THE EXILE'S EXPERIENCE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE POETRY OF HILDE DOMIN AND WACŁAW IWANIUK

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the effect of the experience of exile on the German poet Hilde Domin and the Polish poet Waclaw Iwaniuk. Their involuntary exile, their departure from their respective native cultures and languages has affected them profoundly, both as individuals and as poets. The exiled poet lives in the conflicting world of the exile: on the one hand, he attempts to maintain his close ties to his native language and culture, while on the other hand, he is constantly assailed by the demands of his new and alien environment. He is thus plunged into a crisis of identity. This thesis examines this crisis by concentrating on the aspect of language as a reference point of the poet's identity.

Through a close examination of a selection of the poetry of Domin and Iwaniuk, I have attempted to discover how they express their personal experiences of exile, which problems they are most concerned with, and, finally, how they attempt to solve these problems. Their poetry expresses similar concerns, such as feelings of insecurity, instability and loss, as well as a wish to recover a sense of security. Both Domin and Iwaniuk are aware of the danger of becoming poetic nonentities in their exile, because their link with their native language is threatened. Recognizing the poet's power to find security in his language (which in turn enables him to reassert his identity through his poetry), they both attempt, in different ways, to preserve their identities as poets by writing.
Domin is on the whole more successful than Iwaniuk in defining herself through her language. She believes that language is an inseparable part of her, which naturally finds its expression through her writings. Iwaniuk, on the other hand, is more self-conscious about his language; the preservation of his native language as his poetic tool takes the form of struggle. This fact is not only reflected in the content of the two poets' poetry, but also in its form and style: Domin's language and poetry seem generally more spontaneous and harmonious, whereas Iwaniuk's language and poetry appear to be chiselled intellectually, as if it resisted the author's efforts.
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INTRODUCTION

Von Herberge zu Herberge
Vergessenheit.
Der eigene Name
wird etwas Fremdes. 1

Jede Form von Emigration verursacht an sich schon unvermeidlicherweise eine Art von Gleichgewichtsstörung, und ich zögere nicht zu bekennen, dass seit dem Tage, da ich mit eigentlich fremden Papieren oder Pässen leben musste, ich mich nie mehr ganz als mit mir zusammengehörig empfand. Etwas von der natürlichen Identität mit meinem ursprünglichen und eigentlichen Ich blieb für immer zerstört. 2

These words written by Stefan Zweig also hold true for Hilde Domin and Waclaw Iwaniuk, two poets from different social and cultural backgrounds, united in their common experience as exiles. The above quote touches on one of the most fundamental and problematic dilemmas facing the writer in exile: the problem of preserving his identity, particularly his identity as a writer in a different cultural and linguistic environment which is unconcerned with him or his writings. The departure of the poets from their native countries, but especially their separation from their native language, their essential source of identification as writers, has had a profound effect on both Domin and Iwaniuk. Indeed, for them, the inevitable crisis of identity as poets, but also as persons, is the foremost theme in their poetry. The poet in exile is placed in the difficult and paradoxical position of living simultaneously in two opposing worlds: his past, which formed his identity, and his present, which threatens his identity. This conflict, if unsolved, may have
significant, indeed destructive consequences on the poet. In the words of Cioran, a Romanian exile: "He who abandons his language, changes his personality, and commits treason on a heroic scale by breaking with his past, and - in some measure - with himself."\(^3\)

Though acutely aware of these dire conflicts, Domin and Iwaniuk wish to avoid the negative consequences of losing their identity, of facing total insecurity, linguistic, and otherwise. The question of language (and what language means to them), as well as the manner in which exile affected them as poets and as people, are some of the most prominent themes of their poetry. This thesis will examine their personal reflections on the experience of exile as reflected in their poetry.

Through a close examination of a selection of their poetry, I have attempted to discover how Domin and Iwaniuk view their situation and how they try to deal with it. I tried to discover how writers, who, more than anyone else, suffer from being cut off from their native language, manage (or perhaps do not manage) to assert their identity as writers. Although the theme of exile is to be found in epic as well as dramatic texts, I have chosen lyric poetry, chiefly because it is perhaps the most highly personalized form of literature and provides direct insights into the poets personal convictions and assessment of his situation. The poetry of Domin and Iwaniuk is on the whole not overly concerned with the historical and political implications of exile, but is rather a reflection of their personal thoughts as individuals. This personalized and individual approach renders their poetry communicative and conveys much of
the poet's personal experiences directly to the reader.

During the course of the thesis, it became apparent that merely writing in one's native language is not enough for a poet to preserve his identity with the language (and consequently his identity as a writer). This is evident in Iwaniuk, who frequently complains about the uncooperative nature of his language, which, through its silence, and together with the outside "foreign" world, threatens to undermine his identity as a Polish poet. Domin, on the other hand, has succeeded in not only preserving her identity through language, but in clinging so closely to it as to be inseparable from it.

Language is frequently discussed in both Iwaniuk's and Domin's poems, perhaps because in exile the poet becomes increasingly conscious of language as a possibility for identification. Thus endowed with a heightened awareness of language, the poet feels himself to be an inseparable part of it. For Domin, language achieves this for her, it is ultimately "das letzte Unverlierbare (Zuhause)", a home which no one can take away from her. For Iwaniuk, language also becomes a type of refuge, but a highly unreliable one: he apparently does not find security in using it. Language thus emerges as a means of poetic survival, which in Domin's case is more successful than in Iwaniuk's.

The observation that Domin was more "successful" in her exile than Iwaniuk might reflect the fact that she felt more comfortable with her new environment and its language than Iwaniuk did with his; however, in this thesis, I am not trying to establish whether cultural or linguistic closeness to the new environment is responsible for the exiled poet's
success. I also wanted to leave aside the actual nature of the new and alien culture surrounding the exile, and have therefore limited my remarks to language as a means of preserving poetic identity.
CHAPTER I

HILDE DOMIN

Hilde Domin has lived through all the possible phases of exile, including the return to her country in 1953. She wrote a substantial number of poems in exile, but just as many, if not more, after her return from exile. Her eventual return may disqualify her from being termed an exile poet but for the fact that the experience of exile, even after her return, is omnipresent in her works. In Domin's opinion, the experience of exile marks a person's life for good; it does not end just because the actual political situation which causes the exile has changed.

Domin once describe exile as "das Nicht-Dazugehören, eine Erfahrung, die man erst stückweise vollzieht, man sieht sie nicht als Ganzes vor sich. Erst beim Gehen merkt man, wie vertrackt der neue Zustand ist, wie 'un-heimlich'". Domin's poems often reflect a sentiment of not belonging. The futility of finding security, a constant awareness of the possibility of renewed exile, the loss of all roots except language all contribute to this sentiment. Her poems witness her inner struggle against realizing the impossibility of security, and thus a home, for her. Though this may sound like a dismal prospect, Domin's poetry is not pessimistic. It is, in fact, a poetry of hope, even with the implicit realization of the probable futility of this hope - the hope of finding a new beginning:

Für uns, die stets unterwegs sind
- lebenslängliche Reise,
wie zwischen Planeten -
nach einem neuen Beginn.
In light of these lines, the new beginning can only come after death, since the journey "für uns", the exile, lasts a lifetime. However, Domin was privileged to experience in her own life a new beginning, which she described as a type of rebirth, when she started to write poetry: "'Wiedergeburt', das war, als ich plötzlich anfing zu schreiben. Diese Wiedergeburt lässt sich genau datieren: auf den November 1951, fast drei Jahre vor meiner Rückkehr." With these words, spoken during an interview with R.A. Bauer in 1971, Hilde Domin expresses her beginnings as a writer. At the age of 39, and in the 19th year of her exile, Hilde Domin became a poet, and, literally overnight, wrote the first of what was to be a considerable number of poems. Why she started to write is a question she cannot answer herself. She simply states, perhaps surprised, that it just happened - "es passierte". Ever since this occurrence, she has regarded language as her home and as a point of reference for her own identity.

Between 1951 and 1953, she wrote many poems, very few of which were published. Her writing became home for her during her time of exile, and prepared thus, she decided to return to the home of the language:


In the end, Domin goes back to her country, but she soon realizes
that she is never able to "return home" in the psychological or spiritual sense, since memories and tangible objects containing the memories she associated with home have been destroyed:

Für uns, denen der Pfosten der Tür verbrannt ist, an dem die Jahre der Kindheit Zentimeter für Zentimeter eingetragen waren.⁶

Her return to her city was not experienced as a true return. Since the city is preserved in her memories the way it was before she left, she does not recognize it upon her return; she is lost in its newness and constantly haunted by its past. Thus, even after her return, Domin still senses the aura of the exile surrounding her. Alienated from the city's current life, she walks, or rather glides like a ghost through her native city in her poem entitled "Köln":

Die versunkene Stadt für mich allein versunken.

Ich schwimme in diesen Strassen. Andere gehn.

Die alten Häuser haben neue grosse Türen aus Glas.

Die Toten und ich wir schwimmen durch die neuen Türen unserer alten Häuser.⁷

The first line of this poem is reminiscent of Atlantis, the fabled sunken city of Greek legend. It also discloses a feeling of duality: the word "versunken" has a ring of finality to it; something which is sunk cannot normally be recovered and remains sunken forever. On the other
hand, there might still be a hope (as some people believe there is for Atlantis) that the city might be recovered. However, as indicated by the title, this poem is not about a mythical city, but about a real, modern city in Germany, so that the announcement that it is sunk seems rather shocking and even absurd. In line 2 Domin adds "für mich", which indicates that it is sunk for the poet alone, a fact she underlines in line 3 with the word "allein". This word not only means "alone", but it also stands alone within the poem's structure. This pinpoints and intensifies the meaning of the words and also heightens the emphasis of the poem's personal nature, already established in line 2. The central word of the poem, "versunken", is significantly repeated as the very last word of the stanza. This time, it not only stands alone, but is followed by a full stop which intensifies its sense of finality. There is little hope of any recovery to be found in this stanza; the city appears to be sunk for good.

Each stanza consists of one entire sentence (except the second one, which contains two sentences), interrupted at strategic points to bring out the full drama of the poem's message.

Stanza 2 starts with a paradoxical statement typical for Domin: "Ich schwimme / in diesen Strassen". Taken at face value, this sentence is rather nonsensical (unless, of course, there were a flood). However, as an addition to the first sentence, it becomes logical (since a sunken city is under water, you must necessarily swim through its streets). Until this point, the poem gives an impression of an underwater atmosphere pervaded by silence and an overwhelming sense of unreality. The city
becomes a ghost town in which Domin cannot function normally. Yet in the same stanza (line 7) Domin breaks the underwater spell and reaffirms the essential reality of the city for others: other people walk in the streets, they do not swim. The key word here is "andere" - "the others". This indicates a perhaps permanent isolation, an irrevocable separation between Domin and the new, real city. It is, in fact, a description of exile at home.

In the last stanza, Domin reveals that she is not the only one swimming in the streets: "Die Toten und ich / wir schwimmen". She associates herself with the dead, first by mentioning them together with her on the same line, and then by referring to this connection as "wir". Even though she is alive, she aligns herself with the dead, because it is the dead, not the living who share an experience with her.

The third stanza takes up another theme: the contrast between old and new, which is also the contrast between memory and reality. The old houses still exist, but they now have doors out of glass. The words "aus Glas" occupy a whole line; isolated thus, their significance is magnified. By installing glass doors into old houses which were never meant to have glass doors, the doors become not exactly new and unrecognizable, but disfigured and irretrievable. The houses are now transparent, anyone can look in, which indicates that they are no longer bastions of security for protection.

"Die deutsche Sprache", observed Domin, "war der Halt, ihr verdanken wir, dass wir die Identität mit uns selbst bewahren konnten. Der Sprache wegen bin ich auch zurückgekommen". Further she says:

Dabei ist der Verlust der Zugehörigkeit eine Verwundung, die nie ganz vernarbt.9

Domin has experienced that the "loss of belonging" ("Verlust der Zugehörigkeit") she underwent in her exile has not been eradicated, and she discovers that she is always considered a stranger:

"Unsere Sprache sprichst du",
sagen sie überall
mit Verwundern.
Ich bin der Fremde,
der ihre Sprache spricht.10

Domin's preoccupation with her native language is not surprising when one notes in her poem "Exil" her resentment and sadness in not being able to use her native language. Her language would normally flow fluently from her mouth, but in exile it slowly dies:

Der sterbende Mund
müht sich
um das richtig gesprochene
Wort
einer fremden
Sprache.11

The dying mouth, the mouth of the exiled poet, is now obliged to fight with words instead of molding them to give them new life. The poet's mouth is suddenly rendered useless. In her cycle of poems entitled "Ausreiselieder" Domin compares her words, unwanted exiles like herself, to butterflies (again the bird image of flying through the air, except that butterflies are perhaps even more dependent on the wind due to their fragility, and are therefore even more suited to represent the exile):
Ungewünschte Kinder
meine Worte
frieren.

Kommt
ich will euch
auf meine warmen
Fingerspitzen
setzen
Schmetterlinge im Winter.¹²

Her words thus share her fate; like the poet herself, they are also in exile, as she writes in her poem "Immer kreisen":

Immer kreisen
auf dem kühlten Wind
hilflos

kreisen meine Worte
heimwehgefiedert
nestlos

einst einem Lächeln entgegen
keiner trägt das Leben allein
kreisend und kreisend.¹³

The poet uses the image of the bird to convey the fate of her words. The "bird" of this poem is remarkably similar to the bird without feet of "Vogel Klage" (see p. 24). Like the bird without feet, the bird in this poem is also continuously hovering in the air, not because it has no feet to land with, but because it has nothing to land on; it is "nestlos" and "hilflos". The overall impression of this poem is much less tragic than that of "Vogel Klage", because its images seem less explicitly horrifying. In fact, the first two lines "immer kreisen / auf dem kühlten Wind" are reminiscent of a bird of prey circling its victim. This impression is immediately reversed in the third line by the word "hilflos", an adjective rarely applied to a predator. Here, the bird is obviously a victim. In the second stanza Domin reveals what is actually
circling. After repeating the verb "kreisen" to reinforce the impression of unending circling conveyed in the first stanza, she now names the subject: it is her words which circle. However, she continues the bird image by describing her words as "nestlos" and "heimwehgefiedert".

"Heimwehgefiedert" is another of Domín's double-edged ideas. It is an unusual combination of words meaning "feathered with homesickness". The two words contributing to this phrase have quite opposite connotations. "Gefiedert" indicates warmth, protection and a nest, whereas "Heimweh" is associated with unhappiness, pain and homelessness. Homesickness then acts as a (rather dubious) plumage. It is surely no coincidence that "heimwehgefiedert" is followed immediately in the next line by "nestlos": homesickness is invariably a result of having lost one's home, whether temporarily or permanently.

The last stanza of the poem is quite different from the first two. Not only does it have longer lines, but there is also a change of time from the present to the past (though not indicated in a past verb form), where the poet falls into a type of reminiscence: at one time her words went toward a smile, suggesting that once they were heard, appreciated and even enjoyed, whereas now there is no smile for them to reach. Since they are nestless, they are no longer received by anyone. In line 8, there is also a change of subject: "keiner trägt das Leben allein". Here, the poet is obviously referring no longer to birds or words, but to a person, possibly even to herself. The meaning of this line is again rather ambiguous. On the one hand, it is perhaps the saddest statement of the poem, expressing despair at being alone, coupled with a foreboding of
death. On the other hand, it may well be considered the most positive line of the poem: assurance that one does not go through life alone, but that there is a community (even if it is only a community of fellow "nestless circlers").

The poem itself is built on circularity, both in terms of meaning and of structure. Repeating the word "kreisen" four times in such a short poem intensifies the meaning of this word and entrenches it in the memory of the reader. It is significant that the word occurs twice in the very last line, merely connected by the word "und", which indicates repetition, especially as it is coupled with verbs in the gerund form. The entire poem is structured on a single sentence uninterrupted by commas or other types of punctuation, and so there is no definable end or beginning within the poem; even the change of tense is not an abrupt grammatical change. The first word "immer" immediately suggests an unending process, which is then intensified by "kreisen", a circular motion without a definite beginning or end. Furthermore, all three stanzas consist of three lines each, forming a regular pattern which imitates the regularity of a circle. However, although the structure is fairly regular, the individual lines are not. This helps to generate tension in the poem, suggesting that all is not well. The last lines of each stanza are the shortest lines (this may also be considered a type of regularity): "hilflos", "nestlos", "kreisend und kreisend". These three lines actually embody the central motif of the poem: the image of the homeless, wandering bird. Exile is thus represented as an unending circle, which is difficult, if not impossible, to break.
Nevertheless, Domin concedes that words, unlike people, do have roots, even when they are spoken in exile; words have their roots in their language, the creator of words, as well as in the poet, who uses and manipulates them. Domin consequently calls them "birds with roots":

Meine Worte sind Vögel
mit Wurzeln
immer tiefer
immer höher
Nabelschnur.

Der Tag blaut aus
die Worte sind schlafen gegangen.\(^{14}\)

It is her language that eventually not only becomes a substitute for home, but home itself. For this reason, Domin is intent on preserving the last, and perhaps only enclave she possesses:

Die Sprache, in der ich die Welt gewissenhaft benenne, gewissenhaft mitteilbar mache (und auch so mitteile, dass ich gehört werde), die kann nicht wegnahmbar sein, sie ist die äusserste Zuflucht. Dieses Zuhause verteidige ich bis zu meinem letzten Atemzug. Wie früher ein Bauer seine Scholle. Ich kann gar nicht anders.\(^{15}\)

Domin goes to great length about the importance of language in her life. In a chapter of her book *Aber die Hoffnung* entitled "Leben als Sprachodyssee" she gives a type of curriculum vitae from the point of view of language, since she maintains: "In der Tat sind wir ja von Sprache zu Sprache gewandert und haben in jeder unser Leben verdienen müssen".\(^{16}\) She repeatedly tried to "settle" in other languages (Italian, English, Spanish) by reading poems: "Gedichte lesend und vorlesend haben wir uns jeweils in der fremden Sprache heimisch gemacht."\(^{17}\) However, the other languages she acquired and tried to settle in never became a home to her.
She was only, she maintains, a guest in them: "In den anderen Sprachen, die ich spreche, bin ich zu Gast. Gern und dankbar zu Gast."\(^{18}\)

Language is not only home for Domin. She also writes, as she says, out of a need of self-preservation and freedom. "Ich befreite mich durch die Sprache. Hätte ich mich nicht befreit, ich lebte nicht mehr,"\(^{19}\) she writes in *Aber* "die" *Hoffnung*, and maintains that "Schreiben war Rettung".\(^{20}\)

On an even more decisive note she insists that language, especially its written expression, has become as necessary to her as breathing: "Seither ist Schreiben für mich wie Atmen: man stirbt wenn man es lässt."\(^{21}\)

Her first volume of poetry is entitled *Nur ‘eine Rose als Stütze*. This book is almost exclusively concerned with what one might term exile themes; it contains, as Horst Meller eloquently sums up "Heimatferne und Heimatsuche... Entgrenzungssehnsucht und wissender Verzicht auf jegliches Heimischwerden, Fluchtangst immer eng benachbart dem unverlierbaren Zufluchtsort der Todesbestimmung, stoisches Vergeblichkeitsbewusstsein, die Trauerarbeit des Abschiednehmens und der tastende Mut eines desillusionierten Hoffens."\(^{22}\)

Many of these themes are contained in the poem "Nur eine Rose als Stütze":

Ich richte mir ein Zimmer ein in der Luft
unter den Akrobaten und Vögeln:
mein Bett auf dem Trapez des Gefühls
wie ein Nest im Wind
auf der äussersten Spitze des Zweigs.

Ich kaufe mir eine Decke aus der zartesten Wolle
der sanftgescheitelten Schafe die
im Mondlicht
wie schimmernde Wolken
über die feste Erde ziehn.
Ich schliesse die Augen und hüle mich ein
in das Vlies der verlässlichen Tiere.
Ich will den Sand unter den kleinen Hufen spüren
und das Klicken des Riegels hören,
der die Stalltür am Abend schliesst.

Aber ich liege in Vogelfedern, hoch ins Leere
gewiegt. Mir schwindelt. Ich schlaf nicht ein.
Meine Hand
greift nach einem Halt und findet
nur eine Rose als Stütze.23

This poem sums up the precarious situation of the exile as envisaged
by Domin: she is anchored so lightly in her new environment that she
almost floats in the wind; insecure, she is given no firm ground to stand
on, and is placed in an extremely volatile position "wie ein Nest im Wind
/ auf der äussersten Spitze des Zweigs". There is nothing to anchor her
or lend her support, and so she wants to be safely locked into the barn in
the evenings. It is interesting to note that she specifically mentions
her wish to hear the bolt - the door is thus not merely closed, but
audibly locked, thereby preventing entry from outside. However, as an
exile, she does not have this security. Her only support is,
paradoxically, as fragile as her nest in the air.

When in a review of her first volume of poems Nur eine Rose als
Stütze, Walter Jens wrote that the rose of the title was her native
language, which provided the poet with support during her years of exile,
Hilde Domin agreed with this interpretation.24 Since roses and language
are rarely combined concepts, Domin's connection of the two renders the
rather commonplace image of the rose exciting. The connotations of a rose
are many: beauty, fragility, love, pain, death, violence, among others.
Language, especially as perceived by an exile, may also assume some of the
above characteristics of the rose - it is, at least in the poet's opinion, a thing of beauty; it is fragile in the sense that it is easily mutilated or forgotten, and it can also be a painful reminder to the exile. In the paradoxical world of the exile it is perhaps not surprising that a delicate flower should offer the only support available to her. The fragility of the rose is linked to the fragility of language (and the poet) in exile. However, since language is the main self-identification point of the poet, it is also her only anchor, and she must try to preserve her language in order to preserve herself. To keep the rose from wilting, she must take care of it by writing to prevent the death of the rose. The rose, inextricably entwined with the poet, will inevitably die with her; to prevent a premature poetic death, the rose of language must be kept alive.

One prominent image of the poem is the bird - in many ways the very symbol of the exile - flying from one place to another through the air. Birds commonly occur in images conveying a sense of freedom of action, but in this poem they demonstrate the essential insecurity and sense of not belonging inherent to their "birdness", which in turn is also characteristic of the exile. The poet clearly does not envy the fate of birds, perhaps because she is forced to share it. However, she does identify herself with a bird: "ich liege in Vogelfedern". Nevertheless, the fact that she does not want to identify with the bird, although she undoubtedly shares its characteristics, is made clear when she states that being cradled in her nest in the air, or in nothingness, she is not put to sleep as birds are, but on the contrary, becomes dizzy and is unable to
fall asleep. Again the inability to sleep or to rest is linked with the lack of security of “solid ground”. In fact, she becomes so dizzy that she actually gropes in the air in hope for some support. The image of the acrobat only supports the unsteady and precarious image of the bird and the exile. Like the bird in its nest or in the air, the acrobat flies through the air with his trapeze – he is suspended in the void, prey to the wind, just as the nest of the bird, which, instead of being hidden in a more secure place near the trunk of the tree, is precariously perched on the very end of a branch. The poet does not relish this existence; instead she seeks security by wrapping herself up, encapsulating herself, in a blanket made of the softest wool from “reliable” sheep. She now wants to shed her bird feathers and instead slip into the wool of a sheep. Sheep are obviously not suspended in midair at the mercy of the wind the way birds may be, and when they roam, at least they do so on “solid ground”. Furthermore, when evening comes they have a safe place to go to; in short, they possess qualities which attract the exile. An interesting feature of this poem is the implication that freedom is only desirable when connected with security – the solid earth, doors, buildings and bolts are all objects offering some sort of security. In this poem, the exile realizes that unlimited freedom excludes a sense of belonging, and it is the latter which she seeks.

Domin’s yearning for a home, presented as something physically solid, practically unshakable, and therefore secure, is exemplified in her poem “Bau mir ein Haus”:

Der Wind kommt.
Der Wind, der die Blumen kämmt
und die Blüten zu Schmetterlingen macht,
der Tauben steigen lässt aus altem Papier
in den Schluchten Manhattans
himmelwärts, bis in den zehnten Stock,
und die Zugvögel an den Türmen
der Wolkenkratzer zerschellt.

Der Wind kommt, der salzige Wind,
der uns übers Meer treibt
und uns an einen Strand wirft
wie Quallen,
die wieder hinausgeschwemmt werden.
Der Wind kommt.
Halte mich fest.

* 

Ach, mein heller Körper aus Sand,
nach dem ewigen Bilde geformt, nur
aus Sand.
Der Wind kommt
und nimmt einen Finger mit,
das Wasser kommt
und macht Rillen auf mir.
Aber der Wind
legt das Herz frei
- den zwitschernden roten Vogel
hinter den Rippen -
und brennt mir die Herzhaut
mit seinem Salpeteratem.
Ach, mein Körper aus Sand!
Halte mich fest,
halte
meinen Körper aus Sand.

* 

Lass uns landeinwärts gehn,
wo die kleinen Kräuter die Erde verankern.
Ich will einen festen Boden,
grün, aus Wurzeln geknotet
wie eine Matte.
Zersäge den Baum,
nimm Steine
und bau mir ein Haus.

Ein kleines Haus
mit einer weissen Wand
für die Abendsonne
und einem Brunnen für den Mond
zum Spiegeln,
damit er sich nicht,
wie auf dem Meere,
verliert.
Ein Haus
neben einem Apfelbaum
oder einem Ölbaum,
an dem der Wind
verbeigeht
wie ein Jäger, dessen Jagd
uns nicht gilt. 25

Again the exile's situation is volatile, subject to the whims of outside forces rather than to her own will. The other forces, the "hunter", is again, as in "Nur eine Rose als Stütze", symbolized by the wind, which forcefully removes the poet from her surroundings and forces her into exile. In the last section of the poem, the poet expresses her wish for security, for permanence. She wants a stone house built on solid earth firmly anchored by roots, so that the wind will be unable to disturb it. She even wants to confine the reflection of the moon in a well, which would provide it (and her) with a steady point of reference instead of getting lost in the expanse of the ocean.

The poem is divided into three distinct sections separated by an asterisk. Each section has a different thrust, but they are nevertheless connected by the central motif of the wind. The first section is an introduction to the threat of the wind and explains the wind's acts of destruction. The second section is concerned with the fate of the poet, and the third expresses the poet's wish for security.

The first section consists of three stanzas. The first one is a single line with the ominous prophesy "der Wind kommt.", announcing the motif of the poem. The fact that this statement stands by itself right at
the beginning lends it a compelling quality. After a lengthy pause, the poet continues to explain the threat of the wind's force. The wind turns anything vulnerable to its force, including pieces of old paper, into helpless victims. It is a ruthless and indiscriminate hunter which uproots flowers to transform them into helpless butterflies (another bird-type image) and forces birds, innocently travelling towards a fixed destination, from their path to smash them against highrise buildings.

The most frightening image is that of the birds hurled against the skyscrapers, thereby ending the stanza with an allusion to a cruel and unwilling death. The next stanza repeats the imminent threat of the arrival of the wind. This time, the victims are not outsiders, but they are "us". Here, the poet identifies a community of victims to which she belongs, who are just as powerless as the victims of stanza 1; the poet portrays the "us" as jellyfish - curious creatures which apparently have no power of their own and are entirely at the mercy of the ocean currents. There is an interesting connection between "zerschellt" and "wirft" - the jellyfish are not necessarily broken (as the birds are), but they are nevertheless thrown against something solid (but may or may not break). The fear induced by the wind is by now unmistakably established. The second last line repeats the announcement of the encroaching wind, and the last line finally ends in the plea "halte mich fest". The poet evidently seeks for anchorage and asks for help, apparently forgetting that the flowers also once were anchored by roots, but could not withstand the power of the wind. However, she soon realizes that her body is far from stable - it is made from sand and is therefore vulnerable to the
currents of the wind. It is interesting that despite the evocation of a community the poet does not ask someone to hold onto "us", but onto "me". Whom is she asking? Is she perhaps addressing another member of her community? If this is the case, she must know that her plea cannot be answered. More likely, she is addressing the person of the last section whom she asks to build a house. Thus the first section ends with the impression that the wind has already caught up with the poet.

Because of the long pause between the first and the second section, the reader is prepared for the change of atmosphere or environment which follows. Now the poem speaks about the effect of the wind's force on the poet's body. However, the impossibility of being held back, or rescued, becomes evident when she speaks of her body as consisting of sand, an unstable substance. The poignancy of this is heightened at the end of the section when she repeats her plea twice "halte mich fest / halte" but then realizes the impossibility of this task and adds, already aware of her untenable lightness: "meinen Körper aus Sand". The first sentence of this stanza already indicates that the poet knows of the futility of asking for help: her body is created, like everyone else's, in the everlasting image. However, it is not made of clay, but of sand. This appears to be a biblical reference to the creation of man, and it is significant that the poet perceives her body to be made out of a different material than other people's bodies. Perhaps she believes that she is fated to be an exile, or at least fated to be unable to resist the forces of the wind. In another poem, entitled "Von uns", she writes: "Unser Staub / wird nie mehr Erde", again expressing the conviction that she
will never again become as solid as earth and that she will always remain a potential exile. The line "ach, mein Körper aus Sand", with its emotional ring of despair, coupled with an expressive exclamation mark, indicates the poet's resentment of her fate, a fate poignantly illustrated by the image of the heart as a bird, Domín's predominant symbol of exile.

Domín believes that an exile will never be able to return to his pre-exiled state, simply because he cannot erase the traces of his experience visible either within himself or in the eyes of others. In her poem "Wen es trifft", which was written while she was still living in exile, she describes the cautious reintegration of an exile after he has returned home. This is a person who was forced into exile and does not dare to feel at home again, in fear that he might again be persecuted. Eventually, the exile gradually starts to feel more and more comfortable:

Und ganz unmerklich,
vieleicht an einem Feiertag
oder an einem Geburtstag,
sitzt er nicht mehr
nur auf dem Rande
des gebotenen Stuhls,
as sei es zur Flucht
oder als habe das Möbel
wurststichige Beine,
sondern er sitzt
mit den Seinen am Tisch
und ist zuhause
und beinah
sicher27

However, the exile-returned-home is no longer the same person; due to his exile experience his identity has undergone a significant change: "Aber die Substanz / des Ichs / ist so anders / wie das Metall, das aus dem Holzofen kommt."28 Though the return seems to be accomplished, the exile is still within him, ready to take flight again if need be: "Doch
Diese gewisse Leichtigkeit / ist ihm / wie einem Vogel / geblieben.\textsuperscript{29}

Domin portrays what one might call the "ultimate exile" as a bird without feet, lamenting without ever being heard, and flying with no hope to rest. This bird is portrayed in her poem "Vogel Klage":

\begin{quote}
Ein Vogel ohne Füsse ist die Klage,  
kein Ast, keine Hand, kein Nest.

Ein Vogel der sich wundfliegt  
im Engen,  
ein Vogel der sich verliert  
im Weiten,  
ein Vogel der ertrinkt  
im Meer.  
Ein Vogel  
der ein Vogel ist,  
der ein Stein ist,  
der schreit.

Ein stummer Vogel,  
den niemand hört.\textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}

The poem begins with a disturbing image of sorrow: a bird without feet, helpless and doomed to fly forever without an opportunity to rest. This image is reinforced in line 2 where Domin lists the things a bird without feet cannot possess. These are chiefly places for rest (branch, hand, nest) and are images of home and security. The first stanza introduces this painful image in one sentence. In it, the bird is the sorrow (or lament), implying something which speaks ("klagen" indicates an audible lamentation). But the last stanza of the poem reveals that the bird is mute - the bird is presented as a lament nobody hears. These two opposite definitions of the bird (a lament and muteness), are posited within two similarly structured stanzas consisting of two lines each. However, the last stanza is significantly shorter. This reinforces the dumbness of the bird, since a long silence is felt by the empty spaces
following each line.

The second stanza is the longest one. It consists of two full sentences, each longer than the sentences of the framing stanzas, and serves to explain the transformation of a lamenting bird into a dumb bird. The bird is unable to do anything without causing harm to himself: he does not simply fly because he wishes to, but does so, because he has no option, and is therefore bound to eventually fly himself "wund" (freedom is here, similarly as in "Nur eine Rose als Stütze", turned into pain). Wherever the bird flies, he runs into difficulties. He hurts himself in confined spaces, resembling a captive bird in a cage flying against the bars. An enclosed space is evidently disastrous for the bird of this poem; he cannot even rest in it, but is forced to fly even if this means destroying himself. Open spaces are not much better - the bird merely gets lost in them. In the end the bird inevitably encounters the sea, the most fatal of the spaces. The bird drowns in the sea, probably because he is unable to rest and too exhausted to continue flying.

Lines 3 to 8 have a parallel structure. There are always two lines between the commas of which the first line is the longer one and describes what happens to the bird. All of the longer lines are repetitive: they start with "ein Vogel der" and then give three different fates which befall the bird, finally ending in the bird's death. The verbs are all at the end of the line, which compels the reader to remember them as he moves on to the next line. Each verb is followed by a description of increasingly harmful places. This regular, parallel structure makes the reader aware of the connections of meaning between the lines. There are
also many pauses in this segment of the poem, owing to the empty spaces after lines 4, 6, and 8, which end either in a comma or a full stop, thereby increasing the pause and lending an air of disconsolation to the passage.

The first sentence of stanza 2 (lines 3-8) is an extension of the image of the first stanza and explains the inevitable predicaments of a bird without feet. The second half of this stanza (lines 9-12) also consists of a single, this time shorter, sentence broken up by commas. Here, the poem stabilizes more, and there is not such a drastic change in line lengths. This part in turn anticipates the last stanza. The phrase "ein Vogel / der ein Vogel ist / der ein Stein ist" unites the stone and the bird and fuses these two opposite things (the bird: light and free; the stone: heavy and sedentary) into one paradoxical creature. The repetition of defining the bird as a bird reaffirms that the bird really is a bird and does not merely change into the stone. The bird is truly both a bird and a stone. This is an unusual concept, since birds and stones are not generally associated with one another; here they are not merely associated with one another, but actually fuse into one another. The bird is a bird because it flies and screams, but it is also a stone because it drowns and is inaudible. The bird, exhausted by endless flying, drops like a stone into the sea—since it has no feet, it loses part of its birdness and turns into a stone that screams. Thus the second stanza impressively ends in a scream.

The reader is told only in the last stanza that the scream is inaudible: the bird-stone which screams is inaudible because it is mute.
Nobody hears the scream. This again is rather ambiguous: is the bird really mute, or is he simply so because nobody hears him? The last line of the poem "den niemand hört" comes across as an accusation, aimed, however, at no one in particular for not hearing the bird. The bird, as a representative of the exiled person, is ultimately presented as a victim.

The poem has the structure of an inverse triangle: the lines and sentences become shorter as the poem progresses. The last stanza is also the shortest sentence; this again emphasizes the aspect of dumbness or inaudibility gradually increasing within the poem. Thus the poem itself turns into a lament, a bird without feet.

The essential insecurity of the exile instills in him mistrust of anything which appears to soothe him. In a poem entitled "Warnung", Domin advises constant caution and guard against false security. Though the world may be "frisch gehäutet" and ready to welcome back the exile, implying that the forces which have compelled him into exile have at least on the surface been eliminated, she gives a rather discouraging warning: "Wenn alles dich einlädt, / das ist die Stunde / wo dich alles verlässt." This theme of mistrust along with the unfulfilled yearning for security, which appears to be Domin's almost obsessive preoccupation, is expressed in other poems as well, particularly intensely in "Mit leichtem Gepäck":

Gewöhn dich nicht.
Du darfst dich nicht gewöhnen.
Eine Rose ist eine Rose.
Aber ein Heim
ist kein Heim.

The loss of identity, or rather the forced imposition of a new
identity, prevents her from forgetting her exile experience. The new identity was imposed on her because she was forced to leave her old one behind, as she writes in the first stanza of her poem "Angsttraum":

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Ich muss mich von mir trennen.
Ich werde weggeführt
von mir.
Ich strecke die Hände aus
nach mir.
aber ich biege um eine Ecke
und verlasse mich, die ich weggeführt werde
in einem Straflingskleid. 34
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The sense of urgency in this stanza is established in the first line: "ich muss mich von mir trennen". Like the prisoner she reveals herself to be, the persona of the poem has no free will. She must leave herself behind. The urgency of this comes even more to the foreground when one considers the essential absurdity of the phrase - a person cannot normally depart from himself, but here he must. In her situation, the poet is obliged to do what is otherwise impossible, and apparently succeeds: in line 7 she is in the process of departing from herself. However, she is now dressed in a "Straflingskleid", which stigmatizes her, and also insinuates that she would not depart from herself if she were not forced to, since no one puts on a prisoner's uniform voluntarily. The forced removal from herself is depicted in the passive form of the phrase "ich werde weggeführt", although she does not specify who leads her away.

The first sentence of the poem gives no indication of an outside force; she simply states what she has to do. However, the fact that the action of departing from oneself is in reality impossible, immediately renders this sentence suspicious. The second sentence (lines 2,3) confirms this suspicion and explains that she is being taken away by
something or someone. The sense of unwillingness is enhanced in line 4, where she stretches out her hands in a childlike gesture, as if she thought she could reverse her fate by summoning for help (a similar image is used in "Nur eine Rose als Stütze" where she reaches out for help, but does actually find some). "Ich strecke die Hande aus" is an ambiguous gesture; it can be used to signify welcome as well as farewell (as from a train window, for instance). However, the short line "nach mir" makes it clear that here the stretched-out hands signify reluctance and pleading for something which has been taken away and cannot be recovered: herself. Here again, Domin uses the essential impossibility and absurdity of such an action to emphasize her point. The most striking words of the first part of the stanza are those referring to the poet herself and they appropriately occupy an entire line each (lines 3 and 5), thereby emphasizing the significance of these words. These lines are the shortest ones of the stanza and consequently leave a long space behind them, which, following the pattern of the other lines, are perceived to possess unspoken meaning. The space represents a silence which ought not to be there, and therefore indicates that there is a conflict.

However much she stretches out her hands, the poet cannot catch hold of herself, because she is led around the corner and loses sight of herself. She has now unmistakably departed from herself. Line 7 is the only place where the active voice (describing her actions as if she were performing them from her own will) is combined with the passive voice (indicating the invisible force which forces her into action), and it is also the only place where two parts of a sentence, separated by a comma, occupy the same line and are thus interconnected. The involuntary aspect
is again underlined in the last line of the poem, especially in the last word "Sträflingskleid". The entire poem appears unreal because its matter-of-fact descriptions are clearly at odds with the meaning - the poet describes an essentially psychological process in a tangible way. The unreality of the poem is further reflected (and indeed posited) in its title "Angsttraum", it is in fact only a dream, and, since anything may happen in a dream, its absurdity or unreality becomes essentially real in the context of the dream.

For Domin, the exile experience turns into an interminable feature of life - you cannot return home and simply shake the dust of the exile's wanderings off your feet; on the contrary, exile always follows you, it is the "Wüste einsteckbar" of her poem "Silence and exile":

Unverlierbares Exil
du trägst es bei dir
du schlüpfst hinein
gefaltetes Labyrinth
Wüste
einsteinckbar.35

The problem of the rootlessness of the exile, his inability to become "heimisch", that is, to feel as if he were at home, occupies a large part of Domin's poetry. The experience of exile, with all its inherent dangers, fears and uncertainty, has taught her that everything may be lost, everything, that is, except language, which is "das Unverlierbare, nachdem alles andere sich als verlierbar erwiesen hatte. Das letzte, unabnehmbare Zuhause".36 This ultimate home is her language, as she sums up in her own words: "Hand in Hand mit der Sprache / bis zuletzt."37.
CHAPTER II

WACLAW IWANIUK

Wacław Iwaniuk is a Polish exile poet currently living in Toronto. Iwaniuk's poems frequently reflect the theme of the exile, but with less direct reference than is found in Hilde Domin's poetry. On the whole, his poetry is rather sombre; there is little of Domin's essential affirmation of life found in his works. He may well be considered a poet of the "Dark Times", as one of his volumes is appropriately named, a poet decrying the fate of the exile as a result of our dark, savage times where "History has crossed its Styx. Stopped in a blind alley". ¹ His pessimism may well be a reflection of his situation, in which, both as an exile and poet, he differs significantly from Domin in that he cannot return to his country. He knows that now, in exile, he has more poetic freedom to say whatever he wants. "Nareszcie mogę powiedzieć wszystko od A do Z"² ("Now I can say everything from A to Z"), he says in his poem "Nie płacąc się brudnym słowem". However, he soon finds out that speaking in a strange place is not as easy as it sounds. Eventually, Iwaniuk becomes frustrated as a poet.

In his cycle of poems "From my Canadian Diary" (written in English), he traces his emigration to Canada and writes about his feelings towards his new country. Overall, he is not impressed by the cities, least of all by Toronto, which he calls "my many graveyards / and my painful redemption";³ Toronto is the ultimate place of exile:
In the midst of my lost years
I took the wrong turn; Toronto
With its many crossroads, became my no-man's land.⁴

A major theme running through Iwaniuk's poetry is the concept of silence along with its connotations of inhumanity, barrenness, isolation, lifelessness. For Iwaniuk, silence is dangerous, even criminal: "Teraz dopiero wiem - milczenie jest przestępstwem"⁵ ("Only now I know - silence is a crime"). The opposite of silence is speech, and by inference life, since a poet's object is to produce speech (and life), which in turn enables him to live as a poet. This may explain Iwaniuk's preoccupation with these concepts. Speech, or "śłowo" ("the word") as he simply calls it, is life and creativity, the opposite of silence, with which he, through his situation as an exiled poet, is forced to associate himself. He feels insecure in a world filled with silence, but he finds a certain amount of solace in the word: "Miejsce nie jest ostoja, ostoja jest słowo; / wierne, z którym jak się mówiło u nas / można iść na Saksy albo kraść konie,"⁶ (the place is not a refuge, the word is a refuge; / faithful, with which as they used to say at home / you could go moonlighting or steal horses)⁷ as he says in his poem "Czy mam się cieszyć że świat dla mnie zmalał". However comforting or secure this may sound, Iwaniuk's relationship with language is nevertheless ambiguous; he does not take it for granted and he is never sure if a word will come to his aid whenever he needs it. Iwaniuk takes words very seriously, and so he is unable to use them with facility. He is acutely aware of the effect even a single word can have: "Słowo raz powiedziane pozostanie / i będzie świecić lub kopcić / uzdrawiać lub czadzić całe pokolenia."⁸ ("The word
once spoken remains / and will shine or smoke / heal or poison a whole generation").

Considering how much magnitude Iwaniuk ascribes to each word, it is perhaps not surprising that he comes to consider words autonomous and is in awe of them. A poet is normally considered a creator or at least a producer of words. Iwaniuk, however, discovers that it is not he who controls words, but it is the words themselves, which exercise control:

"Myśl przywołuje słowo, słowo się wzbrania"9 ("The thought calls up a word, the word refuses"). The poet is constantly struggling for words, which remain silent, refusing to be released, refusing to cooperate:

Siedzę w milczeniu nad zamkniętym słowem.
Za oknem płowie czas, przyroda przezielenia -
Zmieniają horizonty.
Mam szeroko otwarte oczy, patrzę w głęb -
I czekam.10

(I sit in silence over a locked word.
Behind the window time fades, nature fades -
Horizons change.
I have wide open eyes, I look inside -
And wait.)

As a result, the word does not come easy to him, as he writes in Na
Antypodach: "Ale do tego potrzebne jest słowo / Nad którym siedzę w
milczeniu i czekam / W suchym jak ziarno krajobrazie"11 ("But for this
the word is necessary / over which I sit in silence and wait / in a
landscape dry as grain of sand"). A similar sentiment is expressed in his
poem "21" of "From my Canadian Diary":

In all my wishes I pray for words.
Here in this sober, dreamless city
perched on a vast Lake,
beneath the Northern Lights,
rich and flat,  
prominent and butchered,  
I pray for words.

Loud waves, bare and lovely, move to the shore  
to meet their lovers,  
interrupted by noisy seagulls  
claiming in loud voices  
the ownership of the Lake.

Yet my wish goes by unnoticed.  
For years I have been waiting here,  
-facing the Lake and facing myself,  
with my past as dead as the Dead Sea  
and my future new.  
Nothing to fear now.  
Nothing to regret.

This Lake lives for me.  
Tied to the earth since the Ice Age,  
it does not rush around.  
The fat sun moves over the lazy waves  
hiding its helpful hands.

Sometimes the Lake may trespass its border  
and flood the shore, destroying  
roads and the basements of summer cottages.  
Perhaps it satisfies Nature,  
but most of the time  
it is full of unconventional majesty.  
It looks like a human being  
who has suddenly awakened.  
Then it is real.  
It is a Lake full of sunlight  
resting near Toronto.  
It is also one inside me,  
which is always dark.12

Language is not an integral (or inseparable) part of the poet, ready  
at his command. On the contrary, the poet must request it, without  
knowing whether his wish will be granted. The poet is not secure with his  
words, words are as elusive as wishes. The fact that he prays for them  
indicates his realization that he might be refused. This indicates the  
poet's recognition that he has no authority over the word he uses.
The first stanza conveys an impression of silence. No one speaks. The first line contains two words which belong to the realm of yearning, or a type of psychological, not factual, reality: "wishes" and "pray"; in the second line these words are contrasted by two factual words: "sober" and "dreamless". Thus, the two worlds inhabited by the poet are introduced to the reader within the first two lines. The poet's situation is made clear: he is in an environment which is deaf to his wishes, and by the time he repeats the phrase "I pray for words" in the last line of this stanza, the probable denial of this wish becomes evident, and thus, in the light of refusal, his prayer becomes more intense.

The next stanza focuses on the Lake. Whereas the first stanza was pervaded by silence, the second stanza presents a scene of noise: there are "loud waves", "noisy seagulls" and "loud voices". As an animated scene of action, it contrasts strongly with the static immobility of the first stanza. It is significant that neither the poet nor the city are mentioned in this stanza, which underlines the essential separation and incompatibility of stanza 1 and 2. Noise, an indication of life, belongs solely to the realm of the Lake.

Stanza 3 returns to silence. Given the noise associated with the Lake, it is perhaps not surprising that now the poet complains that "my wish goes by unnoticed", perhaps because its medium is silence, not noise. The second line of this stanza discloses that the poet has been waiting for many years "facing the Lake and facing myself"; once again the opposition between him and the Lake is expressed. However, now the poet tells us that his past is dead, suggesting that his silence and
lifelessness are a reflection of his dead past. Perhaps it is for this reason that he cannot find words which had been acquired in the past and is left speechless, though also endowed with immunity: with "nothing to fear" and "nothing to regret". The poet thus appears to be in a hopeless situation, since, paradoxically, his past is dead precisely for the reason that he cannot find words for it.

In stanza 4 the poet claims that the Lake lives for him (or rather, instead of him); the sun is aligned with the lake, giving the lake sunlight and life. The sun combined with the lake presents a symbol of light and life, which is the exact opposite of the poet's interior landscape. The sun's helpful hands are hidden - perhaps because the poet does not see them - or perhaps because he does not want to accept the sun's help, knowing that any light of the sun would be engulfed by the darkness within him. Here, the poet appears to have given up hope for himself, and merely transfers his life to the lake outside of him. This then turns the poet into an exile from light and life. Thus the poem presents a struggle between darkness and light, between life and death within the poet, in which darkness and death win. As an exile, the poet needs help and support from outside, which, in this poem, the sun might be able to give; however, he rejects this help.

The last stanza reveals the presence of a second lake, this time a lake the poet carries within him, a fact already hinted at in line 16 when he compares his past to the Dead Sea. This inner lake is, predictably, the opposite of the noisy, lively Lake: whereas the real Lake is filled with sunlight and life, his inner one is ominously dark and dead.
Darkness is not only the opposite of light, but it also absorbs light; it is therefore a strong force within the poet presenting a frightening image: any light entering the poet is immediately absorbed, and never reflected. The poet's inner lake is not a giver or even a receptacle of light, but an impenetrable sea of darkness and of silence, separated from the life of the outside world represented by the sunlit lake.

Iwaniuk's constant fear is his loss of words—without words, a poet does not exist as a poet. It is not surprising that Iwaniuk's motto introducing his volume _Ciemny Czas_ is as follows:

> Żadne gruzy nie są tak wstrząśające
> Jak martwy wiersz. Poeta
> odgrodzony od słowa
> pozostawi po sobie
> tylko krzyk papieru. 13

(No ruins are as shattering
As a dead poem. The poet
separated from the word
leaves behind him
only a scream of paper.)

A silent poet, of course, is not a poet, and a poet who produces no words is barren; this is how Iwaniuk describes himself in his poem "Planeta":

> Nauczyłem się mówić szeptem
> Gdziekolwiek wkraczam budzę popłoch
> Napełniony po brzegi ciemnością
> Żeruję na waszych snach.
> Jestem jak suche drzewo
> Jestem nagi
> Zjęto ze mnie klejnot zieleni
> Bez kwiatu
> Bez owocu
> Jestem jak paraliżyk elektrycznie zwany
> Z głową pochyloną nad własną ruiną.

> Gdybym był planetą, miałbym własny ruch
> I własną siłę do dźwigania innych. 14
(I have learned to speak in whispers
Wherever I appear I cause panic
Filled to the brim with darkness
I prey on your dreams.
I am like a dry tree
I am naked
Taken from me the jewel of greenery
Without flower
Without fruit
I am like a paralytic electrically lively
With my head stooping over my own ruin.

If I were a planet, I would have my own motion
And my strength to carry others.)

However dark his past may be, Iwaniuk is haunted by it to such an extent that he appears to be unwilling to live in the present. His poem "Don't Touch Me, I'm Full of Snakes" illustrates to what degree his past and his memories have a hold over him:

Don't touch me, I'm full of snakes!
Jestem jak martwa gleba bez kropli powietrza
Jak zestrzelony wiatrem obłok
Jak rzeka która była i której już nie ma
O skamieniałych brzegach. Jak bezsilne słowo.
Don't touch me! Wolę nosić w sobie
To, co wypełnia moje sny po brzegi
Lata których żadne słowa nie odmodlą.
Chowam w sobie trujące wspomnienia
Zmije płomieni i jad gazu -
Żyję jak lustro, z twarzą ku przeszłości.

(Don't touch me, I'm full of snakes!
I am like dead soil without a drop of air
Like a cloud shot down by the wind
Like a river which was but is no more
With rocky (or: petrified) banks. Like a powerless word.
[1/o]
Don't touch me! I prefer to carry within me
That which fills my dreams to the brim
Years which no words will pray back.
I hide poisoned reminiscences within myself
Snakes of flame and venom of gas -
I live like a mirror, with my face to the past.)
In this poem Iwaniuk portrays his present situation, lamenting that he once was "a river which was but is no more". He has not enough energy to fertilize his soil with the air it needs. This poem not only describes his situation as an exile, thrown into a strange and for him infertile environment, but also depicts his concern as a poet who cannot write, whose fountain of words has dried up. A highly unusual image is that of the snakes - Iwaniuk says he is full of them, full of poisonous reminiscences, which occupy his dreams and seem determined to discourage him from considering anything else but his past. He suggests that it is perhaps these snakes within him, even more than his actual situation, which prevent him from writing. Curiously, however, in line 6 he admits that he actually likes to be filled with snakes. So, whereas the first part of the poem announces the curse and threat of the snakes, in the second part their existence is asserted.

The first sentence of the poem immediately commands attention because not only it is typographically highlighted, but, in addition, it is written in English, whereas the bulk of the poem is in Polish. Using two languages at once, the poet's native language and his adopted one, is a highly unusual phenomenon in an exiled poet. It may underline the extraordinary pressure the new environment exerts on the exiled poet - now in a Canadian environment, Iwaniuk has to struggle to keep his identity as a Polish poet. This two-language technique immediately suggests an air of foreignness, and indicates a possible estrangement of the poet from himself. The implication of this first line supports this impression of alienation: he forbids anyone to touch him because he is full of snakes; he thus makes himself "untouchable", which suggests the high degree of
alienation the poet feels (perhaps this claim is his method of repulsing compassion for his situation). However, the statement also carries a veiled warning: whoever touches him might get "bitten" and injected with poison. It is a firm admonition as well as a startling revelation of the poet's situation. The fact that the two phrases in line 1 and line 6 are in English, as well as in cursory type leaves the impression that only they are meant to be heard, whereas the rest, written in Polish and not highlighted in any way, are spoken to himself, not understood by anyone. In line 2 the poet says he is like dead soil. This appears to contradict his assertion of the first line, in which he mentions living snakes. However, if one looks for logical reasoning behind the images, one might argue that snakes often live on barren land. One might even continue that the snakes chose to live in him, precisely because he is dead soil. Thus, the seeming paradox of images in the poem turn out to have their own inner logic.

Lines 2 to 5 are a recital of some rather melancholy self-definitions of the poet. The poet believes that he has lost all his powers, and now is merely a "powerless word". The poet strongly identifies with the word, but since he believes that he can only produce meaningless words, he also becomes the type of word he produces. Thus he not only loses the powerful word, but also the part of his identity associated with powerful words. The poet thus becomes as powerless as the words he produces. Previously he was a river, a cloud, fertile soil - all of which, incidentally, are connected with life-giving water. He enumerates all these things without pause until the full stop in the middle of line 5. The sudden stop
catches the reader's attention and prepares him for the impact of the statement "jak bezsilne słowo" ("like a powerless word"), a negative summation of what he was trying to convey in the previous lines. The position of this statement is indicative of its meaning: it is placed as an afterthought, as if the poet had just realized that his enumeration is weak and senseless, in other words, that it hardly matters what he said. A word without power is a symbol of silence, and also of non-existence. If a word has no power, it might as well be left unsaid, which means that Iwaniuk denies the meaning or value of the poem. It is surely no coincidence that this sentence, written in Polish, stands in a relatively unremarkable place in the poem, since, on the whole, the only lines that immediately stand out are the English ones. Another point of interest is that the English lines describe what is alive (snakes), whereas the Polish lines talk about what is dead (the poet himself).

The repetition of the request "don't touch me" in line 6 marks the second part of the poem. However, here the poet provides no further explanation, which signifies an increasing withdrawal into himself. The poet now discloses that he prefers to be in contact with his past, something which no longer exists and which "no word will pray back" (another echo of the powerless word). To make it exist he has to recall it in his dreams. Up to this point, the poem reads like a melancholy reminiscence about happy times irretrievably lost, and it is therefore rather astonishing to discover in the next line that "I hide in myself poisoned reminiscences". The past, until now described in idyllic images of a cloud and a river, now turns into something distasteful: the
reminiscences poison the poet from within. Here, the image of the snakes appears again; the reader is now certain that the snakes are poisonous, and his conclusion is confirmed in line 10—the snakes are flames with venom of gas. It is therefore impossible for the poet to be in contact with the outside world. The poet cannot live with both at the same time, but for a reason known only to himself, he prefers to live with his snakes, his poisonous and perhaps even deadly reminiscences. The end of line 10 is marked by a dash, which, besides indicating a break, also sets apart the following line. In the last line, the poet abandons the violent images prominent in lines 6 and 10, and, in a haunting, but peaceful image compares himself to a mirror reflecting the past.

It is noteworthy that he repeats the word "jak" ("like"), prominent in the first part, only in this last line. The first "jak" of part one is preceded by the verb "jestem" ("I am"). The repetitions of "jak" throughout the first part are assumed to have the same verb preceding them, thereby giving a series of the poet's self-definition. The only occurrence of "jak" in part two is also preceded by a verb, but this time by "żyję" ("I live"). No other comparisons follow in part two, which mainly defines the poet's circumstances. His circumstances are apparently created by his self-definition: he lives like a mirror because he is dead soil. Since the list of the poet's self-definitions precedes the only indication of his circumstances, the importance of the latter is emphasized. The last line of the poem, which is the summation of his situation, induces a definite and irrevocable sense of resignation. He closes his list of images by ultimately likening himself to a mirror.
Besides being the most truthful reflector of the past, it is also an image of finality: a mirror can never hope to overcome its mirrorness and is doomed to forever face the past. Thus by defining himself as a mirror, the poet accepts the inevitability of his position.

Iwaniuk's memories of the past are presented in contradictory terms; once they are poisonous snakes, another time they are almost like a part of paradise. His poem "Liść" conveys a sort of "fall from paradise" in which he contrasts his thriving life in the past with his essential "non-life" in the present:

Koniec sezonu: upadłem na ziemię
już mnie nie ucałuje promień
już się nie pozbleram
ptak mnie podepcze
rosa oczy wyje
wiatry ze mną przestaną się swarzyć -

tyle długich dni
wrastałem - czerpiąc -
w miękkości tlenu
w góry powietrza, w upał
tyle dni
chłonałem stromą nawałę promieni -

płaskie moje ciało
wieszone za szyję
spiewało hymny -

tyle nocy
przeszeptanych ze świerszczem
przegadanych z rozą
na śliskich wywoskowanych zielonych posadzkach -

a teraz tylko ludzki dla mnie los
leżą i cierpię
pamięcią,
nie ciażem.16

(The end of the season: I fell to earth
the (sun) ray no longer kisses me
I will no longer pick myself up
a bird steps on me
the dew eats up my eyes
the winds stop to squabble with me -

so many long days
I grew - drawing [as in: drawing water] -
in the softness of oxygen
in the mountains of air, in the scorching heat
so many days
I absorbed steep profusions of rays -

my flat body
hanging by the neck
sang hymns -

so many nights
whispering along with crickets
conversing with dew
on the slippery wax green floors -

and now my fate is only human
I lie and suffer
with memory
not with my body.)

Here, Iwaniuk describes himself as a leaf which has fallen to the
ground at the end of its life and is now suffering a completely different
fate; it has undergone a transformation from being "leafy" to being human. As an inevitable part of the natural process the leaf must fall to
earth when its season has passed. Considered in this light, Iwaniuk
insinuates that his fall, too, was inevitable, and that it merely followed
the natural course of things. His fall, however, reduces him to the
unenviable state of being "only" human. The word "tylko" reduces
humanity, which normally sees itself as dominating nature, to a level
below nature. Thus, one single word of the poem reverses the "normal"
hierarchy and implies that the fate of the leaf was preferable to that of a human.
The introductory phrase of the poem, "Koniec sezonu: upadłem na ziemię" ("The end of the season: I fell to earth"), indicates a rude awakening after a pleasant season. Happiness and thriving comes to an abrupt end when the poet falls to earth. By being pushed off the tree he is rendered in effect an exile. He still exists, though no longer as a nurtured leaf, but as a decaying leaf which has gained a new dimension of suffering - its tormentors are no longer the natural elements (the scorching sun, for instance), but memories. Another interesting feature is that dew, formerly a natural source of life, is now antagonistic and even destructive: it eats up the leaf's eyes, and it is evident that the relations of things to the leaf have changed. Severed from its native tree, the leaf knows of human suffering. The finality of this pronouncement is furthered by the prefix "u" in "upadłem", indicating a definite, even irrevocable, action. It is as if the poet had fallen with a thud. The rest of the stanza furnishes the reader with a description of the poet's state after his "fall". Again (as in "Don't Touch Me, I'm Full of Snakes") he describes his state in terms of what it once was and what it is no longer - he is no longer gently kissed by sunrays but instead has to endure being stepped on by birds. The beings and elements of the air (sunrays, birds, wind) are no longer favourably connected with him and either ignore or damage him. The leaf, or the poet, is now confronted with the harsh reality of the earth.

The dash after line 6 indicates a longer pause than is usual between two stanzas. The next stanza introduces a change of atmosphere as the poet talks about his past happiness. The many dashes in this stanza
endow it with a dream-like quality - reinforcing the fact that his happiness has passed and that now he can only reminisce or dream about it. During his life as a flourishing leaf, the poet is attached to the tree, his giver and sustainer of life. The third stanza (the shortest of the poem) summarizes his past with a curious image: though his flat body is hung by the neck (a gruesome image of the gallows), it nevertheless sings hymns. This is an unusual and grotesque image. It seems unlikely that a person facing a cruel fate would sing hymns. This might, however, be an indication that he is not conscious of the absurdity of his situation; it is simply a part of his native environment. There is a sense of dispassionate observation in this stanza induced by the absence of the first person singular. Perhaps only now, severed from his native tree, the poet notices the absurdity of this scene and describes it as if it almost did not concern him. However, the positive image of the past is restored at the end of the poem, when he reveals that now he undergoes much greater suffering than bodily harm. Attached to the tree, he is provided with all the necessities for life (sunrays, air, wind, water, communication), and, although he may suffer bodily injury from time to time, he is not yet afflicted with "human" sufferings. Stanza 4 ends in a dash, marking the end of the reminiscences and a return to the poet's present circumstances. The last stanza thus returns to the theme of the first one (indeed, line 20 could equally well follow line 1). The two outer stanzas form a framework for the middle part of the poem and thus assure that reality has the last word, and that dreams are only temporary.

The poet is caught in a downhill current; he is removed, like the
leaf, from his native surroundings and finds himself, now dried up and half destroyed, in a foreign place with an uncertain future and with no points of reference other than his memories. However, in order to survive as a poet, he must still endeavour to write, to be fertile as a poet; but in the face of his present situation, he believes that his efforts fail.

In his poem "To wszystko" Iwaniuk elaborates on the theme of barrenness resulting from the loss of familiar and cherished objects, including one's country. In this case, everything he cherished has been taken away, leaving only ashes:

To wszystko co jest moje
ziemia zabrała -
łodzie punickie, piasek wiślany
most rozpięty gołębiem białym -
to wszystko co jest moje
popalono
połamanono
zamknięto im usta -

Królestwo dymu
popiół wiślany
piasek wiślany -
gołębiom skrzydła połamanono
mostom żebra
ludziom oczy.

Tylko woda jest głębsza od życia
zbiera niesie za horizonty
skrzydła
żebra
kłosy źrenic
wiślane sprzęty -
zbiera i niesie za horizonty.

To wszystko co jest moje -
skrzydła
żebra
i sprzęty źrenic
czekają w porcie moim
na przebudzenie. -17
(All that is mine
the earth took away –
the Punic boats, the Vistula sand
the bridge spread across like a white dove –
all that was mine
was burned
was broken
was silenced. (literally: had its mouth shut)

The Kingdom of smoke
Vistula ashes
Vistula sand –
The doves had their wings broken
bridges their ribs
people their eyes.

Only water is deeper than life
it collects carries beyond the horizons
wings
ribs
sheaves of pupils.
Vistula harvest –
It collects and carries beyond the horizons.

All that is mine –
wings
ribs
the harvest of pupils
wait in my harbour
for the awakening.–)

The first two lines of the poem express the bitterness of the exile who had everything taken away from him by an outside force. Although this poem is permeated by a sense of loss, it nevertheless contains a glimmer of hope (which rarely occurs in Iwaniuk's poetry) of recovering what the poet once possessed. The central motif is the Vistula River, traditionally considered the artery of Polish identity. Here, the poet takes something universal and changes it into a purely personal experience. Everything the poet has lost is depicted in relation to the Vistula, which suggests that the poet strongly identifies himself with
this river and with what the river represents. When this identity is
damaged and taken away, all that remains is desolation and silence.
However, nothing is lost forever, everything is collected by the water
(which is, like time, "deeper than life"), later to be deposited in the
poet's harbour to await the "awakening".

In the first stanza the poet describes what has been taken away:
boats, sand, bridges. If one combines these elements, a secure, harbour­
like atmosphere emerges, an image of peace symbolized by the bridge's
likeness to a white dove. In the light of this serenity, the horror of
the consequent destruction is intensified. Suddenly, in the next stanza
everything is enveloped by the "kingdom of smoke", and all that remains
are the Vistula ashes and the Vistula sand (unchanged in its timeless
quality). This is followed by another, perhaps even more violent scene of
destruction: the foundations of things are broken (a bridge cannot stand
without ribs, doves cannot fly without wings, people cannot see without
eyes). All this collected wreckage - in a fleeting shadow of irony - is
later referred to as the "wis'lane sprzęty" ("Vistula harvest"), swept into
the poet's harbour to wait for the awakening. The only kind of awakening
imaginable is through the poet's words with which he may rebuild what has
been destroyed. The sense of destruction in this first stanza is relieved
in the last stanza, which, although beginning with the same words,
presents a shadow of hope in that it ends on a note of awakening.

The poet, now in exile, has been silenced ever since "to wszystko co
jest moje" ("all that was mine") was destroyed. The destruction of the
poet's home mirrors the poet's fate as an exile as well. Like the
"Vistula harvest", the poet, too, has been carried "beyond the horizons". Physical things, as well as those things of psychological importance which have contributed to his identity, such as the cultural identification associated with the Vistula river, have been destroyed, leaving him with nothing but the hope of recovering what once was his.

His poem "Out of My Dream" (written in English) expresses a similarly desolate picture of lifelessness:

No trees
no rivers
only sand
disturbed by a cactus plant
the demon of the desert
beyond it
there is red
unfortunate colour
of death.
In the dimmed sky
the comely stars
escape my memory.18

In this poem Iwaniuk presents a rather desolate picture of a landscape in his dream (a dreamscape). It is an empty one, and he appropriately begins by enumerating what is not there. There are no trees or rivers - signs of life, growth and cheerfulness - which immediately provides an indication of the lifelessness and barrenness of his dreams. The first impression of barren dryness is confirmed in the third line in which the poet reveals what his dreamscape does contain: "only sand". The landscape out of his dream reveals itself as a desert.

The first three lines consist of two words each, expressing what does and what does not exist. The fourth line departs from this pattern; it disturbs it, just as the cactus plant disturbs the monotony of the sand. The two lines dealing with the cactus are the longest ones of the poem,
creating a disturbing and disquieting picture. The cactus is described as the "demon of the desert" announcing the presence of death and evil. The cactus is also a reminder of the desert's reality, leaving no place for illusions or hallucinations. These can occur only when there is nothing to obstruct one's sight or to provide a focal point for one's attention. Thus, as the only distinctive object in the desert, the cactus renders hallucinations impossible. The cactus, a reminder of the desert's presence, is also a reminder of the situation of the poet in exile; a situation which in Iwaniuk's case is perceived as barren and lifeless as a desert. The cactus ensures that the poet cannot ignore the "desert", that is, the desolate nature of his situation in exile. Although a plant, the cactus is almost like an inanimate object, since it is associated with dryness and pain and lacks all the aspects of luscious vegetation generally associated with trees and plants. The cactus, in fact, contains a paradox by being simultaneously dead and alive, and may well be considered a "demon", an evil spirit, of the unbroken and thus harmonious monotony of the desert.

Line 6 reverts to the original two words per line structure, only to be briefly interrupted in the next line by the three words announcing the colour of death: "there is red". Here, again, the harmony of the desert is interrupted by a reference to an unpleasant reality. For the exiled poet, an uninterrupted desert may provide him with an avenue of escape, albeit an illusory one; however, he is constantly confronted with the realities and difficulties of his situation. The final two lines of the stanza again contain two words each. This circumstances connects them to
the beginning of the poem, and thus integrates them into the description of the contents of the poet's dreamscape. In fact, the entire stanza is now dominated by the image of death. If this is a depiction of his dreams, Iwaniuk's frequently cited inability to bring forth fruit while he is in exile is scarcely surprising, especially since he appears to be obsessed by reminiscences and dreams and takes little active or positive interest in his present situation or contemporary reality. The first stanza describing his dreamscape and ending in death is appropriately sealed by a full stop, the only punctuation mark of the stanza.

There are only three verbs in the poem, each coupled with a different subject: "disturbs" refers to the cactus, "is" refers to death, and "escape" refers to the stars and indirectly to the poet. The most "concrete" verb, "is", indicates the unmistakably presence of death, which the verb "disturbs" temporarily interrupts. The poet is confronted only with these two grim images (the cactus and death), since the stars in the sky, the only positive image, are not etched into his memory. This indicates that the poet perceives his situation as unpleasant. Now in exile, he seems himself living in a desert facing death. His situation seems so desolate, that he does not even remember the beauty of the stars.

"Co robić" demonstrates Iwaniuk's frustration and disappointment of producing what he considers insignificant words, and poignantly portraits his fears of becoming a poetic non-entity:

Piszę i piszę i co z tego
Pióro się wypisało
Słowo się wysłowiło
I nic.
Tyle czasu
Tyle papieru
Tyle życia
I nic.

Ani naprawdę słów
Ani naprawdę życia
Ani naprawdę prawdy

Co robić
Co robić i po co
Życie i tak bez żalu
Przekazać nas w obce ręce.19

(I write and write and what of it
The pen has written itself out
The word has expressed itself
And nothing

So much time
So much paper
So much life
And nothing

Indeed, neither a word
Indeed, neither a life
Indeed, neither a truth.

What to do
What to do and what for
Life anyway without grief
Passes us into foreign (or: strange) hands.)

This poem is rather uncharacteristic of Iwaniuk, whose poetry tends to be more eloquent. However, the rhythmic tinge and commonplace words of this poem carry their own meaning. The language is repetitive; a word count reveals forty-nine words, but there are only twenty-nine different words used. This lack of a diversity of words effectively contributes to the message of the poem.

The first stanza, an expression of despair at the futility of writing, induces a feeling of weariness. The full stop's position of end of stanza intensifies the finality inherent in this punctuation mark.
Each stanza thus appears to be an irrevocable pronouncement, sealed with a fullstop. Furthermore, in the first three lines of the first stanza, no particular word is stressed, and this monotony, coupled with the monotony of the repetition in structure, establishes a tone of indifference and resignation. The poet writes on and on without producing anything he considers worthwhile. However, in the last line of the first stanza, attention is drawn to the phrase "I nic" ("And nothing"). This phrase stands alone; the fact that nothing follows it only emphasizes the meaning of the word "nic". The word "i" ("and"), which connects "nic" to a previous series of phrases further finalizes the possibility of nothingness, because it announces the final item on a list. The sound of the words "i nic" creates a strong and forceful sound, because they both are short single-syllable words containing the same vowel "i". Thus it becomes apparent that, ultimately, none of the poet's efforts bear results.

The next stanza is also repetitive in structure and in words. Three of the four lines begin with "Tyle" ("So much") followed by something the poet says he gave "so much" of. The last line of the stanza is the same as the last line of the preceding stanza. The repetition of "i nic", retaining the same position in the stanza and the same punctuation, serves to express the feeling of disappointment and hopelessness of the phrase. The third stanza elaborates on "i nic" and explains what exactly "nothing" means to the poet. This stanza is the most repetitive one of the poem, both in structure and in words. Each line starts with the same two words "ani naprawdę" ("indeed, neither") followed by one item. The
disconsolation of this stanza is intensified by the absence of any concluding line — there is only repetition, no conclusion.

The last stanza starts off in the reiterative manner of the other three, but departs from the pattern of these stanzas by providing an explanation for the poet's fate. Furthermore, it represents a return to elocution, since none of the words of the last two lines are repeated. Initially the question is asked whether there is any sense at all in doing anything, since nothing "real" is ever produced. Until this point, the poet has been referring to himself by implying that the inability to produce anything "real" has been his fault. Now, however, he takes a more universal view. He changes the persona from "I" to "we" in the last line of the poem, thereby aligning himself with a community of people who might be undergoing the same misfortune. However, he blames this neither on the individual nor on the community, but states that it is "życie" ("life") which "przekazaże nas w obce ręce" ("passes us into foreign hands"). Here again we find evidence of the powerlessness of the individual — he is, like his body in "Słowo w słowo" (see p. 57), a puff ball, subjected to the whims of life or fate. This is an indication of the powerlessness of the writer in exile, who is dependent on outside influences, which may pass him into "foreign hands", a reference to his country of exile. The poet is thus rendered unstable and insecure with nothing to support him, not even the word. Since the word has already expressed itself, there appears to be little hope for it to begin anew; the word has, in a sense, died for the poet.
Iwaniuk's main concern was to write the truth; in fact, this is one reason why he went into exile - "Wyszedłem aby mówić prawdę"\textsuperscript{20} ("I left to tell the truth"). However, nothing comes of it. The poet has covered so much paper and has produced neither a "real" word nor a "real" truth. At this point, he appears to have lost all his desire for writing, perhaps because no one is there to listen to him. Iwaniuk thus becomes increasingly insignificant; in his own eyes he essentially ceases to be a poet:

Still alone,
a man who does not exist,
a merchant of foreign words.
I write non existent poems for non-existent readers \textsuperscript{[t/o]\textsuperscript{21}}

The non-existence of the poet is contrasted by the existence of:

real editors, men of letters,
government officials, and of course
our Prime Minister; all very peculiar people\textsuperscript{22}

These people are all part of the poet's country of exile; for them, the poet does not exist. Iwaniuk criticizes their lack of interest in him and in poets in general; he sees them chiefly as a collection of sober bureaucrats, far removed from his world as a poet, and even farther removed from the source of his identity. He becomes doubly alienated and exiled by being considered non-existent as a foreign poet as well as a person. Iwaniuk is noticeably embittered by his situation - he appears to resents the attitude of his new country towards him as a poet, an attitude he portrays thus:

Poets, according to Plato,
should be sentenced and committed
without trial.\textsuperscript{23}
Iwaniuk seems reluctant to live in the present, and even more reluctant to think of the future, perhaps because of his insecurity, as he writes in "Czy można dziś budować na niepewnych słowach": "Czy można dziś budować na niepewnych słowach / jak na ruchomym piasku swoje babilony?" (Can one build today on uncertain words/ build one's babilons on the shifting sand?) However, the past, mirrored in his dreams, is also problematic for him, because it seems to force itself on him. In "Słowo w słowo" for instance, his days begin when nightfall comes:

Moje ranne zorze przychodzą wieczorem
Ciemność na rzęsy kładzie obca dłoń.
Zamykają się okna choć otwarte są
Wnętrze poduszki niesie zapomnienie.
Żyję jak nić wszpłany w powietrzu
Z wczoraj na wczoraj i z dzisiaj na dzisiaj.
Moje marzenia wyśnił za mnie czas.
O zorze podróżujące jak ja bezustannie
Nie ma dla nas momentu wytchnienia.
Nie mogę siebie unieść dalej niżbym chciał
Ciało jest dmuchawiec ale słowo nie
Tak długo jak wiem, jestem w jego wnętrzu.
Już kukułka krzyczała godzinę dwunastą
Zebrana pamięć nie może się pozbierać
Tak jeszcze niedawno byłem - a tak dawno już.

(My dawns come in the evening
Darkness places a foreign (or: strange) palm over my eyelashes. [t/o]
The windows close although they are open
The inside of the pillow carries oblivion.
I live like a thread knotted into the air
From yesterday to yesterday and from today to today. [t/o]
Time thought out my dreams for me.
Oh dawns travelling like I continuously
For us there is no moment of rest.
I cannot lift myself (up) further than I like
The body is like a puff ball but the word is not
As long as I know, I am in its inside.
Already the cuckoo cried out the twelfth hour
The collected memory cannot assemble itself.
I have not yet been for a long time — but so long already.)
The poem begins with the contradictory declaration that the poet's dawns arrive in the evening, a reversal of the normal process. Dawns are usually the precursors of daylight, which shed light on reality and life. Here, however, they announce the arrival of night and darkness, the realm of unreality and dreams, a type of escape from the poet's present situation. Thus the poet's day begins in the evening, an indication of the paradoxical situation of the exile poet living essentially in the past.

Lines 5 and 6 reveal the state of the poet: he sees himself as a thread knotted into the air, a curious connection of one fragile element with another which lends no physical support to either. Nevertheless, their connection is binding, and so the thread, or the poet, must share the fluid and unpredictable movements of the air. This is an appropriate image of the poet's situation in exile: his fate depends on outside forces, not on his own will.

Line 11 continues the theme of the poet as a victim of other forces (as mentioned in line 2 and line 5): the poet's body is like a puff ball, and, like the thread in the air, it can be blown in any direction against his will. The poet quickly points out that the word is quite different — it is not a puff ball. Consequently, it must be solid, stable and autonomous. In the next line, the poet discloses his double identity: he not only exists inside his volatile and powerless body, but he has also existed inside the word "Tak długo jak wiem" ("as long as I know"). According to the poet, he has thus been living inside the word, or the language, ever since he can remember. Consequently, the word
is inextricably tied up with the consciousness of the poet who is protected and, at the same time, trapped by the word; on the one hand, the word lends him stability and shelter, on the other hand, it wields power over him, making him effectively its prisoner.

A break is announced in line 13, reminiscent of the fairy tale "Cinderella" where the spell is broken as soon as the clock strikes 12, thereby dispelling the dream and asserting reality. The word "juz" ("already") indicates disappointment that midnight has come too soon, and suggests that the poet shuns the return to reality. The poet’s perception of time is at odds with absolute time: while the poet rationally "knows" that memories can only be made real in the twilight of dreams, he nevertheless transforms rational knowledge into individual and personal feeling divorced from the rationality of day. These two perceptions of time are combined in the last line of the poem; the dash announces the transition from one state to the other, while simultaneously positing their coexistence.

Iwaniuk’s situation in exile is rather disparaging: he is a poet on the verge of becoming a non-poet due to a lack of words. He lives the paradoxical life of the exile, mixing reality and dreams, while often ignoring the present. He is essentially a passive being, always blaming fate or life for his situation, even blaming the word for not responding to his summons.
CHAPTER III

A COMPARISON OF DOMIN AND IWANIUK

Hilde Domin and Waclaw Iwaniuk, who come from different backgrounds and have spent their exile in different countries, both wrote poetry permeated by their exile experience. Although they frequently use different themes to express their experience, this experience nevertheless is the common denominator which permits a comparison of the two poets.

Life in exile was not a voluntary choice for either Domin or Iwaniuk; consequently they see themselves in the role of the victim of a force which drove them into exile, as exemplified in Domin's "Bau mir ein Haus":

Der Wind kommt, der salzige Wind,
der uns übers Meer treibt
und uns an einen Strand wirft.

Once removed from their countries, both poets sense the essential insecurity of their position, and it is not surprising that much of their poetry deals with various forms of security, such as the issues of shelter, home, identity, stability, and a sense of belonging. Insecurity, instability and the threat of losing one's identity appear to be the main misfortunes confronting the exiled writer.

As the exile is removed from his surroundings, his sense of belonging to a larger group, which contributed to his feeling of security at home, is taken away. The exile belongs nowhere, he feels unwanted and uninvited. This sense of not belonging causes his feelings of insecurity; removed from his surroundings, he is precariously suspended in a void as
Domin describes it in her poem "Nur eine Rose als Stütze":

Aber ich liege in Vogelfedern, hoch ins Leere gewiegt. Mir schwindelt. Ich schlafe nicht ein.2

Domin often expresses her longing for security in a tangible way; for instance in "Bau mir ein Haus" she asks for a solid house: "nimm Steine / und bau mir ein Haus".3 She feels that she must rely on some sort of external security, because she has a "Körper aus Sand", which is prone to be carried off by the power of the wind, and so, like the helpless and homeless bird without feet, she is forced to go wherever the wind pushes her. However, Domin soon discovers that security in the form of a tangible object, or even psychological security will always be elusive, because the traits of exile cannot be shaken off:

Unverlierbares Exil du trägst es bei dir du schlüpfst hinein gefaltetes Labyrinth Wüste einsteckbar4

Exile is incompatible with security, even with the rather minimal security provided by the possession of objects. Objects might beckon the exiled person, asking to be adopted, but Domin maintains that the security afforded by objects is merely illusory:

Sag dem Schosshund Gegenstand ab der dich anwedelt aus den Schaufenstern. Er irrt. Du riechst nicht nach Bleiben.5

There is yet another poem entitled "Fremder" in which she expresses her lightness and susceptibility to the "wind", which assumes the role of
the hunter in her poems, indiscriminately hunting those who cannot defend themselves with their own weight:

Ich falle durch jedes Netz
wie ein Toter

falle ich durch die Netze hindurch.
Samenkorn ohne Erde
schwere los
treibt mich der Wind
aus allen Netzen empor

For Domin, the exile is essentially a weightless being. Nothing, least of all he himself, is powerful enough to hold him down when the wind comes. In the above poem, the seed has the potential to grow roots to become a tree; however, it is unable to settle because it is not held down by the weight of earth. It is, in a way, exiled by the very earth it belongs to. Like the seed, the exile has no opportunity to develop lasting roots. Here, one important difference emerges between Domin's and Iwaniuk's view of the exile's position: Domin's exile might be powerless when confronted with the wind and drift helplessly through the air, but he is alive and moving; he always seems to be actively struggling. Iwaniuk's exile, on the other hand, practically ceases to live; rather than being compared to a seed, he is like a barren tree, dry and apparently lifeless: "Jestem jak suche drzewo" ("I am like a dry tree"). Thus there is a significant contrast between Domin's images which deal with air, lightness, flight, wind, and movement, and Iwaniuk's, which generally appear frozen and motionless. Both, however, are conscious of the powerlessness of the exile.
Iwaniuk's most common images of exile are connected with the dryness, barrenness and silence found in "Na Antypodach":

Ale do tego potrzebne jest słowo
Nad którym siedzę w milczeniu i czekam
W suchym jak ziarno piasku krajobrazie.

(But for this the word is necessary
Over which I sit in silence and wait
In a landscape dry as a grain of sand)

and in "Planeta":

Jestem jak suche drzewo
Jestem nagi
Zdjęto ze mnie klejnot zieleni
Bez kwiatu
Bez owocu
Jestem jak paralytik elektrycznie zwawy

(I am like a dry tree
I am naked
Taken from me the jewel of greenery
Without flower
Without fruit
I am like a paralytic electrically lively)

The aspect of lifelessness, here portrayed in the image of the dry and barren tree, is intensified by the image of the paralytic who depends on technological devices (artificial devices which can only simulate life), rather than on himself, to go through the motions of life.

In addition, Iwaniuk feels alone and practically non-existent, because nobody acknowledges his existence: "to be alone is to be a nobody / existence requires many pairs of eyes", he says in his poem "5". Eventually, the threat of gradually fading into poetic non-existence becomes real to Iwaniuk. His word is now as good as "forbidden" - it is not the language understood in his new country. If he
speaks in his language, he is never sure who will listen:

Trudno mówić słowem zakazanym
gdy nie widzę nikogo i nie wiem czy są

(it is hard to speak with a forbidden word when I see no one and don't know if anyone is there)

These lines illustrate the futility and difficulty of writing without a reader. The poet foresees no one, and therefore he has a feeling of writing into nothingness, or, at best, into uncertainty. He compares himself to a philanthropist who believes in the future. This comparison, however, is negative, rather than hopeful. As he writes to the absent, his word has already been congealed in the past, and it seems doubtful if it will be understood in the future:

Mówię jak filantrop który stawia na przyszłość
Do nieobecnych. Łatwo mi
bo mówię jak do siebie wierszem który już ostygł
i jest obojętny na działanie pogody i zmiany temperatur.

Czy ktoś mnie słucha, nie wiem.
Nie widzę nikogo w najbliższym pejzażu lat.

(I speak to the absent like a philanthropist who believes in the future. It is easy for me because I speak as if to myself with a poem which has already grown cold and is indifferent to the activity of the weather and changes of temperature.

I don't know if someone hears me.
I don't see anyone in the immediate landscape of years)

Since there are no readers, the poet and his poems might as well not exist; this implies that Iwaniuk indeed needs other pairs of eyes to acknowledge his existence as a poet. Similarly, in "8" he writes:
on my bookshelf rests a de luxe edition
of Toynbee's History of Civilization,
but above it is my non-existent portrait,
which blends into the white wall...
vvanishing from its frame
the face of a poet.

Yes, my eyes narrow, watching it disappear.¹³

Loneliness and the sense of being ignored leads Iwaniuk to imagine
himself a barren poet threatened with extinction. As he looks at his
portrait, he sees it fading into the wall and disappear into the realm of
silence. The exiled poet, cut off from the living stream of language, is
confronted by silence which threatens to overpower him.

It is significant that his cycle of poems entitled "From my Canadian
Diary" as well as other poems found in the volume Evenings on Lake Ontario
are written in English, and that they concern the poet's reflections on
his present situation, rather than his reminiscences. Perhaps this
represents an effort on Iwaniuk's part to regain existence by writing in a
language for which there are many "pairs of eyes". Iwaniuk appears to
fear being forgotten, to be relegated to non-existence. In this volume,
he confirms his existence by writing in the language of his adopted
country; the fact that he writes poetry in English in his later years
perhaps already signifies an acceptance of his increasing non-existence as
a Polish poet. His poems written in English present an attempt at a
renewed existence, which is perhaps similar to Domin's "rebirth" in her
own language.

One of Iwaniuk's main concerns is the past. In this respect again,
he differs from Domin. Domin does not write much about her past or her
memories; but instead concentrates on the predicament of her present situation as a permanent exile. Iwaniuk, on the other hand, is so concerned with the past that he tries to ignore the present, portrayed in "Liść" as the sorrowful state of a leaf severed from its tree.

Paradoxically, in "21" Iwaniuk asserts, however, that his past is dead: "For years I have been waiting here, ... with my past as dead as the Dead Sea." The past is frozen in his memories; it can never be reawakened, because it no longer exists. In this respect, the past is indeed dead; it may be preserved only in his memories, as imperfectly as a photograph which preserves only the memories of the object it represents, but not the object itself. In this poem, the poet ceases to live himself, but lets the Lake live for him. Iwaniuk finds himself in the peculiar position of being practically dead to the present, because he cannot live without his past, which, according to him, is dead. He seems to consider life in the present a betrayal of the past, as he states in his poem "12", in which he describes Toronto, despite the city's bustling activity as his "no-man's-land". This poem contains yet another indication of the importance of the past for Iwaniuk. Here, he defines what for him is the "place", in other words, what is real for him:

For the place is that
which no longer exists
although we say: it did.

This again implies that the place which exists for him no longer exists, and that he considers only this now non-existent place to be "real". This place is therefore a part of the past. It follows then, that the present is "no place", and does not really exist for the poet
(hence his idea of Toronto as a "no-man's-land"). Not only can Iwaniuk not forget the past, but he also believes that by accepting the present, by living for today, he betrays his past, his background, his memories—in short, all the things which had formed him. He is ultimately afraid of betraying himself and of losing his identity if he would fully accept the presence of Toronto:

I would not give a thought
to yesterday or tomorrow,
I would be happy to be and to go on,
deceiving myself, and my past.  

Overall, Iwaniuk's poems document his general dissatisfaction with life which even leads him to resent being alive. In his poem "że mi uszło na sucho", he expresses regret at having gotten away scot-free:

Niepotrzebnie się martwię o każdą pięć słowa
Choc sto morz nas rozłąca została pamięć
Dobra na odpoczynek jak łzy oceanu.
Uratowany, skarżę się że żyję
że mi uszło na sucho.
Na sucho? Do krwi.

(Unnecessarily I worry about every inch of a word
Though a hundred seas separate us, memory remained
Good for a rest like the tears of the ocean.
Saved, I complain that I live
that I came out dry.
Out dry? Completely.)

The theme of loss, or of leaving, which both poets share, occurs most obviously in Iwaniuk's "Lisć" and in Domin's "Noch gestern":

Dies Frühjahr ist wie ein Herbst,
ein Abschiednehmen
von allem was kommt.
Das Karussell
fährt vorbei.
Das Karussell mit den grossen Tieren.
Nie wieder
wirst du mitfahren
und warst doch noch gestern
eins von den Kindern die mitfahren müssen.
Du wirst die Geste noch machen,
fast alle machen ja nichts als die Geste,
Leben heisst hüflich sein,
kein Spielverderber.
Du isst das Eis, das man dir in die Hand gibt,
du lächelst, weil alle lächeln,
fast alle machen die Geste der Freude
für die andern.
Gestern hast du gelacht,
weil du gelacht hast.
Du musst es weiter tun,
du darfst niemand enttäuschen.
Viele Tage werden auch blau sein,
es gibt immer
blaue Tage
wo Lachen leichter ist,
beinah wie früher —
beinah.

Keiner ausser dir kennt die kleine Linie,
den Strich auf dem Boden,
den riesigen Strom,
den du nie mehr
überquerst.

This poem, like Iwaniuk's "Liść", describes the transition from one stage of the poet's life to another. It also applies to the situation of the exile, especially as Domin sees it: once he has crossed the stream and gone into exile, he can never go back. The small line on the ground turns out to be a large river for the person concerned, because it marks a significant and irrevocable change. The immediate difference between "Liść" and "Noch gestern" is that in Iwaniuk's poem there are more "black and white" contrasts in his depiction of the past and present. However, there is also a subtle similarity in their depiction of the past. Both of them use unpleasant images to describe the past: Iwaniuk depicts a figure of the gallows, and Domin depicts happiness as a forced social gesture.
Both things are rather negative if taken by themselves, but they appear positive in comparison to the poet's exiled state. Despite being hung by the neck, Iwaniuk's figure on the gallows sings hymns, because it is still attached to the tree. Domín's laughter, although merely a "gesture", never again is so happy once she has crossed the stream; her subsequent laughter is only "beinah wie früher". Thus these two poems express the poets' awareness that, although things were not perfect in the past and they might have resented some of its aspects, their past situation was preferable to their subsequent one, because it took place in their home and they felt more secure in it.

Iwaniuk states that having been "saved", having survived, has actually harmed him. He seems to live in the present like a lifeless shell. He lives, as he says at one point "od marzenia do marzenia"20 ("from dream to dream"); he starts to live when his dreams arrive in the evening, as he writes in "Słowo w słowo". In his opinion, exile has had a disastrous effect on him as a poet. He is very negative about his situation, and there are few poems in which he expresses any hope for the future, as he does in "To wszystko", where he hopes for a reawakening of everything he has lost. It appears, therefore, that exile has threatened to extinguish Iwaniuk's poetic existence, and for this reason he is justified in worrying "o każdą piędź słowa"21 ("about every inch of a word").

Like Iwaniuk, Domín has experienced a permanent loss of belonging and knows that her past is lost, perhaps even dead as she describes it in "Köln". Even when she returns to her native city, she sees a strange city
in the place where "her" city once was. Exile has thus cut her off from continuity, which she cannot recapture though she is able to return. In this sense, her situation is not unlike Iwaniuk's. Although Domin perceives exile somewhat differently than Iwaniuk, there is one poem in which she shares his concern about the danger of silence: in "Vogel Klage", the bird whose cries are not heard by anyone (and are therefore effectively silent) eventually drowns. Here, Domin recognizes the threat of speechlessness confronting the exiled poet. Just as nobody hears the bird's cries as it drowns, no one might hear the poet's attempts at speech as he makes a last effort to prevent his death as a poet. Here, as in Iwaniuk, there is a subtle implication concerning the reader: if no one hears the sound, there is really no sound (similarly, if no one reads the poems, they do not actually exist outside of the poet). Fortunately, Domin has learned to depend on language as her only support (in "Nur eine Rose als Stütze"): she appears more confident of the stability of this support than Iwaniuk, and is less concerned than he is about "many pairs of eyes" witnessing her existence. Although Domin, like Iwaniuk, is cut off from her past, she is not in danger of losing her identity as Iwaniuk thinks he is. She finds it possible to continue her existence as a poet, because she believes in the support of language. In fact, she started writing poetry in exile, and so actively reasserted her identity through her language.

Thus, though both Iwaniuk and Domin are faced with the similar problem of losing their identity as poets, each copes with this problem differently: Domin reaches for language as her "support", while Iwaniuk
claims that he waits for language to support him (although he does mold the language himself by writing). However, he knows that language does have a supportive power. In spite of Domín's portrayal of the silent bird without feet in "Vogel Klage", and her many similarities to a bird, she refuses to turn into the "Vogel Klage". This state (of being like a plaintive bird) is essentially alien to her: she expresses this alien state with an image of dizziness, implying that she is not at ease when living like a bird in a nest in the air (as in "Nur eine Rose als Stütze"), and therefore looks for a support which she finds in language. The state of exile as a threat to the poet's identity naturally leads him to search for security. Domín, on returning home after her exile and discovering that there is no secure shelter for her at home, instead finds a permanent support in language. Her identity was formed by the language of her childhood, of her first conception of life, and it therefore remains her "home", the only thing no one can take from her. For her, exile is unloseable; an exile, even after his return, will always be an exile. Language has become her only stable home which will accompany her wherever she goes:

Das Gefieder der Sprache streicheln  
Worte sind Vögel  
mit ihnen  
davonfliegen.22

Domín lives in a state of symbiosis with language; she provides words with a voice even when they are unwanted, and words in turn provide her with a home for her identity. This is expressed in her poem "Ungewünschte Kinder", where she offers warmth to freezing, unwanted words.
Ungewünschte Kinder
meine Worte
frieren.

Kommt
ich will euch
auf meine warmen
Fingerspitzen
setzen
Schmetterlinge in Winter.23

Domin treats words as her own creations, she describes them as her "children". Her language, although it exists outside her as well, is re-created in the poet and therefore assumes a strong personal relationship with the poet. Iwaniuk's relationship with his language, on the other hand, appears to be less personal; it is tied up with his past, and cannot be separated from it to become completely his own. He believes that he owes his words to his parents, and thus whatever belongs to him was inherited from the past and still belongs to the past. Thus he believes that he can never free his words from their past:

Today, nothing is mine.
Nothing.
Except my words,
haunted by their words,
which hover over my past
and over my future, too. 24

Consequently, in order to find a support and to preserve their identities, both poets pay a lot of attention to language as such. Iwaniuk frequently complains about a lack of words and the apparently disinterested silence of the word, whereas Domin does not. An important fact is that Domin writes only in German, whereas Iwaniuk writes in Polish, as well as in his adopted language, English. He even uses both
languages at the same time in his poem "Don't Touch Me, I'm Full of Snakes".

Another aspects worth considering in this context are the titles. Both poets occasionally entitle their poems in a foreign language. Domin, for example, uses titles such as: "Silence and exile", "Salva nos", "Vademecum", "Ars longa", "Ecce homo". However, she does not use titles in Spanish, the language of her country of exile, the Dominican Republic, but instead uses Latin and, less frequently, English. Iwaniuk's "foreign" titles include: "Après le déluge", "Ars poetica", "Post Scriptum", "Don't Touch Me", "Non sum dignus". The languages are French, Latin and the language of his country of exile, English. In addition, Iwaniuk has written an entire volume of poems in English entitled Evenings on Lake Ontario. It is noteworthy that this volume relates to a large extent to the present, rather than to the past. In Evenings on Lake Ontario, he talks mainly about his reflections about his new country, and about his situation as an exile. These observations may provide an indication to which extent the two poets allow themselves to be influenced by the new language that surrounds them, and may also demonstrate their sense of security in their own languages.

How do they treat the subject of language in their poetry? It has been argued that for Domin, language is home, a supportive shelter which will never refuse her, it is "das letzte Unverlierbare (Zuhause)". Domin is part of the language, and language is a part of her; here, the poet and her language appear to merge. However, language also transcendents the poet; Domin recognizes that it has existed prior to her and will continue to exist after her. Language thus assumes the
characteristics of an omnipresent deity. It is, in fact, something holy for Domin, as she writes in her poem "Ars longa":

Der Atem  
in einer Vogelkehle  
der Atem der Luft  
in den Zweigen.

Das Wort  
wie der Wind selbst  
sein heiliger Atem  
geht es aus und ein.

Immer findet der Atem  
Zweige  
Wolken  
Vogelkehlen.

Immer das Wort  
das heilige Wort  
einen Mund.

The word, or language, is unending — it always finds its expression through someone's mouth. Domin feels herself to be the receptacle as well as the spokesperson of the word. In this respect, the word, she implies, lives through the poet. Since the word is as natural and necessary as breath, it will always find "Vogelkehlen". Here, the word is truly the "Vogel mit Wurzeln" as she entitles one of her poems. The word has root not only in the bird's throat (the exile's throat, to continue Domin's association of the bird with the exile), but also outside it. Therefore the expression of words, or of language, presents no major problem for her; it is as simple and necessary as breathing. Domin's attitude to language is uncomplicated, intuitive, perhaps somehow mystical. Language does not inhabit a separate place; she does not have to search for words as Iwaniuk does, because they already exist in her. Language is simply a part of herself without which she would not exist.
Iwaniuk's attitude to language is rather more complicated and ambivalent. For him, language is never a given, he must constantly search for it, even without the assurance of finding it. Language is something external to the poet - it is up to him to approach it, to seek its shelter ("In all my wishes I pray for words", he writes in "21"27). The word exists by itself, it does not seek its expression. Iwaniuk, therefore, like Domín, recognizes the independent spirit of words, but unlike Domín, he does not utter them easily. For Iwaniuk, the word does not go out like a breath looking for throats, but remains somewhere waiting for the poet to approach it: "Siedze w milczeniu nad zamkniętym słowem."28 ("I sit in silence over a closed word"). Iwaniuk, who strives to produce only "proper" words to satisfy the language, finds it difficult to summon words.

Domín, on the other hand, finds it relatively easy to produce words. In her poem "Geburtstage", she compares the "birth" of a word by the poet to the birth of a child, only easier and quicker:

Ich habe niemand ins Licht gezwängt
nur Worte
Worte drehen nicht den Kopf
sie stehen auf
sofort
und gehn29

Domín's words do not need any further support; once she has produced them, they already stand on their own feet; they walk away and assume their own "life". The word poses no difficulties for her - she does not even have to please it. This perhaps indicates that Domín feels sure of herself as a poet; her words, she feels, immediately have enough strength to stand by themselves.
However, despite her easy-going manner with language, in her poem "Unaufhaltsam", Domin agrees with Iwaniuk on the unerasable importance and potential power of the single word:

Das eigene Wort
wer holt es zurück
das lebendige
eben noch ungesprochene
Wort?

Wo das Wort vorbeifliegt
verdorren die Gräser,
werden die Blätter gelb,
fällt Schnee.
Ein Vogel käme dir wieder.
Nicht dein Wort,
das eben noch ungesagte,
in deinem Mund.

Du schickst andere Worte
hinterdrein,
Worte mit bunten, weichen Federn.
Das Wort ist schneller,
das schwarze Wort.
Es kommt immer an,
es hort nicht auf, an-
zukommen.

Lieber ein Messer als ein Wort.
Ein Messer kann stumpf sein.
Ein Messer trifft oft
am Herzen vorbei.
Nicht das Wort.

Am Ende ist das Wort,
immer
am Ende
das Wort.30

This poem again expresses Domin's conviction of the power of the word. Here, too, as in "Ars longa", the word appears to be deified and assumes a religious connotation: The word is alive, it has the power to be fruitful as well as destructive: it can cause leaves to turn yellow,
grass to wilt, snow to fall, even to cause a type of death. The word endures to the end and is the end of all things; nothing follows after the last word (compare in Bible: "In the beginning was the Word" John 1,1.). The religious overtone here is quite explicit. Domin does not doubt the power of (her) words, as Iwaniuk does. Iwaniuk, though also aware of the power of the "right" word, nevertheless does not identify himself with this kind of metaphysical value of the word. In his poem "Słowo w słowo" he maintains that "Jestem jak bezsilne słowo" ("I am like a powerless word"), a statement with which he stresses his feeling of isolation, the result of being outside his familiar context.

For Iwaniuk, the word has yet another value: it is stronger than he and yields power over him; he would bring many sacrifices to please it; in "Za miske soczewicy" he even admits "Wolę odmówić sobie miejsca / przy rodzinnym stole by słowo nie miało do mnie żalu" (I would rather decline my place / at the family table than have the word hold a grudge against me). The word behaves like an authority (or a difficult lover) whom he has to please in order to gain its favour. He is dependent on the benevolence of the word. In short, he sees himself as merely the product of the word, whereas Domin is also the word's producer. In this same poem, he claims that silence is criminal "milczenie jest przestępstwem" ("silence is a crime"), which implies that words, the opposite of silence, are virtuous. The word is virtuous, and because it should be used only in the "proper" way, it sometimes remains silent to the poet's summons. Iwaniuk does not wish to remain silent (silence is a crime), despite his continuous activity as a poet, he complains in "Co
robić" that he has been unable to find a "true" or meaningful word:

Tyle czasu
Tyle papieru
Tyle życia
I nic.

Ani naprawdę słów
Ani naprawdę życia
Ani naprawdę prawdy. 34

(So much time
So much paper
So much life
And nothing.

Indeed, neither words
Indeed, neither life
Indeed, neither truth)

Iwaniuk therefore remains effectively silent. The words he produces are good for nothing, because they sound false or "inside out": "po co mi słowo które brzmi na opak" 35 ("what good is a word to me which sounds inside out"). With this implicit reasoning he creates an ambiguous situation: the word is silent — therefore it is committing a crime itself. Thus the words, by remaining silent, also refuse Iwaniuk the release he wants from his own silence.

Myśl przywołuje słowo, słowo się wzbrania
Nie chce być niesłowne, choć je człowiek zmusza36

(The thought calls up a word, the word refuses
It does not want to be unreliable, even though man forces it)  

Here, again, he implies that the word does not like to be misused — it prefers instead to be silent and does not obey the poet. Here lies perhaps the most important difference between Domin and Iwaniuk regarding their attitude to language. Although Iwaniuk at one point says that the word is a shelter (ostoją jest słowo), 37 it seems to be an extremely
elusive shelter, by no means a reliable one, as it is for Domin. In Iwaniuk's case, the word is autonomous; it exists without the poet, but the poet must have words to remain a poet. Thus Iwaniuk often sees his existence as a poet threatened ("but above is my non-existent portrait, / which blends into the white wall... / vanishing from its frame / the face of a poet."38). The word cannot be forced, but must somehow grant itself to the poet — the poet, after all, prays for it. Iwaniuk is inside the word, almost like a prisoner. The word is "beyond" Iwaniuk, in the sense that it not only is more powerful than he, but it also holds Iwaniuk the poet in its power.

Domin and Iwaniuk's common trait as exile poets seems to be the loss of security and the quest to rediscover it in language. Though they both write to survive, Domin's words are part of her, whereas Iwaniuk's are on the outside. He depends on the word to revive him. The situation of the exiled poet evidently produces a heightened awareness of language. Both Domin and Iwaniuk make language the subject of their poems, but, as has been argued, they differ drastically from each other.

How are their respective attitudes reflected in the language of their poetry? Domin uses predominantly simple, everyday words and sentences, her poems look "clear". Iwaniuk's poems generally look more "busy", or, rather, more eloquent, and have a more complicated sentence structure. This is perhaps another reflection of his attitudes toward the word: he labours hard to get it, polishes it in the effort to find a "perfect" word which does not sound "inside out". The effect of exile on Iwaniuk is more tragic than on Domin. At times it appears that he is completely
disoriented as he writes in "Na Antypodach": "pamięć nie zawsze zgadzała się z czasem" ("memory did not always agree with time") and discouraged as in "Co robić", where all his words amount to nothing. As a contrast to Domin, Iwaniuk comes out empty handed.

On the whole, the poetry of Domin and Iwaniuk differs significantly in their style of writing, which may be considered a reflection of their relationship with their language and the way they consider their exile experience. Domin's poetry seems to flow easily - it is simply written and relatively harmonious. Iwaniuk's poetry, on the other hand, appears to have a more complicated context. His poetry seems to have evolved from a struggle; it does not have the spontaneous quality of Domin's poetry, and thus seems dark and tortured. Perhaps this reflects Iwaniuk's disorientation in exile, whereas the harmony of Domin's poetry indicates that, once having accepted the permanence of exile, she nevertheless has found her values, in particular her values as a poet.
CONCLUSION

Ciemne jest wnętrze ciemności
Ale słowa których nie można wymówić
Są po stokroć ciemniejsze

(Dark is the inside of darkness
But the words which you cannot say
Are a hundred times darker.)

This thesis has attempted to elucidate the effect the experience of exile has on two different poets and to analyze how this experience is reflected in their poetry. It has become clear that the poet in exile is under tremendous pressure, especially if he wishes to continue functioning as a poet in his native language. The involuntariness of the poet's exile renders him insecure, not only as a person, but also, and perhaps more importantly, as a poet, since his link with his native country and its language has been severed. To escape the potentially destructive effect of poetic insecurity in exile and to minimize his isolation from the everchanging currents of his native language, he must, these poets imply, try to identify himself as closely as possible with his language in order to cope with and possibly dispell any self-doubts of his value as a poet.

Both writers imply or state directly (particularly Domin) that the poet has the power to find shelter and security in his language, because it is language which defines him as a poet by preserving his identity, even in a foreign country. The two poets discussed in this thesis are both aware of this and sought refuge in their language. The poetry expressing the exile experience of the two poets discloses similar
concerns such as feelings of insecurity, instability, feelings of loss, the wish for security. However, these concerns, which often focus on language, are approached differently by both. Domin is more successful than Iwaniuk in defining herself through her language, because she believes that language naturally finds its expression in her, indeed that she is a sort of mouthpiece for her language. Iwaniuk appears to be more self-conscious in his role as a poet: not being recognized as such in his newly adopted country turns exile into a bitter experience for him. In his poetry, he seems to be torn between striving for the independent security language affords, the reluctance to leave behind his past, and possibly the wish to be recognized in his new country. Domin, on the other hand, is noticeably less concerned with her past, and more anxious to preserve herself as a thinking and feeling human being. Unlike Iwaniuk, she appears to be relatively unconcerned with the possibility of her non-existence for others, hence the note of optimism in her poetry. It is thus the dependence of the poet on his language and his frustration in attempting to preserve it in an alien and indifferent surrounding that makes him a particularly poignant representative of the exile:

... it is fitting that the writer in exile is most often regarded as the exile per se. The quality that gives him this representative status is the tool of his trade: his native language, which he cannot abandon without simultaneously surrendering his identity with the culture he represents.2
INTRODUCTION

1 Hilde Domin, "Unterwegs," Rückkehr der Schiffe (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1982) 47.


CHAPTER I - HILDE DOMIN

1 Domin, Hoffnung 13.


3 Bettina von Wangenheim, ed., Heimkehr ins Wort: Materialien zu Hilde Domin (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982) 207.


5 Domin, Natur 35.


7 Hilde Domin, "Köln", Hier (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1984) 19.

8 Domin, Hoffnung 12.

9 Domin, Hoffnung 13.


12 Domin, "Hier," Hier 24.
13 Domin, "Immer kreisen," Hier 40.
14 Domin, "Vögel mit Wurzeln," Hier 41.
15 Domin, Hoffnung 14.
16 Domin, Hoffnung 24.
17 Domin, Hoffnung 26.
18 Domin, Hoffnung 12.
19 Domin, Hoffnung 30.
20 Domin, Hoffnung 31.
21 Domin, Natur 37.
26 Domin, "Von uns," Hier 17.
29 Domin, "Wen es trifft," Rose 46.
30 Domin, "Vogel Klage," Rose 68.
33 Domin, "Mit leichtem Gepäck," Schiffe 49.
36 Domin, Hoffnung 12.
CHAPTER II - WACLAW IWANIUK


5 Iwaniuk, "Za miskę soczewicy," Nemezis 67.


7 I have tried to do a literal translation of the Polish. However, I also attempted to keep the original form of the poems.

8 Iwaniuk, "Nie plamiąc się brudnym słowem," Nemezis 9.

9 Iwaniuk, "Elegia o cmentarzu w Toronto i słowo o śmierci," Nemezis 56.


15 Iwaniuk, "Don't Touch Me, I'm Full of Snakes," Ciemny Czas 50.

16 Iwaniuk, "Liść," Ciemny Czas 61.

17 Iwaniuk, "To Wszystko," Wybor 99.


19 Iwaniuk, "Co robić," Nemezis 33.

CHAPTER III - COMPARISON

1 Hilde Domin, "Bau mir ein Haus," Rose 21.
2 Domin, "Nur eine Rose als Stütze," Rose 55.
5 Domin, "Mit leichtem Gepäck," Schiffe 49.
6 Domin, "Fremder," Schiffe 50.
7 Iwaniuk, "Planeta," Ciemny Czas 40.
9 Iwaniuk, "Planeta," Czas 40.
10 Iwaniuk, "5," Ontario 7.
11 Iwaniuk, "Za miskę soczewicy," Nemezis 67.
15 Iwaniuk, "12," Ontario 16.
16 Iwaniuk, "12," Ontario 16.
17 Iwaniuk, "12," Ontario 16.
18 Iwaniuk, "Ze mi uszło na sucho," Nemezis 47.
19 Domin, "Noch gestern," Rose 80.
21 Iwaniuk, "Ze mi uszło na sucho," Nemezis 47.
22 Domin, "Das Gefieder der Sprache," Hier 39.
24 Iwaniuk, "Legacy," Ontario 33.
25 Domin, Hoffnung 12.
26 Domin, "Ars longa," Hier 61.
33 Iwaniuk, "Za miskę soczewicy," Nemezis 67.
34 Iwaniuk, "Co robić," Nemezis 33.
36 Iwaniuk, "Elegia o cmentarzu w Toronto i słowo o śmierci," Nemezis 56.
38 Iwaniuk, "8," Ontario 11.
CONCLUSION

1Iwaniuk, "Czekam," Nemezis 10.

WORKS CITED


WORKS CONSULTED


APPENDIX

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

HILDE DOMIN

Hilde Domin was born in 1912 in Cologne to a well-established Jewish family. Hilde Domin's family was, like a large number of German-Jewish families, an assimilated one, which was deeply involved in and greatly contributed to German culture, society and language. After completing her "Abitur" in 1929, she studied law, national economics and sociology.

In 1932, unsettled by the political events and the rise of Nazism in Germany, Domin and her future husband left to study in Italy. Though in the beginning it was not clear to her that she would not return to Germany for a long time to come, she quickly perceived that her stay had turned into an exile situation as Hitler and Mussolini were on increasingly friendly terms. Italy could not become her new country of settlement. After obtaining her doctorate in Italy, she moved to England in February 1939 and lived there until June 1940. (In both Italy and England she worked as a language teacher and translator). Her final destination in exile was the Dominican Republic where she remained until her return to Germany in 1954.

Domin first started to write poetry in 1951 while in exile. Between 1951 and 1953, she wrote many poems, very few of which were published. Her first volume entitled Nur eine Rose als Stütze was published in 1959, and since then she has published four more books of poetry and several books of prose and critical writings.

WACŁAW IWANIUK

Waclaw Iwaniuk was born in Poland in 1915. While he was studying economics, he became active as a poet, and was associated with a "middle-ground poetic group" called the Lublin group. According to Folejewski in his foreword to Dark Times, Iwaniuk was not yet a matured poet at the start of the war, although he had already published his first poems in 1934. These poems, considered rather avant-garde, were characterized by an "economy of words and discretion of lyrical emotions

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sometimes bordering on self-mockery."² His first volume of poetry entitled Pełnia czerwca was published in 1936, his second volume Dzien apokaliptyczny in 1938.

During the war Iwaniuk served as a soldier - an experience which had a decisive influence on the themes of his poetry. Accordingly, his poetry became more somber. After the war, Iwaniuk found himself in Canada and settled in Toronto. He was obliged to face a new reality in a new country, and this is what a large part of his subsequent poetry is about. In Canada, he became actively involved in the cultural scene. His poetry continued developing, he wrote various literary essays, notes and translations of English, Canadian and modern American writers and has gradually "grown into an active force in the stream of the Canadian multicultural art".³ Although most of his poetry is written in Polish, in 1981 he also published a volume of poems written in English entitled Evenings on Lake Ontario.

²Folejewski 2.
³Folejewski 5.