

# Polish Futurism: Literature and Sexual Politics

Kasper Pfeifer

**Abstract**—The aim of this paper is to analyze the way in which Polish futurists redefined Marinetti's assumptions and to study the projects of gender and power relations they consequently put forward. The Italian futurist's manifestos and theories constituted a basis for further, more progressive postulates proposed by the Polish futurists, including the attempts of the latter to abolish patriarchy. The discourses introduced by these postulates were focused on the future, and were supposed to be the means of re-designing the habitus of the semi-peripheral region, to use the terminology of the world-systems theory. The purpose of Polish futurists was to transfer the country and its culture from the semi-periphery to the core – in other words, to get Poland out of a cultural and economic obscurantism and move it towards the level of the countries of Western Europe. The way in which one should thus analyze the sexual politics of Polish futurism is to see it as a chain of discourses revolving around the future and stemming from artists' dissatisfaction with the modernity of the periphery. The analysis of texts and manifestos penned by the Polish futurists conducted throughout the article reveals that one of their main demands was to shift the dynamics of gender relations, which was seen as a condition on which a veritable modernity might exist. This eventually leads to the following conclusion: the egalitarian project of a new gender hierarchy devised by Polish futurism – although firmly rooted in the phallogocentric gaze – should be considered as a bold proposal of social change aimed at creating a new society and new gender roles to be played in that society.

**Index Terms**—Literature, Bruno Jasiński, futurism, gender studies, sexual politics, world-system theory, semi-periphery countries.

## I. INTRODUCTION: DEPENDENCIES BETWEEN POLISH, RUSSIAN AND ITALIAN FUTURISMS

Italian futurism emerged from the “crisis of masculinity” as a response to the anxieties stirred by the social changes at the beginning of the 20th century [1]. As Filippo Tomaso Marinetti dreamt about the adventure of war, he wanted to liberate the world from the muzzle of the bourgeois routine. His militaristic *Manifeste du futurisme* (1909) expressed a male's frustration caused by decadence, the growing presence of women in public life and industrialization with its new models of labor and social organization [2]. In his opinion, war was supposed to overcome this impasse and secure “a life replete with palpable meanings, clear precise goals and nonconflicting demands”, and also provide a remedy for “the diseases that were felt to be inherent in civil society: indecision, aimlessness and loneliness” [3]. Italian futurists perceived peacefulness and the necessity of serenity as the needs of women and their sexual politics aimed at cutting the male off from the feminine “otherness”. As Paola Sica argues, by including women within the category of the

“other”, the militaristic ideology of fascist Italy has gone far beyond the mere differentiation of the male and the female: “Notions of decadence, degeneration, illness and even inferiority were often used to define what was considered as »other« by the hegemonic culture: an inconvenient »other« which, if acknowledged, could transform the existent balance of power; but if denied, considered as inferior, or neutralized through absorption, could help to maintain the hegemony of those in power” [4]. Shortly speaking, the road that led to the existence of Marinetti's project of masculinity has been paved by the ethos of the „new barbarian”; the discourse of the “supermale” forged from the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” characterized by a cult of the body, rivalry, aggression and an uncritical reliance on modernity [5].

The emphasis put on the importance of war and cruelty in the proto-fascist ideology of the Italian futurists was presented as a value that a male had to be faithful to in order to even call himself a male [6]. It was associated with proclamations of contempt for femininity and homosexuality (both being treated as passivity) – characteristics which were synonymous with “emasculatation” for Marinetti and his companions. In the sexual politics of Italian futurism, femininity was an abject that threatened the reproduction of the discourse of toughness. It was a pathogenic factor, yet one significant enough to define this discourse as, above all, a “confrontation with the feminine” [7].

Despite many similarities between Polish futurism and its Italian and Russian counterparts, Polish artists produced numerous apologiae for their uniqueness. Bruno Jasiński, the most prominent Polish futurist, has illustrated that point in his *A Manifesto Regarding Futuristic Poetry* (1921). He wrote: „we don't intend to repeat in 1921 what they did in 1908”. In the *Nife in the Gutt*, which was issued several months later, he stated unequivocally that „Marinetti is a stranger to us” [8]. Nonetheless, as Przemysław Strożek argues, the familiarity with Marinetti's thought was in a way a starting point for all the theories aimed at making a breakthrough in Polish literature and social life [9].

An analysis of the sexual politics of Polish futurism should, therefore, place its similarities with the Russian and Italian futuristic projects in the foreground, paying special attention to these projects' visions of power relations, so as to expose the fact that the Polish movement propagated foreign patterns and privileged masculinity as the point of departure in any further redefinitions of relations between the sexes. The foundations of the movement's „gender theory” can be traced back to the two main postulates of the first of Marinetti's manifestos:

9. We intend to glorify war — the only hygiene of the world — militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of anarchists, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and contempt for woman.

10. We intend to destroy museums, libraries, academies of every sort, and to fight against moralism, feminism, and every utilitarian or opportunistic cowardice [10]<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Quotations are the author's own translations unless otherwise noted.

## II. MAIN ASSUMPTIONS AND THESES

One can find echoes of these theses both in manifestos and the poetry of Polish futurists. This provokes an important inquiry: did the Polish movement contribute the dominant fiction based on hegemonic and militaristic masculinities, or – being the vanguard – did it try to undermine the traditional and patriarchal gender and power relations, proposing alternative models of gender subjectivity in the process [11]?

However, before I proceed to the analytical part of this paper, the privileged phallogocentric position of the subject matter – the artists we will discuss – must be exposed: Polish futurism had many fathers, but not one mother. Should one wish to search for women in its pantheon, one would do so in vain. In the memoirs of Anatol Stern, one of the most prominent futurists in Poland, there is mention only of Teresa Żarnower, the single woman associated with the movement. To crown it all, the honorable mention describes her as the “life companion” of Mieczysław Szczuka, one of the movement’s minor collaborators [12].

Although researchers often identify the Russian strain of futurism as the blueprint for the ideological orientation of the Polish movement, the observations delineated above take precedence in the case of analyzing the sexual politics of Polish futurism. The aim of this paper is to describe the way in which Polish futurists developed Marinetti’s assumptions and to study the projects of gender and power relations they consequently put forward. As it was in the case of futuristic projects created by Italians and Russians, they were meant to overcome the pre-war “gender crisis” as it is described above. In other words, the discourses reproduced by these projects were focused on the future, and were supposed to be the means of re-designing the cultural paradigm of entire nation. To use the terminology of the world-systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, their purpose was to transfer the country and its culture from the semi-periphery to the core [13]. The way in which one should thus analyze the sexual politics of Polish futurism is to see it as a chain of discourses revolving around the future and stemming from artists’ dissatisfaction with the Polish “breed” of modernity. Introducing change into the gender hierarchy was one of the main demands of this movement. Equality between the sexes (although not necessarily truly emancipatory, but this will be discussed later on) was the basis for the discursive effort of Polish futurists and their attempts to introduce a rapid and egalitarian overturn into the Polish habitus. It should be said that I understand this term in accordance with Pierre Bourdieu’s theory as a “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations” [14].

It is necessary to admit, however, that an obstacle appears before a potential researcher. Polish futurism was by no means homogenic: the political and social postulates so repeatedly declared along with the bold requests set forth in manifestos did not find confirmation in its literary and political practices. Thus, to avoid diagnoses devoid of depth, or ones that would conclude merely in showing the inconsistencies of the sexual politics proposed by the movement, I will analyze Polish futuristic manifestos and Polish futuristic lyricism separately. Then I will point towards the differences in the variations of the theoretical

concept of the “multiplied man” defined by Marinetti and subsequently redefined by Bruno Jasiński, in the 1920s.

## III. MANIFESTOS OF POLISH FUTURISM AND GENDER EQUALITY

The first futuristic projections in Poland did not foretell the forthcoming „egalitarian” and “emancipatory” postulates. The very first Polish manifesto, penned by Anatol Stern and the youngest of Polish futurists – Aleksander Wat, entitled *Primitivists to the Nations of the World* (1920), was opposed to many of Marinetti’s radically conservative points, but it has nonetheless repeated his main theses, especially those concerned with sexual politics and gender/power relations. We can perceive these contradictions in the following short quote:

IV. wars should be played with fists. violence is unhygienic. you have to replace a woman often the value of women is their fertility [15].

In the first Polish futuristic manifesto, the marginalization of the “hygienic” (in Marinetti’s sense of the word) aspects of war and the disagreement with militarism is not associated with the contestation of violence in general. In Marinetti’s view, war was to be a “masculine adventure”, an opportunity to forge for oneself a “true masculinity”. The Polish futurists, unlike the Italian initiators of the movement, did not fight on the fronts of the Great War, and thus did not pass through the peculiar, ecstatic initiation rite provided by participating in an armed conflict; indeed, they have never reached the *virtus militaris*. Due to the fact that Polish Futurism began to bear fruit in the 1920s, it was closer to pacifism than to Marinetti’s pre-war veneration of brutality. This generational difference had a significant impact on the shaping of the ideological positions of Polish artists. While Marinetti glorified war and protested against the stagnation and decadence of the last years of the *belle époque*, futurism in Poland was initiated – in the words of Anatol Stern – by a “shock in the collective consciousness brought about by the brutal shattering of the current moral decalogue in the First World War” [16]. The “crisis of masculinity”, which played its part in raising the enthusiasm for military culture in Western Europe before 1914, took a different, local shape in Poland. As Monika Szczepaniak notes, “Polish military masculinity was constituted in isolation from the state – in the shadow of strong invaders and their hegemonic masculinity, but it was still a continuation of a heroic national culture, a continuation which reflects the mental structures of the *longue durée*”. When Poland has regained its political body after 1918, Polish men could leave their complicated situation: dominated in public by “foreign” males, yet dominant in the private sphere. With independence secured, attempts were made, obviously, to compensate for this asymmetry. The institution of the Polish army reborn, the cult of Marshal Józef Piłsudski and, necessarily, military masculinity, are all privileged in public discourses [17]. Due to their leftist ideological inclinations, the Polish futurists denounced this openly militaristic ideology as a compensatory quasi-romanticism.

However, the phallogocentric discourse of the first Polish manifesto did not renounce strength-based solutions. Their intention was only to soften the hypothetical results of war.

For them conflict was still a tool enabling the male to retain his dominant position – the *id é fixe* of masculinity. We find these sentiments reflected in the last part of the manifesto, in which the male authors reveal the projected gender of the Model Reader:

let's open our eyes. the pig will then seem to us more enchanting than the nightingale, and the gga of the gander will dazzle us more than the songs of swans.

gga. gga, gentlemen, fell out into the arena of the world, brandishing its double “g”, “a” screams, “a” – the lips of this wonderful and raffish brute, a mouth, really, a muzzle or a snout. [18].

The later Polish manifestos were less dependent on the variant of futurism developed in Italy. Although they were formally authored by Bruno Jasiński, their content was in fact the result of a collective effort on the part of all of the most outstanding members of the movement [19]. The Russian influence on these texts is, however, noticeable [20]. In spite of projects of gender equality and egalitarianism, it was masculinity that served as the point of reference for the sexual politics of Polish futurism. In a manifesto called *To the Polish Nation: a Manifesto on the Immediate Futurization of Life* (1921), a text inspired by a performance given by Vladimir Mayakovsky, David Burliuk and Vasily Kamensky, for the first time “paseism” becomes a synecdoche for patriarchy:

Among the architectural, visual and technological works of art we can distinguish one – WOMAN – as the perfect reproductive machine. Woman is an untapped and incalculable force, remarkable in her influence. We demand absolute equality for women in all spheres of life, both private and public.

Above all – equality in erotic and family relationships.

The number of married couples who live apart or are officially separated has soared to such heights as to undermine the fabric of society.

We deem the immediate introduction of divorce to be the only way to prevent this process<sup>2</sup>.

We hereby stress: the erotic moment is one of the most primary functions of life-as-such. This moment is an elemental and extremely important source of *joie de vivre*, under the condition that your approach to it is simple, clear and sunny [...] We call on women – as the physically more robust and stronger sex – to take the initiative [21].

Despite the successful transposition of many theses promoted by radical revolutionary writings (e.g. by Alexander Kollontai), the approach to gender equality presented in the above-cited manifesto does not position women outside of the status of the “other”. Erotic freedom for women and an affirmative attitude to divorce are insufficient measures for a sublimation of the female subjectivity [22]. The woman is still referred to here as a “reproductive machine” and an “incalculable force”, and thus she remains inscribed into the traditional hierarchies of the sexes, and into the traditional order in which male rationality is forced to face female sensuality and biologism – nature, to put it simply [23]. However, *To the Polish Nation...* contains

<sup>2</sup> The decision to grant a divorce in the Second Republic of Poland (except the lands belonging to Prussia before 1918) belonged to the courts of the clergy, which in fact made it impossible to obtain it. The so-called “divorce tours” to the post-Prussian provinces in which the cassation of marriages lay in the competence of civil courts were extremely popular in interwar Poland.

a valid demand for the release of this “force”. Femininity – as it is put forth in this manifesto – is given a locus in the domain of technology which is, according to the traditional gender and power relations, an attribute of the masculine. In spite of that, masculinity has superior value in the text: that is why it is women who are „ennobled”, raised to equality „in all spheres of life”, not the other way round. Polish futurists were not radical enough to “decrease” masculine virility to a feminine *mollitia*. Hence, their outlook is quite similar to Marinetti's belief that a woman who does not deserve contempt is a woman who performs a masculine role, who, by entering the agora, abandons the passivity traditionally connected to her gender.

An attachment to phallogocentric dominant fiction reveals itself fully in the writings in which Jasiński attempts to disavow his ideological opponents. In a different manifesto he has proclaimed:

We suggest it [onanism – K.P.] to be a collective name for all of our enemies [e.g. symbolism – K.P.]. We justify this by emphasizing the fundamental moments of antifuturistic art: asexualism; the inability to fertilize the crowds with their art [24].

“Asexualism”, „impossibility of fertilization”, or maybe just unmanliness, effeminateness? It should be said that this type of rhetoric was distinctive for Polish futurism. In his own manifesto entitled *The funeral of Romanticism – the senile decay of Symbolism – the death of Programism* (1921), Tytus Czyżewski called the critics unfavorable towards futurism “eunuchs”. Let us remind that eunuchs are men deprived of testicles and penises, men who are not only unable to produce offspring, but who are also incapable of copulation [25]. In our current context, the lack of a penis translates to the lack of the most important indication of masculinity, the symbolic means of domination. This lack is in turn connected with the fundamental fear that lies beneath the mask of machismo: impotence, the symbol of weakness. Weakness is considered to be an inherent quality of women, and thus to be weak is to contradict the ideological principles of the so called “true masculinity” [26]. It is no coincidence that in the futuristic dictionary »human« is, semantically speaking, almost the same thing as »male« In the manifesto *About the Green Eye and about my painting* (1921) Czyżewski confirms these assumptions: “the human fathered and unleashed a machine that will one day either kill him or exalt him” [27]. In the final parts of the text, Czyżewski appeals to the Model Reader: “love the electric machines, take them as your wives and breed Dynamo-children [emphasis mine – K.P.]” [28].

#### IV. GENDER RELATIONS IN LITERARY PRACTICE OF POLISH FUTURISM

As I have already mentioned, the manifestos of Polish futurism are more progressive in terms of emancipatory themes than the movement's literary works. Moreover, the profound differences between various artists make it impossible to distinguish a supra-individual and coherent project of sexual politics in the literature of Polish futurism. Despite this, it is still possible to identify several things that the literary practices of the most important authors had in common.

One should notice that, unlike in its theoretical writings, gender issues rarely come to the foreground of the poetry of Polish futurism. As far as the manifestos were involved, we were dealing with attempts of creating some sort of an anti-militaristic and egalitarian narrative of gender and power relations. In the case of poetry, we must focus on male-centric discourses in which women and femininity serve as mere background in contrast with which this form of masculinity is constituted. The issues of gender and power relations rarely appear directly and are usually accompanied by completely different topics, for example the motifs of the city showing us the relations between genders and the crowd, and between the genders themselves [29].

Characters and figures populating the works of Polish futurists are predominantly an inseparable part of a city co-created by a restless and carnal crowd that exerts influence on the metropolis and simultaneously allows it to configure itself freely. On the one hand, it results in a depersonalization and a reification of the subject, but on the other, it results in “a multiplication of the forms of individualism” [30]. The crowd depicted by Polish futurists possesses precious few of the attributes of an egalitarian community postulated in their manifestos. It can be treated as a group of individuals, a heterogeneous mass giving us the proxemic experience of space [31]. A lot of the literary works of Polish futurists – e.g. Bruno Jasiński’s *Song about Hunger*, which is usually called upon to prove this thesis – legitimize such an interpretation of a futuristic city. Nevertheless, in the context of gender issues one should ask: if a “futuristic” crowd has gender, which one is it?

Two representative strategies of concretizing collectivity can be distinguished in this context. The first way is to expose not the women, but the “elements of femininity” present within the urban crowd [32]. During endless wanderings throughout the metropolis, futuristic characters perceive encountered bodies as limbs, bodily fragments that manifest a sexual difference. An entity designed in this way is, if you can say so, a hostage to the traditional order of the sexes [33]. This strategy of representation is perhaps most strongly illustrated in Anatol Stern’s poem *Urinals*. Therein the author presents the adventures of a stroller who, upon noticing a succession of voluptuous female bodies in the crowd, goes to the chalet in order to indulge in masturbation. One of the researchers chooses to perceive the protagonist as someone who was “forced, as it were, to perform an act of rapid masturbation” [34]:

supplely flex the velvet bodies of women,  
their power outstretches arms, him forth trembling thighs summon  
as if by some miracle the shape wished to merge with him  
and absorb him into her smooth belly, if she only could.

[...]

his burning eyes chase the swift-footed women,  
as they raise their skirts going across the sidewalk  
his vision gets blurry, immediately he runs to the caretaker  
and shamefully asks for the chalet to be opened.

[...]

in the lubricious palace he leans against the wall,  
powered with such air he breathes with relish  
and abuses himself while his unleashed senses  
draw lines of hips that jar with nudity.

[...]

and then!... final moves, getting lazier  
murmur. heart hammered. he looks back with fear [35].

The second method of the representation of crowds which was frequently used by futurists is connected with the ideological orientation of the artists involved in radical leftist and revolutionary ideologies. As the radicalization of the Polish futuristic worldview progressed, the crowd, previously described as anonymous, started developing an identity: out of the hustle, bustle and turmoil emerged the stories of the working class [36]. These were the stories of a “weak masculinity”, a masculinity suppressed and dominated, unable to speak in its own voice. “Engine drivers”, “peasantry”, “waiters”, “the famished” – the non-privileged class gained self-consciousness, and began to realize all the consequences of this advancement. The process of abandoning the dominated position goes hand in hand with manifestations of force and violence, the purpose of which is to finally reemerge from the margins of society. This we see illustrated in Bruno Jasiński’s poem titled *A Song of Engine Drivers*:

our non-partisan god observed everything from above  
he wept over us with rain, and finally blew blood on us out of his nose.  
when the road roller of centuries squashed us, the hard iambs of our blood  
were heard by the sun, old and as bald as Bismarck’s dome

[...]

who, who will stand in our way now?  
we will crush beneath our boots, we the beautiful, powerful and human  
make way! here comes the horde. the proletarian simoom!  
with caps the way is padded by the dancing steps of the revolution [37].

Nevertheless, it would be futile to look for mythologizations of fraternity and homosocial community – themes characteristic of the Italian representatives of the movement – within the literary practice of Polish futurists [38]. The proletariat of these revolutionary poems is heterogeneous. Men are accompanied by “oppressed women”: servants, cooks and prostitutes. Thus the male body ceases to be completely identical with the dominant political body.

Even in the “militaristic” poems, poems in which one could expect to find descriptions of profound same-sex male relationships, women finally become characters that are present in the foreground. In Jasiński’s bit ironic poem entitled *March*, a column of soldiers advancing towards the frontlines is walking past girls standing by the road. The soldiers are “young. healthy. strong. like bulls [...] going. to war./ so. young. so. Handsome” [39]. The girls, in turn, cry and mourn the fate of the boys who will shortly enter the sphere of virility. They throw bouquets under the soldiers’ feet, and one of them finds in herself the courage to protest against the war openly. “A girl. a street girl.” breaks away from the crowd and starts desperately kissing a random man of arms. When the column disappears beyond the horizon, “ladies. go. cook. Dinne” and in so doing they remain in accordance with the needs of the patriarchal political structure, which has been criticized many times by Jasiński in his manifestos. The march described in this poem is also

accompanied by an implicit critique of militarism: “someone. in mourning. Doesn’t know. where to go. /stops. stands. looks at. leaves.” Bearing in mind Tomasz Tomasiak’s reading of war as a “mechanism of disconnection” – a cause of an almost ritualistic separation and the polarization of gender roles – one could say that the *March* synthesizes the moment of such a disconnection in an extremely skillful manner [40].

## V. MULTIPLIED MAN

Another important factor that should be taken into account in the study of the ideological constructions underlying the sexual politics of futurism is its affirmation of technological progress [41]. “As the Italian futurists saw in the machine the model and the ideal of an organism, and as the Russians, in turn, perceived in it the product and the tool of man, so the futurism of Poland assumed the relation between man to machine to be the relation between an organism and its new organ”, argues Stephen Richard Lee [42]. In the poetics of futurism it becomes possible for the machine, or more generally for the product of modernity, to enter a partnership with man, perhaps even a sexual one [43].

Speaking of futurism’s enthusiasm for technology: it found its most radical form in Marinetti’s theory of a “multiplied man”, which for the purposes of this study I suggest to call simply a “**multiplied male**”. This concept marked “supermasculinity” as the destination point for “modern” masculinity, which was based on physical strength, the sublimation of the male body and a contempt for “womanish” emotionality [44]. To paraphrase Marinetti himself, the “multiplied male” “developed in the machine, and the machine developed in him”, worthily endowing him with strength, physical resistance and vigor, and an indifference to emotionality as well – in other words, traits that would isolate him from the “world of women” [45]. Therefore, the conventional locus of emotionality – the heart – was reduced to the function of an electric switchboard, or a motherboard that can be found in the computers of today. Thanks to the interchangeable and machinic internal organs, the “multiplied male” would never have to experience disease, old age and – most importantly of course – the “tragedy of impotence” [46].

Marinetti’s concept can be treated on the one hand as a project of an immunization of masculinity (founded on the expulsion from the semantic field of the possibility of it being “trampled”), and on the other – as Christine Poggi says, as a result of the belief that a new, “dangerous” world requires a thorough reconfiguration of a male’s sense of a masculine self-identification [47]. According to the investigations of Elizabeth Badinter, Marinetti’s “multiplied man” can be interpreted as an intensification of current cultural norms of masculinity. This exacerbation, so to speak, would result from a feeling of weakness that accompanies a failure in upholding an already demanding ideal. According to Badinter’s thought, a man’s failure to fulfill this model (or even harboring a suspicion regarding such a failure) may result in the man’s becoming convinced of “being unfinished”. This, in turn, may prompt the male to

compensate by an “overproduction” of a hard, tough masculinity, thus turning him into a prisoner of ideology [48].

Bruno Jasiński has redefined the “multiplied male” of Marinetti by putting in **his** place a “multiplied human”. The most important Polish futurist was far from manifesting an uncritical admiration for technological progress [49]. This attitude was a result of the author’s ideological commitment to radical left-wing movements, in connection with which he considered the high-tech, industrial modern city as a „definitely inhuman moloch” [50]. Therefore, the project of a “multiplied human” developed by Jasiński has little to do with the omnipotence that was to characterize the “supermale” designed by Marinetti. Instead of that, the Polish futurist conceived of a peculiar “humanistic cyborg”, “an antidote to the bacillus of modernity” [51]. Interestingly enough, and in contrast to Marinetti (and to the Italian and Russian futurisms in general), he did not characterize the “cyborg” in a way that would fit it into the traditional hierarchy of sexes based on patriarchal power. After all, Jasiński “multiplies” a person, an individual subject who is not by definition a male. In *Polish futurism (A summary)* (1923), Jasiński pointed out the differences between paramount theories of Polish, Italian and Russian futurisms:

Italian futurism teaches [...] to see a pattern and an ideal of an organism in the machine. Through a perpetual apotheosis of the automaton it had hoped to implement the machine into social consciousness as an erotic moment.

Russian futurism took the machine for a product and a servant of man. The machine’s relation to man was reduced to the purely economic attitude of a worker to his employer.

The answer of Polish futurism was fundamentally different [...] The machine is not a human product - it is a superstructure of humanity, a new organ necessary on its current level of development. The relationship between man and machine is the relationship between an organism and its new organ. The machine is a slave to man only in so far as his own hand is a slave, too, subordinated to the orders of one and the same central brain. For a modern human, to be deprived of either of them would mean becoming disabled [52].

Jasiński’s “multiplied human” was to be a child of the peculiar relation “between an organism and its new organ”, which means that the relationship between man and technology was to be free of friction.

However, should one look at the author’s poetic output, the dangers stemming from an inability to harness the products of technology will be the first to come to the interpretative fore. His poetry is pervaded by feelings of alienation and depersonalization that haunt men living in a modern metropolis full of machines, and indicative of a consciousness of a threat – a fear of the machine turning against its assembler [53]. In *They ran him over. Cinematograph*, a modern vehicle gets out of control and kills “a small dun-coated man”. In the *Post-war psalm* the reader faces the effects of a modern industrial war, and in a poem entitled *Morse*, the incessant rush of information turns the persona of the poem into an insomniac – this leads the subject to death by exhaustion. All in all, the masculinity of Polish futurism appears as a fragile thing, susceptible to and dependent on technology. In other words – specifically speaking, in the words of traditional gender hierarchies – it becomes passive and effeminate.

## VI. CONCLUSION: A TICKET OUT OF THE SEMI-PERIPHERY

In conclusion, I would like to devote a few words to the application of world system theory to the study of such socioeconomic aspects of literary production as sexual politics. According to Helena Zaworska, the essence of the problem with Polish futurism lies in the semi-peripheral status of the Second Polish Republic: "At the time of the first instances of futurism, not only Italy, but also Russia or Poland were all countries in which a modern civilization presented itself as a myth of the future rather than the current reality. There, the great technological inventions belonged chiefly among fairytales (at least in the eyes of a significant part of the population)" [54]. Referring to the theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, we can speak about semi-peripheral regions as the regions of partial modernity, the production of which (both ideological and industrial) grows on the intersection between obscurantism and progressiveness. In other words, there were problems in the Polish habitus that were specific to the countries undergoing modernization, and which constitute the context for the post-patriarchal substructure of Polish futurism's sexual politics.

Therefore, even though the gender hierarchies of Polish futurism were to some extent distanced from militaristic and masculinistic ideologies and they bore the marks of an inclusive attitude, they were still characterized by an attachment to attitudes stemming from traditional, patriarchal structures of power [55]. That is why, upon conducting an analysis of the sexual politics of Polish futurism, it is necessary to emphasize not only the influence of the ideas produced on the left wing, but also the fundamental importance of Marinetti's masculinist postulates which one might interpret as an exacerbation of traditional gender hierarchies. The Italian futurist's manifestos and theories constituted a basis for further, more progressive postulates put forth by Polish futurism, including its attempts at abolishing patriarchy. Of great significance for the ideological structure of the Polish movement may have been the fact that, unlike its Italian and Russian counterparts, Polish futurism grew in the shadow of the trauma of war, the trauma that resulted in a "humiliation of heroic masculinity." [56]. In the case of Polish futurism, this translated to a concentration on the body, an aversion to violence and aggression, and a rejection of nationalism. To put it in another way, the sexual politics shaped by the Polish futurists were polemically oriented in regard to the official militaristic culture of the Second Polish Republic.

One should say that Polish futurism, again in contrast with the Italian and Russian strains, never attained the status of a dominant political and artistic ideology; it was always a prospective and radical project, a proposition on how to change the reborn Polish state and introduce egalitarianism and true equality between people instead of reinstating post-feudal and patriarchal social hierarchies. In the context of the issues spoken of above, it must be added that Futurism's task was "to build a new home for an extended Polish nation", as Jasiński put it – a home where the male was to be stripped of masculinist ideologies, a home where women and their femininity – sent to the margins of the

nation by the traditions of the Polish habitus – were to be emancipated and equated with male. I therefore propose to read the sexual politics of Polish futurism as an "art of the semi-periphery", as a prospective project conceived in and for a region undergoing industrial and cultural changes. As Helena Zaworska argues: "Modern civilization in contemporary Polish conditions was first and foremost a prediction [...] They [the futurists – K.P.] had to include in their art not only a fascination with modernity, but also a specific kind of emotionality, sensitivity and imagination that suited the contemporary conditions of Polish life" [57].

For this reason, the egalitarian project of a new gender hierarchy devised by Polish futurism – although firmly rooted in the phallogocentric gaze – should be considered as a bold proposal of change aimed at creating a new society and new gender roles to be played in that society. Similar strategies of "prediction" can be observed in Italian and Russian futurisms, too, but these, especially in Italy, were directed towards reproducing the hegemonic masculinity that was supposed to be a remedy for the pre-war "crisis" of values. However, it should be emphasized that in Polish futurism, a female was a special, non-negative reference point for a male. What is more, a futuristic Polish man, despite the stigmas of hegemonic attributes that allow one to read him in connection with a man developed by Italian futurism, was characterized by many features that Marinetti denounced as typical of "emasculatation" and "pederasty": fragility, pacifism, lust or biologism interpreted as the lack of self-control. All of these were to be relinquished by Marinetti's "multiplied male".

In many ways these unrealized ideologies of tomorrow, phallogocentric though they may have been, undermined the then-existing structures of patriarchy. Without resigning from a bolstering of the male subject, the sexual politics of Polish futurism managed to forsake some of the modalities of male domination, the hard, harsh, "sharp" and overly self-proud masculinity included. In its place the futurists proposed a "transient masculinity", so to speak, and a femininity which was not an abject. In summary, the goal of the ideology of the futuristic "semi-peripheral" masculinity was to use technology in order to break free from the needs and challenges thrown at it by the habitus of interwar Poland.

The militarism of the official culture of the Second Polish Republic was one of factors at play, but one should also take note of the fact that, throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, the cities, a domain of central importance to the poetics of futurism, were inhabited by less than 30% of the total population of Poland. These urban spaces struggled with high unemployment and homelessness, and the rural areas had to cope with overcrowding followed by an increase in the number of micro-farms – household enterprises unable to provide the bare minimum of subsistence for their residents. All of this has contributed to a strengthening of patriarchal structures and facilitated the need for a dominant masculinity and a compliant femininity. This is what the Polish futurists wanted to change. As Bruno Jasiński wrote in his manifesto, the social project of Polish futurism was to be „a fortifying, invigorating juice which will rejuvenate the old, deteriorating

race of yesterday's people, a painful but necessary vaccine that the great historical cataclysm has injected into a decaying Europe from before the war, whose stench was beginning to rankle the nose" [58].

Moving on to the end, I would like to explicate again the merit of applying Wallerstein's ways of interpretation to futurism studies. One should admit that the geopolitical regions, in which a futurism understood as a dream about a "rewarding" and technocratic future developed, did not belong to the core in the 1910s and 1920s. It was not without a reason that in countries such as France, Germany or Great Britain "pure" futurist movements have failed to appear. This observation allows researchers to treat futurism as a utopian movement created by "dreamers" who, due to the obscurantism of their habitus, were designing their world on the basis of the then-latest artistic concepts and ideas of tomorrow, thus combining the "old" and the "new".

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This article was supported by grant no 2018/29/N/HS2/00791 from the National Science Centre, for the research project entitled "Politics of Aesthetics. Bruno Jasiński and his works".

#### REFERENCES

- [1] M. Pasquaini, "Contesting sexual morality. Futurism, masculinity, and homosexuality in Florence, 1913-1914," *Storicamente*, no 5, p. 5, 2013.
- [2] E. Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity, Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism (Italian and Italian American Studies)*, Westport-London: Praeger, 2003, p. 29.
- [3] E. J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 55.
- [4] P. Sica, *Futurist Women. Florence, Feminism and the New Sciences*, New York-London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016, p. 71.
- [5] C. Baumgarth, *Futurizm*, trans. J. Tasarski, Warsaw: WAiF, 1978, pp. 221-224.
- [6] B. Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy*, Minneapolis-London: University Of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- [7] U. Fanning, "Futurism and the abjection of the feminine," in *Futurismo: Impact and Legacy*, G. Gazzola, Ed. New York: Forum Italicum Publishing, 2011, pp. 53-64; E. Van Ness, "(No) queer futurism: Prostitutes, pink poets, and politics in Italy from 1913-1918," *Carte Italiane*, no. 6, p. 170, 2010.
- [8] B. Jasiński, "Manifest w sprawie poezji futurystycznej," in *Antologia polskiego futurizmu i Nowej Sztuki*, Z. Jaroński, H. Zaworska, Ed. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1978, p. 18; Idem, "Nife in the gutt. 2nd phuturist pamflet", in *The Legs of Izolda Morgan. Selected Writings*, trans. S. A. Gauger, G. Torr, Prague: Twisted Spoon Press, 2014, p. 19.
- [9] P. Strożek, *Marinetti i futurizm w Polsce 1909-1939*, Warszawa: PWN, 2012, p. 110.
- [10] F. T. Marinetti, "The founding and manifesto of futurism," in *Futurism. An Anthology*, L. Rainey, Ch. Poggi, L. Wittman, Ed. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 51.
- [11] W. Śmieja, *Hegemonia i trauma. Literatura wobec Dominujących Fikcji Męskości*, Warszawa-Katowice: IBL, 2016, p. 376.
- [12] A. Stern, "Niezwykła historia polskiego futurizmu (1918-1968)" in *Glód Jednoznaczności i Inne Szkice*, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1972, p. 253.
- [13] H. Zaworska, *O Nową Sztukę. Polskie programy artystyczne lat 1917-1922*, Warszawa: PIW, 1963, p. 102; S. I. Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, Massachusetts: Duke University Press, 2004.
- [14] P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford University Press, 1992, p. 53.
- [15] A. Stern and A. Wat, "Prymitywiści do narodów świata i do Polski," *Antologia polskiego Futurizmu i Nowej Sztuki*, p. 4.
- [16] A. Stern, *Niezwykła Historia Polskiego Futurizmu*, p. 254.
- [17] M. Szczepaniak, *Habitus Żołnierski w Literaturze i Kulturze Polskiej w Kontekście Wielkiej Wojny*, Kraków: Universitas, 2017, p. 11.
- [18] A. Stern and A. Wat, *Prymitywiści do Narodów Świata i do Polski*, p. 6.
- [19] Z. Jaroński, "Wstęp," *Antologia polskiego futurizmu i Nowej Sztuki*, p. LV.
- [20] Z. Barański, "Futurizm w Rosji," *Futurizm i jego warianty w literaturze europejskiej*, J. Heistein, Wrocław, Ed. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1977, p. 73; E. Rossi, The emancipation of women in Russia before and after the Russian revolution. [Online]. Available: <https://www.marxist.com/emancipation-women-russia.htm>
- [21] B. Jasiński, "To the polish nation: A manifesto on the immediate futurization of life," *The Legs of Izolda Morgan*, pp. 14-15.
- [22] C. Poggi, *Inventing Futurism. The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism*, Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 245.
- [23] C. Blum, "Rhetorical strategies and gender in Marinetti's futurist manifesto," *Italica*, no. 2, pp. 206-207, 1990.
- [24] B. Jasiński, "Manifest w sprawie poezji futurystycznej," *Antologia Polskiego Futurizmu i Nowej Sztuki*, p. 17.
- [25] *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, 1st ed. M. Flood, London and New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 453-475.
- [26] R. Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis. Myths, Fantasies and Realities*, London-New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994, p. 98.
- [27] T. Czyżewski, "O 'Zielonym oku' i o swoim malarstwie (autokrytyka – autoreklama)" *Antologia polskiego futurizmu i Nowej Sztuki*, p. 44.
- [28] T. Czyżewski, "O 'Zielonym oku' i o swoim malarstwie (autokrytyka – autoreklama)" *Antologia polskiego futurizmu i Nowej Sztuki*, p. 44.
- [29] J. Trznadłowski, "Futurizm polski" *Futurizm i Jego Warianty w Literaturze Europejskiej*, p. 106
- [30] B. Sienkiewicz, *Poznawanie i Nazywanie. Refleksja Cywilizacyjna i Epistemologiczna w Polskiej Poezji Modernistycznej*, Kraków: Universitas, 2007, p. 193.
- [31] J. Koszarska, "Nagi Człowiek w śródmięściu. Futurystów Przyjemność (w) Przestrzeni", *Interlinie*, no. 1, p. 70, 2011.
- [32] M. Kareński-Tschurl, "Czy dlatego, że my się 'par exemple', nie kochamy? O erotyce futurystycznej poezji Brunona Jasińskiego i Anatola Sterna," *Teksty Drugie*, no. 6, p. 58, 2000.
- [33] G. Ritz, "Nowy świat i dawny wizerunek kobiety. Polska awangarda po 1918 roku a kulturowe aspekty płci," *Niż w Labiryncie Porządkania: Gender i płęć w Literaturze Polskiej od Romantyzmu do Postmodernizmu*, trans. B. Drag, A. Kopacki, M. Łukasiewicz, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 2002, p. 163.
- [34] M. Kareński-Tschurl, op. cit., p. 57.
- [35] A. Stern, "Pissuary," *Wiersze Zebrane*, p. 76-77.
- [36] G. Gazda, *Futurizm w Polsce*, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1974, p. 108.
- [37] B. Jasiński, "Śpiew maszynistuw," *Poezje zebrane*, B. Lentas, Ed. Gdańsk: Słowo-Obraz-Terytoria, 2008, p. 88.
- [38] M. Pasquaini, op. cit., p. 7.
- [39] B. Jasiński, "Marsz," *Poezje Zebrane*, p. 128.
- [40] T. Tomasik, *Wojna – męskość – literatura*, Słupsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pomorskiej w Słupsku, 2013, pp. 46-54.
- [41] H. Zaworska, "Futurystyczny ideał człowieka nowoczesnego," *O Nową Sztukę. Polskie programy artystyczne lat 1917-1922*, p. 261.
- [42] S. R. Lee, *Trudne przymierze. Polska Awangarda Poetycka w Kręgu Idei Lewicy (1918-1939)*, Warszawa: PIW, 1982, p. 62.
- [43] R. Bionda, "Le règne de la machine de F.T. Marinetti: Une fable sans animaux? Pour une écocritique du futurisme," *Études de litt ératue de Langue Française des XXe et XXIe si èCles*, no. 5, p. 70, 2015.
- [44] C. Baumgarth, op. cit., p. 234.
- [45] C. Baumgarth, op. cit., p. 236-237.
- [46] F. T. Marinetti, "Multiplied man and the reign of the machine," *Futurism. An Anthology*, p. 92.
- [47] C. Poggi, op. cit., p. 159.
- [48] E. Badinter, *XY. De l'identite Masculine*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 1992, p. 202.
- [49] M. E. Versari, "Do moich przyjaciół ze „Zwrotnicy” – Marinetti, Prampolini i debaty na temat estetyki maszyny w Europie Wschodniej", trans. K. Gucio, in *Enrico Prampolini. Futurizm, scenotechnika i teatr polskiej awangardy*, P. Strożek, Ed. Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2017, p. 100.
- [50] J. Trznadłowski, op. cit., p. 106.
- [51] E. Ranocchi, "Od maszyny do człowieka i z powrotem," *Autoportret*, no. 2, pp. 77-78, 2011.
- [52] B. Jasiński, *Futurizm polski (bilans)*, *Antologia Polskiego Futurizmu i Nowej Sztuki*, p. 60.
- [53] G. Gazda, op. cit., p. 93.
- [54] H. Zaworska, „Kult cywilizacji czy bunt przeciwko niej”, in: *O Nową Sztukę. Polskie programy artystyczne lat 1917-1922*, p. 102.

- [55] E. Anderson, *Inclusive Masculinity. The Changing Nature of Masculinities*, New York-London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 81-104.
- [56] M. Szczepaniak, *Habitus Żołnierski w Literaturze i Kulturze Polskiej w Kontekście Wielkiej Wojny*, p. 10.
- [57] H. Zaworska, *Futurystyczny Ideal Człowieka Nowoczesnego*, pp. 199-239.
- [58] B. Jasiński, *To the Polish Nation: A Manifesto on the Immediate Futurization of Life*, p. 16.



**Kasper Pfeifer** was born in 1990, he is a PhD candidate at the University of Silesia in Katowice currently working on a research project on avant-garde and futurism studies, for the purposes of which he has received a grant from the Polish National Science Center. His other interests include revolutionary poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, people's history, and socio-economic methodologies emphasizing the contextuality of a literary work. He is

also an author of a poetry book "adblock" published in 2019.