

On Acousmatism in Poetry.

Listening to the World
in *Szybki wiersz* by Adam
Zagajewski and *Kontrapunkt*
by Stanisław Barańczak*

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This music with a ride, this is power after all.¹

Miron Białoszewski²

Introduction

Szybki wiersz [Fast poem] by Adam Zagajewski and *Kontrapunkt* [Counterpoint] by Stanisław Barańczak share the theme of music in lyrical circumstances (Iwona Puchalska)³. However,

¹ “To jednak ta muzyka z jazdą to jest potęga.”

² Miron Białoszewski, *Chamowo. Utwory zebrane* [Rabble. Collected works], vol. 11 (Warszawa: PIW, 2010), 222.

³ See Iwona Puchalska, *Muzyka w okolicznościach lirycznych. Zapisy słuchania muzyki w poezji polskiej XX i XXI wieku* [Music in lyrical circumstances. Records of listening to music in twentieth and twenty-first century Polish poetry] (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2017).

the intertextual dialogue between the two poems goes further which is why – when interpreting them – we should ask ourselves questions which will show these texts in the light of intermedial co-dependencies: does music affect the structure of a poem? Does a poem find its shape in “someone else’s beauty”? Apart from analyzing the so-called musicality of literature, we also need to consider the issue of acousmatic listening, which should be recognized as a part of culture in terms of these two poems⁴, as well as a style of reception of a soundscape⁵.

In both cases the lyrical situation is inspired by music from a loudspeaker, i.e. sounds mediated via technology. The acousmatic experience can be understood here as an immersion in “mixed sound” – in which the practice of “mediated” listening (hi-fi) is connected with registering random sounds, provoked by a specific, real space. It is also an attempt at concocting an intimate, safe (although distributed technologically) audiosphere, which plays the role of a niche alternative to the sounds of the chaotic outside world⁶.

Today interdisciplinary comparative studies define numerous music-poetic variants, which belong to the broad “field of intermediality”⁷. The vectors of these inter-artistic inspirations go in different directions, which means that they require a comprehensive approach. The intermedial classifications proposed by Irina O. Rajewsky, Werner Wolf, or Jens Schröter are helpful in defining and organizing relationships between music and literature. Modern taxonomies are typically based on a division of music and literary influences by Steven P. Scher, which is well established in the literature on this topic. In terms of musicality, it is easy to identify “intermedial references”⁸ in Zagajewski’s and Barańczak’s poems – taking them into consideration is a *sine qua non* condition of interpretation. Neither poem goes beyond a single (in this case – linguistic) means of expression. In sophisticated poetry narrowing the interpretation to direct musical clues seems to be an oversimplification. In this case, the character of musical-literary connotations approaches ontological intermediality phenomena⁹, which refer to the specific character of the material of a given art. An intermedial piece is situated between ontological analogies (e.g. temporality as a feature of poetry and music) and differences (e.g. “static” narrative of painting and dynamic narrative of film).

⁴ See Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen. Acousmatic Sound in The Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc, 2014), 8.

⁵ It can be assumed that a soundscape is a given acoustic environment – a studied field with all its contexts. See Renata Tańczuk, “Pejzaż dźwiękowy jako kategoria badań i doświadczeń miasta” [Soundscape as a category of research and urban experiences], *Audiosfera. Koncepcje – Badania – Praktyki* 1 [Audiosphere. Ideas – Research – Practices] (2015): 10–19.

⁶ See Andrzej Hejmej, “Słuchający Stanisław Barańczak” [Stanisław Barańczak listening], in: “Odcisk palca – rozległy labirynt”: prace ofiarowane profesorowi Wojciechowi Ligęzie na jubileusz siedemdziesięciolecia [Fingerprint – a vast labyrinth: papers given to professor Wojciech Ligęza on the 70th jubilee], edited by Mateusz Antoniuk, Dorota Siwor (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2021), 713–727.

⁷ Bernd Herzogenrath, “Travels in Intermedia[lity]. An Introduction”, in: *Travels in Intermedia[lity]. ReBlurring the Boundaries*, edited by Bernd Herzogenrath (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2012), 3.

⁸ Werner Wolf, “Intermediality Revisited. Reflections on Word and Music Relations in the Context of a General Typology of Intermediality”, in: *Word and Music Studies. Essays Word and Music Studies. Essays in Honor of Steven Paul Scher and on Cultural Identity and the Musical Stage*, edited by Suzanne M. Lodato, Suzanne Aspden, Walter Bernhart (Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2002), 19 onwards.; Irina O. Rajewsky, “Intermediality, Intertextuality and Remediation. A Literary Perspective on Intermediality”, *Intermedialités* 6 (2005): 52 onwards.

⁹ Jens Schröter, “Four Models of Intermediality”, in: *Travels in Intermedia[lity]*, 15–31.

Music in poetry

*Szybki wiersz*¹⁰ by Adam Zagajewski comes from the book of poetry *Ziemia ognista* [Fiery land] (1994); it was written at the time when the poet lived in France. *Kontrapunkt* comes from the poetic cycle *Widokówka z tego świata i inne rymy z lat 1986–1988* [A postcard from this world and other rhymes from 1986–1988] (1988). Barańczak's poem illustrates the experiences of an expat in the USA. A comparison of the titles shows that Zagajewski's poem is an example of a metatextual reflection, whereas Barańczak refers to music from the first attempt at a dialogue with the reader, thus signaling that counterpoint – a polyphonic technique which is based on several melodic lines in conjunction, according to strictly defined tonal, rhythmical, and harmonic rules – is going to be significant. The differences between the two poems inspire considerations regarding the style of reception of music, which in turn influences key issues – from shaping the musical prosody of a poem to thinking about the world. In both poems the main point is not collecting purely aesthetic impressions, but rather seeking an experience that would unify the whole life experience¹¹.

Zagajewski debuted in 1967 with his poem *Muzyka* [Music] in *Życie literackie*. He is fascinated with sound: in his poems, he writes about Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, Frederic Chopin, Witold Lutosławski, Dmitri Shostakovich, Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, *St. Matthew Passion* by Jan Sebastian Bach, *Requiem* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Song of the Earth* by Gustav Mahler¹². According to Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel, for Zagajewski music was of primary importance, and poetry was only second¹³.

Barańczak's passion for music resonates throughout all his poetry. In his world *logos* and *melos* are inseparable, they permeate each other, organizing both the fictional space of texts and the poetic worldview¹⁴. Listening brings a new type of experiencing reality sensually – an *acousmatic experience*¹⁵, which irreversibly changes the situation of the listener and thus translates into the palpable pulse of both poems.

¹⁰It should be highlighted that *Szybki wiersz* should be interpreted and read out loud. Zagajewski's "loud poetry" requires an analysis from different perspectives: linguistic communication, performance, literary analysis. See Aleksandra Kremer, "Głośna poezja. Uważne słuchanie w badaniach literackich" [Loud poetry. Attentive listening in literary studies], *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2015): 103–124.

¹¹Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel, *Poszukiwanie blasku. O poezji Adama Zagajewskiego* [Searching for light. On Adam Zagajewski's poetry] (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych "Universitas", 2005), 78.

¹²See Bartosz Małczyński, *Zestrojenia. Szkice o literaturze, muzyce i dobroci* [Tuning. Sketches on literature, music, and kindness] (Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos: 2017), 123–133.

¹³Małczyński, p. 74.

¹⁴See my chapter *Muzyczny światopogląd Stanisława Barańczaka* [Stanisław Barańczak's musical worldview] in Aleksandra Reimann-Czajkowska, *Muzyczne transpozycje* [Musical transpositions]. *S. I. Witkiewicz – W. Hulewicz – S. Barańczak – Z. Rybczyński – L. Majewski* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych "Universitas", 2018), 115–132.

¹⁵See Andrzej Hejmej, "Słuchanie literatury w społeczeństwie medialnym" [Listening to literature in a media society], *Teksty Drugie* 2 (2021): 301–319.

Time and sound

In the two poems, time – a shared characteristic of poetry and music – is of key importance: temporality is understood as the actual time required to read, and a (more complex) fictional time, which belongs to the lyrical situation. There are two temporal orders in the outlined lyrical situation – that of a car ride, and that of music: *Goldberg Variations* by Jan Sebastian Bach (in Barańczak’s poem) and a Gregorian chant (in Zagajewski’s poem). The former is a realistic time of fiction, whereas the latter is time which goes beyond the poems, as it belongs to a different form of art, in this case – to the duration of a piece of music. Although there is a long tradition of relationships between music and poetry, present-day poets no longer perform their poetry while playing the lute or the kithara. A present-day poet listens... In fact, sometimes listening to music can inspire a poem.

The situations presented in the poems do not encourage celebration of music typical of concerts, nor quiet, intimate contemplation at home. The poets outline a common, everyday situation: a car ride while listening to music. The art of sound can thus be only a part of a sound environment, an element of the acoustic sphere of the world, perceived as “a huge macro-cosmic composition which deserves to be listened to as attentively as a Mozart symphony”¹⁶ (Raymond Murray Schafer).

Michał Głowiński remarks (not without regret) that:

Nothing protects a masterpiece from being used as a background for a conversation, journey, waiting room at the dentist’s, or even noisy party. Seen from this perspective, the distance between Beethoven and the Beatles is surprisingly small. Music reaches you from all around you [...] any piece of autonomous music can become functional music at any moment. Even the greatest masterpieces have no protection period¹⁷.

It is not just the distance between popular and classical music that disappears, but also the one between the art of sounds, i.e. a course of sound elements organized in time, and rustling, whirring, noise... The lyrical situation of the poems causes problems with perceiving ontologically different sounds which belong to the shared space provided in a subjective visual and audio (!) reception.

Defining the semantic field of references forces one to consider the personal experiences of the writer – an intimate act of listening. Pieces of music which exist independently of poems move its temporal limits. In Barańczak’s poem, the time of listening begins when *Goldberg Variations* “splashed out from stereo speakers”, surprising the driving protagonist. In Zagajewski we also enter the poem *in medias res* – when music is playing, accompanying the lyrical I while driving.

¹⁶R. Murray Schafer, “Muzyka środowiska” [The Music of the Environment], translated into Polish by Danuta Gwizdalanka, *Res Facta* 9 (1982): 298–315.

¹⁷Michał Głowiński, “Pytania zadawane muzyce” [Questions asked to music], *Ruch Muzyczny* 3 (1993): 6.

The intermedial relations which occur between music and literature thicken the time of poetry not only in a literal, temporal sense, but also structurally. We should thus ask about the textural differences between the two pieces of music – polyphonic *Variations* by Bach, and a monotonous medieval Gregorian chant.

Music in the car

In both poems information about music appears at the very beginning, highlighting its importance:

Zagajewski:

I was listening to a Gregorian chant
in a speeding car,
on a highway, in France¹⁸.

(*Szybki wiersz*)¹⁹

Barańczak:

Goldberg Variations, in the immediately recognizable
record by Glenn Gould, splashed out from stereo speakers,
when he turned on the starter, and with violently sickening disgust,
torment, in fact, he cursed what immediately blocked
bluntly across the rushing stream of accents²⁰

(*Kontrapunkt*)²¹

Zagajewski's text is a "road poem", in which the most important questions concern the destination: "Where was I going? Where did the sun go?". Driving fast, passing by landscapes, highway going up to the horizon line – these are all elements which create an impression of a linear world, in which passing away is not a promise of a cyclical comeback.

The poem's organization is concise in terms of formulated statements, and sketchy in terms of the presented images. The amphibrachic-trochaic rhythm creates a slowly unfolding story, which contrasts with the lyrical situation (driving fast). The intonation dichotomy in the final verse ("on a highway, in France") offers an opportunity to rest, and constructs a quiet perception. The reader gets an impression that the way the poem is shaped follows music and the mood of the lyrical I, distanced to the speeding world:

¹⁸"Słuchałem śpiewu gregoriańskiego / w pędzącym samochodzie, / na autostradzie, we Francji".

¹⁹Adam Zagajewski, *Szybki wiersz*, in: *Wiersze wybrane* [Selected poems] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo a5, 2010), 155. All quotes from the poem cited here come from this edition.

²⁰"Wariacje dla Goldberga", w rozpoznawalnym od razu / nagraniu Glenna Goulda, bryznięty z głośników stereo, / gdy włączył starter, i z tym gwałtowniej mdlącą odrazą, / męką właściwie, przeklął to, co natychmiast stanęło / tępą przegrodą w poprzek rwącego strumienia akcentów".

²¹Stanisław Barańczak, *Kontrapunkt*, in: *Wybór wierszy i przekładów* [Selected poems and translations] (Warszawa: PIW, 1997), 317. All quotes from the poem cited here come from this edition.

Trees were in a hurry. The voices of monks
 praising an invisible Lord
 (at dawn, in a chapel shivering with cold).
 Domine, exaudi orationem meam,
 male voices were asking so calmly,
 as if salvation was growing in the garden²²

(*Szybki wiersz*)²³

It is worth noting that in Zagajewski's poem music creates a vision – an image of monks praying “in a chapel, shivering with cold”. Shivering is sensual, and refers not only to feeling cold, but also to how sounds resonate in space. The echo accompanying chanting in medieval churches intensified the sense of spirituality and “unearthliness”.

Zagajewski reaches for “archaic things”; the choice of the Gregorian chant, which flourished in the ninth-twelfth centuries, is significant. Such melodies sound raw and ascetic. The chant has no harmonious basis, no accompaniment – it is based on a rich figuration. Modality and monophony are characteristic for it; it is *cantus planus*, i.e. plainsong, a monophonic chant²⁴.

In such chants, the melody was subject to the text of a prayer. In its simplest version it was a recitative, modest in terms of melody, typically performed by a priest. A chorus chant was more varied in terms of melody. The most impressive, a melismatic chant was based on assigning many sounds to a syllable in order to highlight key words (e.g. Alleluia). Despite the fact that Gregorian chant is typically treated as a liturgical song, in Zagajewski's poem it also has an aesthetic value, prepossessing with its beauty and simplicity, which become a starting point for an existential reflection.

The poet refers to the Psalm of David (142), which starts with: “O Lord, hear my prayer”. The Psalm is about experiencing one's own weakness, loneliness, torment and dependency on God. It is no coincidence that Zagajewski embellishes his text with the vowel “o”, stressed as many as six times in the last three cited verses. In his poem, the vowel is an expression of lamenting, wailing, and also refers to singing – as if making music phonetically present (Zbigniew Herbert does something similar, but to a lesser extent, with the vowel “a” in his *Apollo and Marsjasz*).

The chant-prayer is a moment of contemplation both for monks and the lyrical I. Zagajewski's poem directs the reader's/listener's attention to transcendence. God remains invisible (“The voices of monks / praising an invisible Lord”). However, in Zagajewski's hierarchy Invisible does not mean absent – invisibility is significant, it is poignant, always perceptible

²²“Drzewa śpieszyły się. Głosy mnichów / chwaliły niewidzialnego Pana / (o świecie, w drżącej od chłodu kaplicy). / Domine, exaudi orationem meam, / prosiły męskie głosy tak spokojne / jakby zbawienie rosło w ogrodzie.

²³Emphasis mine, A.R.C.

²⁴Gregorian chant is based on scores – eight in the medieval times. See Bogusław Schaeffer, *Dzieje muzyki [History of music]* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1983), 47–48.

and related to the mystery. On the other hand, music is a form of art which – like no other – can make the invisible present in the audible²⁵.

Paradoxically, the Gregorian chant, similarly to icons, is a relic of the past, which remains highly popular. “Why do we return to old music, is not for the mystery?”²⁶. In *Autoportret* [Self-portrait] (1995) he wrote: “I listen to music a lot: [...] In music, I find strength, weakness and pain, three elements. / The fourth one has no name”²⁷. It has no name, because it is the Mystery. In Zagajewski’s poetry experiencing music means experiencing a transcendental mystery.

In Zagajewski, music leads to existential questions:

Where was I going? Where did the sun go?
 My life was lying, torn apart
 on both sides of the road, like the paper of a map.
 Together with sweet monks
 I was going towards clouds, grey,
 heavy and impermeable,
 towards the future, an abyss,
 swallowing hard tears of hail.²⁸

Music and contemplation inspired by it are a safe space for the poet, under the condition of listening – *poeta in ascolto*. Perhaps he finds a longing for mystical zealousness and spiritual indolence of the contemporary man in the Gregorian chant. For Alina Biała, music in Zagajewski’s poem are two separate models of the world:

Two models of existence: modern, secular, always in a hurry, and medieval, religious, based on focus and contemplation. The former is associated with a horizontal space, constantly changing thanks to civilization and lifestyle (car, journey), whereas the latter – with a vertical space, still equally beautiful, modeled slowly by a natural rhythm of light and serving asceticism [...] ²⁹.

²⁵See Bohdan Pociąg, *Muzyka i mistyka – o pewnych wtajemniczeniach* [Music and mysticism – on certain initiations], accessed 13.08.2021, <https://deon.pl/wiara/duchowosc/muzyka-i-mystyka-o-pewnych-wtajemniczeniach,122745>.

²⁶“Dlaczego wracamy do starej muzyki, czy nie dla tajemnicy właśnie?” [Why do we return to old music, is it not for the mystery?], Adam Zagajewski, *Wielkie niemilczenie* [Huge no-silence], from the program of *Festiwal Misteria Paschalia 2016*, accessed 13.08.2021, <http://misteriapaschalia.com/images/upload/Zagajewski.pdf>.

²⁷“Dużo słucham muzyki: [...] / W muzyce znajduję siłę, słabość i ból, trzy żywioły. / Czwarty nie ma imienia”, Adam Zagajewski, *Późne święta* [Late holidays] (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1998), 255.

²⁸„Dokąd jechałem? Gdzie schowało się słońce? / Moje życie leżało rozdarte / po obu stronach drogi, kruche jak papier mapy. / Razem ze słodkimi mnichami / zmierzałem w stronę chmur, sinych, / ciężkich i nieprzeniknionych, / w stronę przyszłości, otchłani, / połykając twarde łzy gradu.”

²⁹Alina Biała, *Literatura i muzyka: korespondencja sztuk* [Literature and music: correspondence of arts] (Warszawa – Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwa Popularnonaukowe Sfinks, 2011), 193.

Szybki wiersz is not about music *sensu stricto*, but about doubt, which also manifests itself in the language of poetry: in metaphors and alliterations referring to our reality (“**twarde** łzy **gradu**” [hard tears of hail]), in synonymous adjectives (“heavy and impermeable”), in an apocalyptic juxtaposition with notions from a distant semantic field (future – abyss).

The poet’s internal voice is inspired by the ascetic chant of monks; he anxiously registers the incompatibility of past and present culture, in which there is no understanding for once recognizable signs of eternity. Gregorian chant is another starting point for a conversation with the self³⁰, another poetic record of auto-analysis.

The aim of listening to a chant is to experience something mystical, which requires a high style mediating between spirits of the past and makeshift presence³¹. Sophistication and formal “transparency”, which allow for insight into the essence of things, are characteristic of this style, as well as of a monophonic texture.

Do religious and secular music (the latter represented by *Goldberg Variations*) have their own orders? Bohdan Paciej distinguished between two spheres of sounds: physical (music “from the body”), and spiritual (music “from the spirit”). Songs representing the former sphere are characterized by variety of timbres, thick texture, blunt rhythm, concrete melodies, vitality and clarity, whereas songs representing the latter have a more sophisticated sound foregrounding structure, brightness, and a delicate rhythm, time passing slowly, subtle melody³². Does this translate into the style of reception? *Szybki wiersz* presents the ability to listen in a contemplative-meditative way. And what about Barańczak’s poem?

Braid of counterpoint

By introducing a musical term to poetry, Barańczak recontextualizes it³³. Using counterpoint in a poem means respecting the laws of music, which results in multiplied intermedial relations. For composers, counterpoint is a challenge and test of skill. According to Paciej:

The art of counterpoint, made visible in the system of rules, constitutes the center and fundament of any ability to compose. Composing music is first and foremost about putting together, juxtaposing, tuning, finding agreement between consonant elements. Agreement and harmony

³⁰ Artur Grabowski, “Mistyryzm jako mistyfikacja, czyli o słabej poezji i jej mocnych czytelnikach” [Mysticism as mystification – on weak poetry and its strong readers], in: *Różne głosy. Prace ofiarowane Stanisławowi Balbusowi na jubileusz siedemdziesięciolecia* [Various voices. 70th anniversary of Stanisław Balbus], edited by Dorota Wojda, Magdalena Heydel, Andrzej Hejmej (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013), 199.

³¹ See Adam Zagajewski, *Obrona żarliwości* [Defense of zealotry] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo a5, 2002), 41.

³² See Tomasz Cyz, *Muzyka i Bóg* [Music and God], accessed 10.08.2021, <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/muzyka-i-bog-129000>.

³³ See Aleksandra Reimann, *Kontrapunkt albo poetycka definicja techniki polifonicznej* [Counterpoint or a poetic definition of the polyphonic technique], in: *Muzyczny styl odbioru tekstów literackich* [Musical style of reception of literature]. *Iwaszkiewicz – Barańczak – Rymkiewicz – Grochowiak* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2013), 154–178.

is the ideal here, towards which all music developing over some period of time strives; sounds in individual voices of a polyphonic construction meet and tune in consonance, in accord; each dissonance strives towards a harmonious solution³⁴.

The expectations of a reader-music lover are confirmed in the lyrical situation: the protagonist listens to *Goldberg Variations*, which is a masterpiece of Bach's counterpoint³⁵. The text focuses not only on the general rules of polyphony, but also on a specific piece of music.

Tracing the relationship between mysticism and music in Zagajewski's poem is replaced by no less ambitious task in *Kontrapunkt*: tracing parallel melodic lines and how they intersect at the counterpoint. For music lovers it is important who performs a given song. Barańczak uses a classic, i.e. *Goldberg Variations* by Glenn Gould, who is considered not only an excellent pianist, but also an eccentric and insightful commenter of his own interpretations, who intentionally broke with established canons³⁶. Barańczak listens to a song which was originally written for the cembalo, and hence it is in a (slight) piano transcription. Similarly to *Szybki wiersz*, the reader enters *Kontrapunkt* in the middle of the lyrical situation. In spite of the distance imposed by the use of third person singular, we remain in the circle of experience, thought, expression and feelings of the lyrical protagonist.

The key to understanding the poetic counterpoint is to trace the lyrical situation in which events and actions are multiplied. The moment the protagonist turns the music on, listening is accompanied by other activities:

when he turned on the starter, and with violently sickening disgust,
torment, in fact, he cursed what immediately blocked
bluntly across the rushing stream of accents³⁷

Barańczak creates **a situational polyphony in the poem**, which occurs between events taking place simultaneously: Bach's composition, the protagonist's awareness and routine activities performed in a hurry – these activities generate sounds: “what [...] blocked / bluntly across the rushing stream of accents”.

In the poem, counterpoints go beyond art, as they begins to organize the lyrical situation so that it resembles a musical form. There are too many sounds which distract the protagonist

³⁴Bohdan Pocij, *Bach – muzyka i wielkość* [Bach – music and greatness] (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1972), 8.

³⁵The interest poets take in *Goldberg Variations* is noteworthy – see e.g. a series of poems inspired by individual variations by Alice B. Fogel, *Interval. Poems Based on Bach's „Goldberg Variations”* (Tucson: Schaffner Press, 2014).

³⁶According to Albert Schweitzer, out of all Bach's pieces, this one is the closest in style to the piano – Albert Schweitzer, *Jan Sebastian Bach*, translated into Polish by Maria Kurecka, Witold Wirpsza, afterword by Bohdan Pocij (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1972), 253.

³⁷“gdy włączył starter; i z tym gwałtowniej mdląca odrazą, / męką właściwie, przeklął to, co natychmiast stanęło / tępą przegrodą w poprzek rwącego strumienia akcentów”.

from enjoying aesthetic experiences – in fact, they continuously disrupt the reception of *Goldberg Variations*. Adam Poprawa discusses linguistic constructions which normally describe a realistic situation, but here they also gain new, metaphorical meanings related to music:

“The rushing stream of accents” obviously refers to *Goldberg Variations*, but there is also another meaning: “rushing stream” is also a metaphor describing traffic (a stream of cars). [...] Thanks to such a linguistic construction, which allows for double meanings, incompatible spheres are presented not only as mutual obstacles, but also parallels. [...] A rushing stream of accents is an element in Bach’s composition. A rushing stream of cars is an element of the Composition about which the poem asks³⁸.

According to Pocij, “polyphony” strives towards “harmony”, but it always precedes harmony, as it is more basic and “primary”³⁹. In the world of parallel phenomena listening to music competes with the intrusive sounds of everyday life. Capturing a piece of music in its entirety is possible only via previous knowledge of Bach’s composition and equipping the listener with appropriate knowledge of what counterpoint is. When the protagonist stops being distracted by everyday everyday affairs and actually starts to listen, music allows him to think clearly, it inspires the idea of a goal and order in him – art, which used to be subjected to the world, now subjects the world to its own rules:

He sped up, and only when he hit the brakes [...] did a vague thought occur to him: that in such thick music there is a place for everything⁴⁰.

It should be thus assumed, that “thick music” refers not only to Bach’s masterpiece, but also to the audiosphere. The composition turns out to be a polyphonic mapping of the order of the world; it contains everything, all phenomena⁴¹ – including sounds.

The following passage is often discussed. It can be understood both as a manifesto of the acousmatic experience, and as a poetic definition of counterpoint⁴²:

³⁸Adam Poprawa, *Bach w samochodzie albo próba kontrapunktu* [Bach in a car or an attempt at counterpoint], in: *Formy i afirmacje* [Forms and affirmations] (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych „Universitas”, 2003), 23.

³⁹Pocij, 8–9.

⁴⁰„Przyspieszył, i dopiero gdy ostro hamował [...] / niejasna myśl: że w tak gęstej muzyce jest miejsce na wszystko.”

⁴¹Joanna Dembińska-Pawelec, “Stanisław Barańczak – «niepowtarzalny rytm wiersza»” [Stanisław Barańczak – unique rhythm of a poem], in: *Poezja jest sztuką rytmu”: o świadomości rytmu w poezji polskiej dwudziestego wieku* [Poetry is an art of rhythm: on the awareness of rhythm in twentieth-century Polish music] (*Miłosz – Rymkiewicz – Barańczak*) (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2010), 411.

⁴²See e.g. Adam Poprawa, “Bach w samochodzie albo próba harmonii. O «Kontrapunkcie» Stanisława Barańczaka” [Bach in a car or an attempt at harmony. On *Kontrapunkt* by Stanisław Barańczak], *Warsztaty Polonistyczne* 2 (1993): 44–53; Poprawa, *Bach w samochodzie albo próba kontrapunktu*; Dembińska-Pawelec, 397–398; Reimann, 154–177; Iwona Puchalska, *Zaskoczenia* [Surprises], in: *Muzyka w okolicznościach lirycznych. Zapisy słuchania muzyki w poezji polskiej XX i XXI wieku* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2017): 194–198; Iwona Puchalska, “«Deus ex machina», czyli o doświadczeniu fonografii w poezji Stanisława Barańczaka” [«Deus ex machina», i.e. on experiencing photography in Stanisław Barańczak’s poetry], *Ruch Literacki* 4–5 (2013): 479–483.

For a moment, for a moment to stroke a tight braid
of counterpoint, contemplate the miracle of polyphony of voices,
each making its own separate journey in time,
and at every moment in time they are tied by a different harmony⁴³.

According to Andrzej Hejmej, this passage:

provides an insightful poetic characteristic of the modern phenomenon of acousmatism, i.e. the mechanisms which determine the acousmatic experience (at the same time it is clear from the very beginning that in the new circumstances it is not about the practice of listening to music that can be conceptualized in terms of *ascoltando*)⁴⁴.

Goldberg Variations, which unexpectedly barged in, lead the protagonist towards lost harmony, showing him the original order of diversity. Music – art produced *via et ordine*, i.e. according to the rules of mathematics – reflects its own rules and order in the mirror of transcendence, and reveals a different dimension, a reflection of a universe model⁴⁵.

Conclusion

Convictions about the hegemony of visuality in the modern world seem to fundamentally disagree with everyday experience⁴⁶, as ethereal sound proves to be more expansive than image. It is impossible to stop hearing/listening. This necessity to perceive sounds means that we need to interpret literature considering its soundscape, which is an inseparable part of lyrical situation. This means that both the whirl of an engine and *Goldberg Variations* function on equal terms. Extremely different sounds often co-occur: noise and music, chaos and harmony. Listening mediated via poetry allows us to comprehend reality more profoundly.

In Barańczak, the perception of soundscape which resembles a collection of sounds rather than their logical consequences is a unique experience, strongly connected to affect. Listening to music initiates an analysis which brings existential relief – order resulting from the rules of polyphony – of “thick music”, which predicts and contains everything.

In Zagajewski’s poem listening is connected with a mysticism which translates into both the visuality of the poem, and the sound regularity of the text. The blank verse has its rhythm, thanks to which it sounds intimate⁴⁷. However, unlike in a soundscape, Zagajewski is more

⁴³ „Przez chwilę, przez chwilę gładzić zwiężle spleciony warkocz / kontrapunktu, rozważać cud współistnienia głosów, / z których każdy odbywa w czasie osobną podróż, / a w każdym punkcie czasu łączy je inna harmonia.”

⁴⁴ Andrzej Hejmej, *Śluchający Stanisław Barańczak*, p. 719.

⁴⁵ See Dembińska-Pawelec, 394.

⁴⁶ See Jakub Momro, “Fenomenologia ucha” [Phenomenology of the ear], *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2015): 7 onwards.

⁴⁷ Derek Walcott, “Elegista” [Elegist], in: “*I cień i światło...*” *O twórczości Adama Zagajewskiego* [Shadow and light... On works by Adam Zagajewski], edited by Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel (Kraków: Wydawnictwo a5, 2015), 20.

interested in a natural landscape⁴⁸ that consists of images passed by, especially the vision of a heavy sky closing in above the protagonist. A Gregorian chant leads Zagajewski towards what he calls *vita contemplativa*⁴⁹, i.e. the world of order, sense and harmony. The questions asked by the poem concern the future, and although they refer to ultimate, often mystical questions, their orientation is horizontal, forcing the reader to look at the future at the upcoming events?. To the contrary, in Barańczak's poem, the focus is on intensely experienced, "thick" presence.

Both Zagajewski and Barańczak, typically considered to belong to the "68 generation", are trying to understand reality via the art of sounds. In doing so, they reach for music which serves different functions (religious versus *stricte* aesthetic) and is characterized by different levels of formal complexity (monody versus polyphony based on variations). Thanks to music (and psalms) Zagajewski looks inside himself experiencing invisible Transcendence, whereas Barańczak – quite paradoxically – discovers analogies between the original polyphony of the world and counterpoint encounters – *punctus contra punctum* – in Bach's autotelic masterpiece, *Goldberg Variations*, and its masterful counterpoints.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

⁴⁸Barbara Toruńczyk, "Czytając Adama Zagajewskiego" [Reading Adam Zagajewski], in: „*I cień i światło...*”, 33.

⁴⁹Toruńczyk, 33.

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KEYWORDS

intermediality

Barańczak

ACOUSMATIC EXPERIENCE

audio perception

ABSTRACT:

The paper is about intermediality, focusing especially on relations between music and literature, connected by music in lyrical circumstances (Iwona Puchalska) in poetry. It is an attempt at listening to an intertextual dialogue between two poems, where listening to music is the most important experience (*Goldberg Variations* by J.S. Bach in Barańczak's *Kontrapunkt*, and a Gregorian chant in Zagajewski's *Szybki wiersz*). In the two poems logos and melos are inseparable, they permeate each other, they organize the fictional space of their respective texts, and serve as a starting point for existential considerations. Listening thus brings a new sort of a sensual reception (and organization) of reality, in which experiencing opposites can lead to desired Harmony.

Zagajewski

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MUSIC AND LITERATURE

intertextuality

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