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MARIAN PANKOWSKI'S POETIC ART: BETWEEN THE POLISH AND THE FRANCOPHONE ELEMENTS

KEYWORDS

Marian Pankowski; Sanok; Brussels; mother; poetry; poem; translation; French language; senses; body; image

*To the inhabitants of Sanok, in particular: Jadzia, Janka, Małgosia, Janusz,
Leszek, Piotr, Tomek, Wiesław, Wojtek – in grateful appreciation
of their incredible hospitality and meaningful conversations*

The œuvre of Marian Pankowski (1919–2011), rich and varied, involves a struggle with multiple literary genres as well as poetic, prose, and dramatic praxis. Pankowski's poetry is not, however, often written about and even less often remembered.¹ There are several reasons for it. His poetic œuvre is usually associated

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¹ An interview with Marian Pankowski published in the first issue of the journal *Slavica Bruxellensia* (www.slavica.revues.org) is very informative in this respect. NB The present article, which is very important because it is a pioneering one, was published in "Prace Polonistyczne" in 2015. Since then, the author of the article has devoted more texts to Marian Pankowski and his work. Two bilingual publications are particularly worthy of attention: *Poetic Dédoublément: Marian Pankowski: A Polish French-Language Poet. Dédoublément poétique. Marian Pankowski – poète polonais de langue française*, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warsaw – Varsovie 2020, 317 pages, and



with the early stages of his literary career, with his juvenilia. There is a tendency to either overlook it or fail to attach much importance to his durable lyric passion as opposed to his profuse and mature prose and dramatic works. Moreover, his poems are outstripped by the rest of his oeuvre in quantitative terms. Also, the changes in the editorial policy of the Parisian “Kultura” and the meanderings of the Giedroyc²-Pankowski-Miłosz³ dispute put Pankowski’s poetic energy on hold for a while, even though both the Sanok-born author’s debut and the first literary prize he won were connected with poetic works and the lyric element.

He best expressed himself in prose and drama, where human speech – exuberant, uncontrollable, unleashed – plays a major role. To him, speech was the most intense and the most important activity in human life, because it was erotic. That is why his writing is tantamount to seduction. It is perhaps thanks to this that he remains the youngest among the oldest (Czapliński 2011a).

So writes Przemysław Czapliński about the work of the author of *Matuga*; still, in the present article, I shall argue that, not being as well-known as it deserves to be, Pankowski’s poetic profile is worth rereading and that his poems should be put back on the scholarly agenda, because poetry – also in the broadest sense of the term – shapes, in Pankowski’s case, both the writer, who felt at home in both Polish and French, and the aesthete, sensitive to people’s and the world’s ugliness and beauty. His poetry, unlike his prose, is free from “speech” or “verbosity”, though probably not from a desire to seduce the reader. In addition to particular attention to expression (common to all the literary genres he practised), what marks Pankowski’s poetry is the avant-garde “emotional shame”. Pankowski’s poetic talent does not manifest itself merely in long-crafted form, but also in his intuition and very acute way of looking at the world as well as in his very rich and precise lyric vocabulary. Those who notice it include Jacques de Decker, one of Belgium’s leading literary critics (de Decker 1998: 28), and Renata Gorczyńska, who refers to Pankowski as a “cursed poet” in her review of *Matuga*

Between Sanok and Brussels: Remembering Marian Pankowski on the Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth / Entre Sanok et Bruxelles – souvenirs sur Marian Pankowski au centenaire de sa naissance, edited and translated by Tomasz Chomiszczak and Dorota Walczak-Delanois, Sanok Public Library, Sanok-Bruxelles 2019, 168 pages.

² I use here one of the possible spellings of the surname, one to which its bearer was attached.

³ Despite bans imposed by émigré organisations and the milieu of the Parisian “Kultura”, Marian Pankowski published his works in his homeland and regularly visited Poland. Although he had been awarded the “Kultura” prize for his collection of poetic prose *Smagła swoboda* [Swarthy Freedom] (1955), the editorial team doomed him to absence; both “Kultura” and the London-based “Wiadomości” stopped publishing the writer’s texts regularly. This aspect of Marian Pankowski’s biography is related in more detail in: Goddeeris 2003: 52–56. Part of this article, entitled “Kultura” and Belgium, translated into Polish by Tomasz Chomiszczak in: Goddeeris 2005: 37–41.

written for the Parisian “Kultura” (Gorczyńska 1998: 158–163). Lastly, Marian Pankowski’s literary biography was influenced by his incessant reading of poems by very different authors: from Jan Kochanowski to Tymoteusz Karpowicz, from Apollinaire to René Char. The fact that he edited the “Polish” issue of “Le Journal des Poètes” (1957)⁴ constitutes another dimension of Marian Pankowski’s poetic involvement. Pankowski was also a member of the organizational and founding committee of the Poetry Biennale in Knokke, an event later attended by, among others, Julian Przyboś, Tadeusz Różewicz, and Wisława Szymborska.

All those readings and activities undertaken in connection with the popularization of poetry, and, most importantly, the writing of his own poems, made Marian Pankowski a true connoisseur of the lyric idiom, based on which he built – laboriously, consistently, and for many years – his literary self-portrait. It is worth adding that most of Pankowski’s poetry collections came into being outside Poland, and his French-language collections, unlike his prose and drama, were not translated into the Polish language⁵ by his faithful translators, but originally created in Molière’s tongue.

Let us look at the beginning of his poetic career: Marian Pankowski makes his debut in 1938 in Issue 48 of the Lviv-based “Sygnały” with the poem *Czytanie w zieleni* [*Reading amid Greenery*]. Back then, he is strongly influenced by the poetry of the Skamander group, especially by Julian Tuwim, whose poetry he will read and admire throughout his life, and who will also assess his poems. After the war, it is Tuwim, the author of a collection Pankowski will be holding in his hand, who will help him strike up a conversation with his future wife, Regina,⁶ in a dentist’s waiting room in Brussels. Similarly, the choice of Bolesław Leśmian’s work as the subject of his doctoral dissertation⁷ is unusual and ambitious given the

⁴ There, Marian Pankowski publishes his translations of poems by, among others, Miron Białoszewski, Jan Brzękowski, Bohdan Czaykowski, Jerzy Ficowski, Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, Jerzy Harasymowicz, Zbigniew Herbert, Paweł Hertz, Jan Lechoń, Bolesław Leśmian, Leopold Staff, Kazimierz Wierzyński, Julian Przyboś, Tadeusz Peiper, Czesław Miłosz, Adam Wazyk, and Mieczysław Jastrun.

⁵ As Stanisław Barć notes (Barć 1991: 50), Pankowski, at Barć’s request and for the sake of a book written by the latter, translated his French-language poems into the Polish language himself, the first volume in 1982 and the second one in 1983. Some of these poems will be published later, in 1958, in the collection *Sto mil przed brzegiem* [*A Hundred Miles Before the Shore*] and, in 1993, in the collection *Zielnik złotych śniegów* [*Herbarium of Golden Snows*]. A comparative analysis of these texts suggests that Marian Pankowski actually wrote these poems “anew” in Polish; Marian Pankowski omitted some of his French-language poems. He would also reduce the number of lines.

⁶ Marian Pankowski discussed this during a reading organized in 2005 at the Free University of Brussels by the author of the present article and Alain van Cruyten.

⁷ Marian Pankowski’s doctoral dissertation was published in book form by Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press in Lublin, riding the wave of interest in the prose writer and his

context of Slavonic studies in Brussels, where his doctoral dissertation is written under the supervision of Claude Backvis, a specialist in Old Polish literature. Throughout his literary career, Marian Pankowski will admit to worshipping unobvious authors (Jan Kochanowski, Julian Tuwim, Bolesław Leśmian, Julian Przyboś, Tadeusz Różewicz) and, throughout his teaching career, he will cultivate the ritual of memorising poems: first by learning them by heart privately, and later by reciting them in public during lectures, which will also enable him to truly hear the sound of the poems. Reading poems out loud will also be one of the means of verifying the textual quality of his own poems.

His childhood spent on the San River and the Muse, mentioned by Pankowski on numerous occasions, namely his mother, constitute a separate source of poetic inspiration and a factor shaping his poetic profile. Pankowski will often mention his mother's juicy and accurate language, used to describe her everyday domestic world and her garden, referring to her letters and to his memories of conversations with his mother and her stories.⁸ It is to her, among others, that he will dedicate his first volume, *Pieśni pompejańskie* [*Pompeian Songs*], published in Brussels, shortly after the war, in 1946:

Mother – to your hands, which know the roughness
of floors scrubbed,
and to me are like catkins on the San withe;
and over the Carpathians, across Europe
bless your son –

I send this book.⁹

(Pankowski 1946: 5; *Dedykacja* [*Dedication*])

His mother will appear repeatedly in quotations, in “direct” references, which will build the metaphorical image alongside other elements of the poem, which is the case in the poem entitled *Wieczór przy ulach* [*Evening by the Beehives* (Pankowski 1946: 21)]. The form of a lyric memory with the figure of his mother at the centre of the poetic utterance, albeit placed in the poem's coda, will also play a constitutive role:

literary return to his homeland in 1999, the original having been smoothed out, with a short preface by the author, translated by Andrzej Krzewicki.

⁸ Pankowski scholars such as Krystyna Latawiec, Krystyna Ruta-Rutkowska, Alain van Crugten, Stanisław Barć, Joanna Pastarska have pointed out the role and figure of the mother in the author's work. However, I would mostly like to point out her “language-building” role in Pankowski's poetic inspiration.

⁹ The author of the article does not deal here with the broader problematics connected with wartime and concentration camp experiences, which are also present in the poems included in this volume – they constitute the subject of a separate article.

The solemn voices of the Carpathians.
 The green catapult of the fir trees
 throws eagles which reach me here;
 and in their dark eyes
 my home town has survived;
 there, leading bullfinches,
 my mother
 is on her way to Advent dawn mass, alone.¹⁰

(Pankowski 1998a: 48; *Polski grudzień [Polish December]*)

Ultimately, his mother, exactly as Pankowski explains, builds the fundamentals of the child's, the young man's, the adult's language; they are fundamentals constantly retrieved from the magma of memory, which dialogue with the senses and with the poetic ideal:

[D]orota [W]alczak: It seems that your mother was the first to inculcate in you a predilection for language that was strong or refined, or corporeal if need be.

[M]arian [P]ankowski: Here we touch upon an oft-discussed topic, namely a mother's initiatory role. But in this particular case, the reference seems convincing to me. Imagine a mother approaching a child, who wakes up, and asking them to close their eyes. And then she puts a newborn bunny in the child's hands and lets them look at it. The child finds the bunny and it comes as a big surprise to them. On another day, it is a greengage, which has just fallen from a tree, still warm from the sunrays. On yet another day, it is a small piece of the first ice, which foreshadows winter and which she puts between the child's fingers. The child shouts, of course, but understands that that's the way it is, that this is how winter begins (Pankowski 2008).¹¹

It is worth remembering that Pankowski's very important work entitled *Smagła swoboda [Swarthy Freedom]* (1955), which constitutes his lyric manifesto, is also dedicated to his mother. Let me again point out that the poetic personality of the author

¹⁰ This poem is important to Pankowski, since he includes it in the French-language volume *Poignée du présent* (Pankowski 1954) under the title *Décembre polonais*. Its Polish version, *Polski grudzień [Polish December]*, was published in the volume Pankowski 1998a: 48.

¹¹ "D[orota] W[alczak]: C'est votre mère qui vous a donné la première, me semble-t-il, le goût de la langue : puissante quand il le faut, sublime, charnelle, ou tout à la fois. M[arian] P[ankowski]: Nous abordons ici le sujet, souvent altéré, de la démarche initiatique de la mère. Mais je la trouve convaincante dans ce cas-ci. Imaginez-vous la mère qui s'approche de l'enfant qui s'éveille et lui demande de fermer les yeux. Elle dépose alors un lapereau qui vient de naître dans les mains de l'enfant et lui permet de regarder. Il trouve une surprise pour lui. Un autre jour, elle dépose une Reine-Claude qui vient de tomber de l'arbre, encore chaude des rayons de soleil. Un autre jour encore, c'est un petit morceau des premières glaces, celles qui annoncent l'hiver, qu'elle lui dépose entre les doigts. L'enfant pousse des cris, bien sûr, mais comprend que c'est comme ça que commence l'hiver".

of *Matuga* is also shaped, most importantly, in confrontation with the French language, unlike his prose, which makes it necessary to take into account the Netherlandic language, *vis-à-vis* which Pankowski tries to build a new authorial perceptiveness and attention. It is best exemplified by the anthology of Polish poetry which Marian Pankowski edited, with a preface by Claude Backvis (*Anthologie de la poésie polonaise...* 1961). The selection of poems was motivated not only by teaching needs and a strongly felt lack of translations of Polish literature into French (Pankowski 2008), but also by his own preferences, since Pankowski chose, translated, and compiled annotated bibliographies on poetic texts which differ very significantly from each other. Traces of his own preferences and tastes, as well as a simultaneous desire to paint a literary panorama, are clearly visible and symptomatic. Alongside very well-known authors, works (bizarre from the point of view of the needs of Belgian Slavonic studies scholars and the necessity of making drastic choices due to a very limited number of literature teaching hours) by poets such as Adam Asnyk, Maria Konopnicka, Marian Jachimowicz are to be found in the anthology in question. Besides, even the choice of poems by great, famous, and recognized authors is not necessarily representative of their oeuvre. There are, however, certain constant elements of this choice, which testify to Pankowski's literary temperament. First of all, the objective difficulty of the text is not an obstacle for Pankowski. The anthology does include texts which are very difficult to translate, such as, for instance, Cyprian Kamil Norwid's *Chopin's Piano*, Bolesław Leśmian's *The Beggar's Ballad* or Julian Tuwim's *Scherzo*. Secondly, Pankowski is not daunted by the "corporeality" of the poems, as evidenced by the keenly translated erotic poems, sometimes very humorous, "smutty", such as, for instance, Jan Kochanowski's *To a Maiden*. The anthology in question, though slim, gained strong favour with émigré critics shortly after being published. In the French-speaking world, Marian Pankowski was the first to have such an anthology under his literary belt (Kozarynowa 1964: 520).

It is worth emphasising that from all of Pankowski's translations, from the reading of his poetry collections and letters, from the poems published in the prewar and postwar press emerges the figure of an artist who is exceptionally attentive to meaning as well as to the sonic form of words and the image it builds. It is the image that seems to be one of the key concepts in Marian Pankowski's poetry.

In the decades-long debate over whether it is possible to see a metaphor, Pankowski places himself among those who are not only able to see a metaphor, but also build out of it a true poetic image, which often reinforces narration in prose and the theatricality of drama. In his literary biography, poetry is more important than might be expected. This is, in actual fact, inevitable, given not only Pankowski's individual biography, but also his cultural heritage and the status of Polish poetry, incomparably higher than that of poetry in the West.

As a university lecturer in Brussels, Pankowski experienced the difference in question on a daily basis. At this point, let me quote the words of Claude Backvis, his professor and, subsequently, friend, which are still relevant:

All those who know Polish society well, thanks to books or to everyday life, have noticed the immense role literature, in particular poetry, plays in it. This characteristic is verifiable on both the least important, trivial levels and the most elevated ones, and it is true that there is no Pole who did not try to write poems in their youth, even if the grammatical structure of Slavonic languages makes rhymes readily available. But it seems equally certain that, for over four centuries, the Poles have invested in literary creation a large dose of talent, energy and inventiveness, which is not only disproportional to what we could, in mathematical terms, expect of them in other spheres of life and the spirit, but which, in addition, significantly outstrips the accomplishments of the European genius (Backvis 1961: 7).¹²

As a very self-aware author, perfectly prepared in technical and rhetorical terms, Pankowski remains sensitive to readerly reception. His prose flow of words, stylized to appear spontaneous, is a long-crafted one despite being full of emotion; his voluble speech is speech which fakes volubility. This is also visible when one contrasts it with his poetry, in which Pankowski wishes to attain an ideal. Compared to his prose, his poetic texts are more compact and orderly, verbally and visually disciplined, “manicured” and subject to control due to being contained in a form which is by definition restricted and to having grown out of concrete classic and avant-garde paradigms. I am convinced that Pankowski the prose writer would not have come into being without Pankowski the poet, even though the author himself points out to the reader – because he wishes them to think so – a certain change in sensibility, not only when he says goodbye to “Manius”:

In my lyrics, I shared my confessions, verbalized emotions, thanks to classic poetics, in which everything was transparent and clear. The situation changed when I abandoned verse for prose, when my sentences started to bicker with images, proverbs, popular

¹² “Tous ceux qui connaissent la société polonaise d’un peu près par les livres ou par la vie auront remarqué combien immense est le rôle qui y est dévolu à la littérature et tout particulièrement à la poésie. Ce trait se vérifie, certes, aussi bien dans les aspects dérisoires que dans les catégories les plus augustes et il est bien vrai qu’il n’existe pour ainsi dire pas de jeune Polonais qui n’ait écrit des vers : aussi bien la morphologie grammaticale des langues slaves fait que l’on n’a qu’à se baisser pour ramasser les rimes. Mais il semble non moins indubitable que depuis quatre siècles au moins les Polonais ont dépensé dans la création littéraire une somme de talent, d’énergie et d’inventivité qui non seulement n’a pas de commune mesure avec ce qu’ils ont pu faire dans d’autres domaines de la vie de l’esprit mais qui encore dépasse notablement la part que l’on eût pu en quelque sorte arithmétiquement attendre de ce peuple dans l’ensemble de ce qu’a élaboré le génie européen” (*Anthologie de la poésie polonaise...* 1961: 7).

sayings, words which were neither predictable nor necessary, but which haunted me and to which I instinctively agreed (Pankowski 2008).¹³

Let us return to Pankowski's poetry collections. The dates of publication of subsequent volumes evidence a clear caesura in the sixties and seventies and a return to poetry in the mid-eighties. Pankowski will publish the following books of poetry: *Wiersze alpejskie* [*Alpine Poems*] (Brussels, 1947), *Podpłomyki* [*Flatbread*] (Brussels, 1951), *Couleur de jeune mélèze* (Brussels, 1951), *Poignée du présent* (Paris, 1954), *Sto mil przed brzegiem* [*A Hundred Miles Before the Shore*] (Warsaw, 1958), *Bajki dla Marty* [*Fairytales for Marta*] (Lublin, 1986), *Zielnik złotych śniegów* [*Herbarium of Golden Snows*] (Lublin, 1993), *Moje słowo prowincjonalne* [*My Provincial Word*] (Sanok, 1998), *De arte poetica* (Sanok, 2004). Returning to poetry in the eighties, he will wrestle with verse anew, unable to abandon it for good. Admittedly, however, nine collections make a sizeable poetic oeuvre.

Stanisław Barć, the first and one of the few critics to write about Pankowski the poet – focusing especially on his early work – and about the way the author of *Rudolf* changed literary genres, emphasises the durable qualities of Pankowski's poetic imagination, his inspirations and his affinities with avant-garde poetry in Poland and Belgium (Barć 1991: 15–35). Agreeing with such a definition of the “imagination of things” and with the idea of reading Pankowski's poetry in strong connection with nature (Barć 1991: 27–55), I would like to add that, in Pankowski's case, it is “poeticity” rather than the later “prosaity” that is based on an exceptional, real, palpable ability to perceive, whose intensity, importantly, replaces, as I will elaborate later, the nearly absent sense of touch. This may come as a surprise, given the strong presence of corporeality and eroticism in his works. “Everything in this world depends on the quality of the gaze”, Pankowski says in *Moje słowo prowincjonalne* [*My Provincial Word*], in the collection's title and final poem (Pankowski 1998a: 41). In his case, these words are particularly important. Let us then return for a moment to his childhood, since – as Krystyna Ruta-Rutkowska rightly puts it – it was what first shaped his poetic perception of the world:

In this world [that of his own imagination] the world of childhood takes pride of place. The landscape of the homeland fills the composition in question, as do memories of the town, the people, the way the author perceived the world there and then, and, ultimately, of the language – *speech rooted in patrimony* [...]. Memories of the

¹³ “Dans mes poèmes lyriques, je communiquais mes confidences, je disais mes émotions, grâce à une poétique classique où tout était lisible et transparent. La situation a changé lorsque j'ai quitté les strophes pour la prose, quand mes phrases commencèrent à charrier images, proverbes et mots des faubourgs, mots qui n'étaient pas prévus, ni indispensables, mais qui m'envahissaient, avec ma complexité instinctive”.

land of his childhood are thus the source and the subject of a dialogue with himself which never really ends. Since it is here, on the waters of the San River, that was left a trace, not so much of the past as of a man and a writer who, in his imagination, keeps returning here and always will (Ruta-Rutkowska 1998: 8–9).

In Pankowski's case, the perception of the world is based mostly on the senses of hearing and sight. It is around a sensual confrontation with the world that Marian Pankowski will build his poetic constructs, dotted with true alliterative pearls – alliteration being one of his favourite figures of speech. In Pankowski's case, audibility is synaesthetically combined with visibility, regardless of whether a particular poem is written in Polish or in French. It will suffice to quote the following examples in Polish – “and grey bark sewn in painstaking stitches –!” (Pankowski 1946: 20; *Drzewom* [*To Trees*]) or “An alpine meadow / smelling of sweltering mountains like a sticky bun” (Pankowski 1947: 7; *Łąka alpejska* [*Alpine Meadow*]) – and in French “l'hydromel amoureusement moreau” (Pankowski 1954: 14; *Skieur*) or “au milieu de forêts, les foreuses / Fendent les dalles des fougères” (Pankowski 1954: 21; *La descente en enfer*).

Aware of literary canons, drawing extensively on the beauty of nature, Pankowski remembers the Horatian tradition. He also returns to the Bible, to the Song of Songs, referring to this canonical model of an amorous confession while retaining a perspective which is at the same time consistently dichotomous and architectural. Pankowski uses avant-garde composition: plane – line, verticality – horizontality, combined with Skamander-inspired filling:

Oh, Carpathian fir! – thou art steep and comely, descending
in streams.
– A dark mourner has clouded my sky.
– Oh, Anna of songs! ...

(Pankowski 1946: 30; *O, Jodło Karpat...* [*Oh, Carpathian Fir...*])

The conceit, which is a beautiful amalgam of metonymy, visible when one reads the entire poem (panna – Polish for “maiden” – Anna), rhyme, literary allusion, ellipsis, poetic jest and confession, wonderfully combines and once again shows the importance of the senses in Pankowski's poetry, in this case, as has been mentioned before, sight and hearing. As far as this particular author is concerned, the desire to convey emotion and thought, awakened by sight and hearing, is not a desire to transcend the boundaries of the elements (which remain enchanted), but a desire for perfection and precision of expression, a desire for the impossible, which may be approached only through constantly practised *ars poetica*.¹⁴ In the

¹⁴ The title of Marian Pankowski's last poetry volume, *De arte poetica* (Pankowski 2004), testifies to the importance the author constantly attaches to this problem.

third treatise of *Smagła swoboda* [*Swarthy Freedom*], Pankowski will combine, in a way which is both very conscious and graceful, warnings connected with learning to fly with the age-old topos of Icarus the poet:

Endless flights hast thou. One is swift and whirring, like that of partridges flushed out of a groove; still different is that of goldfinches, slow – sometimes high, sometimes low – as if you have hung a clothes line loosely on numerous poles. [...] But believe me, the most wonderful of them all is the aerial fate of eagles and hawks. This I tried in my childhood, and it gave me considerable happiness. Try it thus as well, my youngest reader, try that celestial inter-existence. Mind you, your time is short, between a paper boat and a first love. Then you shall not leave the Earth... (Pankowski 1980: 33–34).

It is worth remembering that both this poetry and the author's bilingualism were appreciated by none other than Czesław Miłosz, who writes in *The History of Polish Literature*:

His astonishing linguistic sensitivity, which results in words acquiring the qualities of objects which can be touched, tasted, smelled, enabled him to become a subtle, bilingual poet and an excellent translator of Polish poetry into French (Miłosz 2010: 599).

In Pankowski, an awareness of down-to-earth existence is simultaneously connected with a strongly felt sense of not so much the materiality as the corporeality of the world. It is definitely more conspicuous and bolder in the concrete imagery and allusiveness of his French-language poems. In his poetic praxis, corporeality is usually suggested rather than described, as in the poem *La gitane* (*Cyganka*) [*The Gypsy Woman*]. At the same time, all the usual elements of Pankowski's poems are included: symmetry, straight lines, semicircles, and circles, the geometry of the object represented here, namely the Gypsy woman, a geo-metry visible even in so small a poetic fragment as the one below:

De l'arc du sourcil
Elle décoche, sans pitié,
De long iris.
Pouvoir fixer en lignes lumineuses
La migration basanée de ses mains,
Quelle nudité du beau.
(Pankowski 1954: 12; *La gitane*)

Out of the arch of her brows
She hits us mercilessly
Iris after iris
To be able to note in lines of light
The swarthy wandering of her arms
That fairness totally exposed.
(Pankowski 1993: 86; *Cyganka*
[*The Gypsy Woman*])

Pankowski, who will translate some of his poems written in French into Polish, will make significant changes over three decades later, making the earlier, Polish versions of the poems more archaic, less modern, more muted and not entirely faithful to the original. In the Polish version of *The Gypsy Woman*

[*Cyganka*], the author returns to his favourite lexis and to homeliness, absent from the original, although it is likely to be present in the author's longing. And so "beauty" is replaced by "fairness" and "migration" by "wandering". Pankowski translates the line "de long iris", which is a continuation of the thought and imagery contained in the original version, in which the Gypsy woman gazes ardently, "shoots a glance", in a completely different way, against the previously adopted artistic logic; it is worth adding that "iris" denotes a part of the eye here. The change made by Pankowski (who loves flowers; they are often present in his poems) to the name of a flower ("Iris after iris"), which also makes sense, completely blurs the clarity of the earlier, accurate metaphor. The following translation would therefore be more faithful to the original:

Out of the arch of her brows
She shoots mercilessly,
Out of her oval iris.

To be able to keep in luminous lines
The swarthy migration of her hands,
What nakedness of beauty.

It is mostly in the French-language poems that we can find elements of bold erotic poems, which, due to their intended target elegance, will have nothing to do with the erotic motifs in his ingeniously and seemingly unbridled prose. It seems that here as well Pankowski follows the rule that Stanisław Barć thus describes in the context of the space occupied and the time experienced (Poland – childhood, Belgium – maturity):

A reduction to a minimum of the temporal distance between representational planes does not, however, entail the expected complete "unification" of space. Its general "polar" marking is retained: the "here" and "there", which becomes an additional source of image dynamisation and of the peculiar tension between the "forms" of poetic creation which are being integrated (records of perception, imaginings and retrospection) (Barć 1991: 52).

In this perspective, the Polish-language poems would be, the sensuousness of the transcription notwithstanding, texts which convey spiritual impressions, nostalgia, and longing. By contrast, the French-language poems would deal with corporeal impressions and sensations – this is also visible in his peculiar translation-retranscription of the poems into Polish. Pankowski's linguistic dilemmas, hislinguistic reflections, his meditation on the phonetic and graphic systems of languages are also visible in his scholarly articles: *An Attempt to Redefine*

Tuwim's Poetics, Le renouveau en Pologne après le 1956 (Pankowski 1969), *Avant de lire la poésie polonaise, dix ans de poésie polonaise (1945–1955). Une tentative de littérature dirigée* (Pankowski 1962). In those, he does not, however, touch upon the sphere of erotic sensuality whose presence is so strong in the poems written in French, nor the problem of naming it, which is a larger problem, constantly present in this rich œuvre. And so, for instance, in one poem, in its third part to be precise, Pankowski reflects “out loud” on the speech and first sentences of his small daughter, who has only just entered the world of words:

We patiently stroke the pupas of sounds, still stumbling and blind. Maybe as soon as tomorrow a bee will fly from the edge of a wet mouth. A Polish one? A French one?

Two orchards are wide open. Two bands are waiting, bows lifted, having left an open space between the flute and the source (Pankowski 1958: 58; *Daniela*).

This state of being suspended between the Polish language and the French one, familiar to those living and writing outside Poland, in the French-speaking world, leads Pankowski, sometimes in spite of himself and the world, to gravitate towards the tangible and the concrete. This kind of desire is formulated in a very pictorial way in the key stanza of the poem entitled *Zdrada* [*Betrayal*]:

Let the hands look around in a circle,
to come to know a shape captured
by a pair of eyes – which followed,
revealing a secret to the fingertips.

(Pankowski 1946: 28; *Zdrada* [*Betrayal*])

Let us again pay attention to the primacy of the sense of sight, which is the one that first follows and recognizes, the one that dictates the act of “seeing” to the eyes. The sense of touch is the most “non-existent” of all the senses in Pankowski, although the author himself tries to convince the reader of its intense presence. It is not surprising, because, regardless of the boldness of a particular description, regardless of how very realistic, baroque, and vivid the description in question is (this is also true of his prose), there is always a limit to the touch. Let us again point out: paradoxically, the body is untouchable in Pankowski. The touch may at most be projected.¹⁵ This is why the author of numerous poetry volumes is able to say in one of his poems:

¹⁵ Let me add that, in recent years, publishing house Halart has been trying to present him in an entirely different light, riding the wave of the success of the novel *Rudolf*, worthwhile and popularized anew. Also, in the issue of “Lampa” devoted to Pankowski, the writer is presented as the one who breaks the corporeal taboo. Yet touch is in fact one of the most important foundations of taboo in Marian Pankowski’s œuvre. Compare “Lampa” 2006, no. 1.

Les perspectives qui viennent [d'un bleuâtre loin, Boivent l'angle blanc [de tes jambes. La chair est belle. (Pankowski 1954: 7; <i>Chant</i>)	From the distant blueishness run perspectives To the angle of your thighs Fair is the body. (Pankowski 1993: 87; <i>Śpiew [Song]</i>)
[Perspectives coming from the distant blueishness Drink the white angle of your legs The flesh is beautiful.]	

Let us again pay attention to the ellipsis “boivent” – “drink” in the Polish version of the poem. Also, the line “la chair est belle”, translated again with reference to “fairness”, obliterates the connotations of pulp and flesh which the body has when it is referred to as “chair” in the French language. Here, the Polish language becomes an observer’s tool, the French language – an explorer’s tool.

I am not sure if Pankowski knew the poem *On the Beach* by Tadeusz Peiper, whose poetry he actually valued and translated. Nevertheless, the poem entitled *Trois Marines [Three Seascapes]* bears a strong resemblance to it, the difference being that, in Pankowski, the visual, which enriches, builds, makes present, but also tames the remaining senses, limits rather than reinforces the sense of the body’s touchability. The body is touched by the sea, the sun, but never explicitly by the speaker of the poem:

I	
Etendue dans un creux [de la dune,	Lying in the hollow of a dune
Elle écoute la paresse bleue [de son corps.	she listens to the blue laziness of her body.
Une gerbe du rire soudain, Phlox au-dessus de sa bouche [en fête,	A bouquet of sudden laughter, phloxes above the gaiety of her mouth
Où à l'ombre de la feuille [blanche de ses dents M'attend la fraise espiègle.	where in the white shadow of her Teeth a roguish strawberry awaits me.
II	
Sa main naïve peigne la mer Qui bleuit et crépite. Dans la soie rêche de son pubis Le soleil mouillé S'égrenè.	Her naive hand combs the sea which blues and glimmers. In the rough silk of her pubis grain after grain the wet sun moves.

Elle dort
Sur le toit brun de royaumes.

III

Sur les huit mètres carrés du jour
Je grave ses yeux seulement.
Derrière eux se tient la mer
Et les perles mûres bruissent
Contre les tempes.

(Pankowski 1954: 8; *Trois Marines*)

On the eight square metres of the day
I only mark her eyes.
Behind them stands the sea
and mature pearls hum against the temple.

(Pankowski 1993: 90; *Trzy Mariny*
[*Three Seascapes*])

The interesting Polish version of the text, in which deviations from the original are quite visible, comes as a surprise, for instance when it returns to the Belgian jester, Till Eulenspiegel, hidden in the allusive etymology of “espiègle” (“Uilenspiegel” in the Netherlandic language), which had better be translated as “mischievous”, “cunning”, “bright”.

I

Stretched in the hollow of a dune
She listens to the blue laziness of her body.
Suddenly a beam of laughter
A phlox above her playful mouth
Where the shadow of the white leaf of her teeth is

A mischievous strawberry awaits me.

II

Her naive hand combs the sea
Which blues and creaks.
In the rough silk of her pubis
The wet sun is
Visible time after time
She sleeps
On the dark roof of kingdoms.

III

On the eight square metres of the day

I only engrave her eyes.

Behind them is the sea
And mature pearls murmur
Next to the temples.

A similar situation takes place in another poem, entitled *Inc. Quand je dis : la Nuit* [*When I Say: Night*], in which the speaker of the poem, a man, is not the source of the potential touch. He remains unattainable like the Creator himself, but inscribed in a woman's body, depicted in a vivid way, since it is this body that is young, smiles and stretches its hands towards the speaker. Here as well we find mildening and periphrasis in the description of breasts (which appear as raspberries in other works too) inscribed in animation in the Polish version:

Quand je dis : Femme...
un corps se lève
aux framboises pointues,
un jeune corps qui sourit
et me tend les mains.

(Pankowski 1951: 20;
Inc. Quand je dis : la Nuit)

When I say woman
a body comes into being
a young body comes into being
topped with raspberries
it smiles
and stretches its hands towards me.

(Pankowski 1993: 67; *Kiedy powiem:
Noc* [*When I Say: Night*])

[When I say: Woman... rises
a body with pointed raspberries
a young body, which smiles
and stretches its hands towards me.]

The technique consisting in the arm being lengthened like a telescope, in distancing oneself, is also visible in a poem which demands the concrete and is at the same time intimate, tender, and familial, a poem devoted to the poet's daughter. Let us not be deceived by the author's intentions. Here as well there are more than enough elements enabling one to distance oneself from the object which is represented and viewed. Apart from the anaphoric conditional, there is a desire to "multiply" the little hand, which is not to touch, but to point and name, behind the "windowpanes", which build a metaphor, but at the same time carry a clear meaning:

If I could draw, you would have a portrait. [...] If I could draw, I would multiply your little hand by one thousand, so that you could point at everything at once, naming things anew in the ark of life, behind the clear windowpanes of the day (Pankowski 1958: 62; *Daniela*).

In Pankowski, the unsaid – and inexpressible – inability to deal with one's own corporeality will result in insistence on the concrete as an expression of a reality favourable to cognition. In other words, Pankowski the poet will transpose corporeality to the presented world, add it to the presented world. Consequently, what is derived from nature and the elements can subsequently

bring into existence dreams, friendship, what may be born out of interpersonal relationships. Thanks to the corporeality of nature (at this point, we must bear in mind Pankowski's work on Leśmian), the bond with a human being may – though does not have to – be made corporeal, and, in the perspective of the expressed “touch”, Pankowski, faithful to himself, still remains silent:

Comment faire durer ton sourire	How to make your smile last
Dans ce juin d'arômes ?	In this June of aromas?
Ami, nous sommes les rives	Friend, we are banks
Écoutant pleurer l'aviron.	Listening to the cry of the oar.
Les chants s'élèvent et tombent	The singing rises and falls
Pour que la nuit puisse naître ;	So that the night can be born
Pour puiser le rêve	People meet
Les hommes se rencontrent.	To draw on dreams.

(Pankowski 1954: 15; *A Hubert*)

A clear expectation that the supple tongue will say everything the head thinks¹⁶ is visible on all levels of the poetic text's construction. In the poem which lends its title to the entire volume, *Sto mil przed brzegiem* [*A Hundred Miles Before the Shore*], the reader may follow almost to the very end the transparent process of the poem's concretization. It is an unusual text, because it un.masks its own mechanisms of intimacy protection – also revealing for a moment its imperfections and the poet's struggle with verbal magma. It is also an important statement on how the poet situates himself *vis-à-vis* poetry and prose, Poland and Belgium. The poem begins in a lyric mode: “Buried in the snowdrifts of sleep up to her eyelashes, my wife / talks to her childhood” (Pankowski 1958: 46; *Sto mil przed brzegiem* [*A Hundred Miles Before the Shore*]), only to move on to a clear admission of nostalgia for the homeland and immediately afterwards to a repulsive image of the homeland: “the Vistula land stands in sulphurous shivers. It turns its pockmarked face towards us” (Pankowski 1958: 46; *Sto mil przed brzegiem* [*A Hundred Miles Before the Shore*]). At the same time, poetic self-control notices the displacing of the past (there in Poland) and the invasion of the present (here in Belgium), which also concerns the means of expression:

Somewhere are lost the minor words, the mash of Polish speech, stretching the bark of sentences. Through the cracks of solitude, unmoisturised by vernal rainwater, the Polish idiom leaks. Into my brain press foreign shapes of golden proportions. Voids the colour of Sunday. With titmouse chirp, a large family of vowels builds a nest in my mouth.

¹⁶ This is my paraphrase of a fragment of Canto Five of *Beniowski* by Juliusz Słowacki, whom Pankowski valued highly, as did another poet whom Pankowski read and admired – Julian Przyboś.

Somewhere are squandered the steep sentences, rough
like a fox on an October morning.

[...]

The Polish idiom does not know silent vowels, the Carpathians
do not hum in monosyllables.

[...]

I listen to apothecaries chattering, weighing
syntax in milligrams.

They stifle abstraction like waffles
without vanilla ice cream.

(Pankowski 1958: 47; *Sto mil przed brzegiem* [*A Hundred Miles Before the Shore*])

Into his reflection on the natural world and human affairs, Pankowski weaves the real details of everyday life: “separate” Belgian waffles, without ice cream, weighing in milligrams and not, as in Poland, in decagrams, the silent vowels of the French language – these are everyday experiences in a country far away from the Carpathians and his native Sanok. The attitude of a demiurge also tends to be a defence mechanism in Pankowski, a way of taming things and history. This belief “incarnate in the word” stands in opposition to one of the most influential conceptions of twentieth-century philosophy, in opposition to one of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s most important theses. Since, for Pankowski, the meaning of the world does not lie outside it, and chance, fate, luck complete the image of the world (Wittgenstein 1972: 170–172). Unlike in prose, in which the element of the human temperament wants to transcend the boundaries of form, in poetry a sense of one’s Slavonicity and the Polishness of one’s roots is based on a centuries-long cultural heritage and supports the building of cultural bridges. Pankowski wishes to be an “individual poet”, but cannot (unlike in prose) transcend the requirements imposed on him by his chosen aesthetic. It is an aesthetic to which he himself gives pride of place. It is as if he agrees with Leon Chwistek, whom he actually values, and who writes as follows in one of his programmatic articles:

It may be cruelty on my part, but I would be happy to take aesthetics away from pure philosophers, just as logics and psychology have been taken away from them. I believe aesthetics can be practised effectively only in strong connection with creation or at least with experiencing the creation of new artistic forms, based on concrete examples and experiments (Chwistek 2004: 215).

Fascination with aesthetics, also understood as the “polishing of form and content”, is a constant component of Pankowski’s poetry, a proper characteristic of this poetry, especially in the element of the foreign, French-language building material. Remaining faithful to this conviction, which Pankowski expresses in

his entire oeuvre and – as we would put it today – in his real rather than virtual life, is connected with the following philosophical belief, to borrow Waclaw Stróżewski's words: "The role of artistic values is servile *vis-à-vis* aesthetic values: they are a kind of device, a means which enables the emergence of ethical values" (Stróżewski 2002: 181).

Pankowski is aware of the changes occurring in the contemporary world. He expresses it mostly in his poems, which remain a platform for his deepest convictions. If, as Wojciech Ligęza notes (Ligęza 1999: 59), starting in the sixties, forms of lyric expression are present in Pankowski's prose, the status of the speaking "I" is different, not only because of the formal differences between a narrator and the speaker of a poem. Unlike in prose, which – by revealing – in fact conceals, "synonymizes", paraphrases, in poetry, Marian Pankowski, presenting a wide array of alter egos, reveals himself, his sensitive "I". The author does not invent any improbable adventures the speaker of the poem could have, colouring them (also for fun and in order to confuse the reader) with his own biographical details. In poetry, the author is himself, insofar as it is possible within the poetic canons embraced by the poet. He admits to his own reflections and his own preferences:

Langue latine, langue d'Erasmus, tu as nourri notre continent.	Latin language, the language of Erasmus you have fed our continent.
Mais aujourd'hui une autre voix reprend la terre.	But today another voice is taking possession of the Earth.
Son porte-enseigne : Apollinaire. n'ayant qu'une cruche de terre glaise, couleur de jeune mélèze.	Its signboard: Apollinaire. having only a clay jug, the colour of a young larch.
Je la plonge dans ce cru chantant de l'éternelle fontaine française. (Pankowski 1951: 11; Inc. <i>Ce temps-là</i>)	I immerse it in this songful wine of the eternal French fountain.

Writing about Marian Pankowski's drama and prose, Maria Danielewicz notes:

Pankowski does not justify rebellion nor the moral which emerges from the flood of words and images. I suspect that his writing stems solely from the need to juggle with words and from a wilful desire to shock the reader, about which there is something excessively youthful (Danielewicz 1992: 352).

It seems that exactly the opposite takes place in his poetic oeuvre. In it, Pankowski assumes *in versus* the attitude of one who embraces everyday volubil-

ity, ingeniously choosing the words of the metaphors. He does not intend to shock nor provoke the reader. But he still wants to ravish them... Both in his poems and in his poetic prose, he consciously assumes the attitude of a mentor – the one who is experienced and knowledgeable:

Where on earth is this *ars poetica* which you advised me to happily explore? – you will ask me, my young brother. In these five books, I present you with an outline of this knowledge, gained painstakingly year after year and not gained yet. Do it your way. For the world of your birth and your childhood shall be different. Only the wise rotations of the firmament and the Earth's immersion in spring after spring shall remain the same for aye (Pankowski 1980: 55).

And some day, some tomorrow you shall transmit this high art of flying to the young fraternity. So do I and so shall others after me. For as long as there are children and trees in this world (Pankowski 1980: 38).

Writing about *Smagła swoboda* [*Swarthy Freedom*], Przemysław Czapliński discusses the true nature of this text and the relationship between its author, the text and life:

Swarthy Freedom does not lecture, but rather initiates into a mystery – it does not evoke in the reader a hunger for knowledge, but rather a hunger for looking at the world through the lens of style. Only after discovering this principle is it possible to understand the composition of the book, leading to poetic initiation as a desirable way of crossing the threshold into adulthood. In other words, Pankowski placed on one level a child's way of experiencing the world – squirrelling around an orchard, the adventure of building a fire, dreams of flying, his fascination with meeting Gypsies – and adult initiation into expression. Building a life turns out to be building a style. [...] He creates a world which is characterized by – this category turns out to be necessary here – wonderfulness, which means that the impossible is possible here. In this way, the writer realises his intention of building poetic sovereignty (Czapliński 2011b: 58–59).

However, being a poet goes beyond childhood, which is embraced by a mature gaze, and makes it possible to find common ground between the Poet and the Child. The common ground in question is the catharsis of experiencing the wonderfulness of the world – the one surrounding the Poet-Child – and a desire to convey it: in the Child's case, through the energy of the deed; in the Poet's case, through the word. If Pankowski therefore collects images, enumerates, creates parallel constructions in the space of his poems, he does so also in order to preserve each of these one-time wonders, perceived by children and poets. This is also why the author invariably returns to his childhood, longing for

“that” fresh and primary sensitivity, untouched by the war. Although, as a poet, he can recreate it with words and describe, and although he does not experience it spontaneously, it still exists in oneiric journeys, in memories, enriched by years of existential and writerly experience. The boundary between now and then, here and there is often felt, also in moments of great emotion, for example when Marian Pankowski says in a speech made on his being awarded honorary citizenship of his native town:

In the eighties, I took part in a survey conducted by the Warsaw-based *Almanach Polonii*. The first question read: “What does Polishness mean to you?” I replied: “For me, Polishness is an unconditional sense of community with the speech, the people and the land, remembered forever, the Sanok land...” Today, thanks to the resolution of the Town Council, I have been able to repeat those words here (Pankowski 1998b).

Krystyna Ruta-Rutkowska notices the same mechanism, albeit when writing about eroticism in Pankowski’s dramatic works, but it is precisely the question of being peculiarly sensitive to wonderfulness that goes way beyond the erotic sphere: “This return to primary sensitivity is necessary, since it is the only thing that makes it possible to reach the relationship between the word and the body it names” (Ruta-Rutkowska 2008: 150).

At the same time, Pankowski builds his moving faith and future vision; he projects as a father and as a poet, writing the magnificent poem *Pour la naissance de notre fille* [*On the Birth of Our Daughter* (Pankowski 1954: 26)] or *Projekt na imię dla naszego dziecka* [*Project for a Name for Our Child*]:

A name compacted from young snow,
healthy like a slice of wheat bread;
humming halfway, but no
bigger than a skylark

(Pankowski 1958: 44; *Projekt na imię dla naszego dziecka* [*Project for a Name for Our Child*])

It is one of Pankowski’s sunniest poems, in which we find attention to typical colours (fresh snow and a golden brown slice of bread) as well as the possible sound of the projected consonants and, most importantly, indicators of the poetic search for the “name-word”. The latter poem attempts to directly allude to the *savoir faire* the poet professes, starting with the title.

The aim of Pankowski’s “being ravished” is to “ravish somebody”, and Pankowski, as a perfectionist and a poetic extravert, will talk at length about the details of his poetic craft. The poem *Metafora* [*Metaphor*] is not only an intricately thought-out poem, but also an important lesson in poetics the author

kindly teaches to his readers before closing the poem with a beautiful tree metaphor in the coda:

Sparrows hang in the day, holding on to warm straws.
The oak is azure, disturbed by the thuja, the hum
is tied into a house.

In the leaf, a squirrel flows and
turtledoves dive.

I consider the word *oak*
carefully, leaf after leaf. It shimmers with green and
blushes with the chaffinch until, as if in a
fishery, I discover brightness and I see:
a parachute carrying the Earth.

(Pankowski 1958: 23; *Metafora* [*Metaphor*])

Let us again return for a moment to Julian Tuwim, whom Marian Pankowski liked and valued to such a degree. In 1969, having published half his volumes, Pankowski writes as follows:

Today, however, we want to look at Tuwim's poetics differently, we want to deal with a so far unnoticed, but perhaps fundamental characteristic of his imagination, namely the lack of immanent dynamics which characterises this poetry. For we believe the method of naming things or states which exist objectively in reality to be a fundamental characteristic of Tuwim's verse. In other words, we perceive the author of *Polish Flowers* as a transcriber, a collector of impressions, whose possible dynamics do not depend on him, but are rooted in the nature of the phenomena he describes (Pankowski 1969: 16).

In his poetry, Pankowski certainly wants to experience the dynamics he writes about in the context of Tuwim's oeuvre. Despite the author's awareness of his power over words, despite his experience, despite his titanic work, enthusiasm and determination, Pankowski's poetry remains accessible only to chosen tracers of the poetic word. It is filled with a durable desire which Pankowski will, for example, verbalise as follows:

Pouvoir sentir le mot
comme un ouvrier
qui sent la forme virile du pavé
à l'heure des barricades.

(Pankowski 1951: 8)

To be able to feel the word
like a worker
who can feel the virile form of the pavement
at the hour of the barricades.

It is a desire that is romantic and revolutionary as well as nostalgic and melancholy. Pankowski also confesses it when describing two attitudes of the artist (poet) towards the ideal work of art. He referred to the former as “collectors” and to the latter as “transmuters”:

Their eyes fixed on the beauty of the world, collectors wander successive days, filming. Transmuters, by contrast, spend their lives dynamiting trains which carry the obvious. Is it so because they have chosen to do so, or because they have to? Let us not hasten to reply... (Pankowski 1969: 16)

Pankowski the poet was without doubt a “collector” who wanted to become a “transmuter”. It is mostly the former dimension that is inherent in his love of collecting proverbs, nursery rhymes, sayings, his hunt for the lovely and accurate word. It is also visible in his poetic texts devoted to travelling, for instance to England or Spain, as well as in his attempts to describe paintings and sculptures or in the very interesting poem concerned with the carnival in Binche.

What the Polish- and the French-language elements in this poetry have in common is respect for the word and faith in its creative as well as invigorating power. In 2005, he admitted in a letter to his sister-in-law, Jadwiga Pankowska:

I don't “practise” a regular social life. From time to time, I receive invitations, they bring me flowers and the live word. But since I have been living alone, I have jealously guarded my way of life, sharing my best hours with poetry... for 70 years (Pankowski 2006).

Today, as far as discussion of Marian Pankowski's oeuvre and of its reception is concerned, the excellent and worthwhile works of the following scholars who study the complexity of the Sanok-born Brussels-based writer's oeuvre have attracted my attention: Stanisław Barć, Krystyna Ruta-Rutkowska, Krystyna Latawiec, Joanna Pasterska as well as Tomasz Chomiszczak, the author of a recently published, very solid, and much-needed two-volume work, which is devoted to Marian Pankowski's scholarly articles and acquaints the Polish reader with the French-language lectures of the Brussels-based professor of Slavonic studies and his artistic profile (Chomiszczak 2014a, b).

Let me also express my admiration for the excellent initiative taken by a group of faithful readers, friends, authors and interpreters involved in the undertaking called *Acta Pancoviana*, who try to create a complete picture of the work and criticism connected with the figure of Marian Pankowski.¹⁷

¹⁷ At present, the editorial board includes Tomasz Chomiszczak (editor-in-chief), Janina Lewandowska, Janusz Szuber, Leszek Puchała, Anna Strzelecka.

I am inclined to agree with Krystyna Latawiec, who – referring to the post-humously published long interview *Eternal Brawling in the Polish Idiom! Marian Pankowski Speaks*, conducted by Piotr Marecki (Marecki 2011) – writes as follows:

Of course, the phrase “eternal brawling in the Polish idiom” comes from Pankowski, so it serves as a motto of sorts introducing his oeuvre. Something else is, however, thought-provoking, namely the powerful suggestiveness of this expression, which starts functioning as an interpretative cliché, the handy key to the work of the author of *Matuga*. One is justified in fearing that it will be labelled with this phrase and classified as “provocative and hard-hitting”, which may be an effective marketing strategy, but is not good for literature in the long run. After many years of reading Pankowski’s texts carefully and listening to his spoken word, I will take the liberty of stating that today the derisive and mocking tone is already part of a historical phenomenon. It used to be about purifying the national and romantic heritage from an excess of sentimental exaltation. Pankowski was one of the numerous writers representing this trend, which has visibly faded today, since this heritage is sinking into oblivion, especially in the consciousness of the younger generations. That is why “brawling” in this field seems outdated today (Latawiec 2012: 39).

Krystyna Latawiec goes on to point out the Leśmian-inspired sensualism, which is an interesting phenomenon and a constant element of Pankowski’s work. Sensualism, a return to sensual and verbal experiences, is precisely the foundation of Maestro Pankowski’s poetic garden.

Marian Pankowski’s oeuvre fills a certain void in the Polish pantheon, in which he occupies a separate place today. It is a lot. I firmly believe that this is the case not only because his original oeuvre breaks the taboo, eludes unequivocal assessments and classifications. One only needs to read his poems – this poetry is still interesting, educational, visually and verbally intriguing, enigmatic, and full of beautiful metaphors. I think that Pankowski was and deep down remained first and foremost a true Poet. The Polish- and French-language volumes he authored and his lifelong poetic adventure also testify to it.

Translated by Alicja Piechucka

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Dorota Walczak-Delanois

MARIAN PANKOWSKI'S POETIC ART: BETWEEN THE POLISH AND THE FRANCOPHONE ELEMENTS

(abstract)

The literary output of Marian Pankowski (1919–2011) is rich in all literary genres. Nevertheless, relatively little has been written about his poetry, which is the subject of this study. Shaped by his personal experience, both as a human being and as a reader, Pankowski's poems reflect the clash he faces every day, trying to master French and become part of the French-speaking world. In his carefully thought-out lyric form (alliterations, metaphors, similes), which is an explicit reference to the avant-garde and to the Skamander group, a group of experimental Polish poets, there is no place for the verbosity present in his prose. The analysis of some of Pankowski's lesser-known or even unknown poems undertaken in this study proposes an alternative way of reading his poetic texts. The author of the article points out certain poetic images built upon a sensuous yet controlled perception of the world, based mainly on the senses of hearing and sight. The sense of touch, however, is completely suppressed, as if suggested by the heightened sense of sight. For the poet, his own corporeality is a taboo. He therefore seems to transpose it to the presented world. Pankowski's poetry, wrongly associated only with his early works, is worth knowing. It is interesting, educational as well as visually and verbally intriguing.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

Marian Pankowski; Sanok; Bruksela; matka; poezja; wiersz; tłumaczenie; język francuski; zmysły; ciało; obraz