artificially rhetorical. When Zhenia Garanin, the wife of the accused editor, comes to Relikh to seek his advice, he "consoles" her by delivering a lecture on the history of the CPSU:

"You've studied the history of our Party and remember at what time Garanin thought of leaving the Komsomol," Relikh softly spoke. "If you don't remember I will remind you. This was on the eve of the year of the great change, on the eve of the decisive offensive upon the kulaks. You have to remember at least from our literature that the Party sent them thousands and thousands of our best Komsomol members to the villages. . . . Thousands of them were killed at their posts, struck by the mean snipers' bullets. On the heroic graves of these people arose our socialist village" [p. 250].

The interior monologue, as used in *A Conspiracy*, either reproduces directly the impressions passing through the mind of the character, or combines them with the narrator's comments. The following is an example of the direct interior monologue describing Adrianov's dream of developing cross-country skiing in his region:

For a third of the year the whole region is under snow—like a blanket. And the fools whine. Communication breaks down. There are not enough people to clean the roads. To get from the collective to the town located some twenty kilometres away they use horses for any trifling matter. And the Party secretaries? And instructors? No trip to the village without a car. Every day they put cars into snowdrifts. Some motorists! And what about skiing? First of all, it is faster, secondly, more reliable, and thirdly, healthier. No useless squandering of machinery or fuel [p. 259].

When Jasieński depicts the internal struggle in Adrianov's mind concerning Garanin, he switches to the direct interior monologue:

Not to fire Karabut would be impossible. He trusted the newspaper to Garanin. Then this attempt to kill Garanin by his own wife, a Komsomol member and an overexcelling shock-worker; it sheds some very unpleasant light on the case and warrants some additional disclosures. Even a child would say that the atmosphere in the factory, where such things happen, is not healthy. Relikh rightly maintains that such an atmosphere was created as the result of the prolonged fight led by Karabut against him with the silent consent of Adrianov. It will be necessary to fire Karabut, there is no other way [p. 274].

But Jasieński's most successful method of rendering point of view is the concealed narrator, who leads the reader to a vantage point inside the character's consciousness so as to see with the character's eyes, hear with his ears, and experience his sensations.⁴ This type of narration

4 The term "concealed narrator" is taken from an article by Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate, "Notes on Fictional Technique," published in *The House of Fiction* (New York,

appears in *A Conspiracy*, but not nearly as often as in "Bravery," where the point of view is constantly changing. The story begins with a short description of the landscape as seen by Varia Kashchenko from a plane. Then the narrator plunges the reader into the consciousness of Misha Pokaliuk. Finally, the focus is shifted to two more passengers, Losev and Onufriev, and the narrator's general remarks alternate with passages rendering their points of view. The climax of the story, the death of the pilot, is rendered in dialogue, and then the action moves to another level. At first, peasants watch a descending parachute, and then the reader learns that Onufriev is the only survivor. The rest of the story reflects Onufriev's point of view.

Formally, the concealed narrator does not differ from the omniscient; they both use the third-person singular. But a close textual analysis reveals subtle differences between the two. First of all, the concealed narrator usually employs a verb of perception. Whenever Jasiński plunges the reader into Onufriev's consciousness he introduces a verb like "to see," "to feel," or "to think." When Onufriev arrives in his home town, he "sees" people who come to meet him; he "feels" his wife's arms around his neck; he tries "to think out" what to tell them:

Sergei Kharitonovich saw Olga on the platform, as well as the Party secretary Buravin, the editor of the factory newspaper, and many more familiar faces. They came to meet him! Oh yes, of course, he had sent them a telegram. Only now did he realize that he would have to tell them something, that he would have to think something up—but it was already too late.

He felt Olga's arms around his neck. He was surrounded by the smiling faces. A group of workers was congratulating him on something—oh yes, on his rescue [p. 13].

Secondly, the concealed narrator transmits the value judgments of his characters. In "Bravery" this is apparent in the use of epithets that convey Onufriev's happiness upon landing safely. The people seem to him "unknown, but incredibly nice," water is "cold and unbelievably refreshing":

He did not cease to smile happily at the unknown, but incredibly nice and beloved people who surrounded him. They put him back on his feet. He felt the firm ground beneath his feet, and suddenly burst into tears.

A woman with ruddy skin wearing a blue kerchief brought to his lips a cup of cold, unbelievably refreshing water [p. 12].

Similarly, Onufriev's hazy impressions of what has happened to him are transmitted by indefinite pronouns—"someone," "something":

1960), pp. 435-458. See also W. C. Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, 1961); N. Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 70 (1955), 1160-1184; Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (London, 1929).

After hitting something hard, Sergei Kharitonovich opened his eyes. There was some pain in his armpits. He did not feel anything except terrible weariness and nausea. A strange force pulled him aside onto the flat green field. Someone, it seemed, grabbed him, and unfastened his straps. There was a terrible silence. Someone was saying something over his head—a wide moustached face in a straw hat [p. 12].

Finally, the concealed narrator frequently introduces phrases and expressions characteristic of spoken language. In "Bravery" there are words conveying the protagonist's uncertainty—"it seems," "may be," and phrases indicating his way of reasoning, such as: "The sky was blue and fathomless. There was no plane in the sky. Perhaps it had never been there at all? Yes, certainly, it had not been there. It was all a terrible, agonizing nightmare" (p. 13).

In his desire to show the new morality of the Soviet people as well as complex human relations, Jasiński is close to Leonid Leonov. Leonov's *Sot'*, *Skutarevskii*, and especially *Road to the Ocean* are rooted in moral and psychological questions, the industrial setting providing only a background.⁵ The plot of *Road to the Ocean* revolves around the last days of railroad commissioner Kurilov, who is suffering from cancer. This old communist, who once fought in the Civil War, and is now involved in the reconstruction of the railroad, seems at first an ideal choice for a "positive" hero. But he proves instead to be a rather "superfluous" man, unable to work, and spending his last days in a sanatorium. Instead of showing his protagonist in action, indefatigable and successful, Leonov portrays the deepening humanity of his hero.

In comparison with Leonov, Jasiński is still too one-sided in his portrayal of characters. He shows his protagonists absorbed in their social tasks, and completely neglects their personal lives. He still works with a few standard types of characters, the psychological characterization only strengthening the division into positive and negative characters. In so doing, he is closer than Leonov to the theory of Socialist Realism, which requires literature not only to describe the realities of the new world, but to provide edifying examples as well.

Another Soviet writer warranting comparison with Jasiński is Konstantin Fedin, whose many novels exploit the "Western" theme. In his *Cities and Years* and *The Rape of Europe* Fedin presents both life in the West and life in the U.S.S.R. *The Rape of Europe* has several parallels with *A Conspiracy of the Indifferent*.⁶ Both novels contrast two antagonistic systems, socialism and capitalism. Fedin sets the action of his first volume in Norway, Holland, and Germany and portrays the economic depression of 1929-33. Jasiński moves the action in the second part of his novel from the Soviet Union to Germany, and depicts the polariza-

5 *Sot'* was published in 1930, *Skutarevskii* in 1932, and *Doroga na Okean* in 1935.

6 Konstantin Fedin, *Pokhishchenie Evropy*, *Zvezda*, nos. 4-8, 11-12 (1933); nos. 6-10, 12 (1935).

tion of the German people in the 1930s. Some join the ranks of the Communist Party, while others become Fascists. Both writers succeed in conveying a vivid picture of the West by contrasting the life of the rich to that of the poor and by showing the growing demoralization of the Western people.

In the second volume of *The Rape* the action is shifted to the Soviet Union. Despite Fedin's efforts to show the tremendous economic upsurge in his country, the picture of Soviet reality is not very convincing. This results from Fedin's uncritical copying of ready-made elements of the industrial novel—the unpaid labour, the shock-workers, and the enthusiastic leaders.

In his treatment of Soviet reality, Jasiński goes beyond such clichés by deepening the psychological portraits of his characters. He succeeds in transmitting the moral problems facing Soviet people. *A Conspiracy of the Indifferent* is one of the first books to warn against the indifference and apathy which lead to political repression. Published twenty years after it was written, it reads like a tragic postscript to what eventually happened in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

Grotesque Elements in *The Ball of the Mannequins* and "The Nose"

Both Jasiński's Russian novels, *Man Changes His Skin* and *A Conspiracy of the Indifferent*, were written in the tradition of psychological realism, considered to be the true method of Soviet literature. But Jasiński was not an uncritical adherent of the theory of "pure" realism based on verisimilitude and the probability of characters and situations. He believed that the fantastic and the unusual were indispensable elements of all fiction. In his 1934 address to the First Congress of Soviet Writers he accused Soviet critics of a narrow interpretation of Engels' formula of "typical characters in typical circumstances," maintaining that they wanted to reduce the typical to mere stereotypes. As a result, Soviet writers preferred to duplicate the schemes rather than risk being reproached for inventiveness and failure to reflect reality.

I accuse our literature of being too timid, too empirical in following on the heels of reality. We reflect the present in its relation to the past, this is easier. But we still do not have works that would give us a picture of our "today" through the lens of the future. I raise my voice as in a toast: to bold invention, raised on the material of living reality, but not afraid to step over into tomorrow, full of the unexpected.¹

Jasiński's defence of artistic invention was not unwarranted. He used the fantastic and the extraordinary in his *The Ball of the Mannequins*, a satirical play written in 1931, and in "The Nose," a short story

1 Bruno Iasenskii, "Rech'," *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei* (Moskva, 1934), p. 277.

published in 1936. Both works could be described as grotesque, since they presented "the estranged world where what seemed familiar and natural suddenly turned out to be strange and ominous."² Both play with absurdity and deform real correlations.

In *The Ball of the Mannequins*, Jasiński distorts reality to the point of alienation by moving the mannequins from the category of objects into the category of living creatures. Throughout the play he endows the mannequins with the qualities and actions of human beings.

The mannequin motif might well have been inspired by E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman,"³ which Jasiński could have seen in the form of Jacques Offenbach's comic opera *Tales of Hoffmann*, or of Léo H. Delibes' ballet *Coppelia*, during his stay in Paris. The central episode of "The Sandman" depicts a mechanical doll that seems to be a woman. Olympia not only looks like a woman, but also walks, dances, and sings. There is, however, a certain perfection that exposes her mechanical nature: her figure is too symmetrical, her steps are measured, and her playing and singing are unpleasantly perfect. But Olympia's life-like appearance deceives Nathanael, who falls in love with the puppet. Interestingly, Nathanael's first encounter with Olympia takes place at a ball; he spends the whole evening dancing with her. The ball motif is expanded by Jasiński, who sets the entire action of his play against the backdrop of a ballroom.

The Ball of the Mannequins begins with the mannequins gathering for their annual ball. Not unlike people, they dance, gossip, and amuse themselves. We could speak of the personification of the mannequins, were it not that they believe themselves superior to humans. They consider humans their "imperfect copies who to no avail imitate their harmonious and irreproachable figures." Human heads are regarded by the mannequins as "shapeless and empty pumpkins," whose only function is to support hats:

All of them are only cheap copies made on our models. I cannot stop laughing when I look at those twisted freaks. They want at any price to have their clothing, which so perfectly fits us, fit them as well.

They wear on their shoulders these shapeless, empty pumpkins, which they call "heads." They fit them as badly as their clothing. I really don't know, perhaps to some these heads have some special purpose but to the majority they serve only as supports for their funny, pipe-like hats.⁴

2 Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, trans. U. Weisstein (Bloomington, 1963), p. 184. See also B. Jennings, *The Ludicrous Demon: Aspects of the Grottesque in German Post Romantic Prose* (Berkeley, 1963), and Iu. V. Mann, *O grotteske v literature* (Moskva, 1966).

3 E. T. A. Hoffmann, "Der Sandmann," *Die Nachtstücke* (Berlin, 1918).

4 Bruno Iasenskii, *Bal manekenov* (Moskva, 1931), p. 18. This edition will be used hereafter.

The happy atmosphere of the ball is changed by the arrival of Ribandel, who has mistaken a female mannequin for a pretty woman and followed her to this place. Fearing the worst if people learn their secret, the mannequins kill the intruder. Ribandel's head is cut off, but his headless body wanders away. The mannequins draw lots for the head and the winner attaches it to his own trunk and goes to a party given by the owner of a big automobile company.

All of these absurd phenomena—the personification of the mannequins, the transformation of a mannequin into a human being, the normal functioning of a body without a head—are presented as actual occurrences.

The absurdity of the play is heightened by the fact that the human characters, confronted with these situations, behave as if nothing unusual had happened. When the mannequin arrives at the party, he is accepted there as Ribandel. The true Ribandel, headless as he is, is simply treated as an impostor. At first the servants think he is a party-goer in costume, returning from a masquerade:

Where did you dig up such a remarkable costume? Probably from some masquerade. There is no end to those who get sloshed to the gills and then in the morning wander around the city unable to find their way home. Surely that's why they have carnivals [p. 85].

Then they blame the stranger for drinking too much and "losing his head." Here Jasiński reactivates an idiom, "poteriał' głovu," which literally means "to lose one's head," its idiomatic usage suggesting, however, a person befuddled with drink: "Go and find your head and put it under a tap. Perhaps it might help you a little" (p. 85). "A fine fellow, to be sure! It's the first time in my life I've seen a person so plastered" (p. 83). Such a reaction was expected by the mannequins, who were convinced that the headless person would be treated as a drunkard: "Without his head he can go anywhere he wants to. He can chatter away until the morning, but all the same no one will believe him. They will think he has lost his head through boozing. They will not listen to him seriously" (p. 32). All the above examples reflect a play on the primary and secondary meanings of a popular idiom, and the term "textural grotesque" might be employed to describe the intentional distortion of language which heightens the absurdity of the play.⁵

The grotesque is coupled in *The Ball of the Mannequins* with realistic, concrete details. In the first act Jasiński "translates" the fantastic into the ordinary by supplying the exact place and time of the action—

5 See Ludmila Foster, "The Grotesque: A Method of Analysis," *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich*, 9, no. 1 (1966), 77-81, and "A Configuration of the Non-Absolute: The Structure and the Nature of Grotesque," *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich*, 9, no. 2 (1966), 38-45.

Thursday, January 17, in a Paris fashion salon. He drops names like "Samaritaine," "Philippe et Gaston," and "Cherlitte," all well known in the world of Parisian department stores and fashion houses. He also introduces Mr. Ribandel as a member of the French Socialist Party and the League for the Defence of Human Rights, and as a Member of Parliament.

In the second and third acts of the play, real-life situations are at the centre of the action. At a party given by Mr. Arnaux, two competing factory owners try to gain Ribandel's support in order to avert a strike. They offer him money and promise him the affections of their wives and daughters. But the mannequin, unfamiliar with the human world, upsets their plans, at the same time violating the conventions of human behaviour.

Thus the confrontation of the mannequins with the human world was needed to bring out in full relief the hypocrisy of the capitalist world. *The Ball of the Mannequins* is a pungent satire on Social Democrats, who are actually puppets in the hands of big industrialists.

The world of capitalist industry had to be destroyed, believed Jasiński, and he expressed this conviction in the closing monologue of the play. The mannequin has become so frustrated with the human world that it is with great relief that he meets the true Mr. Ribandel. Without delay he returns the head and leaves this strange, incomprehensible world. Upon leaving, he delivers a monologue which openly expresses the idea of the play—the inevitability of the revolution that will destroy this hypocritical and unjust society:

When I won the head, I rejoiced. I thought I had found a treasure. To hell with your head! Now I know what you need it for. We made a right decision to cut off this nut's head. But could all your heads be cut off? There are not enough scissors. And, really, it is not our business. Others will come and will do a better job. We thought you plagued only us. As it turns out, there are others who have decided to get even with you. You won't have to wait too long [p. 109].

The Ball of the Mannequins was published in 1931, at a time when the RAAP critics insisted that the only style of proletarian literature should be psychological realism, which excluded the use of fantasy, hyperbole, and caricature. Fortunately for Bruno Jasiński, his play received enthusiastic support from a prominent figure, Anatolii Lunacharskii, who wrote an introduction to the first edition. Lunacharskii defended Jasiński's use of the fantastic as an excellent means of transmitting political satire, holding that this kind of unrealistic distortion allowed the author to show those qualities of the represented phenomena which he wanted to emphasize. To reproach Jasiński for artistic deformation, warned Lunacharskii, would be like "picking holes in a fat goose":

This material—relatively limited in quantity—which Jasieński uses in order to characterize his bourgeoisie and his socialists gains tremendously by being shown in an unexpected mirror which unrealistically distorts proportions, but perfectly throws into relief those qualities of the represented phenomena that the author wanted to emphasize.⁶

Jasieński's next grotesque work, "The Nose," was written in 1936 and published in the pages of the newspaper *Izvestiia*.⁷ Jasieński openly admitted Gogol's influence by borrowing the title and by introducing a motto taken from Gogol's story:

But what is stranger, what is more incomprehensible than anything is that authors can choose such subjects.

... and yet, when you think it over, there really is something in it. Despite what anyone may say, such things do happen—not often, but they do happen.⁸

As suggested by the motto, Gogol's "The Nose" attracted Jasieński through its bizarre plot, centring on the disappearance of the nose from the face of a young Petersburg clerk, Kovalev. Jasieński borrowed the central motif from Gogol, but introduced a number of modifications. The protagonist's nose does not disappear, rather it changes drastically in shape, from one that is "perfectly straight, a little fleshy and bulgy at the end" into "a large, hooked nose of the Semitic type." This change has far-reaching consequences, since the nose belongs to Professor Kallenbruck, whom Jasieński depicts as an outstanding German anthropologist and author of an anti-Semitic theory on the influence of the shape of the nose on the psychological character of Jewry. This fictitious person has written a scholarly work entitled *The Endogenic Minus-Variants of Jewry* in which he sets forth the theory:

By comparison with the ideal straightness of the Greek-Nordic nose, the Semitic nose was, and there could be no doubt about it, an obvious pathological deformation. After centuries this deformation lost its subjective-pathological character and became one of the genetically conditioned racial characteristics. The influence of this deformation on the cast of mind and the psychological nature of Jewry was obvious and did not require any special proof [p. 189].

The non-realistic, bizarre plot is combined in "The Nose" with realistic, concrete details. Jasieński offers an accurate description of Ger-

6 Anatolii Lunacharskii, "Predislovie," *Bal manekenov* (Moskva, 1931). Despite Lunacharskii's support, *Bal manekenov* was never staged in the Soviet Union. Before the Second World War it played only in the A. E. Bucharian avant-garde theatre in Prague, and in Japan. The Polish premiere of *Bal manekinów* took place in 1957 in the Katowice theatre. See Stern, *Bruno Jasieński*, p. 215.

7 Bruno Iasenskii, "Nos," *Izvestiia*, February 11-17, 1936, reprinted in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moskva, 1957), II, 187-212. The latter edition will be used hereafter.

8 Nikolai Gogol', "Nos," in *Sobranie khudozhestvennykh proizvedenii v shesti tomakh* (Moskva, 1960), III, 93.

many in the 1930s, down to such realistic details as the names of Fascist organizations and references to Fascist newspapers. He juxtaposes Kallenbruck's pseudo-scientific theory and the existing anti-Semitic theories elaborated by Hans Günther and Hans Stecker, and frequently quotes from their works on the subject.

A fantastic supposition is the starting point of the action in "The Nose." The effect of absurdity is further strengthened by the co-existence of the realistic with the fantastic. At first the reader is confronted with a series of absurd situations—the sudden transformation of the nose, the visit of a person killed a few years before, the trip to the genealogical garden—none of which are susceptible to any realistic or rational explanation. The introduction of the dream motif changes the situation drastically: all these strange, absurd occurrences have happened to Kallenbruck in his nightmarish dream.

With the protagonist's awakening the action passes from the realm of the fantastic into the realm of the actual, but the events that follow only confirm the nightmarish dream. While delivering a lecture on "The Semitic Nose as One of the Inherited Minus-Variants of Jewry," Professor Kallenbruck discovers to his horror that his own nose has actually changed its shape. Once more the reader is given a rational explanation. The epilogue suggests that Kallenbruck lost his reason and was committed to a lunatic asylum.

But the epilogue also mentions a secret investigation that proved the Jewish lineage of many prominent Nazis. This information forces the reader to recall the insidious plan of the Jewish Council to bribe the archivists to include some Jewish ancestors in the records of all Germans, starting with the most distinguished National Socialists. Once again Jasiński returns to the fantastic plane of his story, thus refusing to draw a clear line between the real and the fantastic.

Exactly the same device was employed by Gogol, who intentionally bewildered his readers as to the credibility of the events depicted in his story. At the beginning of the epilogue, Gogol's narrator seemed to question the propriety of writers' choosing such fantastic plots, but then he reassured the reader that "such things do happen—not often, but they do happen." Gogol deliberately discarded the dream motif that was used as the framework and the motivation for the otherwise absurd phenomena in an earlier version of "The Nose": "Incidentally, everything that was described here happened in the major's dream. And when he woke up, he was so happy that he began to dance in his shirt."⁹

The grotesque affected not only the substance of Jasiński's story, but also its stylistic treatment. The effect of absurdity is strengthened

9 See V. Vinogradov, "Naturalisticheskii grotesk: Siuzhet i kompozitsiia povesti Gogolia 'Nos,'" *Evoliutsiia russkogo naturalizma* (Leningrad, 1926), p. 41.

by a certain tension between the dramatic story and the jocular manner of presentation. This humorous tone is apparent from the first lines, which characterize the protagonist as a distinguished scholar of "anthropology, comparative 'raciology' and race psychology." The neologism "raciology" (*rasovedenie*) conveys the author's sarcastic attitude towards his hero and the discipline he represents. Jasiński scoffs at Kallenbruck's theory with its solemn, scientific pretensions. In order to adhere to exact scientific methods, the anthropologist measures his nose with a compass. The humorous tone continues in the episode describing the transformation of Kallenbruck's nose. The narrator speaks of "an uninvited nose which does not want to give up the place it has taken a fancy to." The seriousness of the situation is contradicted by an image of a snotty nose which misinterprets the professor's gesture and blows forth a gob of mucus:

Once more the professor came to the mirror and in despair tugged with his two fingers at this uninvited nose, which had come from god-knows where. The nose did not even move, not wanting to part with the place on the professor's face which it had taken a fancy to.

Moreover, having considered the touch of Kallenbruck's fingers as a natural common folk gesture, it happily blew forth two gobs of mucus [pp. 190-191].

The humour reaches its height in the description of the Jewish Council, attended by Kallenbruck. The characterization of the twelve Jewish sages is based on caricature, a literary technique which ludicrously distorts a given feature. The sages are depicted as decrepit men whose faces are covered with hair growing from their ears and noses, not to mention their long beards, corkscrew curls, and bushy eyebrows: "His hair was growing from his ears and from his nose, grey like worm wood; his white bushy eyebrows which covered his eyes looked like a second pair of moustaches, that by mistake grew above the eyes" (p. 202). The Jewish elders behave like stage puppets. They leave the table to sing a couplet, act out its meaning, dance, and, "as if by command," return to the table:

At the sight of Professor Kallenbruck all twelve elders jumped up with a playfulness unexpected for their age and began to sing in a choir. . . . After finishing the song, they made with their jaws several voracious motions, and chattered their teeth, to show vividly how this devouring of the world at one sitting would happen. Then, after dancing on the spot for a while, the elders, as if by command, sat down again at the table and sank into a deep silence [p. 202].

They listen politely to Kallenbruck's story, promising to help him provided he agrees to stay with them. As a sign of assent he eats a slice of matzo, made from the blood of Nazis, and is accepted as the thirteenth member of the Council. He is immediately transformed into a

decrepit man, not unlike the others. Here Jasiński parodies legends propagated by the Nazis about bloodthirsty Jewish rituals. The whole episode seems to be a parody on the traditional folk-tale motif of testing and interrogating the hero.¹⁰ Professor Kallenbruck is first tested; he passes the test, and as a result he is able to propose an insidious plan of revenge.

The grotesque also affected the verbal texture of Jasiński's story. The effect of absurdity is produced by metaphors based on semantic unexpectedness, such as "the professor spat in his heart," "Kallenbruck escaped with his eyes into his collar." The last metaphor paraphrases Gogol's description of the personified nose who "was hiding his nose in a big collar."

Grotesque distortion is evident as well in the image of the genealogical garden, based on a play on the literal and metaphoric meanings of the idiom "genealogical tree." This "genealogical garden" consists of real trees, which show the pedigrees, i.e., the genealogical trees, of all Berliners. The shape of each tree is determined by the individual ancestral line:

There were some huge trees like baobab, some thin and tall like cyprus, some so branchy at the bottom and so bare at the top that it seemed they were growing upside down; on the other hand, there were also some trees plucked at the bottom and shaggy at the top, some twisted to one side like gigantic bushes of saxsavul, and some spherical, as if trimmed by the skillful hand of a gardener [p. 194].

As in the case of *The Ball of the Mannequins*, the grotesque is used in "The Nose" for satirical purposes. Jasiński built his story around a satiric supposition of what would happen if a prominent theoretician of anti-Semitism discovered his Jewish origins and became a victim of his own theory of racially inferior people. The fantastic plot allowed Jasiński to aim a blow at racism and anti-Semitism in Fascist Germany.

Such a didactic use of the grotesque was in full agreement with the theory of Socialist Realism, which recognized only the satirical use of the grotesque. The shaft of satire, according to Socialist Realism, should be directed against the vices of bourgeois society, rather than against the shortcomings of Soviet life. In conformity with these requirements, Jasiński utilized the grotesque only to condemn the evils of the capitalist system. When it came to the affirmation of Soviet society Jasiński adopted the popular Socialist-Realist model of the industrial model.

10 V. Propp, *Morfologija skazki* (Leningrad, 1928), pp. 49-54.

Conclusion

To evaluate Bruno Jasiński's literary career is not an easy task. He was both poet and prose writer, a Futurist as well as a Socialist Realist, and a bilingual author whose name belongs to two different literatures.

On the surface, Jasiński might seem inconsistent and contradictory. After all, poetry is very different from prose, each having internal laws of its own. Equally disparate are Futurism and Socialist Realism, the former insisting on the autonomy of art and concerned with the poetic word, the latter conceiving art as a form of social consciousness whose function is to reflect objective reality and to show its inner contradictions. Because of its cognitive and educational functions, realism is regarded by Socialist Realism as the best artistic method, while Futurism has a strong distaste for realistic art and advocates the principle of creative distortion and the necessity for literary change and novelty.

Yet there was an inner consistency in Jasiński's transition from Futurism to Socialist Realism, from poetry to prose. From the very beginning he was aware of the social tasks facing literature. In his first Futurist manifesto, "To the People of Poland," he claimed that the "sporadic and isolated reform of art in abstract isolation from life itself will prove futile, fruitless, and idle." While challenging his colleagues to "reform life," he himself was undecided about the kind of social changes which should take place. The decision came very shortly afterwards, when Jasiński became involved in the communist movement. He adopted the revolutionary ideology and proclaimed the slogans of the proletarian revolution. From "engaged" literature it was

but a step towards Socialist Realism, which required literature "to depict reality in its revolutionary development," that is, "to reflect the contradiction of social development and the future directions of its evolution." Jasiński took this step after moving to the Soviet Union, and adjusted his works to the requirements of the theory of Socialist Realism.

Jasiński's growing concern for utilizing literature for propaganda purposes was responsible for his switch from poetry to prose. He began his literary career as a poet, sharing the Futurist belief in the higher evocative power of the poetic word. He continued to write poetry in his "engaged" period; both *A Song of Hunger* and *The Lay of Jakub Szela* are long poems. He switched to prose in *I Burn Paris*, convinced that prose communicated better and was therefore more effective as "a weapon of the class struggle." The same conviction was held by Soviet writers, if the relative amounts of prose and poetry written in the 1930s are any indication. But Jasiński came to these conclusions independently, even before he moved to the Soviet Union.

Jasiński's switch to prose proved permanent. With the exception of *The Ball of the Mannequins*, all his works written in the 1930s are novels or short stories. The reasons were both ideological and practical. The practical reason followed from his decision to write in Russian. Prose, much more than poetry, would tolerate his imperfect knowledge of the language, and Jasiński's Russian was probably somewhat faulty.

As a bilingual writer Jasiński made a contribution to the development of two literatures. His importance to Polish literature stems from his elaboration of the Futurist aesthetic programme and his application of these principles to his poetry. As a Futurist poet he helped to abolish the aesthetic canons of "Młoda Polska" and to introduce new forms of artistic expression. It must be said that, in comparison with the "Skamander" group or the Cracow "Zwrotnica," Jasiński was a lesser talent. His attachment to Futurism was so strong that at times the formal experiment took precedence over everything else, to the detriment of the poem as a whole.

Jasiński's Futurism needs to be evaluated not only for its significance in the history of Polish literature, but even more as a necessary stage in his development as a Socialist writer. By bringing together a Futurist form with a revolutionary ideology, Jasiński was able to produce great poetry. *A Song of Hunger*, written under the influence of Maiakovskii, is a truly revolutionary poem, offering a vision of the revolution in an avant-garde form. *The Lay of Jakub Szela*, a fascinating story of the peasant rebellion, successfully combines Futurist poetics with the tradition of Polish folklore. With these two poems and the novel *I Burn Paris*, Jasiński made a significant contribution to Polish proletarian literature.

Jasieński's place in Soviet literature is secure, thanks to his *Man Changes His Skin*, one of the best industrial novels written in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. The novel is equal to those of Gladkov, Leonov, Kataev, and Erenburg, its originality lying in the use of an engaging plot, local colour, and a highly metaphoric style. Even as a Socialist Realist, Jasieński did not abandon his unique style of writing, which subsumed the poetic into the prose. He continued to utilize the fantastic and the unusual, which he considered a legitimate part of Socialist Realism. Thus he always preserved certain elements of Futurist poetics, thereby escaping, in part at least, the restrictions of Soviet literary doctrine.

A Selection of Bruno Jasieński's Poetry with Prose Translation of Each Poem

Rzygające posągi

Pani Sztuce

Na klawiszach usiadły pokrzywione bemole,
Przeraźliwie się nudzą i ziewają Uaaaa . . .
Rozebrana Gioconda stoi w majtkach na stole
i napiera się głośno cacao-choix.

Za oknami prześwieca żółtych alej jesienność,
Jak wędrowne pochody biczujących się sekt,
Tylko białe posągi, strojne w swoją kamienność,
Stoją zawsze "na miejscu," niewzruszenie correct.

Pani dzisiaj, doprawdy, jest klasycznie . . . niedbała . . .
Pani, która tak zimno gra sercami w cerceau,
Taka sztywna i dumna . . . tak cudownie umiała
Nawet puścić się z szykiem po 3 szklach curaçao.

I przedziwne, jak Pani nie przestaje być w tonie,
Będąc zresztą obecnie najzupełniej moderne.—
Co środy i piątki w Pani białym salonie
Swoje wiersze czytają Iwaszkiewicz i Stern.

A ja—wróg zasadniczy urzędowych kuluar,
Gdzie się myśli, i kocha, i rozprawia, i je,
Mam otwarty wieczorem popielaty buduar
Platonicznie podziwiać Pani déshabillé . . .

Ale teraz, jednakże, niech się Pani oszali,—
Nawet lokaj drewniany już ośmiela się śmieć . . .

Dziś będziemy po parku na wyścigi biegali
I na ławki padali, zadyszani na śmierć.

A wpatrując się w gwiazdy całujące się z nami,
W pewnym dzikim momencie po dziesiątym Clicôt,
Zobaczymy raptownie świat do góry nogami,
Jak na filmie odwrotnym firmy Pathé & Co.

I zatańczą nonsensy po ulicach, jak ongi,
Jednej nocy pijanej od szampana i warg.
Kiedy w krzakach widziałem RZYGAJĄCE POSĄGI
Przez dwunastu lokajów niesione przez park.

The Vomiting Statues

To Mrs. Art

*The crooked flats have sat down on the [piano] keys, they are bored to death and yawn
Aaaah . . . Undressed Gioconda stands in panties on a table and insists loudly upon
[getting] cacao-choix.*

*Behind the windows the autumn of yellow alleys shines through, like the wandering
processions of self-scourging sects. Only the white statues, stylish in their "stoneliness,"
always stand in order, stiffly correct.*

*Today you are really classically careless. You who coldheartedly play cerceau with
hearts. So rigid and proud, you knew so well even how to surrender yourself with style
after 3 glasses of curaçao.*

*It is admirable how you do not cease to be in fashion, being, moreover, completely
"moderne." Every Wednesday and Thursday in your white salon Iwaskiewicz and Stern
read their poems.*

*And I—the virtual enemy of official lobbies, the place to think, to love, to discuss, and to
eat, in the evening have the grey boudoir open to platonically admire your déshabillé.*

*But now, however, drive yourself wild. Even a wooden lackey dares to dare. Tonight we
will run a race in a park and will fall on benches short of breath.*

*But, while gazing at the stars kissing us, in one wild moment after the tenth Clicôt, we
will see the world upside down as in a movie by Pathé & Co. shown backwards.*

*And the nonsense will dance on streets as before, when on a night [which was] drunk
from champagne and lips, I saw in the bushes THE VOMITING STATUES carried by
twelve lackeys through the park.*

Miłość na aucie

Było złote, letnie rano w szumie kołnych heksametrów.
Auto szło po równej szosie, zostawiając w tyle kurz.
Zbity licznik pokazywał 160 kilometrów.
Koło nas leciały pola rozpluskanych, żółtych zbóż.

Koło nas leciały lasy, i zagaja, i mokradła,
Jakaś łąka, jakaś rzeka, jakaś w drzewach skryta wieś.
Ja objąłem Panią ręką, żeby Pani nie wypadła.
Wicher zdarł mi czapkę z głowy i po polach poniosł gdzieś.

Pani śmiała się radośnie błyskawicznym tremolando,
 Obryzany pani śmiechem śmiał się złoty, jasny dzień
 I w dyskretnym cieniu ronda z żytnich kłosów ogirlandą
 Nasze usta się spotkały jeszcze pełne świeżych drgnięć...

Może pani chciała krzyczeć? Świat oszalał jak od wina...

Wiatr gwałtowny bił w policzki, wiatr zapierał
 w piersiach dech.

Auto szło wariackim tempem 160 wiorst godzina.

Koło nas leciały pola, kępy drzew i czuby strzech.

Love on a Car

It was a golden summer morning in the road of the wheeling hexametres. The car was going on a flat road, leaving dust behind. A broken speedometer was showing 160 kilometres. Fields of rippling, yellow grain were rushing past.

Forests, and woods, and marshes, a meadow, a river, a village, hidden in the trees, all were rushing past. I embraced you with my arm so you wouldn't fall out. The wind tore the hat off my head and carried it away.

You were laughing happily in a lightning tremolo. Splashed with your laughter, the golden summer day laughed. And in the secret shade of a brim engarlanded with wheat ears our lips met, still full of fresh throbs.

Did you perhaps want to shout? The world went crazy as if on wine. The boisterous wind was beating our cheeks, the wind was taking away our breath. The car was going a mad 160 versts an hour. Fields, clumps of trees and thatches' crests were rushing past.

But w butonierce

Zmarnowałem podeszwy w całodziennych spieszeniach,
 Teraz jestem słoneczny, siebiepewny i rad.
 Idę młody, genialny, trzymam ręce w kieszeniach,
 Stawiam kroki milowe, zamaszyste, jak świat.

Nie zatrzymam się nigdzie na rozstajach, na wiorstach,
 Bo mnie niesie coś wiecznie, motorycznie i przed.
 Mijam strachy na wróble w eleganckich windhorstach,
 Wszystkim kłaniam się grzecznie i poprawiam im pled.

W parkocieniu krokietni—jakiś meeting panieński.
 Dyskutują o sztuce, objawiając swój traf.
 One jeszcze nie wiedzą, że gdy nastał Jasieński,
 Bezpowrotnie umarli i Tetmajer i Staff.

One jeszcze nie wiedzą, one jeszcze nie wierzą.
 Poezyjność, futuryzm—niewiadoma i X.
 Chodźmy biegać, panienki, niech się główki oświeżą—
 Będzie lepiej smakować poobiedni jour-fixe.

Przeleciało gdzieś auto w białych kłębach benzyny,
 Zafurkotał na wietrze trzepocący się szal.
 Pojechała mi bajka poza góry doliny
 I nic jakoś mi nie żal, a powinno być żal...

Tak mi dobrze, tak moją, aż rechoce się serce.
 Same nogi mnie niosą gdzieś—i po co mi, gdzie?
 Idę młody, genialny, niosę BUT W BUTONIERCE,
 Tym co za mną nie zdążą echopowiem:—Adieu!—

A Boot in a Buttonhole

I wasted my soles in everyday scurrings; right now I am sunny, cocksure, and glad. A young genius, I walk with my hands in my pockets, I take mile-long steps, brisk like the world.

I won't stop anywhere at the crossroads or verstposts, for something carries me endlessly, mechanically forward. I pass the scarecrows elegant in their formals, I politely greet everyone and straighten their plaids.

In the parkshade of a croquet court—a ladies' meeting. They discuss arts, criticasting. They don't know yet that when Jasiński came, both Tetmajer and Staff died irretrievably.

They do not know yet, they do not believe yet. Poeticity, futurism—the unknown and X. Let's run, girls, let your heads be fresh. The afternoon tea will then taste better.

Somewhere a car passed by in white clouds of gas, the fluttering scarf whirled in the air. The fairy tale disappeared beyond the mountains and the plains. And I do not feel sorry, although I should.

I feel fine, at ease, so that my heart chortles. My legs carry me somewhere—and what for, where to? I walk, a young genius, carrying a boot in my buttonhole; to those who will not keep up with me I will echo back—Adieu!

Zmęczył mnie język

Zmęczył mnie język jak twardy zlepek.
 Jestem jak człowiek, co lampy przerósł.
 Na skrzyżowaniu dwóch wrogich epok
 stoję, cynicznie gryząc papieros.

Nudzą mnie wiersze najszczerze, bo
 poznałem wszystkich mów Niagary.
 Z jednych słów umiem tak jak Rimbaud
 stawiać katedry i lupanary.

Znam słowa śmigte jak uda sarn.
 Znam słowa równe biblijnym psalmom,
 Nad łóżkiem moim śpiewał Verhaeren
 i długie fugi zawodził Balmont.

Tańczą mi w wściekły porwane trans
 twarze i domy, ludzie i rzeczy.
 Umieć być chłodny jak Huysmans,
 umieć być dziki jak Palazzeschi.

Hałas szantanów i ciszę morg
 zakląłem w strofy pijane rytmem.
 Dzieckiem mi bajki mówił Laforgue
 i zimne hymny skandował Whitman.

Mógłbym na nerwach dojrzałych panien
 grać jak na strunach, cienkich jak włoski.

Mogę tak pisać jak Siewierianin,
Mogę tak pisać jak Majakowski.

Mogę tak pisać jak Apollinaire.
Mogę tak pisać jak Marinetti.—
Tamte drapieżne, lubieżne kobiety
rozdarłyby mnie na żer.

O bracia włoscy, rosyjscy, francuscy,
tacy ogromni w swoim patosie!
O ukochani, najdrożsi, bliscy—
mam już was wszystkich po dziurki w nosie!

Nocą mi w łóżku nie dają spać
olbrzymie stopy wrzeszczących poezji.
Chcę biec, uciekać, nie słyszeć, gnać!
Precz, z Europy do Polinezji!

O tłumie panien, czytających Ewersa,
Zachwycających się Romain Rollandem!
Ucieknę od was aerolandem!
Jak łatwo serca chwycić zamiast sersa!

Puśćcie, bo będę krzyczał jak cham!
I walę pięścią w twardy parapet.
W mieszkaniu moim nie takie mam
tapety z wierszy i wiersze z tapet!

Poezjo! Utrzymanko eleganckich panów!
Anemiczni, nerwowi, bladzi masturbanci!
Precz! Chcę dziś sławić czarnych, ordynarnych chamów,
co nie potrafią France'a odróżnić od francy?

O ekstatyczny tłumie żarty przez syfilis!
Zaropiałe, cuchnące, owrzdodzone bydło!
Kiedy w czarnym pochodzie nade mną się schylisz?
Wszystko mnie już zmęczyło i wszystko obrzydło!

Ręce wasze potworne, pokręcone palce,
Gigantyczne, czerwone, obrośnięte macki,
którym wszystko podatne jest, jak chleb z zakalcem,
więcej mówią mi jedne, niż cały Słowacki!

Stworzę wam sztukę nową, sztukę czarnych miast.
Będzie mocna jak wódka i dobra jak piernik.
Zdziwicie się, że tyle jest na niebie gwiazd,
których żaden wam przedtem nie odkrył Kopernik.

W waszych stęchłych zaułkach, gdzie króluje wciąż
pokraczny mały Chrystus oprawiony w ramki,
tłum czarny się przewala jak olbrzymi wąż,
zapładniając brzuchate, tłustopiersne samki.

Będą rodzić pod płótem, pod próg, byle gdzie
malutkich czarnych ludzi sine od boleści
i już krztuszą się wami przedmieścia i wsie
i już was więcej żadne miasto nie pomieści.

Wylejcie zatorę za rogatki bram
olbrzymia czarna masa, straszna i wspaniała,
i sto tysięcy pięknych, wypieszczonych dam
odda wam swoje białe i pachnące ciała.

Rozsypiecie się morzem wielobarwnym, pstrym,
na wszystko spadnie z góry wasz miażdżący młotek
i pociągnie za wami popielaty dym
z tysiącletnich wszechnic i czarnych bibliotek.

Chodźcie! Chodźcie tu wszyscy! Pąsowi! We krwi!
O Tłumie! O Motłochu! Tytanie! Narodzie!
Odśłońcie głowy z czapek i zamknijcie drzwi!
Zaśpiewamy dziś razem wielką "Pieśń o głodzie."

A Tongue Tired Me Out

A tongue tired me out like a hard bloodclot. I am like a man who outgrew the lamps. At the crossroads of two hostile eras I stand and cynically munch on a cigarette.

I am bored with the sincerest poems, since I learned all of Niagara's speeches. From the words alone I know as Rimbaud [knew] how to build cathedrals and brothels.

I know words swift as deer's thighs. I know words equal to Biblical psalms. At my bedside Verhaeren sang and Balmont crooned long fugues.

Faces and houses, people and things dance for me, fallen into a frantic trance. I know how to be cool like Huysman, I know how to be wild like Palazzeschi.

I bewitched the noise of cabarets and the silence of morgues into stanzas drunk with rhythm. In my childhood Laforgue told me fairy tales and Whitman scanned cold hymns for me.

I could play on the nerves of mature maidens as on strings, thin as hair. I can write like Severianin, I can write like Maiakovskii.

I can write like Apollinaire. I can write like Marinetti. Those rapacious, lecherous women would rip me as their prey.

O brothers, Italian, Russian, and French, so immense in your pathos! O beloved, dearest and intimate, I am fed up with you!

The huge piles of shrieking poetry don't let me sleep at night. I want to run away, to escape, not to hear, to flee. Away from Europe to Polynesia!

O crowd of women reading Ewers, raptured by Romain Rolland! I will run away from you on an aeroplane! How easy it is to catch hearts instead of cerceau!

Let me go, or I will scream like a boor! And batter with my fist at a hard sill. In my apartment I have wallpapers made of verses and verses made of wallpaper!

Poetry! The mistress of elegant men! Feeble, nervous, pale masturbators! Begone! Today I want to glorify the black, coarse boors who cannot distinguish France from a French disease!

O ecstatic crowd, devoured by syphilis! Festering, stinking, ulcerous cattle! When will you bend over me in a black procession? Everything has tired me out, everything has become loathsome!

Your horrible, contorted fingers, your gigantic, red, hairy tentacles, to whom everything is susceptible, like a doughy bread, alone tell me more than the whole of Słowacki!

I will create a new art for you, the art of black cities. It will be as strong as vodka and as good as gingerbread. You will be surprised to see that there are so many stars that no Copernicus had ever discovered for you.

In your musty black alleys, where a hideous, small Jesus in a picture frame still reigns, a black crowd rolls over like a huge snake, impregnating the big-bellied, fat-breasted bitches.

Blue with pain, they will bear small, black people under the fence, on the threshold, anywhere. And now the suburbs and the villages are choking on you, and no city will have room for you any more.

You will spill over [like] a traffic jam [stretching] beyond the tollgates, an enormous black mass, horrible and splendid, and a hundred thousand beautiful, pampered ladies will give you their white, fragrant bodies.

You will scatter [like] the sea, multicoloured and mottled. Everything will be hit by your crushing hammer. And the grey smoke will follow you from the thousand-year-old universities and the black libraries.

Come! Come here all! Red! In blood! O Crowd! O Rabble! A Titan! A Nation! Bare your heads of caps and close the doors! Today we will sing together a grand "Song of Hunger."

Do futurystów

Już nas znudzili Platon i Plotyn,
i Charlie Chaplin, i czary czapel—
rytmicznym szczękiem wszystkich gilotyn
piszę ten apel.

Dziwy po mieście skaczą już pierwsze,
zza kraty parków rzeźby wyłazą,
kobiety w łóżkach skandują wiersze
i chodzą z niebieską twarzą.

Po cztery głowy ma każdy z nas.
Przestrach nad miastem zawisnął niemy.

Poezja
z rur się wydziela
jak gaz.

Wszyscy zginiemy.

Dzień się nad nami zatrzymał złoty
i pola nasze pobił grad,
jakby wytoczyła przeciw nam kulomioty
Niebieska Republika Rad.

Krzyczały w gazetach telefony i Paty,
że w ziemie nie starczy nam chleba—
Nikt z nas nie dożyje zimy.

Przyszedtł czas ostatniej krucjaty.
Tłumie,
coś mnie okrążył i chciał bić laskami,
czemuż stoimy.

Niech poeci idą do nieba.

Jestem z wami.

Nie będzie więcej żaden,
któremu do ust swój dzban dasz,
pieścić nam oczu jadem
gęstym jak bandaż.

Przyjacielu Anatolu,
 połóż, połóż tu się
 i gdy ci spadnie na czaszkę mój młotek
 i szczury się na nią wgramolą,
 nie krzycz z teatralnym gestem:
 "I ty, Brutusie."
 To ja jestem.
 I wyciągnę ci z głowy,
 jak magik,
 domy,
 okręty,
 księżyce
 i dragi,
 kobietę z dzieckiem,
 flagi wszystkich nacji,
 bezcenne słowa po dolarze karat.
 Dzisiaj sprzedaję hurtem
 z licytacji
 cały aparat.
 Próżno się wdzięczy chmurek rokoko,
 na plafon nieba rzucone baze.
 Nikogo więcej księżyc—gonokok
 tęsknotą nocy nie zarazi.

 Znów będzie wiosna raz tylko na rok
 i jedno słońce w niebo się wkrości.
 Jak tynk
 obleci ze świata
 barok
 poetyczności.
 Nie będzie kobiet brzuch
 jak dynamo
 milionem wolt im w głębinie wrząca
 będą po prostu drżały
 gdy nam
 o
 ciała ich miękkie
 pluśnie żądza.
 Znów będzie ogród,
 jak ogród
 i róż chwiejące się metry.
 Świat rozprostuje się nagle na powrót
 w nowej, słonecznej geometrii.
 Znikną,
 jak wrzody,
 które ktoś przegniół,
 sznury tych,
 miejsca nie było przed kim—
 z wiaderkiem w ręku
 każdy przedmiot
 pooklejali w etykietki.

 O zamknij oczu swoich semafor.
 Snów yokohamy kąpią się w kwiatach.

Idziemy
wydrzeć z lawy metafor
twarz
rysującą się
Świata.

To the Futurists

We are already tired of Platon and Plotin, of Charlie Chaplin, and of the magic of a heron. With the rhythmic rattle of all guillotines I write this appeal.

The first wonders jump in the city. Sculptures creep out through the parks' lattice. Women scan poems in bed and wander with blue faces. Each of us has four heads. Fear hangs mute above the city. Poetry seeps from pipes like gas. We will all perish. The golden day above us has ended and a hail ruined our fields as if the Blue Soviet Republic wheeled out machine guns against us. Telephones and telegraphs shouted in the newspapers that we will be short of bread this winter. No one will live till winter. The time of the last crusade has come. Crowd, you who surrounded me and wanted to beat me with canes, why are we standing.

Let poets go to heaven. I am with you. No one whose lips will drink from your pitcher will caress our eyes any more with the poison thick as a bandage.

My friend Anatol, lie down, lie down here, and when my hammer hits your skull and rats scramble up on it, do not shout with a theatrical gesture "Et tu, Brute." It is I. I will extract from your head, like a magician, houses, ships, moons and dredges, a woman with a child, flags of all nations, priceless words one dollar a carat. Today I am selling wholesale by auction the whole apparatus. The rococo of clouds, thrown on the sky's platform, in vain puts on airs and graces. The moon—a gonococcus—will not infect any one with the night's nostalgia.

Again the spring will come only once a year and one sun will "pimple" into the sky. Like plaster, the poetic barocco will fall from the world. The women's stomach will not be as a dynamo boiling with a million volts in their depths, they will simply shiver when we splash their soft bodies with our lust. Again a garden will be a garden and roses' swaying metres. The world will suddenly straighten back to a new, sunny geometry. The lines of those who did not leave room for others, and who with a pail in their hands put labels on each object, will disappear like abscesses pressed by someone.

O close the semaphore of your eyes. The Yokohamas of dreams bathe in flowers. We are coming to tear out from the lava of metaphors the appearing face of the World.

Marsylianka

nie będę więcej stawił żadnej z dam
ani jej imię w śpiewnych strofach pieścić
odkąd ujrzałem cię raz pierwszy tam
w tym dziwnym nigdy nie widzianym mieście

pamiętam wieczór jak wytarty gwasz
i w bramach domów przykucnięty przeraż
gdym nagle w tłumie ujrzał twoją twarz
i zrozumiałem że to właśnie teraz

ulica drgała wijąc się jak wąż
migotał witryn kolorowy miszmasz

i wiatr dał słodszy niżli ust twych miąższ
 na których pręgą wyciśnięty krzyż masz
 i nagle tłumowi obolały guz
 rozorał obłęd jak płomiennym zębem
 i ktoś olbrzymi ręce w górę wznosił
 i w blachę słońca długo bił jak w bęben
 a potem nagi poplamiony bruk
 i bladych ludzi pierzchające garstki—
 uniosłem w oczach tylko chust twych róg
 i twój niebieski kołnierz marynarski
 nie wiem czy znajdę gdzie o tobie wieść
 czy mi się tylko cała wśnisz w legendę—
 wiem że cię zawsze muszę w sobie nieść
 i w każdej twarzy już cię szukać będę
 śni mi się gorzki morskiej wody smak
 gdzie przepływ w portach liże barki barek
 i mam pod czaszką wieczny trzepot flag
 i serce w piersi skacze jak zegarek
 wiem to się stanie w jeden duszny zmierzch
 będę szedł tłumem i jak lampa migał
 aż raz przeleje się mój krzyk przez wierzch
 i miastem wstrząśnie jak olbrzymi dźwigar
 z rozpędu trzaśnie w moją głowę mur
 i nagle przejdzie mój ochrypły bas w alt
 ujrzę pod sobą biały chodnik chmur
 a pod głowami nieba twardy asfalt
 wtedy o wtedy—czuję szat twych wiew—
 i zapach rąk twych poznam każdą tkanką
 klęknieś i z twarzy mi obetrzesz krew—
 kochanko moja smukła marsylianko!

Marseillaise

I will not glorify ladies any more, nor will I cherish their names in melodious stanzas, since I caught a glimpse of you for the first time there, in this strange, never-seen city.

I remember the evening like a tarnished gouache and horror squatting down in the gates of buildings, when I suddenly saw your face in a crowd and understood that it was exactly now.

The street was quivering, crawling like a snake, shop windows were flashing gaudy colours, the wind blew sweeter than the flesh of your lips on which you have imprinted a cross by a bruise.

And suddenly the crowd's aching bump ploughed up madness as if by a fiery tooth and someone huge lifted his hands up and for a long time beat the sun's tin plate like a drum.

And then—a bare, stained pavement and fleeing handfuls of pale people. I managed to save only the corner of your kerchiefs and your blue sailor's collar.

I do not know if I will find any news of you, or if you turn into a legend. I know I must always carry you inside me and I will search for you in every face [that I meet].

I dream about the seawater's bitter taste where the current in the ports licks the barges' barks, and there is an endless flicker of flags under my skull and my heart jumps in my breast like a watch.

I know it will happen one sultry dusk. I will be walking in a crowd flickering like a lamp until my cry spills over and shakes the city like a huge girder.

The wall will crush into my head with an impetus and my coarse bass will suddenly change to a contralto. I will see a white sidewalk of clouds beneath me and the hard asphalt beneath the sky's heads.

Then, o then—I feel the flutter of your dress—I will recognize the scent of your hands with my every tissue. You will kneel down and wipe away the blood from my face, my beloved slender Marseillaise.

Zakładnicy

Świat
zawisnął
na liczbie
jak na belce dźwigara!
W każdej linie—krzyk pręży się czyjś!
Tylko nas
tylko nas
jak bezcenne cygara
zatrzasnęli
w szkatułkach bez wyjść!
Tylko nas
tylko nas
krągłogłowych i białych
jak żyjące odsetki ich rent
zatrzasnęli
jak w sejfach swoich kas ogniotrwałych
w czarnych domach
tłuc głową
o pręt!

Dzień
przysyła nam co dzień
noc
przemądrą znachorę
Z wąskich palców tchnie słodycz i chłód—
Gdzieś
za ścianą
ćmią miasta czarnych tłumów machorę
w fajkach fabryk
warsztatów
i hut

Długo człowiek na popiół w nich się zwęglął
i błyszczał
Skargą dymu
do nieba się piął—
Suchym kaszlem

gwałtownym
i chrapliwym
jak wystrzał
przyjdzie kiedyś
wykastać go
z krwią!

We snach
skaczą
jak szczury
ręce chwytnie i krewkie
w deszczu weksli
banknotów
i kart
Wszystkie rzeczy na świecie
mają szorstką podszewkę
z naszej krzywdy
rapatej
jak part
Armia mrówek nam wszechświat na atomy rozkradła
przeznaczyła je:
który i czyj—
W naszych skrzętnych mrowiskach
nasze domy-widziadła
będą sterczeć już zawsze
jak kij

Za oknami nam huczy wieczny odpływ
i przyływ
szumem kropel
namolnym
i złym
Żmudny kadryl bezmyślny
lat przestępnych i zwykłych
był łańcuchem jesieni i zim
Kiedyż wreszcie
na syren zachrypniętych skowronkach
sfrunie wiosna dla wszystkich na świat?
Na Pawiakach
w Brygidkach
po Lukiszkach
na Wronkach
my czekamy
czekamy
od lat!

Przyjdzie dzień twój—
o tłumie!
i przegródki dni martwych
runą
dane na twarde żer łbom
Wyplniemy
na falach twoich ramion
i bar twych—

sześć tysięcy Alainów Gerbault!
 Będzie w górze
 nad nami
 migot żrenic
 jak w lustrze—
 trzask łamiących się lodów i form

Po cieśninach
 zatokach
 z najludniejszych w najpustsze
 będzie ciskał
 i huśtał nas
 sztorm

Przyjdzie czas
 przyjdzie czas
 szale wagi się chybną
 Jeszcze rok
 jeszcze dzień
 jeszcze pół—
 Może nam właśnie
 nam
 być tą kroplą niechybną
 co ciężarem
 przeważy ją
 w dół—

W wrzawie obcych protestów
 w zgiefku słów byle o czym
 zagłuszając ich nicość i czczość
 Skrwawionymi rękami
 w czarne ściany łomocem:
 O—Otwórzcie!
 Otwórzcie!
 Już dość!

Hostages

The world hung on a number as if on the girder's bar! In each cable someone's cry is stretching! Only we have been locked inside chests without exits like priceless cigars! Only we, round-headed and white like the living dividends of their income, have been locked in our black houses as in safes of their strong boxes to pound our heads against their bars!

Each day the day sends us the night—the wise quack. Her slender fingers breathe sweetness and chill. Somewhere behind the wall the cities smoke the tobacco of black crowds in the pipes of factories, of workshops, and of foundries.

In them for a long time man was charring into ashes and glistened. With a complaint of smoke he was climbing up to heaven. The time will come to cough him up with blood, with a cough dry, violent, and hoarse like a shot.

In dreams the hands, grabbing and impetuous, jump like rats in the rain of bills, banknotes, and cards. All things in the world have a rough lining made of our torment, harsh like hempen cloth. The army of ants stole our universe by atoms, it marked them out: which and whose. In our diligent ant hills our phantom houses will always protrude like a stick.

Behind the windows the eternal ebb tide and flood tide roar for us with the din of drops, stubborn and angry. The arduous and senseless quadrille of the leap and ordinary years was a chain of autumns and winters. When at last will the spring flutter down for everyone on the hoarse larks of sirens? We have been waiting for years in the jails of Pawiak, Brygidki, Lukiszki, and Wronki!

Your day will come, O crowd! And the pigeonholes of the dead days will tumble down, given to the heads as hard prey. We will rise on the waves of your arms and your shoulders. Six thousand Allain Gerbaults! Above us up there will be the twinkle of pupils as in a mirror, and the crash of breaking ice and forms.

The storm will toss and rock us in the straits, in the bays, from the most populous to the emptiest.

The time will come, the time will come, the balance of the scales will dash. One more year, one more day, and a half. We might be that last drop whose weight will tip the scale. In the clamour of alien protests, in the turmoil of words about anything, stifling their emptiness and futility, we pound the black walls with our bloody hands: Open up! Open up! We have had enough!

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