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ŚLAWOMIR SOBIERAJ

Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6332-692X>

e-mail: slawomir.sobieraj@uph.edu.pl

A displaced person's settling of accounts: the grotesque image of the post-war order in the poetry of Tadeusz Borowski¹

Rozrachunki dipisa. Groteskowy obraz powojennego ładu w poezji Tadeusza Borowskiego

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Abstract

The main thesis in the introductory part of the article argues that Tadeusz Borowski's poems, written from the perspective of a DP camp inmate, involve the claim and show the image of reality after World War II in a grotesque way. The analysis of the selected poems of the post-war order grotesque covers three central issues: the personal feelings of a displaced person whose right to freedom has been taken away in a supposedly free world, the national concerns of Poles and the political situation after 1945. Borowski is shown as the creator of modern poetry, dominated by the grotesque, and he needs it in order to get to the hidden or concealed truth. The grotesque effect is achieved by using heterogeneity of the style, mixing a journalistic style and colloquial and vulgar expressions with highly sophisticated metaphors, mundane matters combined with national symbols and myths, and biologism opposing ideology. Moreover, the effect usually occurs in combination with the poetics of surprise and antinomy, supplemented with sarcasm and parody or absurdity. The grotesque serves as a supplement to realism and documentarism.

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The range of Tadeusz Borowski's war experiences is quite diverse: from the oppressive living conditions of a young poet, student and worker of a construction company in Warsaw under the German occupation to camp life in various places of detention. The writer's short life that ended with suicide is recorded by his literary work, often bordering on biographism (being a specific "trail of reality"), which, however, in its considerable majority, cannot be put in the framework of memoir writing. Despite this, the pieces that make up the creative legacy of the author of *Pożegnanie z Marią* should rather be interpreted in association with himself. What counts for me is the opinion of Ryszard Nycz: "Neither the subject nor the work can be regarded as isolated closed systems, and their mutual affinity speaks a lot about the former and the latter" (Nycz 2012: 131). And one more thing: this research strategy is important as it can help to reveal the background for constituting the artist's personality, his identity and subjectivity. After all, writing has become the way of life for the author of *U nas w Auschwitzu...*, chosen consciously and practiced regardless of the political, social and personal situation.

Among Borowski's camp accounts, the least known are those concerning his stay in the last camp, to which he was taken "in the time of contempt". First, he stayed for a year and a half at Konzentrationslager Auschwitz (from February 1943 to August 1944). Later he was taken to Dautmergen near Stuttgart, and then to Dachau-Allach, where he spent the last weeks before Nazi Germany's defeat. After being freed by the Americans, he found himself at a DP (displaced persons)² camp in Freimann on the outskirts of Munich. This painful experience of one camp after another, which occurred after several years of long-awaited freedom, made him rebellious against another and unexpected oppression. It became a source and pretext for a reflection on the situation of the world on the threshold of the post-war world. These reflections on the more-than-three-month stay in another camp were contained in his poems written at the time and after being released in September 1945 and in his letters to his friends. Because of the scarce interest in Borowski's poetry – unlike in his prose – it remains in oblivion, there are no reissues or monographs³, and the story entitled *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem* remains the most representative piece on the DP-related thread in the works of The Columbus of Skaryszewska.

² The Americans created DP camps on the occupied Germany territory, placing large groups of foreigners there (for example: Poles and Jews) in fear of disorder, mob rule and epidemics (Drewnowski 1977: 94).

³ There is an exception of Justyna Szczęsna's monograph (Szczęsna 2000).

However, it is worth taking a closer look at the Munich poetry, which presents the concept of the world not embroiled in the historiosophical determinant, and thereby universalised, considerably different from the vision contained in the volume entitled *Gdziekolwiek ziemia...*, but whose world is saturated with the present time and reality, referring one to “the precisely specified historical place and period” (Szczęsna 2000: 131). A researcher of Borowski’s lyrics points out that this transformation entails a different one, referring to the poetic language, which gets rid of its metaphors, stylistic ornaments and – generally speaking – the literary language to replace it with everyday speech (Szczęsna 2000: 131).⁴ One should add that the everyday language, which draws on the camp language resources, is sometimes expressed in obscene and vulgar lexical units, which – juxtaposed with allusions to known texts and motives of haute couture, give a grotesque effect. Therefore, a reservation needs to be made regarding the non-literary nature, repeated after Justyna Szczęsna. Everyday speech dominates in Borowski’s writing, but its literary nature manifests strongly in numerous quotations and stylistic measures typical of rhymed speech, as is the case in, for example, a poetic reportage entitled *Koniec wojny*. A poem usually has a narrative formula, and the contents resemble those known from the author’s prose, entitled *Pożegnania z Marią*, written somewhat later. Both types of literary utterances are subordinated to the imperative of telling the truth about camps and about the world, which resembles a camp. This is why Borowski writes the poems created after the liberation in the first person, like in the Auschwitz stories – which in that case was associated with the directive to speak in accordance with the conscience of a person co-responsible for the evil (Buryła 2003: 9) – by claiming that poetry is also to be “the thing of the lonely conscience” (Borowski 2003: 263). He departs from a project of a historiosophic myth, which he usually expressed in the poems written under occupation, making the poems impersonal or in the form of a collective subject. He wants to speak as a witness and participant of the events who discovers “human rights, not perceived and neglected” (Borowski 2003: 267).

In Szczęsna’s opinion, the grotesqueness of the picture of the world, emerging from the Munich poems, is a reflection of “the grotesqueness of human actions, the absurdity of their choices and behaviours” (Szczęsna 2000: 131). On the other hand, according to Sławomir Buryła, who deals with a change of artistic measures by writers experienced by war (for example, Borowski and Buczkowski),

⁴ The author quotes Tadeusz Drewnowski’s phrase: “escape from literariness”, taken from his work entitled *Próba scalenia* (Drewnowski 1997: 60).

the grotesque serves the purpose of harnessing pain “by reducing the demonism of evil to ridiculousness” (Buryła 2003: 9). It is without doubt that – these statements being true – this aesthetic category is mainly a creative method most useful to the author of *Proszę państwa do gazu* in executing the task set before the poet – to get to the truth – hidden or passed over. Realism is not sufficient; one needs to go beyond – even ostentatiously – the rules of probability, if poetry is to be “The Great Metaphor of the World” rather than mimicking it. The adopted form of poetry, which says “no”, which shows the reality full of dissonances, is a manifestation of the poet’s attitude to the world, and, at the same time, “going beyond the world”, crossing the “threshold of the impossible” in order to build one’s own physical and ethical world. These considerations were included in Borowski’s poetic treaty, written most probably in late 1945 and early 1946⁵, and there is no reason to think he did not have such thoughts in mind when writing poems during the Munich period.

The grotesque, supplementing realism and documentarism, protecting from recording reality without judgement, becomes a bitter comment on incredible war experiences to the extraordinary invasion of evil, which the poet from Warsaw came across. It makes it possible to express true emotions, e.g. anger (according to Miłosz – even hatred), which Włodzimierz Maciąg said to be used as a defence against schizophrenia (Maciąg 1992: 194). Anger, which is also a defence against depriving man of freedom in the free world, is a rebellion against totalitarianism.

Borowski, who had waited for his freedom behind the barbed wire of various camps, must have experienced a shock when after the Dachau-Allach camp was liberated by the Americans. On 1 May 1945, he was transferred to a different place of detention, where he felt treated in a similar way as before. His state of disappointment is expressed in his memoir from Freimann:

I’m looking at the calendar hung on the classroom door. 15, Freitag, Juni. I remember the year myself: 1945. The classroom is dirty and stinking. Twenty bunk beds, nearly never made, shakedown of free people. On the table, covered with soiled paper, unwashed bowls, full of waste, and wilted, red and pink roses. I potter around doing nothing, and I can’t find a place in this huge stone SS barracks, among the fresh greenery of the early summer. *Anno Domini* 45, a month and a half of the American era, a month and a half of moral torment.

[...] Soup – thin, with no potatoes or meat. They cooked better in winter ‘45 in KL Dautmergen. “There is a daily ration of 200 g of meat per person”. “And potatoes?” “300”. “There’s no meat or potatoes in the whole pot. They steal.

⁵ The treaty is entitled: *O poezji i poecie*. Justyna Szczęsna suggests that it was written most probably before 20 February 1946 (Szczęsna 2003: 473).

Everyone – the military and civils, the committee and police, cooks and Jewish women. And they don't give out a litre of soup in officers' rooms. There, they call «who wants soup?»». KL Auschwitz 43. KL Freimann – 45. Political prisoners. Polish military staff.

[...] 24.VI. 1945 Seven inmates were killed and one injured over three days. Two were caught by the Germans while stealing a heifer and stabbed to death, four were killed while they were returning to the camp and about one – there was a message: “you should take him out [?] and hide at night”.

I wanted to go for a walk. Walking up to the gate – they want a pass. A tall American with restless eyes stops me: “Zurück... Sagen Kameraden, das ist verboten” and points his finger at my vest. Someone from the side adds: “Put on a jacket, you dumbass. You can't leave without a jacket”.

[...] They liberated us from the Germans, those stout and good-natured boys. But who will liberate us from those stout, good-natured boys? (Borowski 2004: 357, 360, 362, 363–364)

A new political order in the post-war world, established in Yalta, was practically far from normal, especially for people longing for freedom, like Borowski. In one of his letters to a friend at home, he wrote from Munich about planning to publish a volume (*Noc zza oceanu*), which would contain pieces that “problematise the peace” (Borowski 2001a: 53). Having to exercise at the camp, restrictions imposed because of a refusal to follow the American soldiers' orders, hard living conditions and, mainly, imprisonment – all this made him rebellious, expressed in some poems published in a collection entitled *Imiona nurtu* published in late 1945. In *Maj swobody*, the poet – with sarcasm and full of sorrow – announces liberation, which, in fact, is not one:

I looked for you behind the wires of large, German camps,
writing an epos for all the future generation with my death.
Stranger soldiers gave me bread and freedom, and now they're carrying you,
My May of freedom and May of bitter enslavement! (Borowski 2003: 287)

He writes about fake freedom as about “a stone slab”, which is a burden on his chest. It is also a burden because it does not allow him to return to his home country. Antinomies of space: displacements and births determine the dilemmas and pain experienced by the lyrical subject.

The grotesque order of the world is shown by Borowski in three problem circles, each one with a broader scope and, at the same time, containing the previous one. One can talk about permeating the elements that comprise those circles to different areas than before, to their mutual effect. The starting point is the individual experience of depriving one of freedom in an apparently free world.

In circle one, there are DP's personal experiences (originally written in memoirs and letters), circle two embraces the national issues, and the third one concerns the global order. Given the statement of Andrzej Werner about a camp, which is a totalitarian state in a test tube, one can say that the laws valid behind the wires and the evil prevailing there are perceived by the poet in a post-war reality in various dimensions.

The first circle – personal. Degradation of a person deprived of the right to freedom

Even in one of the erotic poems from a collection published soon after the war, Borowski perceives his unnatural and oppressive situation, which imposes the role of a refugee on him. He feels like someone who has been deprived of humanity and calls himself, in a foreign language, a displaced person:

What's here? Yearning and sleepless night,
some streets and poems.
I live. And I'm from people and not from people.
Displaced Person. (Borowski 1945: 21)⁶

The fate of emigration evokes a yearning for a loved one and a nostalgia for the country. In a different piece ("*Thumowi słowem iść naprzeciw!...*"), a DP becomes aware that not much has changed for the better in his life, but there's still death, and limited space of existence by external forces around him, only the flag, under which camp guards appear (sneeringly called SS-men) changed:

Towns in ruins, corpses stinking,
right to die, right of grace,
a striped banner is flapping,
as in the days of old: a portion of soup,
who was once an inmate, remains one,
an SS-man walks slowly. (Borowski 2003: 185)

The hero of the poem does not want to celebrate the victory over Nazi Germany together with millions of others because he is aware that the new world is based on slavery.

⁶ A poem starting from the incipit *Wiesz, myślę coraz częściej...* I quote, as an exception, after the first edition, because the collection *Poezja*, edited by Tadeusz Drewnowski and Justyna Szczęśna, contains a less logically justified variant with altered text: "What's here?" to "What is it?"

In a poetic reportage entitled *Koniec wojny*, the author of *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem* describes a sodomitic night at the DP camp, with “both sexes and all nations” participating. The word “liberation”, put in quotation marks and ending one of the piece’s parts, has a double and ironic meaning, recognising the injustice of imprisonment breeds anger and hatred. The Freimann picture sketched in the poem *Obóz pod Monachium* is an example of the stylistic use of the language whose syntax is made purposefully compact and limited to gerund clauses. Individual words or phrases are separated from one another with dots. This speech, short of breath and yet hard, is confirmed by many monosyllabic words placed in verse clauses and rhyming. It conveys the state of the spirit and the situation of the lyrical subject:

Stone and green. Wind smells,
 freedom. Roads
 go straight to the horizon. A fence of iron grilles.
 Rifles, police, posts.

[...] Thousands of silent mouths. Pure sky
 in the eyes filled with fear.
 Stone and green. Time hardened and dead.
 Munich... (Borowski 2003: 202)

There’s hatred, loneliness and homelessness in a strange world (*Noc zza oceanu*). And doubts and dilemmas appear about which road to choose: whether to stay abroad or to return home? There is a wish to go home and a fear of doing so (*Spacer obozowy*):

I walk, I look: girls lying,
 Devouring lettuce and radish,
 The sky is shining, the sun is burning,
 And I don’t know: “Truman, Stalin?”

[...] I walk, look, look, think,
 in the west – glowing sun,
 in the east – well, the commune...
 Stalin, Churchill, Churchill, Truman? (Borowski 2003: 198)

The poem entitled *Odrodzenie człowieka* is Borowski’s most dramatic attempt at a self-portrait from the DP times, which fills the text with irony, reinforced with a pathetic tone to show the absurd actions of the victorious troops, i.e. the camp authorities, gives a grotesque effect, revealing the ridiculousness of the situation. The inmates, earlier harassed by SS men, get their clothes because

there are no others. This leads to the unnatural behaviour of the hero, affected by the camp syndrome. He manifests his rebellion by shouting the salute to the torturers used in the Third Reich (“Heil”), reading Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and the macabre statement that he dreams of burning people in a crematorium. The non-uniform style, intertwining solemn phrases with expressive phraseology of everyday speech and the journalistic concrete specify the world reversed order, which he points to in the form of sarcastic glee:

They liberated me, dressed in an SS uniform.
 Man became man! Why shouldn’t I boast!
 Freedom and life! (Borowski 2003: 215)

The poet plays a specific emotional game with the recipient. He becomes a provocateur who wants to stir the conscience of people allowing for using the totalitarian force in the societies’ life organisation.

The sarcasm and grotesque serve to sharpen the image of the tragicomedy in which the DP’s participated. They are the basic elements of the satirical tone, which is present with greater intensity in pieces on the Polish DP community.

Polish issues. Demitologisation of the national ideology and exposing the pseudo-patriotic cliché

The second circle of the Munich poems deals with Polish issues. Even to a greater extent than in the earlier examples, Borowski introduces grotesque imaging as in the pre-war poetry by Gałczyński, whose poetry he valued highly. He draws on the literary techniques employed by the “charlatan” of the Polish inter-war lyric poetry, who was not only a “gay decadent”, but also a careful observer of important social events and phenomena who could create visions built on a mixture of low and high culture (Sidoruk 2004: 219–220), perverse juxtaposition of national and religious symbols with a requisite from the sphere of the profane. The poetry of surprise, contrast and antinomy, introduced to short poems, with roots going to the concepts of futurists and expressionists, brought its effects in the form not only of typically ludic and iconoclastic phrases in minor pieces (for example, “...and Kosciuszko looked down on it and puked” (Gałczyński 1957: 318), “Poland, my country, let’s wet our legs!” (Gałczyński 1957: 310–311), but also *sui generis* lyrical reportages (*Inge Bartch*) and poems, which contained a diagnosis of the crisis condition of the European spiritual values in the catastrophic approach (Ossowski 2006: 278–280), like for example *Bal U Salomona* and *Ludowa zabawa*.

The poet of Skaryszewska sees the Polish community as disintegrated, his co-patriots as being at each other's throats, divided into fractions – emigres living abroad and those at home, cultivating the tradition and religious cliché in hypocrisy. He presents the full description of degenerative Polishness in foreign lands in the poetic reportage. *Koniec wojny*. Mainly he points to the hypocrisy among the people who demonstrate their patriotism. He parodies a speech by a Volksdeutsche from Lodz, full of romantic stereotypes. He ridicules the national ideologists, who persuade others to emigrate, creating an amalgam made up of quotations from *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego* and *Wesele* and jingoistic slogans calling for building a reborn Poland according to the military order:

The colonel who lives near Zamość,
 be the leader in the name of God,
 forwards! Count our step!
 in platoons, in companies
 we'll cross the Vistula, we'll cross the Warta,
 „... only in striped uniforms,
 because we were taught by Bonaparte,
 how we should go – West”.

The colonel who lives near Zamość,
 lead us steady, lead us straight,
 singing the “Dąbrowski Mazurka”
 from the German soil,
 straight to the English we'll enter! (Borowski 2003: 190)

One cannot be surprised that Borowski was disgusted by the soldiers' showing off. The parody technique is supported here by referring to a non-serious situation and by drawing attention to the unrealness of the camp authorities, who are occupied by mundane business, such as providing food, and their declarations of actions do not stand much chance of being fulfilled.

The text quoted above manifests the poet's aversion attitude to the pro-English (pro-allied) sentiments of his co-patriots sharing his camp suffering. It appears that his leftist sympathies may have influenced his perception of the western powers, which he may have seen as representing unreal or non-people's democracy and capitalist exploitation due to their alliance with the Soviet Union. However, one should recall – as has been said above – Borowski's fear about his return to Poland and his distance to communism, expressed in the poem *Spacer obozowy*.

A similarly ridiculing style is present in another piece of this kind – *Reportaż z 3 Maja*. A series of snapshots from the national ceremony is used to

expose – like in a distorting mirror – the falseness of the sentiments shown by its participants. Thieves: a major and a policeman, talk about the highest values – Honour and Homeland (Borowski 2003: 196–197).

Both of these pieces, called reportages by the author himself, contain noticeable stinging satire on the Polish intelligentsia circles in the DP community. Images of self-appointed institutions (structures) in the camp: military, religious and patriotic show the hypocrisy of his co-patriots, tomfoolery, from which the poet dissociates himself (Szczęsna 2015: 117). He is the most critical towards emigres, who trade in their homeland and values, in the poem entitled *Gruba Gamemnona*, where he calls them “stinking carrion” (Borowski 2003: 230). The poet is very critical towards the intelligentsia for its selfishness, pettiness and minding their material benefits, which he expresses in many other pieces, e.g. *Opowiastka o Adasiu, Szkice inteligenckie*, “*Onanizują się ojczyznę...*”. His opinions about Polish DPs correspond with those presented ten years later by Tadeusz Nowakowski in *Obóz Wszystkich Świętych*, in which he wrote about their being lost and degenerated, about their cultivating jingoistic traditions and dabbling in politics (Krupa 2017: 144). It is noteworthy that Borowski was probably the first Polish writer to describe DP camps (Szczęsna 2000: 138). A little later, in 1947, a book with reportages about this little-known episode of World War II was published by Jerzy Zagórski (Zagórski 1947).

The war winners’ vision of the world. A protest against injustice and totalitarianism

Let us remember that when the war was over, Borowski was still – for four months – looking at the world from an inmate’s perspective. This experience of gross injustice, i.e. imprisoning an innocent person and confined to a world controlled by military and police services in one of Germany’s largest cities provoked a strong objection on his part, which he expressed in his memoirs and poems. In a letter to his fiancée – written after he returned from Germany to Poland – the poet stated that he counted the year spent in Munich as part of the camp part of his life. Perhaps, several years later, he would go further in recognising the reality in which he lived and would conclude that the whole modern world reminded him of a camp – a great totalitarian machine. At any rate, such suggestions can be found in many of his pieces written during the Munich period.

It is noteworthy that the titles of several of Borowski’s post-war poems, written during his stay in Germany, contain the word “camp”. It refers the reader to

the DP world, which was neglected by literature and history. Nowadays, great importance is attached to referring to concentration camps as Nazi camps. It is also stressed that there were no Polish camps. However, in his poems written in 1945–1946, the Polish poet described from a prisoner's perspective the grotesque reality of American camps, which may not have been concentration camps, but they were still camps in which people died.

Rebellion and aversion, and even downright hatred, is directed towards the winners and lords of the world, i.e. imperial allied powers: England and the United States. He criticises the democracy to which he has to submit, and he criticises the actions of the allied leaders, usually focusing on Truman, Roosevelt and Churchill. He mentions Stalin and the Soviet Union rarely and in a rather neutral tone.

In a poem with an ironic title *Dary demokracji*, he complains about hard living conditions in the DP camp, about the ill-treatment of inmates, the food rations of 300 g of bread and beer, about insufficient aid from the UNRRA, which was an international organisation helping countries harmed by the war.⁷ He mocks the words of British prime minister, Winston Churchill: “we are fighting for the ideas, not for profit”, to summarise his opinion about the new order with the firm: “I wish to punch democracy in the face!” (Borowski 2003: 205).

However, his attack is usually directed against soldiers arriving from across the ocean and their leaders. His *Pamiętnik z Freimannu* mentions – at the very start – “the American era” and the drastic restrictions associated with it: “The American flag above the gate and American soldiers standing guard and protecting the order of the new Europe. Guards around the barracks. Those who try to leave are shot at. Quarantine” (Borowski 2004: 357).

The last word of this quotation from a memoir signals a problem faced by many residents of Eastern Europe, who were refused the right to return to their native land for quite some time after it was liberated by the allied forces, which bred trauma and bad feelings towards the victorious troops. This was also the case of Borowski, who saw “boys in deep helmets” – MP's, American Military Police servicemen, reminding him of SS-men – everywhere (Borowski 2003: 232). He also sees analogies in a different dimension when he writes about them: “they have their traditions exactly like German, bunkers, posts, very small food rations...” (Borowski 2004: 364).

⁷ United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, an international organisation established in the USA in 1943, carrying help to countries harmed by World War II, in the years 1945–1947.

In a piece without a title (“Tłumowi słowem iść na przekór...”), the poet uses expressionist language to characterise the American era in the history of Europe. Only with clear exaggerations was it possible to describe the tragic situation in which the DPs found themselves.

The grudge towards the soldiers from across the ocean is expressed in a variety of ways. In *Spacer po Monachium*, they are shown as victors who enjoy life, and have affairs with young German women, “who conquer the last forts/the hills of breasts and hips” (Borowski 2003: 223). This motive of the military personnel having sex with local women is repeated in many pieces. It is entwined in the considerations which present contrasting pictures of post-war inequalities and injustice: mental suffering and hardships of the lives of “slaves”, that is, former concentration camp inmates and the (primitive) joy of life experienced, paradoxically, by representatives of nations which used to fight against each other – the victorious and the defeated.

Borowski talks with aversion about the new order in this part of Europe, which entails the Americans patrolling towns, checking people’s ID, but also rationing clothes and food, like in the poem entitled *New Deal*:

The Americans announced Victory
and divided it into calories,
They raked Europe through like a pillow in the struggle for people,
and, like in the old days, strikes and hunger. (Borowski 2003: 249)

He tries to undermine the opinion about the good hearts of donors from across the ocean and their good intentions in the piece entitled *Piosenka o pomocy amerykańskiej*. He points out in it that the Americans benefited from World War II, which indeed they did, because their wealth had increased at the time by 50% (in terms of the GDP). He writes about the wealth of philanthropists hoping for further profits, which is in contrast with the conditions of life in Europe destroyed by the war and which is offensive to a person liberated from the camp:

In the new systems
they give out sand and cement,
powdered lime, iron and steel,
to erect foundations
which were turned into ruins
on the fields of yesterday’s fights.
[...]
And there, across the ocean
wealthy ladies go

to picket lines, to banquets and balls,
 they fasten rosebuds
 and collect into money boxes
 for poor people, who they are sorry for.

In the streets and in cinemas
 each poster implores:
 "Give a dollar for whole milk!"
 The harlequin star cries,
 the cartel shark cries,
 the wolf of industry sobs.

After some thinking
 they draw money out of their wallets
 for people to buy bread (not from wheat flour, for now),
 voluntary donations
 and one standard of contribution:
 half per mille of war profits. (Borowski 2003: 250–251)

One might think that a Polish left-wing poet sees the social injustice which – in his opinion – arises from the rule of the capital. And it is the USA that was the most powerful capitalist country after the war. That was probably one of the main reasons for his anger and bitterness after regaining the delayed freedom. It seems that when Borowski mentions the anger of modern helots, "cursed and hungry", who rise to change the "foundation of the world" (Borowski 2003: 185), he does not probably refer to *Oda do młodości* by Mickiewicz, as Justyna Szczęsna comments regarding the poem *Oda do przyjaciela* (Szczęsna 2003: 453), but rather to a well-known hymn of socialists – *The Internationale*. He takes the same position – of a diagnostician of the "madness of the capitalist world", in the book entitled *Opowiadania z książek i gazet*, published several years later, which contains some lyrics of the song as the motif: "The world is about to change its foundation/We are nothing, let us be everything!". This, partly journalistic collection of novellas, essays and features presents an even more exaggerated criticism of the West, testifying to the Marxist views of the author and his poor insight into modern culture (Drewnowski 1977: 291–292).

When he attacks capitalism, Borowski has in store – as one might guess – an effective remedy, that is, socialism, which will not appear in his works until 1949. Although this perspective is not clear in the DP's poems, one can perceive taunts concerning the USA's imperialist actions – such as dropping the atomic bomb on Japan (for example, *Licytacja*, *Po wojnie*). In the title of the cycle *Cztery wolności* and of the piece *Pasy wolności*, the poet alludes to the political

principles preached by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941, which he translated into Polish during his stay in Munich. This is about the *Cztery swobody* [*Four freedoms*] – the inherent rights of everyone: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from poverty and freedom from fear. For Borowski, they were a utopia, the goal, not the way, a manifestation of American idealism (Borowski 2001b: 70). *Pasy wolności* presents a vision of a widespread rebellion against the restrictions, which were called the bloody stripes of freedom. This was a revolution in the name of the defence of the dignity of people exploited by capitalists and the pseudo-democratic country; it was a workers' (socialist) revolution. They disarmed soldiers and MPs, demolished prisons, barracks and churches and fought for well-being, and access to cinemas, theatres and cafes. Although the words like “worker”, “socialism”, and “communism” are not mentioned, the message conveyed by the piece has an implied ideological meaning and points to the author's leftist inclinations.

When he made them known several later in a strongly ideologised brochure entitled *Do młodych agitatorów pokoju*, he wrote that American soldiers were depraved by their superiors, who allowed them to commit murders and rapes, and that they followed orders fearing the consequences, without realising that “they would become tools in the hands of madmen and murderers, who plan to conquer and annihilate the world” (Borowski 1951: 8).

The world of deprecated values

A DP's fate becomes, for Borowski, a metaphor for the total enslavement of an individual by institutions acting on behalf of the state and in the name of international treaties. Shown in a grotesque and satirical formula of poetry, it provides one not only with the knowledge of violating human rights but also makes one sensitive to the sorry moral effects of unjust deprivation of freedom. A DP is a person of a worse sort who doubts all the higher humanist values, like – earlier – a concentration camp inmate. Therefore, one can talk about a syndrome of chronic camp disease. The poet aspires to give a diagnosis to the post-war world. And the diagnosis is devastating. Such concepts as culture, democracy and justice have been denied. Borowski sees how empty they are. He does not believe in the good intentions of liberators, he criticises the Western allies for false promises of freedom, for the atomic bomb, and he is also a little afraid of the eastern situation, although he plans to return to Poland, like in the poem entitled *O powrocie, bolszewikach, autach etc., tudzież jego sens prawdziwy* (Borowski 2003:

342–343). In a different piece – *Po wojnie* he settles his accounts with the world of great politics: superpower leaders and the pope, and the result is clearly negative:

One can see that this fucking world,
is only lies and cheating,
if Broniewski himself
starts to write against... (Borowski 2003: 258)

Borowski's post-war lyrical writings do not produce a new diction and form of utterance, it does not lead – as Drewnowski pointed out – to “unifying [...] various means of expression, to discovering his own poetics”; it is a “multi-form” achievement (Drewnowski 1977: 135), which opens new threads, but does not bind them together, leaves them unfinished... However, this poetry is clearly modern; it features such qualities as a journalistic style, irony and grotesqueness. It justifies seeking affinities to the lyrical writings by Gałczyński. This is the same current of expressionist imaging.

Its grotesque nature should be understood taking into account the contextualising framework: the identity-related problem of human and artistic freedom and political conditions of life in just post-war Europe. Not a minor role in this presentation is played by a network of intertextual signs and meanings: political, historical, cultural and linguistic. One such example of grotesque imbued with the experience of war is *Sonet* dedicated to Staff, where Borowski talks about a vision of the future less optimistic than that presented by his older colleague (*Pierwsza przechadzka*):

We'll give you simpler and more honest life
we'll get rid of famine and TB;
we'll make bayonets blunt
and we'll destroy all battleships.

We want to step into the new world,
we don't want to be afraid of people,
we want to make old enemies brothers –

we'll be watching each other inquisitively
through half-closed eyes
like through narrow slits in a tank. (Borowski 2003: 354)

The final scene, outlined with military terms, expresses a post-traumatic mental state of a person who has survived the war and cannot liberate himself from it. Undoubtedly, it contains a projection of the world in which the individual

is constantly cornered, and they can't escape from it. This is a significant and representative example of Borowski's volitionally ambivalent lyric poetry. The poetry, in its deepest essence, is a response to the challenge of totalitarianism.

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