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Title: Paper: Walkscapes of the Avant-Garde. Rhythm and Embodiment in Polish Poetry of the 1920s

Abstract:

In his essay "Humor, Joke, Metaphor" the major avant-garde Polish poet and theoretician Tadeusz Peiper describes his visceral relationship with the rhythm as follows: „,I was coming back home, a lump in my throat, with the gullet full of affection. (...) In a moment my tongue started syllabically hitting the palate. It started lightly, quite lightly, tapping it with the tip of the muscle. It started to pulse as if syllabically. In a glance from this quasi-pulsation, the words were born.“ (T. Peiper, *Humor, Joke, Metaphor*, in: *Pisma Wybarane*, Biblioteka Narodowa, Kraków 1979, pp.166)

Similar testimonies of the bizarre origins of the rhythm, which appears as both something intimate and communal, internal and external, active and passive can be found in the writings of Paul Valery, Osip Mandelstam, and Vladimir Mayakovsky. However, for the futurists, formists, and constructivists of the 1920s, the rhythm was primarily associated with the fast-paced movement of the modern civilization. New rhythms of the city, the structured timeline of human labor, and consequently, the influence these changes had on the evolution of literary forms, would preoccupy most critical attention.

With walking as a point of departure I will focus on investigating the concrete examples from Tadeusz Peiper's, Bruno Jasiński's and Tytus Czyżewski's poetry to demonstrate that the attitude towards the function of the rhythm and its relation to the body can significantly vary within the avant-garde, and that, in fact, all of the authors have idiosyncratic ways of approaching the issue. While Peiper uses the type of rhythm which is "the most appropriate content-wise" to create his textual reality, Jasiński utilizes the device to popularize his social message. In the case of Czyżewski, as I prove, the rhythm serves as a tool designed to combine the dispersed parts of reality scattered by the horrors of World War I. In my paper, I will refer to writings by Nietzsche, Bergson, and Spinoza, as well as the poets' theoretical remarks on rhythm.