

**Sara Kurowska\***

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7370-2925>

## “Why do I write?” On Sławomir Mrożek’s writing philosophy

### *Summary*

This article focusses on the meta-literary thread in the correspondence exchanged between Sławomir Mrożek and Wojciech Skalmowski. The latter, wondering about the actual reason why writers create literature, provocatively reduced the metaphysical dimension of a work of art to learn about its contemporary actual value; whether it is was only trade-based. Baudelaire’s work as interpreted by Walter Benjamin became a major context indicating the diversity in the perception of the analysed problem depending on historical time. The article discusses how during his exchange with Skalmowski Mrożek tried to answer the title question about the reason why he created literature, and, which is the most important, how he started focussing on elements which he previously missed or marginalised.

**Keywords:** Sławomir Mrożek, Wojciech Skalmowski, trade, product, originality

---

\* M.A., University of Lodz, Faculty of Philology, Institute of Polish Philology and Speech-Language Therapy, Department of Polish Literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries, Pomorska 171/173, 91-404 Łódź; e-mail: sarakurowska@o2.pl

I can't write anything smart about your book because what could be written by someone who even if they flexed their every mental muscle, they would not be able to write a book even slightly matching yours. That's like with listening Rubinstein play the piano – I can listen to him, but criticise or analyse his music? My head is terrifyingly devoid of those skills at which you excel. It's unnerving because there are many artist/writers who are, at the same time, not so helpless in that respect. Miłosz is not helpless, nor was Gombrowicz or Witkiewicz. But I have a sense of abyssal ignorance and mental void. And that's what I'll be left with.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Mrozek wrote about his inability to theorise in a letter to Wojciech Skalmowski, his friend, after the release of a book selection of his literary critical texts originally published in the “Kultura” journal. Skalmowski, a specialist in Oriental studies,<sup>2</sup> did actually display a passion for theorising and he was not put off even the slightest by his friend's confessions that he lacked any skill “in that respect.” “I am always interested in the structure”<sup>3</sup> (meaning: in how things work – author's clarification) – he kept saying to Mrozek. He treated letters to him, among other, “as a pretext to »poke« him and compel him to reflect on literature or culture”<sup>4</sup> One such »poker« was the question: “what is the motivation behind writing in the artistic sense, such as, e.g. Yours?”<sup>5</sup> Skalmowski thus explained it:

I question artist's magnanimity: “I give you beauty, take it”, that conceals the unspoken “instead, you give me...” – and now: what? Probably: good disposition; certainty that I'm wise, meaning armed, meaning safe. I think that thus presented a case is a fair trade, and actually because it is trade, not an attempt to hustle something for nothing. [...] I'm referring to, e.g. Gałczyński who wrote entertaining poems because he needed cash for booze; and that is much more pleasant than Norwid's pathos and writing for progeny. When I hear someone talking about the “self-sufficiency of the arts” I suspect a deceitful attempt to wangle something, and when someone concedes “culture's demise” and the stupidity of the audience I suspect the bitterness of a clumsy – or even ignorant – con artist. Your Vatzlav bragging that they beat him

1 S. Mrozek, W. Skalmowski, *Listy 1970–2003*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Krakow 2007, p. 499. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish.]

2 In the 1950s, Wojciech Skalmowski was enrolled in Oriental studies at the Jagiellonian University where in 1952 he first met Mrozek. In 1968 he emigrated to Belgium. In 1975–1998, he was a professor of Oriental studies at a Belgian university in Leuven. Apart from his academic work, Skalmowski published on an on-going basis in the “Kultura”, under the nom de plume Maciej Broński, book reviews and discussions of the outputs of major authors.

3 S. Mrozek, W. Skalmowski, *Listy...*, p. 83.

4 W. Skalmowski, J. Strzała, *Partner Sparringowy*, „Tygodnik Powszechny” 2007, issue 17, p. 8.

5 S. Mrozek, W. Skalmowski, *Listy...*, p. 110.

(and no one gave him anything in return for that) could also be a symbol of a lesser artist, not only a Pole. But now the matters get interesting – in a theoretical sense, not personal – You, a true artist, uncovering that hustle: what would you gain? Is it only the fact of sincerely pointing out the comicality, novelty, and a point of view previously unknown [...], or is there something else – whether, e.g. you thus force a change in the world, like a scientific discovery changes the world? [...] Or differently still: did, e.g. Dante add anything new or did he simply make a grand-scale trade? Could he be compared to Einstein or rather to Onassio?<sup>6</sup>

In his question regarding the cognitive value of a work of art subjecting its eternal myths to criticism Skalmowski embodied a modern scientific point of view. According to one of the earliest myths, art originated from Telchines, a tribe of ingenious inventors and grand artists who combined “both those talents into as if a »Leonardian« type. And beauty was certainly something they created and excelled at, because that was one of the reasons why they were called the »Thelgines«, because they wanted to entice and charm people [...]”<sup>7</sup> From that myth, as Monika Sznajderman has argued, another myth was born: of the jester artist, a clown, ropedancer and a juggler who crosses the existing limits and fulfils the role of a cultural demigod, the creator of culture, and the teacher of humanity.<sup>8</sup> According to Sznajderman, Baudelaire was first to create a counter myth yet which actually supplemented the original one: “the myth of a tragic clown – abandoned, forgotten, living in misery.”<sup>9</sup> In fact, Gałczyński, whom Skalmowski mentioned, not only “traded” poems for money and booze himself but he also created the first lyrical character as a transformed Baudelaire’s original: a charlatan artist trading items no one needed [not necessarily for money or booze].

The fact of comparing art to trade is, of course, nothing new, though one must admit that the question regarding the consequences of the comparison, a question posed by the critic for the artist about what the former gains in trade with his art, is provocative in nature. When referring to rhetoric devices one could state that Skalmowski used rhetoric license [*licentia* in Latin] which consisted of a bold and opened expression of his judgement.<sup>10</sup> However, he did not intend to draw attention to himself; he even stated explicitly: “This is no rhetorical question as I do not know the answer to it, I don’t have it up in my sleeve to close it with an

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, pp. 110–112.

<sup>7</sup> M. Sznajderman, *Błazen. Maski i metafory*, Wydawnictwo ISKRY, Warsaw 2014, p. 193.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, pp. 45, 203.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 208.

<sup>10</sup> M. Korolko, *Sztuka retoryki. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warsaw 1990, p. 119.

alinea.”<sup>11</sup> Contrary to a rhetorical question which is used “to emphasis the speaker’s own position,”<sup>12</sup> Skalmowski’s question seems a kind of a provocation, a “poking” to trigger the writer to offer a statement on writing, a writer who doubted his theoretical mind and who could never be persuaded by his friend to write down a philosophical summa of his artistic experiences. Yet it did exceed, as Skalmowski did admit, one’s personal perspective. One could say that it approximated the friends’ dialogue to Plato’s dialogues as it included a method specific for Socrates: of deriving the core of things from opinions. The researcher intentionally reduced the metaphysical dimension of a work of art to establish its contemporary actual value – whether it was only useful for trade. One of the people to ask that question was, of course, Baudelaire, a critical observer of the modernising city. In the 19th century he observed, being “completely disillusioned,”<sup>13</sup> the transformation of literature into a literary product – a novel in instalments produced in a manner resembling the products of an assembly line. He was also disillusioned about his own situation, that of a flâneur who “ventured onto the market to, in his mind, only browse things, but actually to find a buyer.”<sup>14</sup> Walter Benjamin argued that he fact of comparing the writer “and most of all oneself to a whore was for him a common practice.”<sup>15</sup> Baudelaire felt somewhat inferior when compared to manufacturer writers who reproduced literary clichés for newspaper readers since he subjected to parametrisation something about spiritual value, something most valuable for him. In *L’art romantique* he wrote with bitter irony:

However beautiful a house might be, until its beauty is proven it is mostly a certain amount of metres up and across. The same applies to literature, which is the most immeasurable of matters; it mainly consists of filling up columns; a literary architect who cannot profit from his name alone, must sell things at whatever the cost might be.<sup>16</sup>

Baudelaire experienced his own downfall as the downfall of the supreme modernist concept of art.

To paraphrase a well-known poem by Różewicz, one could say that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century “the bottom end of art was removed” as in losing its sacred character it lost its former vertical structure. What the French poet considered a downfall of an artist, Mrożek approached with irony. When he was asked why he wrote during a meet the

---

<sup>11</sup> S. Mrożek, W. Skalmowski, *Listy...*, p. 111.

<sup>12</sup> M. Korolko, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>13</sup> W. Benjamin, *Twórca jako wytwórca. Eseje i rozprawy*, trans. by R. Reszke, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Warsaw 2011, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> As quoted in: W. Benjamin, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

author event in Düsseldorf organised by the NKVD, he answered that he did it for the money and simply sat down.<sup>17</sup> Yet it was not only in the presence of the NKVD that he spoke about his writing with ruthless self-irony. The artist's musings in his *Dziennik* indicated pessimism when it came to art, not to mention him doubting himself as an author. He thus responded to the question posed by Skalmowski: "For some time I only wrote to propel my career, and even if also for something else, I never thought about that."<sup>18</sup> One could notice, however, how during his writing he wondered – he considered a conditional clause and "rewrote" it increasing its probability: "And, probably, for something else still, not only my career, fortunately, because nothing would have survived only from that which I had written at that time."<sup>19</sup> Skalmowski's provocation was apparently successful. It snatched Mrożek out of his way of thinking. The artist started musing on elements which were overlooked, marginalised, "non-tradable", which survived from his writing at that time; or maybe which saved him as a writer. After a short pause, he continued on a path he knew well:

Later, for career's sake, too, though less so because I satiated my hunger, and somewhat further, because my eagle-eye fixed on the Tatras, the Nysa, the Oder and the Baltic, and the chieftain's forehead became split with a deep wrinkle. I need to conquer it. Or maybe even further, past the Alps... In fact, the careerist model had already borne the model of a professional and it slowly began to transform into it. Mundane routines, necessity, and habits.<sup>20</sup>

Once more, though, he broke the easily flowing story and with some irritation he noted that he was losing something important: "All that is for certain, but that's not everything. But what now I don't quite know myself."<sup>21</sup> He began to question himself reducing his interlocutor to a mere witness of a peculiar conversation. Was he writing only for himself? "Surely not entirely so."<sup>22</sup> Would he be writing had he been wealthy and had any other choices? Let us assume that he would be writing. But would he publish? If so, for whom? For everyone? Or maybe he would only lend to his friends his original copies of small releases or he would read to them aloud? "I shall never find that out,"<sup>23</sup> Mrożek concluded because he came to the realisation that pure meditation, suspending historical order is impossible. The force of negation which he unleashed provoked him to question the established order: Why should

---

17 S. Mrożek, W. Skalmowski, *Listy...*, p. 656.

18 *Ibidem*, p. 115.

19 *Ibidem*.

20 *Ibidem*, pp. 115–116.

21 *Ibidem*, p. 116.

22 *Ibidem*.

23 *Ibidem*.

he “communicate with everyone, that is publish books in the existing commercial mode or stage plays which anyone can attend?”<sup>24</sup> That which seemed a downfall to Baudelaire, Mroźek considered with cool approval: “Entertain” strangers for money? “Yes, that is acceptable,”<sup>25</sup> he concluded, only to add: “But to offer them something more personal? Why exactly?”<sup>26</sup> Mroźek defended the sanctity but not of art as something supreme, rather as something which the most deeply intimate, personal, and hidden. Contrary to the Romantic model in which creators intended to dazzle the world with their originality. “To include in your own writings your whole life and your whole self is completely something different than a simple intellectualization,”<sup>27</sup> Michel Maffesoli wrote. According to him, true knowledge comes at the price of own existence. Probably at that level there occurs the most significant of trades in which an artist participates. Unlike in the case of knowledge devoid of a body, a pure, abstract, and intellectual juggling, it is introspective, corporeal and gloomy; it emerges from primitive darkness.<sup>28</sup> Skalmowski’s question compelled Mroźek to descend into “crypts” which held that which was the most primitive in humans.<sup>29</sup> He met the eighteen-year-old himself down there. It was then that he started writing his journal, and he “had never even dreamt”<sup>30</sup> of being a writer. While descending into those crypts Mroźek, his adult version, of course, managed to inform his interlocutor: “I’m not feeding you some stories of the »Chopin’s youth« kind. I want to wonder a bit.”<sup>31</sup> Intellectual consideration transforms into a corporeal perception of that Beginning and a suspicion about its Original Beginning:

In this you probably cannot omit that which is not articulated, something sensory. Which later can be called: a craftsman’s instinct, something that happens at the interface of the hand, tool, and material. In fact, all children have that instinct of doodling, though usually it is rather a desire to destroy. I don’t know. Maybe some never grow past that. When I started writing the journal, I remember that moment clearly as the contents of the first entry. I felt that same sensory pleasure between good smooth paper, pen, and my hand. I remember realising that. I wouldn’t completely separate the instinct of writing, that is expressing thoughts, from writing, calligraphy, and decorative art, or writing as the act of placing signs, witchcraft.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 147.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> M. Maffesoli, *Rytm życia. Wariacje na temat świata wyobraźni ponowoczesnej*, trans. by A. Karpowicz, Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, Krakow 2012, p. 106.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. M. Maffesoli, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–108.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 105.

<sup>30</sup> Vide S. Mroźek, W. Skalmowski, *Listy...*, p. 114.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p. 115.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

Mrożek also wrote about writing in which that which people commonly include in the sphere of the logos, i.e. expressing thoughts, is mystically connected to the very sensory act of writing, transforming into a ritual. Antonin Artaud, an artist fascinated with primitive culture, argued that it used a language which was limited, specific, and corporeal.<sup>33</sup> The fact of finding in oneself such a language would be a kind of an architext, something which preceded Mrożek's proper writing, explained by himself with the voice of a rational modern order. That voice omits that primitive experience of sacrality, the magicity of writing, yet Mrożek has realised that it was impossible to omit it. How much of that experience did survive in his later writing? In a letter of 24 May 1974, he stated:

[...] if there is one more thing I can count on, it is only that kind of motivation. Some curiosity about own imagination, curiosity about that which might leap out of it or which might appear. The pleasure in introducing order and organising, shaping, selecting elements, and grouping. Of expressing and applying outcomes. But this is where I descend from the higher level to a lower one, I'm not talking about sacredness or magic but about something more like a game, a mental sport.<sup>34</sup>

Mrożek saw the threat awaiting artists, especially professional ones, who can unwittingly forge creative sensory creations using craft skills. They can turn from creators into producers, mere imitations of themselves. Mrożek wished to create, i.e. find something unexpected in himself, to cross his own "mediocrity, measurability, and his inherent limitations."<sup>35</sup> He often seemed to himself a mere craftsman, though, at the same time, he defended craft as a value in elementary art; his defence was, of course, futile. In the age of reproduction, talent and craft have lost their value among the multitude of imitations. Once he returned to Poland, Mrożek viewed the fact of creating under a *nom de plume* as a sign of imitating art, something which as he argued in a letter to Skalmowski discussing one Ingrid Villquist "happens here and nowadays more than once and more than once under just one pseudonym."<sup>36</sup> Suffice to add that one critic raved about Villquist while considering a play by the author of *Tango* to be *dépassé*.<sup>37</sup>

When Mrożek sent to Skalmowski his new work for evaluation, what seemed most important to him was that it was sound in terms of the employed craft, though, of course, he always hoped for, as he termed it, a *surplus*. In a letter of 26 March 1983, he wrote:

<sup>33</sup> Cf. L. Kolankiewicz, *Święty Artaud*, Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2001, p. 179.

<sup>34</sup> S. Mrożek, W. Skalmowski, *Listy...*, p. 149.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 264.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 820.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 821.

As always, I'm relieved that the new play, this *Letni dzień*, is to your liking, that you accept it. Because I'm convinced – at some level I don't know anything, while on others I have more and more convictions, vide: storeys, ranks, hierarchies – that everyone face the danger of slipping below the acceptable level, if not down to talentless scribbling. Only starting from some level is debate possible and, fortunately, *Letni dzień* is a case of that. So once again I managed. And since this time, I ventured into something new for me and I succeeded, it is the more an encouragement to, in the future, engage my further still hidden reserves.<sup>38</sup>

In his writing Mroźek tried to discover in himself the previously uncovered reserves, yet in his life he complained about having “no reserves.”<sup>39</sup> Despite his declared lack of faith in literature one might infer that Mroźek hoped for experiencing completeness and intensity in writing, not in life. Even more so, he noted that actually his writing was an act of defence against life, that his mood improved when fiction “became truer than reality.”<sup>40</sup> When considering Skalmowski's question, eventually this thought came to his mind:

To write maybe also because: in my head there is still so much stuff going on. By happening incoherently it's tiring. The only form of repose is to have such a setup so that everything happens according to a specific order, preferably mine. Through writing. [...] Only writing, the perfectly introvert activity, enables you to focus your attention. Any other work, less introverted, does not allow me to focus, lose myself, feel a relief to such an extent as writing does. There is absolutely no other activity that could keep me at a table for six hours straight without me being distracted. Even reading can't do that, though it is second best in terms of preoccupying me only to writing. So maybe that?<sup>41</sup>

In his concept of the creative process Walter Hilsbecher has stated that the integrity of a monad is constantly threatened by becoming infected with the shapeless, surging, festering matter of reality.<sup>42</sup> Artists exact a very subtle spiritual re-

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, p. 566.

<sup>39</sup> “Everything mounts and attacks, demands things, while tiredness is ever increasing, not dropping. A huge longing for rest, reduction, calming. And the inability to satisfy it. An inability to cope with everything that's bearing on you [...]. No reserves. And I'm afraid that one day in the simplest of circumstance, when, e.g. the postman comes and demands that I sign the receipt of a registered letter, that that would tip the scales and then it would be too much, and that I would become overcome by a fit of hysteria. I would start shouting and I would thrust the postman down the stairs, and then they would take me away.” (S. Mroźek, W. Skalmowski, *Listy...*, p. 368).

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, p. 205.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, pp. 116–117.

<sup>42</sup> Vide W. Hilsbecher, *Tragizm, absurd, paradoks. Eseje*, trans. by S. Błaut, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 1972, p. 162.



venge on that matter. By using an unstable material – paint, wood, stone, sounds or language – they transform it into a work of art with a perfect harmonious order.

We don't have at our disposal any artistic or philosophical answer to erase for ever the question posed by life and the unrest with which it infects us. For a moment we feel free from its torments, then it starts tormenting us anew, forcing us to venture new attempts, answers, new attempts at healing. Sisyphean labour!<sup>43</sup>

One could note that the distinct moment of Mrożek's mood plummeted after he had finished working on a text. When after reading *Garbus* Skalmowski wrote to him: "I envy you writing a play – I mean the realisation you finished it,"<sup>44</sup> in response he read: "Yes, I'm glad I wrote something new, I mean I was glad when I was writing it, now I'm glad no more. Now I'm dumb, empty, and yet foggy, without a direction, assignment and meaning."<sup>45</sup> In short: Mrożek had just finished his new play and yet it was too late to envy him anything. Skalmowski tried to put himself in Mrożek's position – of an artist and analyse that mysterious "mechanism": "I believe that all concrete kinds of work lead to that – when you can't see the result immediately, when you can't see the direct application for the work, etc. – so, probably, you too, after finishing writing, feel things – those inside – in a similar manner."<sup>46</sup> Despite his best intentions, Skalmowski rather managed to reproduce his own experience of an academic, not of an artist. Could he, however, have arrived at any nuanced conclusions using only his theoretical skills, without an insight into that special experience? In response, Mrożek admitted:

Writing is too much for its own sake, it is for me only a process, for the question about the meaning of it to pester me. Eventually, couldn't you compare it to music? To playing music, or maybe even to composing it? I have always suspected that a busker is free of hastiness (when he plays) because his playing has no specific end, his only aim is to play, which means his intention is not to end a composition, the final note is no more particular than any of the preceding ones in any part of the composition. Works which I have written interest me as products which can ensure for me some place within the society (that also covers earnings), yet as "artistic compositions" they interest me to a surprisingly low extent. [...] So my blandness and feebleness are not caused by the fact that I have doubts why and what for I write. [...] But

---

43 Ibidem.

44 S. Mrożek, W. Skalmowski, *Listy...*, p. 202.

45 Ibidem, p. 204.

46 Ibidem, p. 210.

when I finally finish writing something, and through simple exhaustion I don't start anything new, a hole appears in my head through which blandness and feebleness trickle in. I have noticed that concentration, any concentration, it's not at all about its object, its object has no significance whatsoever, it works well on your mood. [...] No, it's not about the goal of writing because it exhausts itself. Blandness rather lurks there and then when there is no writing.<sup>47</sup>

Mroźek argued that a busker immersed in his playing is free of haste, though it would be probably more precise to write that he stops experiencing time. In his book *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time*, Edward Hall argued that "Concentration of any sorts obliterates time."<sup>48</sup> Is there a relationship between the obliteration of time and good mood? Emil Cioran would respond that when we stop experiencing time, we experience the direct dynamism of life, whereas "sensitivity to time is associated with an ability to live in the now. [...] We no longer live *in* time, rather *with* time, in parallel to it. With life we only form a unity, but we *are* time [...]"<sup>49</sup> The breakdown of that timelessness is heralded by "the final note", which is why, contrary to Mroźek's argument, one can suppose it is special. The fact of being immersed in a melody which had stopped resonating within the physical space could be sometimes seen in concert halls. For example, Rafał Blechacz thus reported on the reception of Frederic Chopin's Mazurka in A minor Op. 17 during a concert in Hamburg: "It is a melancholic composition and it ends in a special way – an accord turns to silence. When I stopped playing, I waited for applause which usually emerges immediately. Yet that time there was silence. The audience was so enthralled as if they were hypnotized."<sup>50</sup> According to Mroźek, the object of concentration is unimportant. But is it? The artist's feelings described in the letter can be treated as a record of some universal artistic experience confirmed by various writers. This is how, e.g. Sándor Márai framed it:

A minute after I had finished writing a book which for the past eight months demanded my entire life, health, patience, happiness, freedom, and time, I felt strange embarrassment. I felt like someone who broke free from under a tyrant and torment, I felt ease, I would like to cautiously scream with joy because finally, finally I didn't

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, pp. 212–214.

<sup>48</sup> E.T. Hall, *Taniec życia. Inny wymiar czasu*, trans. by R. Nowakowski, Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie MUZA SA, Warsaw 1999, p. 154. [English version: Edward T. Hall, *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time*, Anchor, 1984, p. 127.]

<sup>49</sup> E. Cioran, *Zmierzch myśli*, trans. by A. Dwulit, Wydawnictwo KR, Warsaw 2004, pp. 14–15.

<sup>50</sup> R. Blechacz, K. Tadej, *Nie wstydzę się mówić o Panu Bogu*, „Niedziela Ogólnopolska” 2017, issue 30, pp. 10–13, <https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/Z/ZF/ZFS/niedziela201730-blechacz.html> (access 22.07.2019).

have to give into the same craze, the same *idée fixe* day and night, I finally broke its neck and broke free from it, from my prison warden and guard, my executioner and tormentor! And, at the same time, I felt homeless. As if I was expelled from my terribly familiar family house and from my homeland where everything hated me and yet was close and personal to me. That is because work is also a homeland, meaning both a yoke and happiness. So, I dotted the "i". I'm finally free. And I warily look around: what am I supposed to do with this freedom?<sup>51</sup>

Mrożek, just like Márai, used the category of homelessness to describe that "borderline" experience. "Now I'm homeless once again,"<sup>52</sup> he concluded in a letter to Skalmowski after finishing work on *Piękny widok*. Finally, in Gombrowicz's *Dziennik* one can read: "I don't know what to write. I don't know what to write after finishing *Operetka*, and I don't know what to write now in the journal. The situation is nothing to be envious about."<sup>53</sup>

One could assume that for modern writers the necessity to create art as a product for sale is not as bad as "finalising" production and the following state of unproductivity, when they no longer create, i.e. no longer creatively process reality. Clearly, the question about the meaning in creation poignantly applies to the issue of time, which in artists' perceptions is a peculiar phenomenon. It is defined by as if an interchangeable rhythm: the flexing of creative forces and their crisis when a work is finished, when an artist has to face a sense of pointlessness, exhaustion, blandness, and "homelessness".

## Bibliography

- Benjamin Walter, *Twórca jako wytwórca. Eseje i rozprawy*, trans. by Robert Reszke, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Warsaw 2011.
- Blechacz Rafał, Tadej Krzysztof, *Nie wstydź się mówić o Panu Bogu*, „Niedziela Ogólnopolska” 2017, issue 30, pp. 10–13, <https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/Z/ZF/ZFS/niedziela201730-blechacz.html> (access 22.07.2019).
- Cioran Emil, *Zmierzch myśli*, trans. by Anastazja Dwulit, Wydawnictwo KR, Warsaw 2004.
- Gombrowicz Witold, *Dziennik 1953–1969*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Krakow 2013.
- Hall Edward Twitchell, *Taniec życia. Inny wymiar czasu*, trans. by Radosław Nowakowski, Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie MUZA SA, Warsaw 1999.

<sup>51</sup> S. Márai, *Niebo i ziemia*, trans. by F. Netz, „Czytelnik”, Warsaw 2011, pp. 141–142.

<sup>52</sup> S. Mrożek, W. Skalmowski, *Listy...*, p. 760.

<sup>53</sup> W. Gombrowicz, *Dziennik 1953–1969*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Krakow 2013, p. 897.

- Hilsbecher Walter, *Tragizm, absurd, paradoks. Eseje*, trans. by Sławomir Błaut, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 1972.
- Kolankiewicz Leszek, *Święty Artaud*, Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2001.
- Korolko Mirosław, *Sztuka retoryki. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warsaw 1990.
- Maffesoli Michel, *Rytm życia. Wariacje na temat świata wyobraźni ponowoczesnej*, trans. by Agnieszka Karpowicz, Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, Krakow 2012.
- Márai Sándor, *Niebo i ziemia*, trans. by Feliks Netz, „Czytelnik”, Warsaw 2011.
- Mroźek Sławomir, Skalmowski, *Listy 1970–2003*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Krakow 2007.
- Skalmowski Wojciech, Strzała Jan, *Partner Sparringowy*, „Tygodnik Powszechny” 2007, issue 17, p. 8.
- Sznajderman Monika, *Błazen. Maski i metafory*, Wydawnictwo ISKRY, Warsaw 2014.

---

Sara Kurowska

## „Dlaczego ja piszę?” Wokół filozofii pisania Sławomira Mroźka

### *Streszczenie*

Przedmiotem artykułu jest metaliteracki wątek korespondencji Sławomira Mroźka z Wojciechem Skalmowskim. Skalmowski, zastanawiając się nad właściwym powodem, dla którego pisarze tworzą literaturę, prowokacyjnie redukuje wymiar metafizyczny dzieła sztuki, by dowiedzieć się, jaka współcześnie jest jego rzeczynista wartość – czy jedynie handlowa? Ważnym kontekstem, pokazującym odmiennosć spojrzenia na analizowany problem w zależności od czasu historycznego, uczyniono twórczosć Baudelaire’a w odczytaniu Waltera Benjamina. Celem pracy jest pokazanie, jak w trakcie dialogu ze Skalmowskim Mroźek próbuje odpowiedzieć na tytułowe pytanie o powód, dla którego tworzy literaturę oraz, co szczególnie ważne – jak zaczyna zwracać uwagę na elementy, które wcześniej przeoczał, marginalizował.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Sławomir Mroźek, Wojciech Skalmowski, handel, produkt, pierwotność

**Sara Kurowska** – Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Polish Literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries, University of Lodz. Graduate of Polish philology at the University of Lodz. She received a commendation [category: literary studies] at the 16th edition of the Czesław Zgorzelski Competition for her master's thesis entitled *Nie-Czysta Forma Witkacego*. She is preparing a doctoral dissertation devoted to Sławomir Mrożek's epistolography. Her academic interests include: modern literature and 20<sup>th</sup>-century art, and the category of corporeality in literary texts and studies.