

Polish rock music: the voice and the language

Paweł Tański

UNIWERSYTET MIKOŁAJA KOPERNIKA

Keywords

rock anthropology, song lyrics studies, Polish rock music, voice, interdisciplinary comparisons

Abstract

Recent years have seen a growing number of research about songs and the development of the field of *song studies*. The goal of the present article is to show all the rich meanings of Polish rock, with its deep and sharp insight. Since the article is limited in scope, it examines a selection of lyrics of Polish rock bands, being the best examples of how the people of rock react to the surrounding reality. Only a few musicians, whose achievements are certainly meaningful, have been selected for interpretation. The article is an attempt to reflect upon the “songwriters and their ballads”.

1. Introduction

The goal of the present article is to show all the rich meanings of rock, with its deep and sharp insight. Since the article is limited in scope, it examines a selection of lyrics of Polish rock bands, being the best examples of how the people of rock react to the surrounding reality. Only a few musicians, whose achievements are certainly meaningful, have been selected for interpretation. The article is an attempt to reflect upon the “songwriters and their ballads”. Recent years have seen a growing number of research about songs and the development of the field of *song studies*. This proves that scientists start to focus their interests on everyday life in its various forms of expression and to appreciate the role of ordinary elements shaping our identities, both

group and individual ones. The presented interpretations focus on language and, despite an emphasis on the anthropological dimension, the article is mainly a work from the area of literature studies. It highlights the analysis of the lyrics and their poetry as well as language studies. Besides, it addresses cultural contexts, which seem to lead to achieving a status of an artistic act by rock songs and to their introduction into the symbolical area of culture (also by rejecting the current socio-political context). This connection (anthropology, literature studies, and language studies) must be emphasized here. The title of the article determines the composition of the reflection: from voice to words, explaining and extracting meanings. The eighties begin with learning of a new language, in the wake of discrediting its former version. The new language is linked to the expressiveness of young people who had been deprived of their own voice (it should be noted that in the sixties of the 20th century the government promoted the notion of “Polish youth singing Polish songs”, so in case of the eighties we should rather say “Polish youth writes their own songs”).

Grzegorz Ciechowski (the band *Republika*, Polish ‘*Republic*’), who is the first protagonist in this discussion, syllabizes, repeats words, phrases, sections of sentences, learns the language just like a child. He is not an outstanding vocalist: he lisps, does not clearly articulate words and treats the voice as a secondary medium but focuses on the shaping of the language itself. In the beginning of the eighties the musicians teach the vocabulary, while the other people follow. Ciechowski, and later Lech Janerka, reveal their own struggle with the matter out of which something new must emerge. Language undergoes a process of refining, and this phenomenon is addressed in subsequent parts of the article: rock lyrics include more and more playing with words, the language is subject to complicated operations, until the moment of becoming a form of noble, oral poetry. In this very moment, the word of rock becomes an artistic entity and language prevails over the voice. This article presents it as a unique nobilitation of a song to an art form. It has its own, “new” tradition, basing on intensive learning and arduous work over the words. In parallel reflection over the language, the existential problems touched in the selected songs are analyzed. The reflection does not only refer to the direct message of the lyrics, but also the music that creates an existential atmosphere, haunts, besets and causes insomnia. These motives appear to be constantly present in the music and lyrics of the protagonists of this article: night, sleep, insomnia, (anti-)lullaby. The third circle of problems is taming of alterity. Here we have the Other One talking about himself or herself and one’s own world. In the space of man’s music the feminine voice and words of Kora (Olga Jackowska) sound very clearly. Still, the problem of communication is the most impor-

tant one for the young generation of musicians in this context. The relation between a man and a woman is mentioned in this article very often, but one must notice that the egocentric ‘I’ dominates in the lyrics of young musicians. Only a conscious creation of community triggers the need to express “us”, “you” or “him”. The study is composed in a way aiming at showing the specific evolution of the songs of the Polish rock musicians in the 80’s of the 20th century. It was the most important period for the Polish rock music. The article presents the journey of the rock culture in its lyrical aspect – from the lyrics of *Republika* and Lech Janerka to the bands *Aya RL* and *Siekiera* (Polish “axe”), to the phrases from songs of Kora (band *Maanam*), then back to Poland’s best rock lyrics author, Lech Janerka. This perspective of the history of Polish rock lyrics is also a part of the discussion over *sound studies* – how “listening defines [...] modern and contemporary culture [...] stronger than seeing, looking or reading” (J. Momro, *Fenomenologia ucha*, „Teksty Drugie” 2015, no 5, p. 11. The whole issue devoted to *sound studies*.). Hopefully, that interpretation of Polish rock lyrics proposed in the present article at least to some extent shows the intriguing areas of culture of this period.

2. Four important song lyrics and four voices by rock music artists

Origins of Polish rock music reach back to 1955. The literature points out Jan Walasek, as the pioneer of rock’n’roll, together with the band *Blackout* (numerous Polish bands have English names; 1965, with the lead singer Mira Kubasińska), later renamed to *Breakout* (1968). The First Polish Beat Avant-garde Festival (27th-30th Nov. 1969) was an important event for the history of our counterculture. The most significant bands from the widely-defined rock trend included: *Romuald i Roman*, *74 Grupa Biednych* (*74 The Band of the Poor*), *Nurt* (*The Trend*), *Zdrój Jana* (*Jan’s Spring*), *Laboratorium* (*The Laboratory*), *Grupa w Składzie* (*The Line-up Band*), *Klan* (*The Clan*). In 1983 the debut album of *Republika – Nowe sytuacje* (*New Situations*, 1984 UK edition) was released, with ten outstanding songs (see Jeziński 2012). The focus is on the title, opening song (time: 4’25”). It is a story of a man cast into the web of reality, making his way through a tunnel of experiences. “New situations” are a metaphor of experiences, emotions, accidents. At any moment a man reaches the edge of circumstances, of conditions of existence, surprising because sudden and not obvious. The events are difficult, painful or wonderful, energizing. The song starts with the declaration of the protagonist, who encounters these “new situations” and discovers that they contain “new orientations”, meaning: ability to recognize specific places and terrain directions, situational awareness, some issue and ability to evaluate them.

Later parts of the lyrics bring great metaphors that further define the feelings of the speaking/singing person – the situations are “unexplained”, meaning mysterious, full of riddles, impossible to guess, “dreamt of”, meaning unreal and strange. Grzegorz Ciechowski, the author of *Republika’s* lyrics, has made an interesting language trick here – the “dreamt of” (Polish “śnione”) appear after truncating the word “unexplained” (Polish “niewyjaśnione”). After “niewyja” part is cut, “śnione” word remains in the song fragment as a definition of a new – almost strangely dreamlike – situation. The singer later uses the adjective “sleepy” to characterize the situations and the orientations, which intensifies the feeling of alienation, disorientation and unreality of the protagonist. Ciechowski sings also that the “new situations, new orientations” “shall embrace us” and that “sleepy situations sleepy orientations” “shall conquer us”. This describes both the sense of uncertainty, danger, risk and stoic acceptance of unfathomable fate. The emotions of encircling are seen here, but also excitement for what is to come and what is unknown and what we are uncertain of. The whole song oscillates between the two poles – fear and joy, unrest and hope, pain and fulfillment, ignorance and curiosity. In the later part of the lyrics another noun appears, as a synonym of the “situations”. This is the word “constellations”. Thus the word “situations” receives two synonymous definitions: “orientations” and “constellations”, which rhyme (also in Polish) with the original word. This stylistic trick has allowed the author to achieve interesting metaphor informing the audience about the protagonist’s relation with the world. It is a poetical perception, proving rich imagination and lapidary language operation. The three words “situations” – “orientations” – “constellations” are three definitions of an attempt to understand our experiences. The two latter ones are extensions of the first one, while the word “constellations”, meaning a “group of stars, arrangement, status quo”, receives a tint of uniqueness and great mystery, due to its etymology – the Latin “constellatio” is a merger of the words “con” and “stella”. One can state that the question of human fate is not only the curiosity about what is to happen next, tomorrow and later, in a near and far future, but it is almost a metaphysical secret. And this secret is very close to a human body, close to a human worldly biology, since at the end of the song Grzegorz Ciechowski sings: “touch the new situations”, “touch the new orientations”, “touch the new constellations” and the emphasis of the touch proves the readiness and activeness of a man and his vital potency. Fear can be overcome. What remains is curiosity about the world, and creative human power.

In 1985, a debut album by *Klaus Mitffoch* – titled *Klaus Mitffoch* – was released, with sixteen outstanding songs. It did not contain the single of 1983 – *Jezu jak się cieszę* (*Jesus, I'm so happy*)¹.

<p>Jezu jak ja lubię Jak ja bardzo lubię Chyba tak nie umie lubić nikt Lubię się zaszywać Lubię nadużywać Szukam wciąż okazji I je mam</p>	<p>Jesus, I'm so fond of I'm so very fond of The only such fond of in the world Fond of hidden places Properly abusing Every time I can And again</p>
<p>I pięknie jest Nieskromnie bardzo jest</p>	<p>Beautiful. Very immodest, too</p>
<p>Jezu jak ja lubię Jak ja bardzo lubię Chyba tak nie umie lubić nikt Lubię się zaszywać Lubię nadużywać Szukam wciąż okazji I je mam</p>	<p>Jesus, I'm so fond of I'm so very fond of The only such fond of in the world Fond of hidden places Properly abusing Every time I can And again</p>
<p>I pięknie jest Nieskromnie bardzo jest</p>	<p>Beautiful. Very immodest, too.</p>
<p>Kiedy mija Tak jak wszystko Ta euforia Kilkudniowa</p>	<p>It's all over Passing quickly This euphoria Few days-worth</p>
<p>Wstawać i pra Cować i mieć Nie bardzo mogę Nie bardzo chcę</p>	<p>Waking up, wor... ...king and possess I'm not very fond of Neither I can²</p>

Janerka's song expresses joy due to earning money and at the same time an ironical sadness, that the state of possessing the financial resources is so very brief. The song opens with invoking God's name in casual speech. As the *Dictionary of the Polish Language* states – "Jesus" (Jezu) it is an "invocation expressing various emotional states and attitudes". In case of the lyrics written by *Klaus Mitffoch's* bass player – it expresses joy and happiness because of temporary inflow of cash. Further it is directly stated: "Jesus, I am so happy". Another line ends with a rhyme (in Polish) "cieszę" (happiness, joy) –

¹ The author of the article translated the lyrics.

² Polish original in L. Janerka, *Texty*, Wrocław 2002, p. 23.

“wskrzeszeń” (resurrections), a part of the phrase “briefly resurrected”, symbolizing the earning. In Polish “briefly” is expressed as diminutive, further emphasizing the state of transiency of the state of possessing funds. These two lines are well-supplemented by the third one, ending with another rhyme to “cieszę” – “kieszę” (Polish word for “pocket”), in a phrase “pocket full of money”. This great humorous and ironic opening of the song tells the story well known to almost everyone from daily life – situation, when the earnings shrink incredibly fast. Next lines further increase the state of euphoria:

Znowu mogę myśleć	Seems to me I can
Trochę jakby ściślej	Focus my good brain
I wymyślać śmiało	Boldly I’m conceiving
Nowy plan	A new plan

The phrase „Boldly I’m conceiving / A new plan” is especially valuable here, since it reflects the protagonist’s emotions: vivid energy, sense of power, hope that the problems can be overcome. Following lines express joy resulting from the circumstances:

I pięknie jest	Beautiful.
Nieskromnie bardzo jest	Very immodest, too.

The reverse word order (in Polish, „very immodest too): „nieskromnie bardzo jest” instead of „jest bardzo nieskromnie” proves Lech Janerka’s sense of humor, it is ironical and emphasizes the message from the beginning of the lyrics, hyperbolizing the emotions of happiness resulting from the inflow of cash.

But the story goes on – the feelings change, apathy and discouragement appear, because the funds run out and what remains is regret that the state of joy has been so brief:

Kiedy mija	It’s all over
Tak jak wszystko	Passing quickly
Ta euforia	This euphoria
Kilkudniowa	Few days-worth
Wstawać i pra	Waking and wor...
Cować i mieć	...king and possess
Nie bardzo mogę	I’m not very fond of
Nie bardzo chcę	Neither I can

In the second part of the song, the narration focuses on protagonist's sensations, who declares to be fond of specific areas of reality. This is also hyperbolizing and emphasizing of positive attitude to some elements of the world:

Jezu jak ja lubię	Jesus, I'm so fond of
Jak ja bardzo lubię	I'm so very fond of
Chyba tak nie umie lubić nikt	The only such fond of in the world

After this fragment comes an explanation about the reason for such a pleasing state of the protagonist:

Lubię się zaszywać	Fond of hidden places
Lubię nadużywać	Properly abusing
Szukam wciąż okazji	Every time I can
I je mam	And again

So this is a joy resulting from separation, escape from daily issues (“fond of hidden places”, of hiding) and from giving up to one's passions – “properly abusing” – which does not mean “abuse of alcohol” appearing at the first glance, but ironical “abusing”, by diving into some important, personal activities so deeply, that it might be harmful. According to the *Dictionary of the Polish Language*: “nadużywanie” (Polish “abuse”, over-usage) is “use of something in excessive amounts, usually harmful for health”. Janerka speaks of living the full life, with all its power. At the end of the lyrics he speaks also about taking the chances that the existence offers. The bass player has also used irony here:

Szukam wciąż okazji	Every time I can
I je mam	And again

The sense of control over one's life is full of optimism and vigor, despite the fact that the earnings vanish so quickly and the process cannot be stopped. Lech Janerka expresses the idea that spiritual matters are more important than material concerns and a resourceful man can cope with it while the joy of life is stronger than the vanity of wealth. In the background, there is also the idea of work which is not only a way to earn money, but also a way of living, passion and a force prompting a man to act. The song ends with the opening fragment and these sentences return:

Jezu jak się cieszę	Jesus, I'm so happy
Z tych króciutkich wskrzeszeń	Briefly resurrected
Kiedy pełną kieszeń znowu mam	Pocket full of money once again

Znowu mogę myśleć
Trochę jakby ściślej
I wymyślać śmiało
Nowy plan

Seems to me I can
Focus my good brain
Boldly I'm conceiving
A new plan

I pięknie jest
Nieskromnie bardzo jest

Beautiful.
Very immodest, too.

Such arrangement emphasizes the cycle of earning event, work, rest, life. The conclusion is optimistic, joyful, against odds despite the empty wallet...

In 1985, a debut album of Aya RL was released with ten unique songs, with a special opening song *Księżycowy krok* (4'38", *The Lunar Step*).

Noc przytula mnie
Pieści z całych sił
Jej oddaję to, co mam
Oddaję sny...
Daję swoje sny
Daję to, co mam
I przez cały czas
Wiem
Nie jestem sam

Night embraces me
And caresses me ...
I'm offering it all I have
All my dreams
Offer all my dreams
Offer all I have
All the time I know
I am
Not alone

Budzę się przy blasku ostrych barw
Głuchnę w wielkim huku słusznych
Dławię się słowami – których wstyd

Colors are so sharp, wake me up
Deafened by the volleys, rumbling,
Choking with the words bringing
shame

Modłę się do bożków obcych mi

Praying to the gods, they are strange

Daj mi księżycowy krok
Wiarę w ślepe oczy
Nabrać oddech (by znów iść)
Pozwól – dobra Nocy

Grace me with the lunar step
Trust in blind's man eyes
Let me breath (to walk again)
Let me, my good Night

Daj mi księżycowy krok
Weź mój sen proroczy
Klucz do ciszy, w której trwasz
Daj mi, dobra Nocy...

Grace me with the lunar step
Take my prophet's dream
Key to the silence that you are
Give me, my good Night

The lyrics by Paweł Kukiz are a lament of a suffering man, trapped in a loop of loneliness and incapable of understanding the rules governing the world that is strange, incomprehensible, indifferent and hostile. The night

is the only time of hope, when he can breathe, calm down, hide from the daylight that reveals the falseness of reality. “The sharp colors”, “deafening rumble of just volleys” symbolize the aggressive attack against a man in this world. Darkness and silence are the salvation. The protagonists seeks them to hide among them. “Lunar step” is a symbol of unreachable sphere of freedom, inner space where one can feel safe. It is also a metaphor of escape far from the world, where we are strangers and expression of longing for peace. However, this is also longing for emotions of the first man on the Moon – Neil Armstrong – who stepped there on 21st July 1969. The dreams of revealing the secrets of space and of man, finding faith in various aspects of human existence, soothing the pain caused by traumatic experiences are the topics of this beautiful song by Paweł Kukiz.

In 1986, an album by *Siekiera* was released, title *Nowa Aleksandria* (*New Alexandria*), with ten outstanding songs, with lyrics and music written by the singer and guitar player, Tomasz Adamski. The focus here is on the song *Idziemy przez las* (4'40", *Walking through the Wood*). It is sung by Dariusz Malinowski, the bass player. *Siekiera's* song has (in Polish) only two phrases, six words, including two nouns, one verb and one adjective, repeated many times. Two remaining words are prepositions, constituting so called prepositional phrases with the nouns: „Idziemy przez las. / Pijani od słów” (Walking through the wood / Drunk with words). This conciseness of language is accompanied by musical minimalism. Such artistic and aesthetical form is typical for the creative expression of the leader, Tomasz Adamski, and his attitude towards the world, the man and the language: a popular slogan of Cracow avantgarde: “minimum words, maximum content”. One can obviously add a phrase, “minimum sounds, music, maximum content”. By using plural (in Polish) the singer clearly expresses the experience of not just one person but of all humans. It is a story of a journey through life. The wood is a metaphor of existence, like in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. During this journey we are „drunk” – that can be interpreted as a metaphor of intoxication, but also of disorientation, temporary extasy, as well as an unnatural, artificially induced state. But we are not „drunk” with the impressions of the world, but with „words”. This can mean both delight with language, and distrust towards it. Language can bring us closer to the truth and meaning but also deceive, lead astray, lie and hurt. The music illustrating this story is not joyful and ecstatic, but rather melancholic, depressing, full of sadness, pain, anxiety and feeling of getting close to the absurd of the world, insanity. This is common for the whole album *Nowa Aleksandria*. The protagonist of these stories is a man sick with death and life, singing out traumas, insanities, sickness and suffering in a trance-like fashion. The title of the album creates and important context –

it is a metaphor describing gray, tight and hopeless atmosphere of a small town, where one cannot breathe. In this context “the wood” can be interpreted as a space for temporary freedom, breath, peace and escape. It should be mentioned that no lyrics were added to the album edition, and what we hear is not only “drunk with words” but also “wood / drunk with words”. This can be interpreted as not only possessing the urban space by a contaminated human language, but also the space of “wood”, the space of freedom, independence and ecological niche. Such an interpretation is even more pessimistic, suggesting that a human destroys his own world. Four unique Polish rock songs of the ‘80s of 20th century, sung by four electrifying voices³: Grzegorz Ciechowski, Lech Janerka, Paweł Kukiz and Dariusz Malinowski bear marks of these years, with their hopeless resignation, pulsating anger against poor conditions of life and lack of freedom. But they are also universal stories about the attempts to position oneself among the mysteries of everyday life (*Republika*), about therapies of traumas of human experiences (*Aya RL*), being drunk with words and journey through life (*Siekiera*), finally about ordinary joy of earning money just to make a living, but also about the superiority of spiritual life over material problems (*Klaus Mitffoch*). They are four stories about humans struggling with daily reality, politics, world, themselves, journey through the existence and language, to survive in the emptiness and pain.

3. Kora (Olga Jackowska, Olga Sipowicz) – the queen of singers and authors of Polish rock songs

Songs by Olga Jackowska, compiled in the volume *Stoję, czuję się świetnie* (*I am standing, I am feeling great*, 2017) constitute a kind of dialogized monologue, directed by the protagonist to a close person, related to lyrical experiences, emotions and desires. Not by accident, this well-composed compilation is concluded by important words said to a beloved man: “If you hurt me, you will perish”. This can be interpreted as a warning, angry, emotional conjuring for the sake of protecting a female sensitivity against pain inflicted by a beloved one. This simple sentence is truly striking – not only for the addressee, but also for the reader. This is the final statement, closing of the volume – the echo of these words stays with us, rumbles, claiming empathy, being close with the close ones and not hurting them. Non-trivial, read with all the power of the lyric, the last one in the compilation – the sentence speaks of the care about the others but also of oneself. This is not egocentrism, this is

³ On the pleasure of listening to singer’s voices see, for example S. Frith, *Sceniczne rytuały. O wartości muzyki popularnej*, przeł. M. Król, Kraków 2011.

just claiming what one deserves. An intriguing illustration of the lyrics – two, entangled trees, supplements the contents of *Życie za życie (gdy skrzywdzisz mnie)* (*Life for a life (when you hurt me)*) – a metaphor of nature, biological and natural order. Two people grown into each other like trees. The nine-syllable emphasizes the rhythm of human bodies, of nature, of world's order, repeated seasons and cycle of common life, while the seven-syllable of the final five words „Gdy skrzywdzisz mnie to zginiesz” strikes by being different, rid of two syllables. The words sound clearer, hit our eardrums and stay with us.

The former piece is related to the first, opening one – *Bliźniak (The Twin)*, telling a story of human life order and of the world as contradictory, colliding pairs, being also connected “duos”, such as combination “like nudity and boredom” (jak nagość i nuda), with interesting phone instrumentation of “n” letter (in Polish). The lyrics open with the most important issues: “love and hate”, later compared to various dichotomies: “Jak czarne i białe / Jak zimno i upał / Jak kat i ofiara / Jak wierzch i spód dłoni” – “Like black and white / Like cold and heat / Like the executioner and the victim / Like palm's upper and lower side”. If we go through the whole book by Kora – outstanding singer with great, electrifying voice – it turns out, that in fact she writes about these two most important aspects of the world: love and hate. The trick is to tell this story in an interesting way, and the author has succeeded in that. „Will we succeed / or not succeed” – the question from the same piece, related to human problems, is not an answer to the question “will we succeed?” but rather a sequence of reflections: “will we succeed” or “not succeed? – in love, in our plans, dreams, everyday routine, every moment. In terms of the body of work (leaving the lyrics aside and focusing on the author's place in cultural landscape) – let us go back to the end of the previous paragraphs – one can say, that Olga Jackowska has succeeded. Repetitions are accepted in songs, but how about here? In this case I believe so, since she deserves more writing, reminding us of how great scenic personality she is, outstanding author of lyrics, not to mention the vocal skill. It is her voice that fascinates and attracts us the most, being magnetizing. Some artist do indeed have interesting voices but not the first class type (they will not be listed here), while their lyrics are outstanding. But there are also the ones with exceptionally beautiful voices and lyrics that are fair, but not very sophisticated (a song does not have to be a poem, it has to be a song – let us remind these words by Simon Frith from his book *Performing Rites. On the Value of Popular Music*, 1998). Kora belongs to a third group of writing singers – to those with very good lyric writing skills and a great voice.

But let us come back to the topics of her songs put on paper. Love will come back in a moment, first let us talk about hate. It reveals its face on var-

This is a cell for those haunted by hate, a cell of solitude and despair. Love is from another world. Olga Sipowicz writes about it fondly, persistently noting the moments of good emotions. Even the title of the author's lyrics, *I am a woman*, tells about a sense of peace: "I am standing, feeling great" – being in a "standing" state, natural for a human, not standing in a line to solve issues (this text can surely be interpreted as an ironic image of these grey times of the People's Republic, when one stood in lines for hours; even though this is the basic interpretation of this song, it could be read as a more universal statement – about overcoming of these hopeless times), rather in a state of readiness to accept the fate, life, good and desirable emotions, to feel the sense of existence, just like in another song:

Jest bardzo, bardzo, bardzo cicho
 Słońce rozpała nagie ciała
 Morze i niebo ostro lśni
 Dobrze mi, ach jak dobrze mi
 Jem słodkie, słodkie winogrona
 Ty śpisz w moich, moich ramionach
 Morze i niebo ostro lśni
 Dobrze mi, ach jak dobrze mi

It is so very, very quiet
 The sun is burning naked bodies
 The sea, the skies are shining bright
 I feel so very, very fine
 I am eating grapes, so very sweet
 You're in my arms, you are asleep
 The sea, the skies are shining bright
 I feel so very, very fine

(*Cykady na Cykladach –
 Cicades in Cyclades*)

„I am feeling great” – the moments are like in *The Gift* by Czesław Miłosz, states of epiphany, looking for hope:

Czekam na wiatr, co rozgoni
 Ciemne skłębione zasłony
 Stanę wtedy naraz
 Ze słońcem twarzą w twarz

Awaiting the wind that will blow
 Dark, rolling curtains away
 And here I shall finally stand
 An eye to an eye with the Sun

(*Krakowski spleen –
 The Cracow Spleen*)

Let us remind that the song *Standing, standing, feeling great* opened the 1981 *Maanam's* album and it was an outstanding opening – full of energy (both in the aspect of lyrics and the music – wonderful guitars and dynamical drums and bass), vitality, belief in creative powers of a man, his freedom and independence:

Ruch, gwar, blask dookoła
A oni siedzą, jeszcze nie leżą
Wszyscy mi mówią połów się, usiądź

A ja nie muszę, naprawdę nie chcę
Ruch, gwar, blask dookoła
A oni siedzą, jeszcze nie leżą

Stoję, stoję, czuję się świetnie
Nie muszę siedzieć, nie muszę leżeć
Czuję się świetnie, ach jak wspaniale
Nie muszę siedzieć, wcale ach wcale
Czuję się świetnie, ach jak przyjemnie

Moving, buzzing, glittering around
And they are sitting, not lying down
yet

Everybody tells me to rest down
Don't really need to, don't really want
Moving, buzzing, glittering around
And they are sitting, not lying down
yet

Standing, standing, feeling so great
Don't have to sit, don't have to rest
Feeling so great, feeling so fine
Don't have to rest, don't need at all
Feeling so great, feeling so pleasant

Such moments of élan vital sensations, explosions of good emotions, vital strength, accomplishment and value. Kora writes the lyrics of *Eksplozja* (*Explosion*):

Wszystko ma swoją formę: liść, drzewo, jaszczurka
Woda w oceanach jak w czarach spoczywa
Ogień w kominach spala się bezpiecznie
Ziemia zamknięta słowem krąży po elipsie

Eksplozja

Powietrze przybiera kształt rzeczy dowolny
Ja wciąż taka sama w gestach mimowolnych
Żyjemy obok siebie spokojnie do chwili
Gdy gniew rozsadza formy, a treść eksploduje

All has its own shape, a leaf, a tree, and a lizard
The oceans keep waters resting in their cups
Fires in the chimneys quietly burning safely
The Earth, locked by the word is spinning its ellipse

Explosion

The air adapts the shape of all the things
I am still the same in my unconscious gestures
We live side by side, peacefully till the moment
The rage blows the forms and the content explodes

It is a creative rage, rebellion against the worse parts of the reality, power of identity and being oneself, together with the acceptance of the world's beauty, its infinite, uncountable forms. Vitality is a trademark of Olga Jackowska's literary and musical creation, of sound, vocals, her voice anthropol-

ogy and literary anthropology. Her pen notes the vitality of a man (the man creates metamorphoses, *Szare miraże – Gray Mirages*) and of the universe:

A planety szaleją, szaleją, szaleją i śmieją się, śmieją się, śmieją
A planety szaleją, szaleją, szaleją i śmieją się, śmieją się, śmieją

And the planets are dancing, are dancing, are dancing, and laughing, and laughing
And the planets are dancing, are dancing, are dancing, and laughing, and laughing

(*Szał niebieskich ciał – Celestial Bodies' Frenzy*)

The vitality comes from the power of Eros. The man has written anthems to love since the beginning of time. This is a precious experience to be able to describe man's closeness, moments spent in the lovable sensation of what is beautiful and unique:

Ciało do ciała krew do krwi
Przeminął dzień jak co dzień
zwyczajny leniwy
Przeminął a ja jestem z tobą
jestem z tobą
To znaczy że dzień był szczęśliwy

Flesh to flesh, blood to blood
Another day has passed
Ordinary and lazy one
It has passed and I have stayed
Stayed with you
Making the day a happy one

(*Mandragora*)

What we find in the lyrics of Olga Jackowska is an awe of the world, the Existence but also an ironic submission to what is mysterious and unexplainable, towards which one can only accept a child's attitude, of listening and watching, consciously fragile but believing in lasting:

Szczęście to słowo co spadło z księżycy
Nie zna przyczyny i nie dba o skutki
Jest między nami lecz tylko przez chwilę
Ma naturę wiatru i jak wiatr umyka

Happiness is a word that has fallen from the Moon
Unaware of the cause and of the results
It is among us just for a brief moment
Windy by nature runs away like a wind

(*Tęcza – The Rainbow*)

4. Lech Janerka – The best Polish songwriter, singer and bassist

In 1984 the album titled *Klaus Mitffoch* was released by the band *Klaus Mitffoch*, founded by Lech Janerka a few years earlier, in 1979. It is considered one of the most important albums in the history of Polish rock mu-

sic (winning the best album of the three decades competition of “Magazyn Muzyczny” in the journalist category and the best album of the eighties of “Tylko Rock” in the readers category). Lech Janerka is an artist who has not disappeared after one or several albums. He is still creative and visible in the cultural landscape, maintaining the high level of artistic expression. The debut album includes sixteen songs. The A side of the vinyl, called “this one” by Janerka, includes ten songs (about twenty minutes of music), while B side, called “the other one”, includes six songs (lasting a little over nineteen minutes). Among the sixteen pieces there is one instrumental (the tenth, concluding the A side), called *Strzelby (The Rifles)*. It is very short, no more than 25 seconds. Thus, we have an album of fifteen songs. Lyrics of eight songs were written by Lech Janerka, and of seven songs by his wife – Bożena. This is stated on the record cover, but Janerka in his book, *Texty*, mentions that actually he is the author of these pieces⁴. The opening song has only three words: “Śpij aniele mój” (Sleep my angel), repeated multiple times. The cover does not inform who the author of this phrase is, but rather – whose idea it was to use these words. It is assumed that it was Janerka himself. The song is very short – just twenty nine seconds. It is a “backward lullaby”, “anti-lullaby” or “different lullaby”, a “non-lullaby” (one of Janerka’s songs is titled *Niewalczyk*, meaning *Non-waltz*), since the words usually said or sung to put somebody to sleep (usually a child) – “sleep my angel” – are accompanied by sharp, high-pitched, dynamical sounds, and Lech Janerka and the band members scream these words out. The goal of this figure is apparently to show that inner balance, calming, finding the good side of the surrounding reality is impossible. An impatient man can quietly repeat these words to himself. In this way, he achieves an ironic distance towards himself, calling himself “my angel” in this inner monologue. Still this phrase can be also directed to a close one. In this case, the concept of the performance reflects the drama of the communicating person – I wish to sing you a lullaby to calm you down before sleep, according to the state of the art and the convention, but I cannot. I cannot pretend everything is fine, because it is not. The world is evil, dark, gloomy, I can achieve a tender tone in my voice, no optimism, joy or peace, at least. My voice is full of anger, rebellion, objection, towards the reality we live in and the one I am observing. This is why, despite my wishes, I am not singing a traditional lullaby. My words ask you to “sleep”, and call you tenderly “my angel” which is used only in relation to a close person. Still, the words are full of anxiety and unable to achieve a peace of mind.

The following interpretation is also possible: it is just an impatient father, asking his child to finally go to sleep – all sounds of this song express

⁴ L. Janerka, op. cit., p. 113.

in such a case his tiredness, irritation – sensations well-known to anyone who has spent long minutes on putting a child to sleep. The opening song is also an obvious provocation known from the rock culture, and especially its variation – punk rock, post-punk. It is playing with the convention, joke irony, collision of tender, gentle words with strong, aggressive performance. It is also playing with the composition of the album – we could imagine that *Śpij aniele mój* could be completely different – peaceful, tender and could be closing the album. It could be the so called „slow piece” (as opposite to the „fast pieces”). However, this is not the case – *Śpij aniele mój* it is rather a waking song, calling „get up!”. Sounding like a military trumpet at dawn, a sharp alarm clock, that irritates and annoys us. At the end of the song some mumbling can be heard. It is like the singer wanted to emphasize his dislike of conventional performances – it is the rebellion of the rock artists and punk provocation – anti-aesthetics, reversing of the convention, its turning upside down, testing its limits, bending to one’s own goals and own vision of the world. “A lullaby?” – “Here, be my guest, but on my own terms”. “Let me give you a lullaby then!”. This song can be also regarded as mocking – a drunken cry, with the words “pij aniele mój” (drink my angel) heard. The song gets a ludic character, but underneath this specific folklore a more serious issue might be possibly lurking – if the “reality squeaks” (high-pitch sounds heard in the song), how can you sleep without an “anesthesia?” Anyway, the song *Śpij aniele mój* is simply funny, it is a joke, being an embodiment of carnivalization⁵ in the rock culture. It is a joke but also an attempt to express in this way one of the issues of everyday experiences – since falling asleep is the main topic of this song, together with the issue of sleeplessness and the question of how to express the bodily, somatic topic, such as pain and tiredness, and also apparently plain issue of falling asleep and sleeping, with the use of language⁶.

The second song on the record is *O głowie (Of the Head)* with words written by Lech Janerka:

Głowa umie łączyć niebo z szyćą
 Niebo w szyćę wpada poprzez głowę
 Głowa przez to lubi być niczyją
 I dlatego ciągle jest jak jest

⁵ See *Teoria karnawalizacji. Konteksty i interpretacje*, edited by A. Stoff i A. Skubaczewska-Pniewska, Toruń 2000.

⁶ See *Antropologia ciała. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, prepared by A. Chałupnik, J. Jaworska, J. Kowalska-Leder, I. Kurz, M. Szpakowska, introduction and editing M. Szpakowska, Warszawa 2008; *Antropologia słowa*, prepared by G. Godlewski, A. Mencwel, R. Sulima, introduction and editing G. Godlewski, Warszawa 2003.

Głowa mówi lubię kiedy mówię
Lubię głowić się i lubię lubić
Lubię łudzić się i łudzę ludzi
Że odcinam się by ich nie nudzić

Głowa widząc flagę mówi flaga
Kolor naszej flagi jest złożony
Kolor górny jest kolorem białym
Kolor dolny to kolor czerwony

The head can connect the neck and the sky
The sky falls into the neck through the head
So the head likes to stay unattached and shy
That's the constant reason of all things

The head is speaking I like when I am speaking
I like my head to work and I like to like
I like to deceive and I deceive people
That I detach just not to bore them down

The head is speaking flag while seeing a flag
Our flag has a complex color
Upper part is of color white
Bottom part is of a red color

This is a song about a man's independent reason, about freedom and the lack of it. The first verse is a praise of human reason ("the head can connect the neck and the sky"), the second one shows a human as a cruel, non-reasonable, untruthful and selfish being ("the head is speaking I like when I am speaking", "[...] I deceive people / That I detach not to bore them down), while the third and fourth ones are bitter because of the life of Polish people without reflection or without freedom – unable to say the truth about their opinion regarding the country and the government, a man must speak in a safe, non-straight way. This fragment can be also interpreted as confirmation of the inclusion of the protagonist (and the author) into a given community but also as a Gombrowicz-style struggle for authenticity, with Polish nationality and an ironic attitude towards being Polish. What follows is *Wiązanka pieśni bojowych* (*The Collection of Battle Songs*) written also by Lech Janerka:

Ja wiem że to jest zwykły syf paranoja wiem
Ja wiem czego chcesz no i znowu się boję wiem
Ja wiem że to jest zwykły syf paranoja wiem
Ja wiem że chcesz by się lała krew
Lecz pytam się z ilu jeszcze serc

To figurole wałą w głowę
Gnojku nie masz szans
To figurole pieprzą swoje
Gnojku nie masz szans
Żadnych religii zmartwień
Żadnych analiz zmian
To figurole

I know that this is just a paranoia crap, I know
I know what you want and I'm afraid again, I know
I know that this is just a paranoia crap, I know
I know you want to spill some blood
I ask how many human hearts must bleed

Figuroles smashing heads
You bastard do not stand a chance
Figuroles speaking their crap
You bastard do not stand a chance
No religions and no worries
No analyzing any changes
Figuroles

This song is a sharp critique of government, with harsh words – common ones (I know that this is just a paranoia: commonly something lacking sense and reason), an abusive one (bastards) to vulgar ones (crap) (see Grochowski 1995). The protagonist expresses his sense of danger, rebellion, anger and hopelessness. This piece can obviously be interpreted in the context of the contemporary political situation – the '80s of the 20th century in Poland were the time of communism. However, it seems that an universal interpretation is also allowed – it is a protest song, being a reaction against any kind of limiting freedom of a mind. The fourth song on the album was written by Bożena Janerka and its very title suggests its topic: *Nie jestem z nikim* (*I Am with Nobody*) speaks of a desperate attempt to reach independence and keep individual character, against all odds. „I cannot I cannot take it any more” – says the protagonist, suggesting the sense of failure and hopelessness. But despite this pessimistic statement he does not quit the fight – as proven by the following song: *Klus Mitroh* – written by Lech Janerka – apart of its mysterious title, obviously related to the name of the band – expresses rebellion, standing on the side of freedom, despite being rejected as “a stranger”. It is a critique of reasonless crowd, it is also direct critique of fascism, and not expressed directly, that of communism, of any totalitarianism.

Lyrics of the next song, titled *Wiązanka cz. IV (Collection part IV)* were written by Bożena Janerka:

Chciałabym mieć rower	I want to have a bike
I nowe majciochy	An new panties
Chciałabym mieć rower	I want to have a bike
I będę go mieć	And I will have it
Chciałabym majciochy	I want to have panties
I chciałbym rower	And a bike
Chciałbym majciochy	I want to have panties
I będę je mieć	And I will have them
Dajcie nam żyć	Let us live
Dajcie nam śmielej marzyć	Let us have bold dreams

Besides, here Lech Janerka sings out a protest against any type of authority. The lyrics speak of a desire to live a normal life in a free country, where you can “breathe freely”. The song aims at the reality of the People’s Republic of Poland, with shortages of everything. The word “panties” (“majciochy”), possibly related to underwear, is a bitter irony, since in a country with no basic products available getting underwear was a big deal. It can also mean slacks – commonly related to as “panties” in Polish, in a joke-like manner emphasizes the expression but is also in opposition to a “woodblock language”, “stiff speaking”, “empty words”, high-style, bloated. It is a rebellion against the language of propaganda, official style of the contemporary administration, wishing to enforce its style of expression in the ordinary, everyday life. Language is also one of the most important protagonist of the songs by Janerka. Both he himself, and his wife, who was also an author of lyrics, follow the path of the poet Miron Białoszewski – they play with the language, its potential, its sound, ordinary side, alliterations, they create neologisms, such as “figuroles” in *The Collection of Battle Songs* – being a word describing various suspicious types of politicians or generally so-called important persons. People accept roles of important figures (such as politicians), turning into “figuroles” – an ironical description of something important, especially in their own opinion. The word “figuroles” in Polish resembles a word “głupole” (dumb people) and relates to “figurant” (figureheads). So calling somebody a “figurole” is smart, malicious and ironical. Language mechanism used in the songs of Janerka aims at saving the space of freedom – since I have to struggle with censorship and authority, I might at least stick out my tongue at them – through linguistic play, humor, surrealism of creation and the vision of the world, of expression, absurd, grotesque, irony. It is a higher level of reflection over the

language, comparing to Ciechowski's *New Situations*. The leader of *Republika* was learning to speak, while Janerka plays with the language.

Next songs were written by Bożena Janerka. *Jestem tu jestem tam* (*I am here, I am there*) expresses sense of danger and hopelessness, fear and lack of freedom. *Muł pancerny* (*Armored Mule*) is a self-ironic description of somebody struggling with human oppression, but also a bitter, sarcastic description of human nature – impulsive, controlled by instincts, without reason, animal-like, prone to be used and manipulated („Deng deng kopią go w du / Pę a on nerwowo uśmiecha się” – Boom boom, they kick him in the a / As while he smiles nervously). *Powinność kurdupelka* (*Shrimp's Obligations*) tells about a man struggling against something far exceeding his scale, an enemy power described as an “elephant”. It is a metaphor of the authority, the “shrimp-man” fights against. This pictures the small physical posture, weakness against the huge creature, the elephant. Still the man persists in his fight „Do góry głowa niech się słoń schowa / Do góry podnieś skroń // Goń słonia całe życie goń” (Raise you head, make the elephant hide / Raise you face // make the elephant run, all the time). Fear is the basic problem of the protagonists of all these lyrics. The most important is an attempt to overcome fear of authority and lack of freedom. It is an optimistic message – because you can still fight. It is, however, impossible to defeat man's greatest enemy – death, as the eleventh song tells us (the opening piece of the second side). *Nad ranem śmierć się śmieje* (*Death Laughs in the Morning*), written by Janerka, concludes with words „you do not stand a chance”. But this song is mainly a critique of life without a reason and “the captive mind” – as in the title of a well-known work by Czesław Miłosz. Once again in the songs by Janerka we find a critique of a man who does not rebel, does not think and does not use his mind in a proper way.

Next three songs from the *Klaus Mitffoch* album have one thing in common – an ironic and bitter record of human existence in the world of the “socialist paradise” – absurd situations that people encounter do not allow to experience the bright side of reality. A man attempts to protest against these situation, but is aware that he fails. *Tutaj wesoło* (*So Much Fun Here*, written by Bożena Janerka,) is an ironic, bitter description of socio-political situation (with the echo of the well-known phrase “the most joyful of the socialist block”...), a one people cannot change. *Ewolucja rewolucja i ja* (*Evolution, Revolution and I* written by Lech Janerka) brings a declaration of the protagonist: he is longing for a change, for a better life. *Dla Twojej głowy komfort* (*Comfort for your Head*, written by Lech Janerka) describes a collision of two attitudes: that of people who value comfort in life above ideals and that of people who value mostly freedom and independence. The penultimate song

of the album, *Siedzi* (*Sitting*, written by Lech Janerka) is the best one in this collection. It is particularly suggestive with its accurate descriptions of ambitions of a man who would like to overcome his limitations and barriers he encounters on his livelihood path, who struggles for freedom and knowledge about the world:

Siedzi a chciałby postać	Sitting, wishes he's standing
Głowę chciałby podnieść wyżej	He would like to raise his head
Wiem też to znam	Yea, I know it well
Stoję a chciałbym lecieć	I'm standing, I am not flying
Głowę chciałbym mieć wysoko	I would like to raise my head
Wiem też to znasz	Yea, you know it well
Lecisz a nie wiesz dokąd	You're flying into unknown
Idziemy z brudnych miast	We walk out of dirty towns
Szukamy ciepłych mórz	We seek for warm seas
Nie wiemy gdzie	We don't know where
Gdzie one są	To find them
Nie wiem a chciałbym wiedzieć	I don't know, I'd like to know
W informacji też nie wiedzą	The information doesn't know
Dokąd zmierza świat	Where's the world heading
Nie wiem a chciałbym wiedzieć	I don't know, I'd like to know

“We seek for warm seas” – this is a key metaphor in this lyrics, but is also a key to decipher all other lyrics sung by Lech Janerka on the *Klaus Mitffoch* album. The struggle to maintain one's dignity, independence, freedom, exercising one's consciousness and the abilities of reason – these are the “warm seas” – lands of the man's inner worlds, where he regains his truly humane dimension, worthy of a *person*. “Warm seas” are also like Gałczyński's “Happy Islands” – areas better than those in which protagonists of Janerka's songs live. The form “he” appears for the first time among the analyzed lyrics. It is a sign of distance, necessary for rationalizing of emotions, to turn emotions into action. The album is closed by *Strzeż się tych miejsc* (*Beware of These Places*), written by Bożena Janerka. It tells about dangerous places within a given space – their terror results from the presence of people who are willing to hurt others, so the topic of human evil, aggression, brutality and lack of reason emerges, as an issue constantly touched in the lyrics written by the author of *Konstytucje*. Once more the dark side of human nature appears. The call for not hurting another person, called the “other”, is again a woman's initiative. Formerly it was Kora, now it is Bożena Janerka. Poetic anthropology included in the songs performed by Lech Janerka is an expression of

caring about human reason, rock energy allows outstanding expression of emotions and thoughts of the Wrocław-originating artist, struggling with all his strengths to rescue a man from stupidity and oppression.

Conclusions

Rock is a culture of authenticity. It is a voice of rebellion, rage and sorrow, that of happiness, epiphany and of awe. It is an extremely interesting contemporary narration, focusing on human world. Listening to this voice is worth an effort. Granting the Nobel Prize in Literature to Bob Dylan⁷ in the autumn 2016 was a very important moment in the history of culture. A singer has gained appreciation of a honorable jury and thus the artistic medium he has used for many years, a song, was accepted by wide consciousness. However, has it really needed to ask for acceptance? Has a song not accompanied us in our everyday life for many years? Maybe the decision of the Nobel committee was also a confirmation of a well-established fact – a word of a song is very important and it is up to us how much we appreciate it.

References

Sources

- Janerka, L., 2002, *Texty*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Via Nova.
Kora (Jackowska, O.), 2017, *Stoję, czuję się świetnie*, Stronie Śląskie: Biuro Literackie.

Music or Sound Recording

- Aya RL (1985). *Aya RL* [Vinyl]. Warsaw, Poland: Tonpress.
Klaus Mitffoch (1983). *Jezu jak się cieszę / O głowie* [Vinyl]. Warsaw, Poland: Tonpress.
Klaus Mitffoch (1984). *Klaus Mitffoch* [Vinyl]. Warsaw, Poland: Tonpress.
Maanam (1981). *Maanam* [Vinyl]. Warsaw, Poland: Wifon.
Republika (1983). *Nowe sytuacje* [Vinyl]. Warsaw, Poland: Polton.
Siekiera (1986). *Nowa Aleksandria* [Vinyl]. Warsaw, Poland: Tonpress.

⁷ As early as in 2004 a British scholar and literature expert, Christopher Ricks, wrote about the value of Bob Dylan's lyrics in his outstanding book *Dylan's Visions of Sin*, New York 2004.

Special works

- Chałupnik, A. (ed.) et al., 2008, *Antropologia ciała. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Godlewski, G. (ed.) et al., 2003, *Antropologia słowa*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Frith, S., 2011, *Sceniczne rytuały. O wartości muzyki popularnej*, przeł. M. Król. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Grochowski, M., 1995, *Słownik polskich przekleństw i wulgaryzmów*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Jeziński, M. (ed.), 2012, *Republika wrażeń. Grzegorz Ciechowski i Republika jako fenomen społeczno-kulturowy*. Sosnowiec: Gad Records.
- Ricks, Ch., 2004, *Dylan's Visions of Sin*. New York: Ecco.
- Stoff, A. (ed.) et al., 2000, *Teoria karnawalizacji. Konteksty i interpretacje*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

Address: Paweł Tański, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, Instytut Literaturoznawstwa, Katedra Historii Literatury Polskiej i Tradycji Kulturowej, ul. Fosa Staromiejska 3, 87-100 Toruń, Poland.