SLOVO

Journal for East European, Central Asian, and Russian Affairs

The 'Protest Singer' Myth: Self-Referentiality in the Guitar Poetry of Karel Kryl and Jacek Kaczmarski

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ABSTRACT

This article examines 'guitar poetry' in Czech and Polish culture through a comparative analysis of two of its most prominent exponents, Karel Kryl and Jacek Kaczmarski. Drawing on close readings of their lyrics, the study focuses on the theme of self-referentiality in their poetry in relation to the perceived public reception and institutionalisation of their works, as well as the relationship to politics, ideology, and notions of freedom. Particular attention is given to how the authors reflected critically on being cast as the focal points for civil resistance in their countries. While both resisted mythologisation, their differing responses illuminate broader contrasts between the Polish and Czechoslovak opposition movements and traditions of lyric poetry. This article argues that guitar poetry functioned less as a vehicle of protest than as a medium for aesthetic, ethical, and existential (self-)reflection.

Keywords: Guitar Poetry, performance practices, bard, Karel Kryl, Jacek Kaczmarski, 'Protest song'

 • doi: https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.0954-6839.2143

Introduction

Few phenomena have shaped the collective memory of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe as widely as music, whether the Baltic 'Singing Revolution,' the rise of progressive rock, or the expatriation of East German *Liedermacher* and poet Wolf Biermann. Even so, one musical and, indeed, literary dissident tradition has garnered less attention in comparative research (in part, due to the unresolved terminological difficulties)[1] – that of the poet-singer or 'bard'. To some extent, this constituted a transnational 'underground' movement;[2] two of its key exponents were, undoubtedly, Karel Kryl in Czechoslovakia and Jacek Kaczmarski in Poland. Bolstered by the portability of the guitar and its relative simplicity, these two poets became focal points for civil resistance in their countries. Their most popular works, Kaczmarski's 'Obława' (1978; a double entendre, either 'The Hunt' or 'Police Crackdown') and Kryl's 'Bratříčku, zavírej vrátka' (1968; 'Little Brother, Close the Gate') serve as accessible, provocative allegories which declaim political repression – whether by ZOMO or Warsaw Pact forces, respectively. Beyond expressions of opposition or social mobilisation, the artists covered an expansive thematic range between them, such as meditations on national history, religious motifs, or love songs, which, in Kryl's case, show the clear influence of the poetics of Semafor theatre. Their 'higher' literary ambitions can also be distinguished by individual works of prose, as well as poetry intended solely for reading.

Nevertheless, much of their oeuvre has been coloured by ongoing domestic reception, popular and scholarly. Kaczmarski, for example, has been lauded by critics and fans alike as the 'bard of Solidarity' for his close ties to the trade union and politically engaged poetry.[3] While Kaczmarski appreciated this popular support, he felt it necessary to reaffirm the individualistic nature of his pursuit, "I do not represent any battle standard."[4] Unlike the Polish critics, Czechs and Slovaks mostly avoided the less familiar, Russian term 'bard', adopting Western nomenclature like *protestsongy* to describe, problematically, the works of artists like Kryl, Třešňák or Merta. This produced frequently absurd results as Kryl himself noted with characteristic irony: "a young listener told me after a show that [my songs] are *protestsongy*. At that point, I wasn't so sure what that meant. He filled me in on Bob Dylan, Donovan and Tom Paxton […] that's how I learnt that I, for that matter, also protest (*protestuji*)."[5] This rebellious poetic mode, recently institutionalised in the decision to award Dylan the Nobel Prize, has framed Western approaches to the artists.

Indeed, these poet-singers are often identified, simplistically, as the Bob Dylan of their respective nations.[6] Such trends seem symptomatic of the Western narratives towards 'dissent' more generally, as Jonathan Bolton points out: "the romanticism and idealism [of dissidents] contain some truth, but they also speak to Western dreams and desires—a belief in heroes, a yearning for a clear stand against evil, a hope for more

[1] Rossen Djagalov, 'Guitar Poetry, Democratic Socialism, and the Limits of 1960s Internationalism', in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, ed. by Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), p. 148.

[2] Djagalov, 'Guitar Poetry', p. 149.

[3] Marcin Romanowski, *Między Bardem 'solidarności' A Jackiem Kaczmarskim: Fragmenty Biografii Artystycznej.* (Gdansk: University of Gdansk Press, 2013), p. 9.

[4] Jacek Kaczmarski, *Mury*, [n.d.] <https://www.kaczmarski.art.pl/tworczosc/wiersze/mury/> [accessed 23 May 2024].

[5] Miloš Čermák, *Nanebevzetí Karla Kryla.* (Prague: Daranus, 2014), p. 47.

All translations, including literal translations of poems, are the author's own.

[6] Djagalov, 'Guitar Poetry', p. 148.

fulfilling forms of political participation."[7] This can certainly apply to the now popularised image of the lone poet, acoustic guitar in hand, playing songs that forcefully repudiate the establishment at immense personal risk. Such an image is compelling, if not potentially misleading and ripe for exploitation. As shall be discussed, both Kaczmarski and Kryl were subjected, *nolens volens*, to the wants and needs of the opposition as a means of galvanising collective support. Opposition leaders, like Havel, implicitly understood the importance of integrating the music 'underground' into a predominantly intellectual movement, as was the case with Charter 77. During the Velvet Revolution, for instance, Havel persuaded Kryl to perform the national anthem from the balcony of the Melantrich building, alongside popular singer Karel Gott, an Anti-Charter signatory. Kryl would later bemoan the carefully orchestrated act of conciliation, concerned that he was becoming a mouthpiece for values antithetical to himself.[8]

This study shall assess the means by which Kryl and Kaczmarski navigated their artistic and social roles, through a cross-analysis of their self-image, in relation to questions of genre, dissent, and their shared experiences of exile. By adopting Gerald Smith's designation of 'guitar poetry' as its critical framework, this study seeks to reappraise the authors' works along more objective lines of discussion. Smith considered the Soviet variant, in essence, a "composite art form which interpenetrates the domains of its two constituent elements, poetry and music."[9] Further characteristics include sparse guitar accompaniment, lending greater weight to the texts, transmission through mostly private channels, namely, *magnitizdat,* and a dissident or, at least, unofficial content and form. Guitar poetry may not have occupied a firm standing in the Czech and Polish literary traditions like in Soviet Russia, nevertheless, this framework holds true for the individual *modus operandi* of Kryl and Kaczmarski. Here, precedence has been accorded to the actual texts of guitar poems, though musical features are noted where deemed pertinent. In doing so, the study shows Kryl and Kaczmarski firmly engaged in personal debates on the meaning and function of guitar poetry – at variance with the collective, moralistic approach, sometimes espoused by 'protest song.'

Performance practices and the wider context(s) of the genre

In Poland, a defining moment for the genre came with the partial relaxation of cultural and political life under Edward Gierek's leadership. Kaczmarski first amassed a popular following within this climate, performing through (semi-)official channels, in various student gatherings and festivals.[10] However, even at this early juncture, Kaczmarski readily identified the pitfalls associated with his chosen literary genre. In an era of increasing commercialism, encouraged by Poland's governmental policies, the poet was aware that the incipient popularity of *poezja śpiewana* may result in its very commodification and detriment.

In *Ze sceny* ('From the Stage'; written 1978),[11] the poet reflects on the essentially metaphysical question of the nature of performance and, indeed, being. The opening stanza depicts the tension between performer and spectator during a live show:

> Wy w ciemnościach – reflektory chronią was –
> Oświetlając tylko scenę, na niej mnie!

[7] Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, the Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 3, doi:10.4159/harvard.9780674064836.

[8] Karel Kryl, *Krylogie: Půlkacíř.* (Prague: TORST, 2000), p. 475.

[9] Gerald Stanton Smith, *Songs to Seven Strings: Russian Guitar Poetry Soviet "Mass" Song.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 28.

[10] Andrea Bohlman, 'Solidarity, Song, and the Sound Document', *Journal of Musicology*, 33: 2 (2016), p. 234 , doi:10.1525/jm.2016.33.2.232.

[11] Jacek Kaczmarski, *Ze Sceny*, [n.d.] <https://www.kaczmarski.art.pl/tworczosc/wiersze/mury/> [accessed 23 May 2024].

Jak na dłoni widać mą stężałą twarz,
Gdy przez mrok próbują oczy przebić się!
Mikrofony wychwytują każdy dźwięk,
Mój najlżejszy oddech usłyszycie stąd!
Ja przemogę sztywność zaciśniętych szczęk,
Wstrzymam myśli niekontrolowany prąd![12]

The physically delineated performing space (the stage platform, harsh spotlights, and high-sensitivity microphones) serves only to isolate the performer from his audience, who are 'protected' by the partition of darkness. A sense of unease is generated in the poem by this latent inequality and the clinical environment of the stage. Naturally, live recital entails an additional sense of vulnerability for the poet, whose every utterance and expression is amplified and scrutinised as it happens. By way of contrast, the invisibility and self-gratification of the spectators allude to a purely voyeuristic posture. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the established conventions for spectatorship evoke a dichotomy between the artistic persona and the authentic self – forced to withhold the 'uncontrollable current of thoughts.'

It is precisely this traditional performer-listener relationship from which Kaczmarski hopes to liberate his audience and himself:

Ja tu na krótko! Kochani – pozwolicie?
Przed wami chcę naprawdę szczerze się
wysilić! To dla was chwila, dla mnie całe życie!
Nim zniknę – niech pokrzyczę krótką chwilę![13]

Kaczmarski is sensitive to the difficulties produced by the intersection of the musical and poetic form. Whilst the addition of music allows the texts to reach an unprecedented audience, it may also contribute to its self-erasure. The anaphora ('dla was chwila, dla mnie całe życie!') neatly juxtaposes the disparate perceptions towards the genre. For the casual audience member, the artist's life pursuit provides only a momentary source of entertainment which ceases to exist once realised. Indeed, this seems to be symptomatic of a tension in the song's 'serious' content and its popular origins in folk music, ballads and cabaret.

Likewise, the poet seems to emphasise the inherent ephemerality of guitar poetry as an 'immaterial' art form through polyptoton of 'krótko' (adverb) and 'krótką' (adjective), 'chwila' (nominative noun) and 'chwilę' (accusative). Whilst poetry is most frequently consumed solitarily in its written form, the addition of music signifies at least a partial transformation towards performing arts and the incorporeal. Indeed, given its social and cultural function, guitar poetry may only manifest itself authentically in the moment of its performance before a captive audience. This apparent impermanence is not necessarily a deficiency, as the guitar poem in fact suggests. The practice of reenactment, in which a singular performance is never exactly replicated, liberates the spectator from the possibility of revisiting the material, thereby necessitating critical engagement. In any case, a favourable outcome is clearly dependent on the will of the artist and audience to establish dialogue. As such, the artist calls on the listener to be receptive, or as Kaczmarski frames it, 'to scream'.

[12] ['You in the darkness – shielded by the spotlights – / Which illuminate only the stage, with me upon it! / My hardened face lies open, plain to see, / As your eyes strain to pierce the dark / Microphones capture every sound, / From there you'll hear my faintest breath! / I overcome the stiffness of clenched jaws, / Holding back the uncontrollable current of thoughts!']

[13] ['I'm here for a brief moment! Dear friends – will you permit it? / Before you, I truly want to make a sincere effort! / For you, this is an instant; for me, a whole lifetime! / Before I disappear – let me cry out for one brief instant!']

This motif, which returns throughout later verses, expresses, at a metaphorical level, a cathartic desire to make oneself heard and break through apathetic silence. As Marcin Romanowski points out, the motif of the scream can also be considered within the aesthetics of Polish New Wave poetry.[14] In the cultural atmosphere of the 1970s, shouting until hoarse was presented as a means of overcoming falsehood or as a final plea of desperation for writers living through an 'impending apocalypse.' Inspired by the strained delivery of Vysotsky, Kaczmarski literally adopts 'screaming' as the primary vocal technique of early works. There is undoubtedly an existential element to this anguished cry, as seen by Kaczmarski's allusion to the *Theatrum mundi,* in which death appears to be personified as a secret police officer:

> Każdy chce mieć i każdy tak czy owak ma
> Tę krótką chwilę między wejściem swym i wyjściem.
> Każdy na jakimś instrumencie gra,
> Choć nie każdego oklaskuje się rzęsiście.
> Lecz ja – ja wiem, ta krótka chwila długo trwa,
> Ale mam tyle, drodzy, wam do powiedzenia!
> Tylko przeszkadza mi ta za kurtyną twarz
> I ciągły szept, że to już koniec przedstawienia![15]

Kaczmarski's alternative, dissonant mode, which signifies his existentialist and poetic intent, compels the listener to treat the work differently to a normal pop composition. Indeed, much of the poet's early work and style (Kaczmarski would later abandon his Vysotsky-esque delivery) seems preoccupied with the limitations of song form. Similar questions arise in 'Ballada autotematyczna' (1978; A Self-Referential Ballad);[16] here, the audience seem reluctant to engage with the composition beyond its immediate auditory aesthetics, despite the tragicomic, internal contradictions this stance brings:

> A gdy akt abdykacji składam,
> Klaszczą do taktu krzycząc – bis!
>
> Ktoś rękę po koncercie poda
> I powie błyszcząc wprost z zachwytu –
> Podoba mi się Synagoga,
> Choć jestem antysemitą.[17]

Nevertheless, issues of mass reception were not immediately pertinent to Kryl given the policy of 'normalisation' which forced the singer into exile. Although the singer toured widely following his debut release in 1969, by the 1970s the movement was increasingly distinguished by its necessitated informality. This unofficial lifestyle was most notably epitomised by the 'tramping' movement, characterised by unregulated hikes in the countryside where music of a political nature was frequently shared, alongside

[14] Romanowski, *Między bardem*, pp. 23-26.

[15] ['Every wishes to have it – and everyone, one way or another, does / That short moment between (their) entrance and exit / Everyone plays some instrument / Though not everyone is lavishly applauded / But I – I know this brief moment lasts long / But I have so much, dear friends, to tell you / bothered only by that face behind the curtain / And the constant whispering that the show is over!']

[16] Jacek Kaczmarski, *Ballada Autotematyczna*, [n.d.] <www.kaczmarski.art.pl/tworczosc/wiersze/ballada-autotematyczna/> [accessed 23 May 2024].

[17] ['And as I resign from the act, / They clap in rhythm, shouting – encore! // Someone will shake my hand after the concert / And say at once, shining with delight – / I like [the song] 'Synagoga' / Even though I am an anti-semite"].

country, bluegrass or spirituals.[18] In any case, Kryl was also keenly aware of the dichotomy between the song's 'simple' origins and its greater cultural or political content. In 'Písničkářský bacil' (1989, The Songwriter's Bug),[19] which was written shortly before the collapse of the communist government, Kryl comically surveys the legacy of musical censorship. The poem derives its humour from the apparently frivolous, trivial nature of music and the regime's increasingly desperate attempts to control it. The President, Gustáv Husák, and the Party leadership – referred to jocularly by their first names – are seen here as ageing and jittery pensioners, troubled by the presence of a bird which has memorised the melodies of Czechoslovakia's most renowned folk artists – Třešňák, Hutka and Kryl:

> Jednou před lety
> snídal Gustav tablety,
> vzteklý na ptáka,
> který zpíval Třešňáka.
> Pták sed na budku,
> pak si vzpomněl na Hutku,
> a když přešel na Kryla –
> už lekce stačila.[20]

In the first stanza, Kryl identifies the absurdity of the regime's endeavours to dispel the highly politicised faction of the *písničkář* movement. Despite their illegality, the trio's songs were widely known and performed openly – in the Czechoslovak countryside especially. Unsurprising, therefore, that the rural songbirds seem familiar with the movement's repertoire. Such ease of cultural transmission, likened to the vocal mimicry of birds, exposes Husak's measures at mitigation to ridicule. Moreover, the avian imagery exploits the double entendre of 'pták' which, like the English 'pecker', has phallic connotations. If construed in this way, Husak's attempts to control the younger writers appear connected to his Freudian concern for virility.

The analogy of songwriting as a bacterial infection, besides encapsulating its threat and uncontrolled growth, manifestly ridicules the Party's proclivity for flowery rhetoric, which, curiously, often constructed hygiene as a metaphor. Dissident writers and musicians could be charged by State Security with *příživnictví* ('social parasitism') and, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, contended with *Akce Asanace* (literally, the Decontamination Act), the cover name for governmental persecution and prohibition. Kryl appropriates the euphemistic language of sanitation to absurd ends:

> Gustav křikl: „Hrom aby ho bacil;
> rozmoh se tu nakažlivý písničkářský bacil!
> Od té nákazy nepomůžou zákazy;
> poradím se s Vasilem
> co počít s bacilem.“ [21]

[18] Tom Dickins, 'Folk-Spectrum Music as an Expression of Alterity in 'Normalization' Czechoslovakia (1969–89): Context, Constraints and Characteristics.' *The Slavonic and East European Review,* 95: 4 (2017), p. 652, doi:10.5699/slaveasteurorev2.95.4.0648.

[19] Karel Kryl, 'Písničkářský bacil' in *Texty Písní.* (Prague: Torst, 1998), pp. 336-337.

[20] ['Once, years ago, / Gustav took some tablets for breakfast, / angry at the pecker, / that was singing Třešňák['s songs]. / The bird perched on its nest box, / then evoked Hutka / and when it switched to Kryl – / [Gustav] had learned his lesson'].

[21] ['Gustav shouted: / "Oh, to hell with that bug; / the contagious songwriter's bug / has spread here! / Bans aren't going to help / with the contagion; / I'll check with Vasil / what must be done about the bug.'"]

Husák's seemingly pathological fear of contamination (evident through the thrice repeated 'bacil', which is rhymed with itself) sees him absurdly delegate to Vasiľ Biľak, a Communist hardliner infamous for supporting the Warsaw Pact invasion and engineering the normalisation process. Such an autocratic response is particularly disproportionate considering that these musicians belonged, for the large part, to an essentially small music underground. Indeed, Kryl succeeds in naming every single member of note over the course of one immaculately rhymed, sub-three minute composition:

> V běsu zavilém
> kopli Hutku za Krylem:
> neb snad v exilu
> vymaní se z bacilu.
> Čárlí Soukupe,
> vsadili tě do kupé,
> Vláďu Veita s Třešňákem
> poslali hytlákem.
> Aby čistka neskončila v půlce,
> vypudili Karáska i Vokatou i Schulze,
> pro klid soudruhů
> Benýška a Neduhu:
> zatočili s bacilem
> Gustav s Vasilem.[22]

The given stanzas relate the three generations of persecuted folk singers. The first, namely, Kryl, was forced into exile at the end of the 1960's, the second – Hutka, Veit and Třešňák – at the end of the 1970's, following Charter 77. The extent of persecution is reflected by the extensive rhymed listing which also include less prominent signatories, journalist and musician Martin Schulz, and figures from the underground like Svatopluk Karásek, a folk singer and Protestant minister who was one of four defendants in the now infamous 1976 trial. The stanza overshadows the actual brutality that some of these authors faced – Soukup was beaten, while Třešňák had matchsticks extinguished on his wrists and was told that he would end up struck by a lorry should he not emigrate.[23] This treatment is expressed, through tragicomic understatement, in the difference between leaving in *kupé* (second class) and being deported in a packed *hytlák* (the colloquial term for a covered wagon).

However, as Kryl acknowledges, prohibition not only failed to destroy the (apparently modest) phenomenon, but bestowed it with unintended credibility and added 'immunity':

> Mikeš z dědiny
> dneska rve si šediny – neb
> vrabci na střeše
> cvrlikají Dobeše.
> V tónu nedbalém
> Nohavicu s Plíhalem,

[22] ['In stubborn rage / they kicked Hutka out after Kryl: / For perhaps in exile / they'd be rid of the bug. / Charlie Soukup / you were put in second class / Vláďa Veit and Třešňák / you were sent in the service wagon / So that the purge (lit. *cleansing*) wouldn't finish halfway through / they expelled Karásek, Vokatá and Schulz, / for the comrades' comfort / Benýšek and Neduha: / the bug had been dealt with / by Gustav and Vasil'].

[23] Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, p. 181, doi:10.4159/harvard.9780674064836.

celou scénu folkovou,
Nose i Voňkovou.
Znějí Lutka, Jahelka i Merta
Paleček a Janík, ba i měchy Jima Čerta…
Vasil s Gustavem
před pohřebním ústavem
unaveně zafuní:
„Bacil byl imunní!"[24]

The third wave of folk artists to emerge in the eighties attracted larger crowds of young listeners to festivals such as Porta. Whilst the regime attempted to co-opt the movement and limit anti-government rhetoric, the proponents of folk often maintained a political subtext in their music and participated, amongst others, in civic actions like *Několik vět*. Clearly, the politicised movement had far greater vitality than the despots, depicted here in death throes. Thus, Kryl cites the very prohibition of the genre as testament to its enduring power and success.

Given the time period, it is understandable that the ludic tone of this self-reflexive composition, which abounds in features of spoken Czech ('sed', 'rozmoh', 'nepomůžou'), differs from earlier works which thematised cultural censorship, such as 'Veličenstvo kát' (1969; 'Your Majesty, the Executioner'). Nevertheless, metafictional (if not openly self-deprecating) humour is also a broader characteristic of Kryl's approach to writing. As noted by Erazim Kohák,[25] Kryl masked the intimacy of his poetry, treating it with cynicism and scorn – such as in the intentionally misspelt title of his collected works *Kníška* (1990). Through this self-refuting strategy, Kryl could avoid the tendencies of moralism or self-importance, and, furthermore, dismantle his own mythologised image as a visionary 'protest singer' which preoccupied the author on his return from exile.[26] Besides, the flippant treatment of the genre in 'Písničkářský bacil' perhaps reflects his awareness – like that of Kaczmarski – of the internal contradictions inherent in this intermedial form. In a comparable manner, Kryl plays on the image of 'light' music serving a greater ideological purpose in 'Demokrácie' (1993; 'Democracy'):[27] "Demokracie zavládla: / zpívá nám Gott i Walda."[28] Apart from suggesting that democracy was achieved for the sole purpose of listening to schlager music in renewed comfort, the presence of the two popsters – Gott and Waldemar Matuška – suggest continuity; presented together their names resemble that of Klement Gottwald, Czechoslovakia's infamous first leader and committed Stalinist.

Guitar poetry, ideology and approaches to the opposition movements

Envisioning the artists through the lens of social movements also overlooks their capacity and preparedness to critique the opposition from within. Besides, the term 'protest singer' might itself imply a derivative, Western-oriented approach, which was periodically problematised in the thoughts and writings of Karel

[24] ['Mikeš from the village / He's tearing his grey hair out today – for / the sparrows on the roof / are chirping Dobeš. / In a careless tone / Nohavica and Plíhal, / the whole folk scene, / Nos and Voňková. / Lutka, Jahelka and Merta ring out / Paleček and Janík and even Jim Čert's bellows… / Vasil with Gustav / in front of the funeral home / huffs tiredly: / "The bacillus was immune!""]

[25] Erazim Kohák, cited in Jan Čulík, *Knihy Za Obradou: Česká Literatura V Exilových Nakladatelstvích, 1971-1989*. (Prague, Trizonia, 1991), p. 256.

[26] Kryl, *Krylogie*, p. 474.

[27] Kryl, 'Demokrácie' in *Texty písní*, pp. 378-379.

[28] ['Democracy has prevailed: / Gott and Walda sing to us'].

Kryl in particular. In 'Pasážová revolta' (1968; 'The Arcade Revolt'),[29] Kryl sets forth a polemical appraisal of the 60's generation and counterculture movement during the final days of the Prague Spring. Kryl's attitude towards the movement – as something peripheral, hidden, inaccessible – is neatly encapsulated by the song's suggestive title; 'Pasážová revolta' envisages a rebellion taking place in the narrow arcades and poorly-lit side streets which constitute the liminal spaces of central Prague. As Kryl has acknowledged, it also alludes to hippie gatherings where fellow musicians Hutka and Kalandra would perform (typically in Platýz arcade, just off Wenceslas square).[30] Accordingly, the composition opens with the prototypic motifs of the underground movement:

> Nosíme z módy kopretiny
> čímž okrádáme stáda
> a vůl – kdys jméno obětiny
> je titul kamaráda
> Na obou nohách vietnamku
> a jako komfort hlavu
> Na klopě placku jak psí známku
> Znak příslušnosti k davu[31]

The Czech subculture, much like its American model, developed a distinct set of features in this period, namely, popular accessories (flip-flops and pin badges) and the espousal of a new argot (the poet cites the self-contradictory epithet 'vůl' ['ox', 'dude'], originally used in a purely pejorative sense.) For Kryl, these semiotic tokens of individuality and non-conformity paradoxically result in a monotony of thought and ideas, as evidenced by the simile ('jak psí známku'). Their actions – wearing daisy chains, in this case – do not serve as symbolic gestures of love or peace, but rather something fashionable, realised only for the accumulation of social capital. The poet, essentially, treats the movement as unserious, even hedonistic: 'a místo přesvědčení / jen pití piva Z žalu.'[32]

The fact that Kryl inverts the standard notions towards Western counterculture also speaks to his personal artistic vision. Kryl did not count himself as a member of Dylan's generation, rather he emphasised that his work followed in a domestic tradition, namely, the avant-garde theatre scene of the First Republic, the Divadla malých forem. Indeed, critics have likened 'Pasážová revolta' to 'Hej, pane králi' by Werich and Voskovec, a generational vignette of the 30's.[33]

Beyond the immediate, American-influenced iconography of the underground, Kryl identifies the atmosphere of resignation which had spread throughout much of society:

> Pod zadkem stránku Dikobrazu
> vzýváme Zlaté tele
> Sedáme v koutcích u obrazů

[29] Kryl, 'Pasážová revolta' in *Texty písní*, pp. 110-111.

[30] Vojtěch Klimt, *Akorát Že Mi Zabili Tátu: Příběh Karla Kryla.* (Prague: Galén, 2010), p. 80.

[31] ['We wear daisies, as is fashion, / doing this we steal from the herds / and *vůl* – once the name of a sacrificial animal / is a term for a friend / Flip flops, on both feet, / and our head, just for comfort / A badge on our lapel, like a dog-tag / A sign of belonging to the crowd'].

[32] ['And instead of firm convictions / only sorrowful beer-drinking'].

[33] Honza Dědek and Josef Vlček, *Zub Času: Rozhovor*, (Prague: Galén, 2012), p. 53.

Čekáme Spasitele
Civíme lačně na měďáky
My – Gottwaldovi vnuci
A nadáváme na měšťáky
tvoříce – Revoluci[34]

Through the visual symbolism, Kryl suggests that his generation's acts of political defiance have become purely nominal and besides, lack conviction. This seems apparent given the ambiguous status of the cited satirical magazine *Dikobraz* (lit. 'Porcupine'). Although the magazine was censored for anti-Soviet content following the Prague Spring, *Dikobraz* broadly served as a propagandistic tool and would have been readily available in newspaper stands.[35] At any rate, his compatriots hide their tentative political commitment, concealing the magazine 'beneath their bottoms.' In this passage, Kryl seems, again, to be referencing the (subdued) hippie gatherings outside the Platýz Art Gallery in which paintings served as the backdrop for performances ('Sedáme v koutcích u obrazů.') Kryl bitterly equates the atmosphere with the biblical narrative of the Exodus, namely, the Israelites' cult worship of the Golden calf and the hope for the Saviour's coming. Despite the novelty of the movement, it is as though their misguided belief in foreign intervention is firmly imbued with precedents from antiquity.

Illustratively, Kryl's iconoclasm extended not only to official taboos, but also to cherished institutions of the opposition and reform movement. Josef Smrkovský, for one, took great exception to the text after a 1969 performance, remarking, 'the young comrade takes a very dim view of everything.'[36] As Kryl liked to point out, the reformist leader was himself removed from governmental functions only a few weeks later. In any case, Kryl's professed intention was to provoke discussion from within the actual music underground, rather than strictly moralise. Indeed, the poet appears to include himself amongst this troubled generation, that is, if one takes the assumption that the 'wir' narrator expresses authorial voice, rather than external detachment. Likewise, some of the poem's imagery (as the title itself) – intelligible only to the few thousand who participated in underground gatherings – raises doubts about the 'mass function' of Kryl's guitar poetry. Kryl argues that the movement should look beyond external models of support and (as the subsequent invasion showed) its unfounded optimism and complacent pacifism.

Throughout his oeuvre, Kaczmarski expressed a separate distrust for mass movements, most notably in the metafictional work 'Mury' (1978, released 1980; 'The Walls').[37] In this piece, Kaczmarski interpolates the melody of 'L'estaca' (1968, 'The Stake') by Catalan singer-songwriter Lluis Llach, not to demonstrate any particular support for independence, or, indeed, suggest that the inevitable defeat of totalitarianism, whether Francoist Spain or Communist Poland, are somehow linked – but rather as a theoretical discussion on the nature of musicing and social organisations. This is achieved through the account of an unnamed, archetypal artist who performs before a crowd:

On natchniony i młody był, ich nie policzyłby nikt;
On im dodawał pieśnią sił, śpiewał, że blisko już świt.

[34]['A page from *Dikobraz* magazine under our backsides / we worship the Golden Calf / We sit in corners beside paintings / awaiting the Saviour / We stare greedily at copper coins / We – Gottwald's grandchildren / And we curse the rascals from the town / The makers of the Revolution'].

[35] Matthew, Sweney, 'Representations of the USA in the Czech Magazine Dikobraz (1945–1989)', in *America in Foreign Media*, ed. by Michal Peprník and Matthew Sweney, (Olomouc: Palacký University Olomouc), 2014, p. 91.

[36] Kryl, *Krylogie*, p. 93.

[37] Kaczmarski, *Mury*.

Świec tysiące palili mu, znad głów podnosił się dym;
Śpiewał, że czas by runął mur…
Oni śpiewali wraz z nim:[38]

The artist and the mass movement occupy a binary opposition, as emphasised by the anaphora of the pronoun, normally dropped in Polish: 'On natchniony […] / On im dodawał […] / Oni śpiewali'. Aside from establishing their lack of integration, the apparent anonymity of the actors suggests that any sense of individuality and personal responsibility has now been eroded. Indeed, the artist's foreboding calls for the 'dawn' of a new age is thoughtlessly repeated by the crowd in unison:

Wyrwij murom zęby krat!
Zerwij kajdany, połam bat!
A mury runą, runą, runą
I pogrzebią stary świat![39]

The repeated refrain serves as an embedded song, which is audibly marked by the change to an aggressive strumming pattern and a *Sprechgesang* delivery – as well as visually by the written colon. The fictionalised singer presents an emphatic tricolon of imperative phrases, demanding forceful and urgent action which should culminate in the burial of the old world. Such imagery appears to rearticulate the generic message of 'L'estaca', which calls for the dismantling of the stake to which the people are bound. Through the implicit recontextualisation, the singer's capacity to generate social mobilisation (and, indeed, violence) is brought to the fore. Clearly, the intertextual adaptation should be considered within the framing narrative of 'Mury':

Wkrótce na pamięć znali pieśń i sama melodia bez słów
Niosła ze sobą starą treść, dreszcze na wskroś serc i głów.
Śpiewali więc, klaskali w rytm, jak wystrzał poklask ich brzmiał,
I ciążył łańcuch, zwlekał świt…
On wciąż śpiewał i grał:[40]

With the aid of music, the nameless artist can appeal to countless, adulating fans, on both an emotional and intellectual level. However, as witnessed in 'Ze sceny,' the interrelationship of poetry and performance demands the artist fully relinquish the rights to their works – given the interpretative nature of music, the composition belongs, necessarily, to any number of other voices. In fact, the text itself is often disregarded by the listener for the melody, the bearer of 'the old content.' As the descriptor 'starą' serves to imply, new meanings may also be attached to the song, serving the function of the masses and the growing cult of personality:

Aż zobaczyli ilu ich, poczuli siłę i czas,
I z pieśnią, że już blisko świt, szli ulicami miast;
Zwalali pomniki i rwali bruk – Ten z nami! Ten przeciw nam!

[38] ['He was inspired and young, no one could count their number / He lent them strength with his song, singing that the light of dawn was near / They lit thousands of candles for him, smoke rising overhead / He sung that it was time for the walls to fall / They sung along with him:'].

[39] ['Pull from the walls the bars, their teeth! / Cast off the chains, break the whip / And the walls shall fall, fall, fall / and bury the old world!'].

[40] ['Soon they knew the song by heart and the melody without words / Carrying with it the old message, chills through hearts and minds / So they sang, clapped in rhythm – their applause crackled like gunfire / And the chain weighed heavy, delaying dawn / But still he sang and played on:'].

Kto sam, ten nasz najgorszy wróg!
A śpiewak także był sam.

Patrzył na równy tłumów marsz,
Milczał wsłuchany w kroków huk,
A mury rosły, rosły, rosły,
Łańcuch kołysał się u nóg…[41]

The multitude is empowered by the song, understanding it as a literal call to violence. They take to the streets, tearing down monuments and, through the process of 'othering', attack those who do not conform to their narrow ideological agenda. Like the old doctrine, their movement has fostered new barriers to human existence and the 'walls grow' once more. Kaczmarski seems to understand ochlocracy as a facet of human psychology and, indeed, an issue of Polish historiography. Kaczmarski, who was half-Jewish, was no doubt consciously aware of the pogroms which broke out in Polish territory after the triumphant atmosphere of the post-war.

Above all, the perverted conclusion which frames Llach's narrative seems symptomatic of the masses's disregard for – and politicisation of – the more moderate singer, who stands isolated from the crowd, watching the events unfold. It is with great irony, therefore, that 'Mury' was re-appropriated by Solidarity during the strikes of 1980 at Gdańsk shipyard, becoming the singer's most celebrated 'protest song'. At the expense of the third verse, which was frequently omitted, the song's problematic refrain became a literal anthem for the movement and was used as a quasi-jingle during broadcasts of Radio Solidarity from 1982. On different occasions, audience members even substituted the original pessimistic ending, shouting 'The walls do not grow, but fall, fall!' or even, 'There are no more, no more, no more walls!'[42] Clearly, cultural institutionalisation was not only a strategy of the Communist Party, but also of the dissident social movements themselves. Besides, this deliberate misreading may also reflect the prominent place of 'Tyrtean poetry' (*Poezja tyrtejska*) within Polish national consciousness. Indeed, the song continues to be misinterpreted by literary critics and musicologists alike as an unequivocal, patriotic protest song, more recently, for example, in Piotr Wiroński's literary study of Kaczmarski's poetry.[43]

Facing the conscious appropriation of his work by his listenership and the ideological challenges posed by life in exile, Kaczmarski wrote a further continuation on the song's ideas entitled 'Mury 87' (Podwórko)' (1987; 'Walls 87' (The Backyard)').[44] Here, the decisively unambiguous imagery excludes any possibility for the listeners' misinterpretation, to the extent that one suspects Kaczmarski of writing tongue-in-cheek:

Jak tu wyrywać murom zęby krat,
Gdy rdzą zacieka cegła i zaprawa?
Jakże gnijącym gruzem – grzebać stary świat,
Kiedy nowego nie ma czym i – na czym stawiać?

[41] ['They saw just how many they were, they felt strength and time / And singing that dawn was near, they went through the city streets / They toppled statues and tore up cobblestones – This one's with us! This one's against us! / Those who [stand] alone, they [are] our worst enemy! / But the singer too was alone. // He watched the steady march of the crowds / Silent, listening to the rumble of footsteps, / And the walls are growing, growing, growing, / The chain dangles by their feet.']

[42] Marek Payerhin, 'Singing out of Pain: Protest Songs and Social Mobilization', *The Polish Review*, 57: 1, (2012), p. 16, doi: 10.2307/41557949.

[43] Piotr Wiroński, *Wbrew, pomimo i dlatego: analiza twórczości Jacka Kaczmarskiego,* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2011), pp. 127-130.

[44] Jacek Kaczmarski, *Mury '87 (Podwórko),* [n.d.] <www.kaczmarski.art.pl/tworczosc/wiersze/mury-87-podworko/> [accessed 23 May 2024].

O czym dziś na podwórku śpiewać
Liszajom obsuniętych ścian,
Gdzie nawet skrawek nieba ziewa
Na widok tych – śmiertelnych ran?[45]

Alongside its identical melody, the first stanza presents a series of rhetorical questions which refers back to the infamous refrain from 'Mury', which Kaczmarski systematically negates. In 'Podwórko', the mural motif assumes a new dimension given the social and cultural associations of Communist Poland's neglected urban landscape. The physical decay of the architecture, constructed quickly and inexpensively, embodies the almost tangible decline of Polish society since martial law. The possibility for future 'reconstruction' is unlikely; there is no foundation nor material to build with, the walls are covered in rust and mould keeps spreading. In any case, the possibility for mass insurrection is fundamentally improbable; there can no longer be music to incite the masses given the atmosphere of widespread apathy, depicted here by the transferred epithet, 'the yawning sky.'

Despite their contrasting styles, it is interesting to note that both Kryl and Kaczmarski wrote or released poetry during the euphoric years of 1968 and 1981 which manifestly found fault with the opposition and the music underground. Demonstratively, their relationship to the social movements was not nearly as unequivocal as has often been construed. That said, a repeated point of divergence emerges between the two in their depiction of songwriting and dissent. For the former, a common theme is a lack of integration, particularly, in terms of the artist's intentions, the frustrations of a self-serving underground culture and an apathetic society. Reversely, in Kaczmarski's case, a quasi-apocalyptic vision is presented by the forces of the collective, which, under the weight of its social position, unbridled power and ostensible success, threatens to implode on itself. Such a difference is, of course, reflective of the idiosyncrasies of the respective countries' oppositional culture. More so than any other nation of Central East Europe, Poland had developed a strong independent civil society, propelled, above all, by the strength of the Catholic Church and Solidarity, which successfully galvanised the Polish working class alongside the intelligentsia.[46] In comparison, civic engagement covered a much smaller scope in Czechoslovakia. The legacy of Charter 77 has, for example, been critiqued for its internal divisions, such as a failure to extend beyond its small grouping of intellectuals, or even reach the Slovak parts of the nation[47].

Demythologisation, self-parody and exile

The experience of exile would also pose new challenges for the guitar poets, both on a spiritual and creative level, in their detachment from homeland and audience, and ideologically – caught up in the political machinations of the Cold War. Nevertheless, both artists were able to establish novel contacts with their audience (if only 'invisibly') through their respective shows on Radio Free Europe, where the two became acquainted. These changing social dynamics form the literal impetus of Kryl's guitar poem 'Martině v sedmi pádech' (1983-1984; 'To Martina in Seven Cases'), which responds to a listener's letter directly. The unattainable desire for greater intimacy and sincerity is reflected by the song's playful thematic structure; Kryl articulates his response to the limits of what his language allows – each of Czech's seven grammatical cases marks a new stanza, beginning with the nominative:

[45] ['How can the fang-like bars be torn from the walls / when rust covers the bricks and mortar? / How can you bury the old world with decaying rubble / when there's nothing and nowhere to build anew? / What is there to sing about, today in the backyard, / to the mould on the sunken walls, / where just a small stretch of sky yawns above / at the sight of these mortal wounds?']

[46] Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent* , p. 32, doi:10.4159/harvard.9780674064836.

[47] Francesco Tava, *The Risk of Freedom : Ethics, Phenomenology and Politics in Jan Patocka,* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), p. 145.

V obálce džbán a květina
a list, v němž ptá se Martina,
jak chutná chleba,
co jím, když země vymetám,
a proč jsem tady – a ne tam,
kde je mne třeba?
Smažím si vejce na špeku –
a ač je očím do breku –
ústa se smějí,
když nad otázkou přemítám,
proč nejsem tady – ani tam,
kde prý mne chtějí.[48]

Kryl acknowledges the internal irony of his own position – a politically-motivated writer who must now contend with the superficiality of life in a stable democratic nation, an image which he also exploits in 'Die innerdeutsche Frage' (1980; 'The Inner German Question'). Indeed, the fan's physical letter is presented in a manner which, at first, seems illogical. The primary focus is not the writer's professed values, but more mundane affairs, such as the quality of the West German bread. Kryl manifestly satirises the disparity between an artist's self-indulgent, political philosophising and the actual struggles of the public, who – in the face of economic stagnation – conceptualise freedom through food rather than any other abstract notion. In any case, the experience of a free democracy does not offer Kryl ostensible solace, besides, perhaps, the small comfort of 'egg cooked in bacon fat'. The artist is unable to reconcile his dual identity and experience, as shown by his telling, antithetical reversal of the listener's question, 'I'm neither here – nor there.' Still, this state of limbo is preferred to a life of undue compromise in Czechoslovakia:

Smět sedět vedle Martiny –
a píti suché martini
k mokrému masu,
sotva bych asi vyznával
to, co jsem doma zpívával
za starých časů.
Ošlehán vichry větráků
měl bych už kolem metráku –
tak jak se sluší,
a kromě piva v žejdlíku
měl bych i bachor z knedlíků
a tučnou duši.[49]

Kryl recognises that his earliest works now belong to a bygone and perhaps idealistic era, nonetheless, the artist cannot allow himself to betray his independent and authentic younger self – if nothing else, 'living in truth' is to Kryl, at least, personally justified. Besides, the writer, like many Czech dissidents, manifestly

[48] [In the parcel, a jug and a flower / and a letter, in which Martina asks, / what the bread tastes like, / what I eat, when I sweep the ground, / and why I am here – and not there, / where I am needed? / I fry some eggs with bacon – / and though my eyes weep – / my mouth does smile, / when I ponder the question, / why I am neither here – nor there, / where they say I'm wanted.]

[49] [If I could sit next to Martina / and drink dry martini / with a piece of watery meat / No doubt, I'd hardly recognise / what I once sang back home / in the olden days. / Swept by the winds from the fans / I'd have put on a hundred-odd kilos – / as is proper. / And besides my pint of beer / I'd have a belly made of dumplings / and a fat soul]

recognises the inherent absurdities of his position. By all accounts, the experience of the persecuted singer cannot compare to that of the average citizen, whom the *národní bard* supposedly represented. Kryl playfully exploits the chasm, imagining the type of existence that would allow the socially committed writer to give up his romantic ideals and return home. As one might expect, Kryl identifies overindulgence in (cheap) food and alcohol, aided by the nationalised breweries and policy of *panem et circenses*. Like the writers of the Revival, Kryl assumes that these worldly distractions are characteristically Czech ('tak jak se sluší.') Although, the transferred epithet, 'a fat soul,' signifies, most resolutely, that a life of excess should erode all sense of social responsibility.

The following stanzas humorously imagines the decline of the morally upstanding poet into a paradigmatic Czech 'Homo Sovieticus' with all its hallmarks: alcoholism, indifference, obedience, chauvinism, and petty theft from the workplace. One by one, the poet proffers a series of absurd hypotheticals which expose the inner contradictions of such existence, commencing with the fictions of the Communist ideology: 'Kdybych chtěl zajet k Martině, / snad bych pak dělal v Martině / holoubky míru.'[50] Kryl playfully envisions his own forced 'proletarianisation' spent manufacturing peace doves, the ubiquitous symbol of peace and world communism (a fate not unfamiliar to members of the Czech intelligentsia, forced into working menial jobs during normalisation). For Kryl, Picasso's doves become a stark reminder of the regime's hypocrisy, indeed, these are juxtaposed with the Slovak town of Martin, where heavy military equipment was produced and exported (to subjugate other Warsaw Pact citizens.) The regime's undeniable disregard for human life is also exemplified by the incipient environmental emergency in Northern Bohemia, which had become Europe's most heavily polluted region,[51] due to the use of cheap brown coal: 'nebo bych bydlel v Záluži – / a doma z vody z kaluži / vyraběl síru.'[52] In any case, the conformist individual remains indifferent to this apocalyptic sight, quietly fashioning sulphur from the puddles of acid rain.

Finally, the 'rockstar' poet traces his gradual retreat into comfortable, but mundane, conjugal life (a well-documented phenomenon in late socialism, facilitated by rapidly expanding housing estates):[53]

> Kdybych chtěl líbat Martinu,
> dal bych svou páteř za třtinu
> ohnutou větrem,
> trávil si život schůzemi
> a večer brblal v přízemí
> nad černým Petrem,
> nosil bych hesla v zástupu
> a třebas stavěl chalupu
> a kradl cihly,
> koupil bych láhev stoličné
> a z jedné sklínky hořčičné

[50] [If I wanted to drive over to Martina / perhaps I'd have to make, in (the town of) Martin, / little doves of peace].

[51] Tony Judt, *Postwarz History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), p. 570.

[52] [or I'd live in Záluží – / and at home, take the puddle water / and make sulphur from it].

[53] Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, p. 74, doi:10.4159/harvard.9780674064836.

bychom si přihli.[54]

The poet satirises the habits of the petit-bourgeois who live parallel to the system, drinking out of mustard jars, and stealing bricks to build their weekend-getaway cottages – though, as shown here, this 'quiet' life came with the constant caveat of nominal political participation.

In 'Martině v sedmi pádech,' Kryl recognises that the country he once knew has ceased to exist. Kryl treats his own disconnect from Czechoslovak society with a certain degree of detached self-ridicule, aware that his value system (apparently unchanged since the 1960's) is incompatible with the average strategies for existence. In face of the song's jocular or even derisive tone, however, the penultimate stanza functions as a volta – marked by the perceptible shift to plucked, arpeggiated accompaniment. Kryl equilibrises the moral certainty of previous stanzas, admitting a sense of isolation, vulnerability, and search for genuine connection: 'Snad moh bych najít v Martině / přítele ve zle hodině, / kdy člověk zoufá.' [55]

During the final months of communist rule in Poland, Kaczmarski also took a clear parodistic approach with the guitar poem 'Bajka o głupim Jasiu' (1989; 'The Tale of Foolish Johnny.')[56] In seeking appraisal of his experience in exile (1981-1989), Kaczmarski taps into the familiar, folkloric image of Ivan the Fool, or 'Głupi Jaś' as the Polish variant is known. In Kaczmarski's retelling, Jasio ostensibly sets out to the West ("Szedł za słonkiem tam gdzie zachodziło,")[57] seeking the 'water of life' that should cure the dying King. Palpably, the poem offers an account of Polish emigrés following martial law (Jaś is, after all, an archetypal national hero), however, the piece may also serve as the poet's own exilic confession – which Kaczmarski himself acknowledged.[58] The poem begins with Jasio's departure from his ancestral home, approximating the structure of the fairy tale:

Ojców dom pożegnał głupi Jasio,
szukać wody życia rad nie rad.
Stopy ścisnął swym niedobrym braciom,
którzy siłą go wysłali w świat.[59]

A unifying thread throughout the poetry of Kaczmarski and Kryl is the use of folk-tale imagery and child-like perspectives.[60, 61] These may serve a variety of functions; typically, the juxtaposed, banal world of fairy tales exposes a contradiction within the professed morality of the state. Here, the archetypal evil sibling – the impetus for Jaś's wandering and tragic downfall – assumes particular relevance in the Polish context,

[54] ['If I wanted to kiss Martina, / I'd have to trade my spine for a reed / bent by the wind, / spend my life in meetings / and in the evenings grumble on the ground floor / over blackjack, / carry slogans in the parade / and maybe even build a cottage / and steal some bricks, / I'd buy a bottle of Russian vodka / and from one mustard glass / we would toast to our good health.']

[55] ['Perhaps, I could find in Martina / a friend at a cruel hour, / when hope is lost'].

[56] Jacek Kaczmarski, *Bajka o głupim Jasiu*, [n.d.] <https://www.kaczmarski.art.pl/tworczosc/wiersze/glupi-jasio/> [accessed 23 May 2024]

[57] ["He followed the sun to where it went down"].

[58] Ibid.

[59] ['Foolish Johnny said goodbye to the house of his forefathers, / to seek the water of life, willing or not. / He clasped the feet of his wicked brothers, / who had forced him out into the world.']

[60] Wiroński, *Wbrew, pomimo i dlatego*, p. 67.

[61] Čulík, *Knihy Za Ohradou*, p. 255.

where oppressive martial law was enforced 'fraternally,' by fellow compatriots. Additionally, Kaczmarski's self-stylisation as a holy fool allows him to express his personal philosophy regarding artistic creation under oppression: 'Schedę jego wezmą i zmarnują, /nic powiedzieć nie mógł choćby chciał. /Więc wyruszył w drogę pogwizdując.'[62] Jasio's only response to tyranny – whistling a tune – is not particularly heroic; rather, it is best described as a non-sequitur, trivial and simplistic. Indeed, to those around him, it is apparent that he lacks common sense:

> "Głupi Jasiu, głupi Jasiu"
> śmiał się w lesie szczebiot ptasi.
> Prawda to, że ci rozumu brak!
> Woda życia nie istnieje,
> a w obczyźnie nam zmarniejesz.
> Ale on przed siebie szedł i tak.[63]

Yet, it is not courage, but rather naivety which drives the exile's determined resilience and optimism. Kaczmarski seems to share the same sentiment which Kryl expressed in 'Martina', that the artist's beliefs may ultimately be futile, naive or result in persecution, nevertheless, such pursuit of an (unreachable) goal provides the poet with individual fulfilment. Indeed, the song takes an important alternative conclusion to the original fairy tale. Where the original Głupi Jaś locates the water of life and receives the princess and Kingdom as his reward, Kaczmarski's Jasio only finds himself tricked by his brother:

> Głupi Jasiu, głupi Jasiu!,
> coś na złudę się połasił.
> Raz spojrzałeś w dół, jedyny raz.
> Na nic trudy, droga krwawa,
> zniknął dom i brata zjawa
> i zmieniłeś się pod szczytem w głaz
> i zmieniłeś się pod szczytem w głaz! [64]

The condition of the émigré, isolated from the shifting domestic landscape, may all too easily be threatened by stasis. If not avoided, their writings and attitudes may seem permanently anchored to their moment of departure. Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that the fatal flaw of the protagonist is to look back and succumb to a petrifying nostalgia. The subsequent and final evolution of the exile – their gradual return and mythologisation – is depicted by the following stanza, which contemplates the reality of homecoming:

> Wraca teraz głupi Jaś z kamienia,
> pełznie drogą rok po roku cal.
> Lecz przeminą całe pokolenia
> nim pokonać zdoła złotą dal.
> A gdy dotrze już do domu kamień,
> dzieciom ktoś opowie o nim baśń

[62] ['His legacy will be taken from him and squandered, / even if he wanted to, he could not say anything. / So he set off whistling'].

[63] ['"Foolish Johnny, foolish Johnny": / the birds in the forest chirped derisively. / You truly lack reason! / The water of life does not exist, / and you will waste away in foreign lands. / But still, he walked on.']

[64] ['Foolish Johnny, foolish Johnny / lured by illusion. / You looked down once, only once. /The toil, the bloody road, all for naught / Your home vanished, and the spectre of your brother / and, under the peak, you turned to stone…']

i pojawi się przy starej bramie,
ożywiany baśnią głupi Jaś.[65]

Jasio returns not as an individual but as a lapidified symbol, existing only in the narratives which have formed through his absence. Clearly, Kaczmarski recognised the pitfalls of his idealised artistic and social role. As made clear by the poem's apparent folk tale, the legacy of the 'bard of Solidarity' was already starting to take hold within the treacherous ground of Polish mythology. Certainly, a similar concern was raised by Kryl after the initial euphoria of 1989 had subsided: 'there can be nothing more embarrassing than a living classic.'[66]

Conclusion

From the guitar poems listed above, it is clear that both artists not only problematised and parodied their artistic-social role, but at times consciously rejected it. On the one hand, both artists were highly sensitive to their songs' position in society. The subtle combination of poetry and song form allowed the texts to be easily reproduced, be more memorable and reach a far wider audience than could ever be expected of traditional written poetry. Nevertheless, the very success of the movement brought with it new challenges which shaped the artists' approach towards the genre. For Kaczmarski, the insecure, commodified mode of expression is a source of internal anxiety parallel only to the existential concerns of the occupied nation and the mortal self. Thus, the artist sought to confront the traditional dynamics of song directly, through a combination of forceful poetics and strained vocal delivery. Conversely, Kryl's attitude to the genre is marked more by acute self-ridicule, or even self-reproach. This strategy might reflect the smaller scope of Czechoslovakia's persecuted underground, as well as the author's personal style and disdain for pomposity. Revealingly, the artists critiqued their contemporaries' understanding of what guitar poetry should be and what it should do. Through embedded song, Kaczmarski cautioned the use of music as a social and political expedient – which Kaczmarski saw as particularly susceptible to manipulation. Besides, the conventional protest singer seemingly stands for a new dogma, albeit of a different and righteous kind. Similarly, Kryl found the adapted model of Western counterculture problematic, perhaps even incompatible with the needs of society and freethought.

Despite their propensity to be lumped together with the opposition and protest movements, Kaczmarski and Kryl were far more preoccupied with self-understanding and the individual's response to totalitarianism than political strategy or self-mythologisation – as demonstrated by their exilic works. Notwithstanding their untimely deaths, the two artists remain, very much, in the frame of public consciousness; their works feature in secondary school reading lists, are routinely performed during modern-day protests (the translation of 'Mury' became an anthem for the 2020–2021 Belarusian protests,[67] *Krylovkÿ*, meanwhile, have featured in current anti-Fico demonstrations), and are even co-opted by the far-right for their seemingly 'patriotic' themes.[68] Demonstrably, the need to integrate their work into the Czech and Polish canon is ongoing and remains of clear importance.

[65] ['Foolish Johnny, returns, petrified, / inching down the road, year by year. / But entire generations will pass by / before he manages to conquer the golden distance. / And when the stone finally reaches home, /someone will tell the children his tale / and by the old gate he will appear, / Foolish Johnny, brought back to life by the tale…']

[66] Markéta Zítková, *1063 dnů s Karlem Krylem*, (Prague: Forma, 1995), p. 83.

[67] Ilma Rakusa, 'Tränenfabrik und Transformation: Spotlights auf die zeitgenössische belarussische Poesie', *Osteuropa,* 70: 10/11, (2020), p. 353.

[68] Tatiana Witkowska, 'A New Singer-Songwriter: The Songs and Activity of Tomáš Hnídek in Czech Extreme Right-Wing Discourse', *Adeptus*, 15 (2020) p. 1, doi:10.11649/a.2089.

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