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# The poetry of the “dry pogrom” – March 1968 in Polish poetry (a reconnaissance)

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**Abstract:** The paper construes the distinctive character of March 1968 against the classical definitions of pogroms (hence the selection of Adam Michnik’s phrase “dry pogrom”). It analyzes direct responses to the events, pointing to examples of Aesopian language (Artur Międzyrzecki) and satire (Janusz Szpotański, Natan Tenenbaum), as well as other reactions (Jerzy Ficowski, Aleksander Rymkiewicz). Further, it is concerned with poems by artists affected – to a larger or smaller extent – by the dry pogrom, such as Arnold Słucki. Views from afar – including Kazimierz Wierzyński’s *Izrael* [Israel] and Jacek Bierezin’s *Wygnańcy* [Exiles] – have also been analyzed. Michał Głowiński’s formula of “March talk” has been used to interpret the poetics of the poetry about March 1968, with reference to Orwellian Newspeak and Klemperer’s LTI. Finally, in the conclusion, a question is posed of whether the poems of the dry pogrom are “poetry of dry despair” (a term used by Julia Hartwig to describe Paul Celan’s poems), as they speak about impossible liquids – blood and tears.

**Keywords:** pogrom; dry pogrom; Polish poetry; 1968.

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We turn a blind eye to what surrounds us, and a deaf ear to the never-ending cries.

[last words in the film *Night and fog* by Alain Resnais<sup>1</sup>  
(Hartwig, 2014, p. 139)]

You are our parks, prisons, Irkutsk dreams. You are a burned bunch of plasma.  
We like to watch as the climates rage; from beneath melting glaciers there rises up like before  
an ancient gene of immortality, which leapt back, bites our legs and devours the blue from the  
grass. A leaf attacks us one by one: a laser, the slightest murmur – a pogrom of hearing.

[Arnold Słucki, *Lato* [Summer] from the cycle *Requiem dla osła* [Requiem for an ass]  
(Słucki, 1982, p. 167)]

I could not tolerate the view of a swastika shown together with a Star of David. The memory  
of the murdered Polish Jews would not allow me to fall asleep.

(Grynberg, 2011, p. 115)

Everything collapsed into debris. Poland changed as a state and as a community, all that  
was left was what the black sotnia had initiated.

[November 1971 (Jastrun, 2002, p. 632)]

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1 The author notes that the echoes of Celan’s poem *Todesfuge* sound here.

## Pogrom: an adjective

One hears sometimes about a “pogrom atmosphere,” “pogrom climate,” “pogrom threat.” I was intrigued by this adjective [*pogromowy*]. In Henryk Dasko’s book entitled *Dworzec Gdański. Historia niedokończona* [The Gdański Station: An unfinished story]<sup>2</sup> I read:

The thunder hit a little earlier, in June 1967. My father, a delegate to the Congress of Trade Unions, returned home in a bad condition. “What happened?” my worried Mother asked. “Gomułka has made a pogrom speech,” he answered. I didn’t know what he meant, but I had never heard him say anything of that sort. This happened a few weeks after the Six-Day War in the Middle East, which ended in the defeat of the Arabs. All the countries of the Soviet bloc, except Romania, severed diplomatic relations with Israel, calling it an aggressor. Convinced that Polish Jews supported Israel, Gomułka called them a “fifth column within the country” and accused them of collective disloyalty. My father lay down on the couch, turned to face the wall and continued to lie so, motionless, for a few days (Dasko, 2008, p. 101).

In a recent conversation with Piotr Matywiecki, I heard yet another phrase referring to the year 1968: “in this pogrom year.”<sup>3</sup> Obviously, I pressed on: was this indeed the language of those times? Was this the atmosphere that later bore the words of Adam Michnik – words that I find to be excellent and quintessential, and that form the core of my paper? “Definitely, yes,” the author of *Kamień graniczny* [Border stone] responded, adding quickly that such an intuition, full of authentic horror, was expressed both by Polish Jews who had been socially excluded and a faction of non-Jewish intelligentsia. Phrases such as Dasko’s “pogrom speech,” Matywiecki’s “pogrom year” and Adam Michnik’s “dry pogrom”<sup>4</sup> overlap in a particular way; the former two refer (also etymologically<sup>5</sup>) to the

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2 Dworzec Gdański – the Gdański Railway Station – was erected in the 1880s as the Vistula Station (Dworzec Nadwiślański) and then renamed Kovel Station (Dworzec Kowelski) in early 20th century. Burnt down in 1915 by the retreating Russian troops, it was rebuilt before the end of World War I as the Gdańsk(i) Station (Dworzec Gdański). During the Nazi occupation the station was referred to as Warszawa Gdańska. When the Warsaw ghetto was being liquidated (1942–1943), it was from the reloading point – or Umschlagplatz in German – of the Gdański Station that Germans sent Jews to the death camp in Treblinka and labor camps in the Lublin District of the General Government. After World War II, the reloading point was closed and a monument commemorating the Umschlagplatz was put up. In 1959, the Gdański Station was rebuilt according to a modern design by Stanisław Kaller.

After March 1968, the Gdański Station was the point of departure for Jewish citizens of Poland – deprived of their civil rights, sacked from work, expelled from universities and schools, intimidated and hounded – in their one-way, no-return trip out of Poland. In March 1998, the 30th anniversary of the March 1968 events was marked by the unveiling of a commemorative plaque on the station’s eastern wall, quoting the words of Henryk Grynberg: “Here, they left behind more than they had.” Henryk Dasko, a March émigré, wrote: “In March 1968, however, the Gdański Station became an altogether different symbol. It is through its platforms that 13,000 Polish Jews transferred on their way to emigration. Some claimed this was yet another Jewish privilege: the natural-born Poles could not emigrate. The sentimental history of station farewells has been described on numerous occasions and in detail. For many, these concrete walls symbolized the last remnant of home, and the most painful of the blows delivered by their homeland, which was saying, ‘We don’t want you.’ Among the March émigrés, there were people for whom parting with that world took decades. There were some who never succeeded” (Dasko, 2008, p. 141–142).

3 From a private conversation in Lublin, on May 28, 2015.

4 “Dry pogrom” was a phrase used by Adam Michnik during the 1995 conference *Polish memory – Jewish memory* in Cracow (cf. *Tygodnik Powszechny*, July 16, 1995).

5 I would like to express my thanks to Professor Joanna Tokarska-Bakir for pointing out to me this “uncanny intertextuality” – uncanny as regards the matter discussed here, the anti-pogrom poetry and Kornel Filipowicz’s story *Suchy piorun* [Dry thunder], published in the volume *Biały ptak* [White bird] in 1960. The publication date in a way indicates that poets are the first ones to know, ones to know the before the others (cf. Filipowicz, 1973, pp. 42–50).

returns of pogroms throughout history, similarly to violent storms in nature: the “pogrom year” resembles a “stormy year” or “a year full of hailstorms” [*rok pogromowy, rok burzowy* and *rok gradowy*, respectively]. The last phrase, dry pogrom, illustrates the specificity, or maybe uniqueness of this particular pogrom as compared to others in history; nobody actually loses their life in the open, there are no broken windows or ruins of houses to clean up and rebuild. Hate turns out to be word, not flesh. It is cynical, not somatic. As Henryk Grynberg (cited further on) writes, it is expressed more in “pogrom cries,” although the number of victims is higher than we tend to think. The feeling of the pogrom year has been recreated well by Artur Międzyrzecki in his poem *Draśnięcie* [A scratch]: “A hit! It is the bullet / of the atmosphere, an unending series / of the executing squads / of the air” (Międzyrzecki, 1968, p. 29).<sup>6</sup>

The year 1968 simultaneously is and is not a pogrom. It “is” one because its consequences in the Polish collective memory resemble or even surpass the consequences of previous pogroms on Polish lands (excluding only the consequences of Jedwabne, understood as a pogrom internal to the Holocaust). It “is not” one because its course is not similar to that of typical pogroms (I follow here the definition from the *Polski słownik judaistyczny* [Polish Jewish dictionary], where March 1968 is not treated as a pogrom – it is called an “antisemitic campaign”; Borzymińska & Żebrowski, 2003a). Michnik’s phrase is in my opinion a very good encapsulation of this identity and nonidentity with other pogroms. Yet it “is” a pogrom more than it “is not,”<sup>7</sup> as Lidia Burska masterfully demonstrated in her book, *Awangarda i inne złudzenia. O pokoleniu '68 w Polsce* [The avant-garde and other illusions: On the 1968 generation in Poland]. There, she uses “pogrom” not as an adjective but as a noun, and defines the essence of a dry pogrom perfectly, in my opinion:

The absurdity of “detective materialism,” scoffed at years later [by Jerzy Jedlicki – K.K.K.], was in 1968 more dangerous than ridiculous, as it was supported by the violence of the authorities. These authorities would stigmatize the defective Poles. The label of anti-Polishness was a stigma of alienation, a measure of humiliating social exclusion and even a push back into the ghetto. Not only that, however. When Władysław Gomułka called the Polish Jews a fifth column, not only did he seal their alienation, condemn them to exile and disinherit them from the spiritual space they wanted to call their homeland, not only did he deprive them of their merits and also, not infrequently, of their life’s work which they could not take with them in a hurry... He also gave scoundrels permission for a pogrom. By singling out the family connections with Stalinism and the “Jewish

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6 It is also interesting to note that the author, born a generation earlier, sounds here like poets of the New Wave.

7 The character and scale of the early (and modern) French antisemitism of the salon seem similar to those of Nazi German antisemitism. The Dreyfus Affair somewhat “loses” its importance when one thinks about subsequent Nazi crimes or about the colonial genocide coincident with the times of Zola and Proust. However, when we analyze not just the size and consequences, but the type of consent, the character of the 1968 “dry pogrom” in Poland and the aura of antisemitism presented by Count Arthur de Gobineau or Edmond Drumont, as well as the exclusionary attitudes typical of anti-Dreyfusards, become increasingly similar. I am thinking here of the extreme and a priori exclusion performed by the authorities, and the collective which legitimizes them, while keeping up appearances and continuously rationalizing their own actions, as well as of the deliberate strikes at assimilated Jews and similar attitude of the intellectuals who express solidarity with the excluded (similar, though unfortunately not as effective). More on that matter in: Bieńkowska, 1999, pp. 76–92; Poliakov, 2008, pp. 243–263; let us remember that the latter monographer of the subject considers the Dreyfus Affair a caesura in the history of French antisemitism.

origins” of “the Commandos,” one could now not only write with impunity that “they express the interests of their rulers – Zionists and Radio Free Europe,” but also spur compatriots on to patriotic deeds with the rhyme [...] repeated by secret police officers: “take the Jew by the payot and get him overseas” (Burska, 2013, p. 87; emphasis – K.K.K.).

March 1968 has been – at first glance – very well described by Polish researchers; there are many scientific studies about it, both general<sup>8</sup> and detailed ones (Andrzejewski, 2008; Suleja, 2006; Jankowiak, 2008; Wystouch & Borowiec, 2010). They include literary and linguistic research (among others, Stępień, 1992), as well as historical, and recently also sociological and anthropological studies (cf. Osęka, 2015; Wiszniewicz, 2008). However, the reflection on poetry seems to be sparse and insufficient. Such extraordinary papers as the historical study by Feliks Tych, *Kilka uwag o Marcu 1968* [Several remarks on March 1968], initially read at the 1998 conference *March 1968. Thirty years later* and then published in his book *Długi cień Zagłady* [The long shadow of the Holocaust] (Tych, 1999), and its continuation published in his *Następstwa Zagłady Żydów* [The consequences of the Holocaust of the Jews] (Tych, 2011, pp. 385–412) have not had their counterparts describing poetry.

Although Michał Głowiński described very well the features of Gomułka’s language of hatred, including its relationship with Orwellian Newspeak<sup>9</sup> and Hitler’s and Goebbels’s LTI (Klemperer, 2013; cf. also Głowiński, 1993), no attempts have been made to look at poems of the “dry pogrom” as a re-action of Polish artistic language. Hence, this paper acts as a reconnaissance and a filling of the gap, by confronting the most characteristic incarnation of “March talk” [*marcowe gadanie*],<sup>10</sup> or the language of Władysław Gomułka’s speeches,<sup>11</sup> with the poems of those whom these speeches denied their civil rights. For this reason, I draw attention to the use of neosemanticisms and black euphemisms (cf. Kuczyńska-Koschany, 2013) serving different functions in the languages of poetry and propaganda (and in the language of everyday life, infected by propaganda, as Głowiński shows). I am primarily concerned with language: the “dry pogrom” as an event in language (I borrow here again from Głowiński).

This paper is of an ordering character, as it isolates the matter of anti-pogrom poetry of 1968 within the literary, historical, sociological and philosophical publications to date; but it acts also as a diagnosis and reconnaissance, since it attempts to determine the real significance and role of the “dry pogrom” poetry among other types of works on the same subject. These other works include even such well-known songs as: *W żółtych płomieniach liści* [In the yellow flames of leaves] (1970, lyrics by Agnieszka Osiecka,

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8 Here, the most fundamental works are the monograph by Jerzy Eisler (Eisler, 2006) and the collective volume *Oblicza Marca 1968* [The faces of March 1968] (Rokicki & Stępień, 2004).

9 *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orwell, 2016, pp. 3–4). Let us remember the three slogans inscribed on the white pyramid of the Ministry of Truth: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.

10 A term coined by Michał Głowiński (cf. Głowiński, 1991).

11 It is worthwhile to consider the genealogy of this language which initiated this particular pogrom was of Soviet provenance. One recalls Michał Głowiński’s remarks about “Newspeak in Polish” as a special language of totalitarian propaganda, actually a quasi-language which would like to be universal. Another trope could lead the reader to the French Sovietologist Françoise Thom and her *langue de bois* – the language limited, or even degraded, to its ideological function (Thom, 1990, *passim*).

music by Andrzej Zieliński, originally performed by Łucja Prus and the Skaldowie<sup>12</sup> and *Tak jak malował pan Chagall* [The way Mr Chagall painted] (lyrics by Wojciech Młynarski, music by Leopold Kozłowski; originally performed by Sława Przybylska). Further, one needs to mention Jonasz Kofta's *Szary poemat*<sup>13</sup> [The grey poem] and Jacek Kaczmarski's *Piosenka pewnego emigranta* [An emigrant's song] (from the 1987 record *Kosmopolak* [Cosmopole]), featuring the verse: "For I wanted to be someone, as I was a Jew, / And if a Jew was not someone, then this Jew was no one" (as cited in: Kaczmarski, 2011).<sup>14</sup>

### Life is elsewhere<sup>15</sup>

The most important volume of poetry, where one can see clearly from a distance,<sup>16</sup> seems to be *Czarny polonez* [Black Polonaise] by Kazimierz Wierzyński (bearing the comment: "written in 1967–1968"), and the volume's quintessential poem *Izrael*, with a deeply remorseful rhyme: "Gdzie tu schodzą się Żydzi / Polak który się wstydzi" ["Where do Jews gather / A Pole who is ashamed"]:

Polish diplomats,  
Carriers for the Soviets,  
Went with Moscow's mail  
To cast a black ballot against Israel:  
Death in abstentia.<sup>17</sup>

Where is the wailing wall,  
The place where misery turned to stone for centuries.  
Where do Jews gather?  
I want to go there,  
Stand among them,  
Bow my head,  
A Pole who is ashamed.

[Kazimierz Wierzyński, *Izrael* [Israel], from the *Czarny polonez* [Black Polonaise]<sup>18</sup>  
volume (Wierzyński, 1968, p. 31), translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter]

12 Osiecka's biographer says: "Following the events of 1968, she wrote a moving song entitled *W żółtych płomieniach liści* [In the yellow flames of leaves] about departing birds. The verse about the scorching shame on the temples became a piercing metaphor of March '68. However, she said about herself that she was a political coward" (Kolecka & Ryciak, 2015).

13 I would like to express my gratitude to Joanna Maleszyńska for pointing the lyrics out to me.

14 I would like to thank Krzysztof Gajda for his assistance in finding these lyrics.

15 The above phrase comes, obviously, from Rimbaud. Taken over by European contestors in 1968, it also became the title of Milan Kundera's famous novel. Lidia Burska found it in *Ciepło, zimno* [Warm, cold], a novel by Adam Zagajewski, representative of the Polish generation of 1968 (Burska, 2013, pp. 16–17, 158–161, 253).

16 Other poems need to be added here, for instance *Wygnańcy* [Exiles] written by Jacek Bierezin in 1969 and dedicated to Czesław Miłosz, and *Wiosny wieców studenckich* [The springs of students' assemblies] by Aleksander Rymkiewicz, which is mysterious to me, but probably links the Polish and the European year 1968.

17 "Death in abstentia" is a kind of anagram of "dry pogrom."

18 The overrepresentation of the adjective "dry" in the poetry of 1968 is also attested to in the same volume, by the poem *Sucho gałęzie* [Dry branches].

Yet the most important voice, expressed in both poetic and non-poetic texts, and at the same time a deeply self-identifying one, is that of Henryk Grynberg. Among his volumes of poems, the most symptomatic is probably *Antynostalgia* [Anti-nostalgia] of 1971, especially the title poem, with its description of America as the Promised Land, its timelessness and placelessness (which in his essays Grynberg will present in much more radical words, bordering on progressive utopia<sup>19</sup>). In the poem, the line, full of relief: “at last – nobody else is here,” is undercut with an enumeration of anti-human and antisemitic people – written deliberately in minuscule, against Lévinas – and the prospect of hopelessness:

Here the tickling of wayward seaweed  
brings a smile to the face  
of the southern giant  
and the blinding sun pierces the blue depths  
and leaves me unsure  
of whether I'm still sailing the sea  
or if it's already the heavens

At last – nobody else is here  
only an immortal plain  
like God  
not ending or beginning anywhere  
Here, I am and I am not  
I half am  
floating  
not waiting for anything  
I would like to stay here forever  
forgotten  
even if this peace is a mockery  
written on water  
when down below in the ocean's belly  
life chased and devoured breathes heavily  
I would like to be forgotten forever  
on this great plain of nothingness  
on which I managed to sail with such difficulty

I am unable  
I cannot be forgotten  
because even if I were completely gone  
*they* would make me up  
and remember me

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19 I am thinking here, for instance, about *Winię Europe* [I blame Europe], first published by the *Res Publica Nowa* magazine, and later in the volume *Monolog polsko-żydowski* [A Polish-Jewish monologue] (Grynberg, 2003). More on that matter in: Buryła, 2006b, pp. 88–99.

I am unable because I too cannot  
forget all those  
anti-human faces  
sometimes called antisemites

I should probably be grateful to them  
thanks to them I can so easily avoid nostalgia  
thanks to them the call of a tern  
sounds like the rasping of a razor  
for my Proustian scents are the stench  
of a childhood seared with a swastika  
no one had to tell me fairy tales  
because I lived through them  
I still remember the megaphonic deathly voice  
the same one I hear *again* today  
kiczko calls out from my ukraine  
and walichnowski calls from my lithuania

(and drabarek from the kurier polski  
some “lon” from sztandar młodych  
aleksander tarnawski from polish radio  
zenon wilczewski and klaudiusz hrabyk  
zdziław andruszkiewicz and alina reutt  
from walka młodych and even  
ignacy sic krasicki from the television screen)

we have certainly not yet travelled far enough  
let's go let's go further

[Henryk Grynberg, *Antynostalgia* [Anti-nostalgia] (1971),  
from *Wróciłem: Wiersze wybrane z lat 1964-1989* [I am back: Selected poems from 1964-1989]  
(Grynberg, 1991, p. 52), translated by Thomas Anessi; italics – Henryk Grynberg, emphasis – K.K.K.]<sup>20</sup>

Particularly important in this poem is the post-Holocaust and post-pogrom sense of hearing, captured as the dramatic couplet of a child of the Holocaust who was repeatedly denied the identity of a Polish Jew: “I still remember the megaphonic deathly voice / the same one I hear *again* today.” Here, the author singled out the word “again” as the center of self-identification – referring to yet another exclusion from the community into which he was born (first during the Nazi period, and then at end of the 1960s; first by the Holocaust, and then by a pogrom). Indeed, in *Rachunek za Marzec* [A check for March] Grynberg calls 1968 “a bastard of hitlerism.” I am not going to develop this

<sup>20</sup> Grynberg must have been haunted by this poem, since he included another version of it in his next selection of poems, *Z Księgi Rodzaju* [From the Book of Genesis] (Grynberg, 2000, pp. 28–29).

idea further, as Sławomir Buryła analyzed it very carefully and precisely in the chapter entitled *Zagłada i Marzec* [Holocaust and March] of his monograph, *Opisać Zagładę* [Describing the Holocaust] (Buryła, 2006a). I would merely like to recall here – as it is very important in this context – a fragment of Grynberg’s text from the Paris *Kultura* (issue 11 of November 1968):

I was born in the largest – three and a half million – and culturally oldest Jewish community, which was known worldwide as the “Polish Yishuv.” I am only thirty-two years old. A year ago, when I left Poland, twenty-five thousand Jews were still living there. Today, as I am writing these words, half of those twenty-five thousand have left or are leaving. How fast does history rush! [...] For history, this is yet another exile. [...] 1968 is the year of the expulsion of Jews from Poland; the year in which the phenomenon known as the Polish Jewry ended, and we need to be aware of it (Grynberg, 2010, p. 595).

It is as if Grynberg was trying to narrate the pogrom<sup>21</sup> and this exile through all means: with poems, prose (*Memorbuch*), journalism, and memories. In his *Pamiętnik* [Diary] (see Grynberg, 2011, pp. 113–132), 1968 consists almost exclusively of antisemitic quotations copied from national press and concerning the author. The most important text, however, written from a greater temporal distance, is *Historia polsko-żydowska* [A Polish-Jewish history] from the volume of essays entitled *Monolog polsko-żydowski* [A Polish-Jewish monologue], where Grynberg consistently uses the phrase “March pogrom”:

After the March pogrom, the University of Warsaw dismissed three young mathematicians, but when it turned out that the name of one of them was “purely” German, the error was quickly corrected [...]. In the Third Polish Republic, a political opponent is “accused” of hiding the name of a Jewish grandfather or grandmother, while the “truly” German name does not bother anyone. It is good that Germans are accepted, but why not Jews? Did they inflict so much more damage on the Poles?

Only one-tenth of Polish Jews survived the Holocaust; of them, only one-tenth – in Poland. After the Kielce pogrom and the mass flight there was only one-tenth left (communists, Polonophiles, Jews with Aryan documents and those who didn’t quite know who they were). After the return of Gomułka and company, anyone who could packed their suitcases (and boxes, because they allowed you to take your furniture) and only one-tenth was left again. After the March pogrom, again only one-tenth of these remained. This is, literally, what constitutes decimation; not just “thinning out” or “culling,” as the dictionaries would state.

In 1968, the one-hundred-percent-true communists implemented the anti-Jewish program of the one-hundred-percent-true anticommunists of 1938. Traditionally, in a European way, via humiliation – incapacitation – plunder – exile, with the addition of the Nuremberg criterion of origin (at least one grandfather or one grandmother). On a smaller scale, since after the Holocaust, but more shamefully, since after the Holocaust. [...] That March was a bastard of hitlerism, though fortunately one that came too late. The Jews already had a small but effective asylum in the south and a gateway to the west, because after the

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21 I refer here, of course, to the title of B. Krupa’s extraordinary book, *Opowiedzieć Zagładę: Polska proza i historiografia wobec Holokaustu (1987–2003)* [Narrating the Holocaust: Polish prose and historiography in the face of the Holocaust] (Krupa, 2013).



shameless murder of several million defenseless people in the European salon, it was not appropriate to refuse several thousand visas.

March was a “dry pogrom,” as Michnik aptly stated. Aptly – because the perpetrators remained high and dry. Dozens of fatalities (suicides, heart attacks, strokes), thousands of serious wounds that have never healed, yet no one has been punished. No attempt was even made to hold anyone accountable for the worst racial persecution since the Nazi Reich, for the biggest Polish pogrom, in which almost all state and social institutions, workplaces, schools and universities participated. Thirty years later, the President apologized for the crime, but punishment was not even mentioned. The government, now law-abiding, paid compensation to the citizens who were persecuted for their opposition activities, but not to those who were persecuted for nothing. Those who were deprived of their jobs, apartments and property; removed from the university; defamed publicly in the media; illegally imprisoned and forced to flee the country in which they had invested their lives. (Grynberg, 2003, pp. 33–35; emphasis – K.K.K.)

Here, Grynberg pays astute attention to the oxymoronic character of the pogrom: the word in its etymology is hot (“what happens after the thunder, after the strike of lightning”) – yet here we are dealing with a chilled designation; this pogrom is “dry,” decreed and legitimized by the authorities. I shall return to this topic in the conclusion.

### **Arnold Słucki, or a synecdoche**

The post-pogrom life story of Arnold Słucki is exceptional, as it is tragic, with its longing, remoteness and finally lonely death (there are analogies; for instance, to the Jewish fate of Stanisław Wygodzki<sup>22</sup>). Jerzy Ficowski’s poem entitled *Dworzec Gdański 1968* [The Gdański Station 1968] (from the volume *Gryps* [Secret message / Kite], 1979) was published already after Słucki’s death and dedicated “to the memory of Arnold Słucki”:

Departing Now departing  
Get on Close the doors please  
Departing for the sunken islands  
down beneath the dried up seas

there in the heart’s chamber  
get on close the doors please  
he’ll meet his death overdue  
blend into its crowd  
delayed just him  
farewell Arnold

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22 These are very clear, for instance, in the poem *Pora już wracać* [Time to return]. Concerning this subject, cf. primarily Bruder, 2003. I would like to thank Alina Molisak very much for drawing my attention to this book. Cf. also: Szablowska-Zaremba, 2010, pp. 213–230; Wojdowski, 1993.

and he waves from the window  
of a suddening distance  
first only with a handkerchief  
and now with the sky  
in which a cloud lingers on<sup>23</sup>  
above us and stays

and we unreturnably remain

[Jerzy Ficowski *Dworzec Gdański 1968* from the volume *Gryps* (1979)  
(Ficowski, 2014, p. 175), translated by Piotr Sommer and Jennifer Grotz, emphasis – K.K.K.]

The title leaves no illusions as to the circumstances of the good-bye, and the lonely single line “farewell Arnold,” where a farewell to a friend on leaving a train station with a one-way ticket blends with his departure forever – death – captures the terror of a post-pogrom fate. This pogrom did bring deaths, but they occurred in a syncopated rhythm, away from the gaze of the perpetrators. The passages about the “heart’s chamber” and the single “overdue death” clearly place the exoduses and deaths of March 1968 in the context of Holocaust survivors being finished off (especially since Słucki died of heart failure, and especially since there were gas chambers). They place them in the sphere of continued and planned expulsions and extermination. We are no longer surprised that the antisemitic leaflets of March 1968 were modeled on Joseph Goebbels’s propagandist “achievements.” The departure towards the “dried up seas” with “sunken islands” allows us to imagine the contours of the “dry pogrom’s” Atlantis.

Let us recall the life story of Arnold Słucki, before and after the pogrom. He was born in 1920 in Tyszowce (symbolized by Szagalowo in his poetry) as Aron Krajner (Kreiner), in an orthodox Jewish family, and then used the literary pseudonym of Arnold Słucki as his family name consistently, starting in 1951. Having received a traditional religious education, he studied at the State Seminar for Mosaic Religion Teachers in Warsaw (1934–1939). Then, he was dismissed from school and not allowed to take the Baccalaureate exam due to being a member of the Communist Youth Union (since 1936). At that time he began writing poems in Yiddish and debuted in the Jewish press; during the war he also taught Polish, Russian and Ukrainian in Volodymyr-Volynskiy, and later in Uzbekistan. He was an activist of the Komsomol, a soldier of the Red Army from December 1942, a soldier of the Polish Army from 1943, and from 1944 a member of the editorial staff of the division newspaper *Do boju*, later transformed into *Życie Warszawy*. He also cooperated with *Twórczość* and published twelve volumes of poetry. As a fervent communist, he belonged to the Association of Fighting Youth (ZWM), Polish Writers’ Union (ZLP), Association of Polish Youth (ZMP), Polish Workers’ Party (PPR) and Polish United

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23 The topos here is of a distinctive post-Holocaust character. Such a cloud appears in Wisława Szymborska’s poem *Jeszcze* [Still] (1957), in the title of Piotr Matywiecki’s volume *Ta chmura powraca* [This cloud returns] (2005) and its very short, meaningful title poem: “This cloud returns every year – / it became a beggar asking for someone’s eyes. / No one sees it.” It appears also in *Dym* [Smoke], a children’s story about the Holocaust by Antón Fortes and Joanna Concejo (Fortes & Concejo, 2011).

Workers' Party (PZPR). Due to tuberculosis, he was demobilized in 1946. In 1966, he left the Polish United Workers' Party after signing a protest letter concerning the expulsion of Leszek Kołakowski. He left for Israel in September 1968 and then went to West Berlin in 1970. One of the particularly important and dramatic circumstances of Słucki's forced emigration is the fact that, since 1963 a captain of the Polish Army, in 1971 he was degraded to the rank of private by Wojciech Jaruzelski, then Minister of National Defense, "due to a lack of moral values." *The Polish Jewish dictionary*, which I use here, closes this period of Słucki's stay in exile – and at the same time so close to Poland, in the geographical sense – with one important sentence: "With a feeling of loneliness, he awaited the possibility of returning to Poland" (Borzymińska & Żebrowski, 2003b, pp. 545–546).

Ryszard Matuszewski described Słucki's exile more closely in the introduction to the posthumous selection of his poems, *Biografia anioła* [Biography of an angel] (Matuszewski, 1982, pp. 7–22). Matuszewski recalls that "the last poem written by the poet prior to his departure from Poland and closing the collection *Requiem dla osła* [Requiem for an ass] was marked with the following annotation: 'Warsaw, September 9, 1968'" (Matuszewski, 1982, pp. 15–16).<sup>24</sup> It is a poem without a title, and an attempt at a new beginning of the world – an attempt that is impossible, condemned to death, and evoking the experience of the Holocaust:

An auger through the heavens,  
carving in death:  
a new existence  
out of Adam's rib,  
which I found here  
in a former cemetery –  
iron trees  
ash on the landscape.

[Arnold Słucki, untitled, in: *Requiem dla osła* (Słucki, 2014, p. 45), translated by Thomas Anessi]

In the introduction to *Biografia anioła* [Biography of an angel], Matuszewski referred to Jacek Bocheński's essay:

In his beautiful and wise piece, Jacek Bocheński asks: "Did he have to emigrate in 1968?" answering promptly: "Of course, he did not have to, and today we know better than then that whoever was able to resist the pressure, did not have to leave. But Arnold was convinced that he not only must, but also should leave, if they demanded so. Were the demands directed at him more than at others? He was absolutely certain of that. Perhaps we will never find out whether this feeling was based on a fairly realistic premise or whether, in his sensitive imagination, these premises became more than they would have for anyone else. In any case, he did not consider that the imperative (external or internal) of emigration could be opposed. He thought of himself as an exile, but at the same time felt called to leave as if it was his moral duty and destiny."

<sup>24</sup> By way of digression, I would like to add that this date is a special day when poets depart. On September 9, 1939, Józef Czechowicz died during the bombardment of Lublin by the Germans.

Bocheński continues with a reminiscence of a conversation on this painful subject with the poet, in which Słucki stated: “I’ve come to understand where my place is. They are driving me out, but I understand now. I have to be in Israel.”

[...]

“Yes – Bocheński writes – the land of Abraham, David and the prophets, but also the land of the Essenes and Jesus Christ. [...] The idea of such a relationship of two religions and a certain extended ecumenism would accompany him in Israel” (Matuszewski, 1982).

Słucki gives expression to his disillusionment with Israel in poems such as *Koleśda* [Carol], *Koncert* [Concert], *Niś* [Thread], *Via Dolorosa* or *Kadłub* [Torso]; according to Bocheński, the poet did not succeed there, with either Judaism, or ecumenism, secularity, pacifism or humanist universalism (Matuszewski, 1982, p. 18). At that time, as in the case of forced emigration from Poland, he provided each unsuccessful attempt to find a new place on Earth with a date. *Z buszu* [From the bush] was the last poem written in Israel, on May 7, 1970;<sup>25</sup> the first poem from Ramersdorf in Germany was dated by Słucki June 22, 1970.

Both the story of David and Goliath in the poem *Mit wtóry* [The second myth] from Ashdod, dated November 9, 1968:

David from stone,  
Goliath from light –  
A sling from the name  
I call out  
repeatedly  
at night.

[Arnold Słucki, *Mit wtóry* (1968) (Słucki, 2014, p. 49),  
translated by Thomas Anessi]

and the myth of Genesis in *Tego chćecie* [What you want] (Ramersdorf, September 10, 1970), were myths in which Słucki was searching for hope; as it turned out, the endeavor was futile:

Like  
dying  
on the day of creation,  
when the earth and plants are happening  
and nothing yet is a model  
of anything else. To have enough tact  
not to be

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25 Mieczysław Jastrun wrote about Słucki’s departure from Israel in his diary of November 1971 – very bitterly: “A totalist state – from one extreme to another. The propaganda knows no half-tones or justifications, or even little attempts at reaching the truth regarding any phenomenon. Through and through. Nationalism? Only the darkest breed. This extremity is characteristic of endangered nations or those suffering from various complexes. Jews in Israel breed their own racism, a very ugly one, which makes one think of Biblical times and customs. The Słucki family apparently experienced this madness first-hand – they escaped from Poland and from Slavic racism, and fell into the Jewish one. Not being ‘fully’ Jewish, Słucki’s wife was hounded almost completely, together with her fully Jewish husband. They left in order to look for some kind of support in the old Europe, from where the crusades used to set off” (Jastrun, 2002, pp. 632–633).



The tuberculosis was healed, what was not healed was his longing, which after he moved to Germany was probably intensified by the extraordinary proximity of Poland. The poet called it “amputation”; in a poem under such a title – from the cycle *Requiem dla osła* [Requiem for an ass] – he suffered from sui generis phantom pains:

And so it still hurts, like an amputated leg  
this feathered emptiness and ash makes us itch,  
They sighted in Mazovia two willows  
in green tallits and some kind of stand  
amidst the heavens, like a market stall,  
like a piano, pale black on white,  
until angels gathered with hoes  
with muscles tensed like Salvador Dali,  
and then fell like a ray of light into a thick emulsion,  
the very memory of them zigzagged by.

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And all the colors had the same color.

[Arnold Słucki, *Amputacja* [Amputation],  
from the cycle *Requiem dla osła* [Requiem for an ass] (Słucki, 1982, p. 158),  
translated by Thomas Anessi]

Słucki belongs to the few victims of the dry pogrom known by name, all the more uncommon as they made their deadly trauma their topic. Therefore, the story of his fate constitutes a *pars pro toto* here:

[...] he probably was almost a symbol: the symbolic embodiment of that Polish Szagalewo, no longer existing today, burning, insane, entangled, whose ashes had long since been blown away by the winds. And in this psychological burning fire of his, he will always remain alive, both as a figure – in the memory of those who knew him – and also as the author of hundreds of strange, dark, tangled and passionate poems that no one else but him could have written (Matuszewski, 1982, p. 22).

## Poets and Gomułka

It seems to me that no better parody can be found than Artur Międzyrzecki's poem *Wezwania* [Calls] as regards the still audible tone of the speeches of Władysław Gomułka, this simplifier of all etymologies (and of his famous cry: “Zionists to Zion!”):

Writers back to your pens  
Steelworkers back to the furnace  
Doctors back to the hospital  
Sick people go back home

Gravediggers back to the coffin  
Bricklayers back to the lime

Chimneysweeps back to the chimney  
Waiters back to waiting

Miners back to setting off mines.  
Militants back to the military.

[Artur Międzyrzecki, *Wezwania* [Calls] from the volume *Koniec gry* [End of the game]  
(Międzyrzecki, 1987, p. 24), translated by Thomas Anessi]

The coda of the final couplet is at the same time a phrase driven *ad absurdum* and an encryption of the tragic relation between March 1968 and the events of December 1970.

However, poetry after this – specific, different and unique – pogrom was also written as post-Holocaust poetry. Natan Tenenbaum's poem *Do tow. I sekretarza KC PZPR Władysława Gomułki list otwarty* [To comrade Władysław Gomułka, First secretary of the Central Committee of the United Workers' Party; an open letter] is deliberately saturated with specific German quotes originating from LTI, distinguished by the author by italics and placed – for better audibility – in the last words of the stanzas. It also ends with a direct and clear allusion to Nazism:

Though you no longer have under our heavens  
Any "Mosiek" or "Srulek"  
...Somewhere a "Zionist" threatens  
Does that bother you, *Herr Gomułka?*

That I want to die here, where I was born,  
That I call Poland my fate –  
This is what bothers you most  
*Wiesław, our Parteigenosse!*

The boor caught scent of a new breeze  
Its freshness gave him courage  
Your national socialism  
which solves the *Judenfrage*.

And someone from that crude crowd,  
As if ironically, will just snarl  
Eying your wife  
"So you committed *Rassenschande??!!*"

[Natan Tenenbaum, *Do tow. I sekretarza KC PZPR Władysława Gomułki list otwarty*  
[To comrade Władysław Gomułka, First secretary of the Central Committee of the United  
Workers' Party; an open letter] from the volume *Chochóły i róża* [Straw men and a rose];  
(cited in: Michnik, 2010, p. 700), translated by Thomas Anessi; italics –  
Author, emphasis – K.K.K.]

A similar poem may be found in Wierzyński's collection *Czarny polonez* [Black Polonaise]; entitled *Do towarzysza Wiesław* [To comrade Wiesław], it was written slightly earlier than Tenenbaum's poem, but also in form of a letter. Let us read an excerpt:

[Those who believed WG in 1956]  
They thought you'd sat long enough in your cell  
legs crossed, Indian style  
It seemed you went against the current,  
Our way  
Almost like  
(Sorry for the expression)  
Piłsudski.

Two steps and a sudden stop,  
You turned back  
[...]

You stamped your feet like a rubber stamper  
And you chastised like them:  
Freedom is something *nyet* possible,  
Until the whole world stank  
Of your Polish roast  
From a Soviet rotisserie.

You lost the march,  
The party is finished and that's it.  
What's left for you,  
Secret police scout troops?  
Look out the window,  
How does the night look?  
As the Republic  
Flees from you  
In a thief's bicycle cap.<sup>27</sup>

[Kazimierz Wierzyński, *Do towarzysza Wiesław* [To Comrade Wiesław]  
(Wierzyński, 1968, pp. 34–35), translated by Thomas Anessi]

Poems would also be the first, intuitive, immediate and strong reaction (as violent as the pogrom itself usually is). Such was Natan Tenenbaum's *Rzecz marcowa* [The thing in March], under a bitter and ironic title, driving the black March *ad absurdum*, with a refrain at the beginning and the end: "It was as I said, because I know everything from the press."<sup>28</sup> Most importantly, such was the perfectly satirical *Ballada o Łupaszce* [The ballad

27 For more on this topic, cf. Stępień, 1992, pp. 93–108.

28 First published in the Paris *Kultura*, 1969, issue 3 (258). Reprinted in the volume *Chocholy i róża* [Straw men and a rose] (cited in: Michnik, 2010, pp. 699–700).



of Łupaszko] by Janusz Szpotański, dedicated to Paweł Jasienica<sup>29</sup> (written in prison to a suggestive rhythm of amphibrachic dipodies). Szpotański heard the encouragement to commit pogroms loud and clear in Gomułka's words,<sup>30</sup> which was obvious especially if we confront the lexis of his ballad with comrade Wiesław's speech given to the Warsaw Party officials on March 19, 1968 (Gomułka, 1969, pp. 43–80).<sup>31</sup> Moreover, one of the most well-known fragments of all Gomułka's speeches concerns no other than Szpotański:<sup>32</sup>

At the meeting [of the Warsaw section of Polish Writers' Union], Kisielewski also undertook to defend a certain Szpotański, who had been sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment for reactionary lampooning, full of sadistic hatred to our party and to the authorities of the state. At the same time, this work contains pornographic abomination, which can come only from a man stuck in a rotten gutter, a man of a whoremonger's morality (Gomułka, 1969, p. 52).

*Ballada o Łupaszce* [The ballad of Łupaszko] purposefully exaggerates Gomułka's lexis; Szpotański had a great ear and heard the March talk well. Below, the lexis of Szpotański and Gomułka are compared:

**Szpotański:** “ghosts of the reaction,” “black reaction,” “lying Łupaszko,” “gives orders in the Jewish jargon,” “shamelessly dares to mock,” “was in secret collusion / with Baron Rothschild,” “with a pile of London kikes,” “wanted all Poles / to be converted into matzo” [**pogrom talk**], “a day of revenge and anger,” [rhyming in Polish]: “company” – “the punishing arm of Gomułka,” [the bandits] “like potato beetles / started to gnaw at the roots / of People's fatherland,” “abandoned the crooked course / of vile treason,” “plotting,” “marked [...] with hidden Zionism,” “Yids,” “Finis Poloniae” – rhyming in Polish with “to turn our country / into a Judean colony,” “the Jewish / action is developing,” “a question arises in listeners' minds,” Łupaszko as General

**Gomułka:** “plotters” as a key word; “the dividing line runs between socialism and the reaction in any form,” “the politics of bandits and reactionary remnants,” “the attempt to push Poland on to the path of destruction,” “a handful of reactionary individuals,” “only in this way can the ulcer of reaction be cut out” (Gomułka, 1969, p. 46); “in the name of some abstract freedom,” “political hoax” (Gomułka, 1969, p. 50); “The ban on *Dziady* [Forefather's Eve] only served various backward and hostile forces in Poland as an excuse for their dirty acts” (Gomułka, 1969, p. 51); “the gloomy demagoguery of slanders directed at everything” (Gomułka, 1969, p. 53); “resolution of Jasienica, Kijowski and the company”; the act of exposure of Paweł Jasienica: “His true name is different.

29 Zygmunt Szendzielarz, alias Łupaszka (1910–1951), born in Stryj (then Austro-Hungary, today Stryi, Ukraine), partisan leader, army major, in 1943–1947 commander of the 5th Vilnius Brigade of the Home Army; he fought against German, Lithuanian and Soviet formations, as well as, in 1945–1947, against the communist Polish state; sentenced to death, he was executed on February 8, 1951, in the prison in Warsaw's Mokotów. One of so-called “accursed soldiers.” A figure surrounded by an ambivalent personal myth of criminal-hero.

Paweł Jasienica, born Leon Lech Beynar (1909–1970), born in Simbirsk (now Ulyanovsk, Russia), historian and essayist, dissident, invigilated by the secret police; shortly imprisoned, removed from the Polish Writers' Union and banned from publishing for supporting the youth protests of March 1968; died in 1970 Warsaw of lung cancer. In 1944–1945 Beynar was a soldier in Łupaszka's brigade.

30 J. Szpotański, *Ballada o Łupaszce* [The ballad of Łupaszko] (1968) from the volume *Zebrane utwory poetyckie* [Collected poems], London 1990 (cited in: Michnik, 2010, pp. 696–698). The rhythm is, of course, an allusion to the ballads of Mickiewicz.

31 Tokarska-Bakir describes the pogrom as “a kind of a spectacle, which Turner calls ‘social drama’” (Tokarska-Bakir, 2017, especially chapter 6: *Pogrom Cries*, pp. 221–246; the quote is from p. 222).

32 Gomułka's 1968 speech was first published on March 20, 1968.

Dayan (rhyming in Polish with “compatriot”), “a certain Michnik,” “a toast to Zion,” “a gang,” “a fifth column,” “wicked Zionists / want to ruin our country,” “our land is finally purified / from the cursed Zionists” [J. Szpotański, *Ballada o Łupaszce* (cited in: Michnik, 2010, pp. 696–698)]. His name is Leon Lech Beynar. What kind of an individual is that?” [on belonging to the gang of Łupaszko] (Gomułka, 1969, p. 54); “the most active elements gave the congregation an aggressive and troublemaking character” (Gomułka, 1969, p. 58).

Szpotański’s satire concerning Gomułka and his rhetoric is all the more accurate since the very target of this satire tends to contradict himself as he uses more and more of the “March talk”; the following two quotes are examples of that:

[...] There is now a certain number of people in our country, citizens of our country, who do not feel like either Poles or Jews. No one can hold a grudge against them for that. No one is able to impose a sense of nationality on anybody if they do not have one. Due to their cosmopolitan feelings [a neosemanticism – K.K.K.], however, such people should avoid areas of work in which national affirmation becomes necessary (Gomułka, 1969, p. 75).

We fight Zionism as a political program, as Jewish nationalism, and that is legitimate. This has nothing to do with antisemitism. Antisemitism occurs when someone stands out against the Jews because they are Jews. Zionism and antisemitism are two sides of the same nationalist coin (Gomułka, 1969, p. 76).

### **Poland after the drought<sup>33</sup>**

(A digression.) March 1968 fractures the narrative of the Holocaust as well (or, as Zivia Lubetkin would put it, the Holocaust and the uprising). Hanna Krall talks with Marek Edelman:

Tell me about the flowers. Or whatever. It doesn’t matter what. But it can be about the flowers. How you get them every year on the anniversary of the uprising, without knowing who they are from. Thirty-two bunches so far.

Thirty-one. In 1968, I didn’t get any flowers. Felt bad about that, but already the next year I was getting them again, and I am still getting them up to this day. Once they were marsh marigolds, last year they were roses – always yellow flowers of some sort. They are delivered by a florist without so much as a word (Krall, 1986, pp. 39–40).

Before moving on to the conclusion, let me quote a very interesting memory of Artur Międzyrzeczki, akin to the category of “pogrom miscellanea”:

It was the summer of 1968, a memorable time for us. In March, I had resigned from the position of the Vice-Chair of the Writers’ Union.

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<sup>33</sup> I understand “Poland after the drought” in the same (allegorical) manner as Max Ernst understands “Europe after the rain.”

[...] Jarosław [Iwaszkiewicz] continued to chair; he did not call after his arrival from Italy where he had waited the events out, and seemed to avoid talking about the repressions that had affected his colleagues. I sent him my resignation by mail. From others, I heard later that he said:

“That was a beautiful letter.”

But in fact, it was a fairly dry thank-you to the Board for many years of cooperation.

It was said that Krystyna Wrońska – the first on the list of writers not accepted two years before, at the meeting in Cracow – came to the next assembly. Jarosław sent her out of the hall, saying: “We haven’t accepted the previous resignation yet.”

Wiesław Jukowicz was said to have been hitting the table with his fist, protesting against unnecessary formalities. Jarosław himself talked about it in town and probably did not exaggerate it. Jukowicz had for years been endorsing party hard core members with his heart and soul; it was said that he published an article in *Izvestiia*, supporting the new sharp course of Khrushchev’s cultural policy. All other writers who were approached regarding such an article by the Warsaw correspondent of the Moscow daily refused, including Iwaszkiewicz, who gave some publicity also to that event.

Khrushchev would tell the writers:

“Well, let us suppose that you will succeed in overthrowing the Soviet rule. I am not saying that you have this possibility. You don’t. But let’s suppose you do. And what will happen then? They will hang not us, but most of all – you.”

This story, as told by Konstanty Paustowski, is worth our attention. Indeed, the first object of common hate of the masses and the official black sotnia is everyone, without exception, who belongs to the intelligentsia and dissenters. The street slogan *Bey Zhidov, spasay Rossiuu* [Beat the Kikes, save Russia] will certainly be successful as it has an infinite number of universal variants; it is possible to exchange Russia for any other country, and Jews for any other ethnic group, and the meaning of the slogan remains the same. Russia without the Crimean Tatars, France without colored metics, Africa without Indian people, Ceylon without Tamils, Flanders without Walloons, Bulgaria without Turks and Turkey without Armenians, and all these areas taken together without the cursed intelligentsia and perverse eggheads. Girondians to the guillotine, Jews to Madagascar, writers to their pens! The proverbial well-educated uncle from the Warsaw cabaret remains one of the permanent characters of this police tragic farce, in which he is still being harassed and blamed for all the failures of the totalitarian world. This uncle from the intelligentsia is a libertine, an insurgent, a troublemaker, a darling of the Jesuits, a freemason, a leftist, a “filthy reactionist dwarf,” a defiler of youth and a dissident. The song with the chorus stating “Hit the uncle on the head / And there’s no talk of seeing red” frivolously conveys the whole political sense of these unending campaigns which show the disastrous role played by the Polish intelligentsia from the Piast period, through the Romantic era, until – especially! – the months of “Solidarity” (Międzyrzejcki, 1992, pp. 79–81; emphasis – K.K.K.).

My attempt at a conclusion should start with the third phrase valuable for my train of thought, namely Julia Hartwig’s formula of “poetry of dry despair,” originally applied to the works of Paul Celan. [It is worth mentioning that Hartwig spoke – analogously to Matywiecki, and also as the wife of Artur Międzyrzejcki – about “that March of 1968, gloomy for the Polish intelligentsia, when in the whole country, and most of all in Warsaw, the stuffy climate prevailed and friends became not so much worth their weight in gold, as precious as bread and water” (Hartwig & Strzałka, 2006, p. 79).] In the diary note of

July 10, 2009, the poet noted: “Celan is in fact a mad poet, although his poetry does not carry any of features of his madness; it is guided by a thought and a very careful one; it is governed by a complete freedom which does not contradict discipline. It is the poetry of dry despair” (Hartwig, 2011, p. 210; emphasis – K.K.K.). This paper attempts to answer the question of whether dry pogrom poems are always “poetry of dry despair.” When are fluids – blood and tears (cf. also Tec, 1982) – impossible? When is a pogrom non-somatic?

This question is answered, for example, by Leopold Unger, who speaks of his “farewell without tears” after almost twenty years of working for *Życie Warszawy*. A 46-year-old journalist, he was called – suddenly – to the editorial office of Henryk Korotyński and dismissed from work. Years later, he reminisced about it in *Tygodnik Powszechny*:

I came to Korotyński’s office a few minutes later (we lived close). I immediately see that something is wrong. He is extremely excited. He stands in the middle of the room, shakes my hand, but doesn’t look at me, he doesn’t ask me to sit down and goes straight to the point.

He: Sadly, I have to tell you that I must free you from your work duties.

I: From the secretariat?

He: No, in general.

I: What happened, who told you to, whose decision is it?

He: Mine. I emphasize that, so that there is no doubt, only mine.

I: But why?

He: Because I decided that you are the source of the ideological disintegration of the team.

I: Henio, what are you talking about; this is nonsense, this team no longer has to be ideologically disassembled. Who dictated this to you?

He: No one. I repeat once again that this is my decision alone. And please close all the issues today so that you don’t have to come to the office tomorrow. I would like to end this here.

And so he did. He was extremely agitated. It was obvious that the conversation was very difficult for him; he looked either beside me or straight into the ceiling, as if he was making me understand – though it’s probably not true – that somewhere there, a microphone was eavesdropping on us.

[...]

I felt sorry for him. To be subdued to such an extent so as to take responsibility for the decision to discard one of the oldest members of the editorial staff? With immediate effect? Under such an idiotic pretext? And after, as it was said, the “season”? When no one with a bit of rationalism would even speak of ideology, considering the background of the brutal rush to power and riches on the side of Moczar’s fellows? (L. Unger, *Bilet w jedną stronę* [A one-way ticket], cited in: Michnik, 2010, pp. 604–605).<sup>34</sup>

The conversation, together with the tearless comment, is quoted here as a symptomatic indication of the tone of those good-byes. Such people, dismissed from Poland, would also receive a euphemism: a “travel document,” the “one-way ticket” mentioned in the title. The appearances of legality have been maintained. The pogrom was

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34 Originally published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* on December 2, 2001.

obsessed with its own legitimization. It was “dry,” also in the sense that it was legitimized by the government, which through such acts – logically speaking – lost its right to exercise power, but paradoxically, at first established and strengthened it, although for a short time and in an illusory manner.

Translated by Agnieszka Marciniak

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#### Wiersze „suchego pogromu” – Marzec '68 w poezji polskiej (rekonesans)

**Abstrakt:** W tekście referuję odrębność pogromu marcowego wobec klasycznych definicji pogromu: dlatego wybieram formułę Adama Michnika „suchy pogrom”. Zajmuję się reakcjami bezpośrednimi; są to przykłady języka „ezopowego” (Artur Międzyrzeczki), satyry (Janusz Szpotański, Natan Tenenbaum) i inne (Jerzy Ficowski, Aleksander Rymkiewicz). Interesują mnie także wiersze dotkniętych – w szerszym i węższym sensie – „suchym pogromem” (jak Arnold Stucki). Analizuję widzenie z oddali (np. Kazimierz Wierzyński, *Izrael*; Jacek Bierezin, *Wygnańcy*). Wykorzystuję formułę „marcowego gadania” Michała Głowińskiego wobec poetyki wierszy o Marcu '68 (tu odniesienia do Orwellowskiej nowomowy oraz Klempererowskiej LTI). W zakończeniu pytam, czy wiersze „suchego pogromu” to „poezja suchej rozpacz” (formuła Julii Hartwig użyta wobec poezji Paula Celana) – poezja o cieczach niemożliwych: krwi i łzach.

**Wyrażenia kluczowe:** pogrom; suchy pogrom; poezja polska; 1968.

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