

THE POETRY ADDICT: UTZ RACHOWSKI AS POET, POLITICAL PRISONER, AND COUNSELOR

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ABSTRACT

Closely analyzing selected poems, this article traces the major phases of the five-decade-long career of contemporary German poet Utz Rachowski. First, East Germany's paranoid repressive police force declared five of Rachowski's poems to be subversive. Second, with his prison poems, Rachowski asserts his subjectivity against objectifying punishments. From this phase onward, the metaphor "poetry is a drug" helps us to understand the role of poetry for Rachowski. Third, his exile led to a sense of loss of home expressed in mature poetry. Finally, taking on responsibility for a dog during his 2012 stay in the United States reconfirmed Rachowski's belief in trust, giving his poetry new productivity and a gentler tone. Outside his poetic career, Rachowski counsels people who have suffered under the state repressions

KEYWORDS: poetry as drug; police state; exile; prison literature; protest literature.

CONTEXT: WRITING UNDER REPRESSIVE CONDITIONS

Repressive regimes all over the world have probably given rise to many variations of the following story: a person is found dead, killed by the dictator's henchmen and still holding in his/her hands the one element that had sustained him/her during a period of persecution. And that one "element" is not any so-called legal or illegal drug – it is poetry.

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In this article, we focus on the contemporary German poet Utz Rachowski, who survived his ordeal of persecution, imprisonment, and exile in the divided Germanys of the nineteen seventies and eighties. The prototypical story we alluded to first, however, is the story of Albrecht Haushofer and his *Moabiter Sonette*,¹ which Haushofer wrote in defiance of Adolf Hitler's National Socialism:

[Albrecht Haushofer] was murdered by an SS raiding party on April 23, 1945, immediately after his release from Moabit Prison and just a few days before the fall of Berlin. His brother found the manuscript of the sonnets on Haushofer's body, reportedly still clenched in his right hand. (STOEHR, 2001, p. 160).

The lives and works of authors like Haushofer form a line of literary tradition that speaks truth to power and that reaches far back into history and spans the world. In order to place Utz Rachowski in this tradition, Jörg Bernig provides a brief historical overview. He mentions Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart's poem "Der Gefangene" (LEIBROCK 1998, p. 26) as an early example for German literature dealing with state repression (BERNIG, 2006). Speaking truth to power has always involved risks even at the few times when civil (and *civilized*) public discourse seemed possible. For each country and period, the list of persecuted authors (and artists and other activists) seems frighteningly long, and yet each list is just one piece in this line of tradition. Bernig (2006) includes Oscar Wilde and Fyodor Dostoyevsky as examples of European authors in this tradition.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the division of Germany into East and West during the Cold War led to the unusual "double" situation for authors who were perceived as critical of the Communist regime in the German Democratic Republic (GDR, in the East). They were not only persecuted by the secret state police (Stasi, short for *Staatssicherheit* or "state security") but could also be sent into exile in the

¹ The collection of Haushofer's sonnets is named after Moabit, a borough in Berlin that is the location of the prison where Haushofer was detained.

other (Western part of) Germany, the Federal Republic of Germany. What may appear as a simple move within what used to be the same country (with shared literary and artistic traditions) was nevertheless a true exile, an uprooting from one's social, political, and familial environment. Only after the collapse of the GDR and the unification with the Federal Republic of Germany in the years 1989 and 1990, has the extent of repression and persecution perpetrated by the Stasi begun to emerge as access became available to the vast files kept by the Stasi.

As a result of its repressive political climate, the GDR suffered an exodus of people, which led it to fortify its side of the border between the two German states in 1961, which also meant building a wall around West-Berlin, thus creating an enclave of the West inside the territory of the GDR. Ironically, the exodus of authors (and other artists) continued after 1961 because many of those who suffered repressions and imprisonment were exiled to the West (often for "ransom" paid by states or organizations in the West). Wolfgang Emmerich argues that this exodus damaged the intellectual "substance" of the GDR. He distinguishes four main waves of emigration before the collapse of the GDR. He considers the last wave, which started in 1976, of "an extent that had been unimaginable before." (EMMERICH, 1996, p. 256-257). Utz Rachowski is part of this vast wave (p. 257) because he, too, stands in the tradition of speaking truth to power (BERNIG, 2006, p. 259).

Utz Rachowski, "arrested in 1979 at the age of 25 for *staatsfeindliche Hetze* (subversive agitation)," (COHEN-PFISTER, 2010. p. 250) was sentenced to twenty-seven months in prison. He served a total of fourteen months: seven months of pre-trial detention for interrogation by the Stasi and seven months of hard labor in prison – by that time his health had already declined so dramatically that his life would have been in danger had he not been ransomed by Amnesty International in 1980. His crime was writing and disseminating poetry that the authorities deemed dangerous to GDR socialism. In particular, five of his poems were singled out as subversive – "subversive" here is not a category of literary theory but a legal category (the German adjective "staatsfeindlich" literally marks Rachowski as an enemy

of the state) that was actionable in a court of law, however unjust that law might have been. In Rachowski's case, each poem was worth about five and a quarter months of his life to be spent at hard labor in prison.

Still, Rachowski continued writing poems even while in prison, when he was in exile, and he continues doing so to this day. Wolf Biermann identifies the following "virtues" of Rachowski's poetry and prose: "old-fashioned passion, moral seriousness, melancholic humor" (BIERMANN, 1993, p. 187). Biermann refers to these virtues as "eastern," that is, ostensibly specific to the GDR, the former East Germany. The question remains about the reasons for Utz Rachowski to hold on to these virtues, especially after his experiences with repression and persecution in East Germany.

Utz Rachowski's crime included also disseminating poems by other authors, including poems by his friend and mentor Jürgen Fuchs, by Reiner Kunze, and by Wolf Biermann. Biermann is the best-known GDR songwriter and the GDR's most famous exile, whose expatriation in 1976, while he was on concert tour in the Federal Republic of Germany, triggered the fourth (and last) wave of emigration from the GDR. In the wake of Biermann's expatriation, more than eighty authors and artists, a veritable "who's who" of the literary scene in the GDR, signed a letter "futilely protesting Biermann's expatriation and asking for a reconsideration of the decision," which was "published by a Western news agency after the East German news agency refused to publish it." (STOEHR, 2001, p. 345). Many of the letter's signatories later left or were forced to leave the GDR, and Biermann's name remained anathema to the GDR regime, which is one of the reasons the Stasi considered Utz Rachowski's work subversive.

Analyzing select poems, we show that the phases of Utz Rachowski's career as a poet mainly follow the outward events of his life: arrest, prison, exile, and having the responsibility of caring for an animal during his 2012 stay in the United States. First, a paranoid repressive police force arbitrarily declared five of Rachowski's poems to be subversive. Second, his prison poems provide the focus for Rachowski to assert his subjectivity against objectifying punishment, which the metaphor "poetry is a drug" helps us to understand. Third, his exile led to a sense of loss of home that continued

after he was able to return home and that contributed to his poetry turning more melancholic and mature. Fourth, taking care of a dog reconfirmed Rachowski's belief in trust and loyalty, which gave his poetry a new gentler tone. Throughout, poetry has remained a "drug" for Rachowski. Finally, he not only shares his suffering in his poems but also works as a human rights activist and counselor for people who have suffered under state repression.

FIVE SUBVERSIVE POEMS

In the context of the Stasi's interest in literature, unfortunately, the term "subversive" is not a category of literary criticism but rather a sign of ideological paranoia that says more about those who apply this label to a specific text than it says about the writer of that text. In this paranoid sense, the Stasi was suspicious of many activities that it considered dangerous to socialist East Germany; any such activity would be "subversive." After all, in the five poems that the Stasi somewhat arbitrarily selected,² Rachowski voiced some criticism that, in turn, sufficed to "prove" their subversive character. In a police state without freedom of speech, almost anything is (or can be construed by paranoid officials as) critical; therefore, the bar for being persecuted for subversiveness is set very low.

There is no doubt that Rachowski's poems voice criticism, but this should be a well-respected right for any citizen. In one of the poems, he refers to the "no man's lands," that is, the two Germanys, by subverting³ the colors of the German flag (black, red, and gold) into "BlackBloodGold."⁴

² Rachowski begins a poem with: "I did not go to prison / because of poems / I had written about Poland." This laconic observation suggests that there were more poems for which he could have gotten into trouble with the Stasi. .

³ Here, "subverted" is used in the sense of a positive literary quality.

⁴ Louise Stoehr, interview with Utz Rachowski. Rachowski explained that he no longer considers this particular poem valid; therefore, it is not included in *Die Dinge, die ich vergaß*, which presents a selection of his poems from five decades. Since it was recently published in 2018 and is readily available, we will refer to the poems from this collection. It does contain four of the five poems that were considered "subversive" by the GDR justice system.

The substitution of “blood” for “red” is clearly provocative, but provocation itself has been a valuable literary strategy not just since Dadaism over a hundred years ago. It clearly requires the paranoia of a repressive state and its secret political police to construe certain texts as undesirable and to persecute (in the guise of prosecution) the authors of these texts. In the (legal) case of Utz Rachowski’s poems, as a result, there are three elements at work, as we will illustrate in the following analysis of one of the five “subversive” poems: voicing criticism, guilt by association, and paranoia.

THURINGIAN LEGEND

for Reiner Kunze

One man has been
expelled.
He was followed by jasmine.

He, however, left behind
a glass of tea made of silence
that no one had the time
to finish
before it became bitter.

(RACHOWSKI, 2008, p. 60, our translation)

THÜRINGISCHE LEGENDE

für Reiner Kunze

Einen hat man
vertrieben.
Dem zog der Jasmin nach.

Er aber liess noch stehen
ein Glas Tee aus Schweigen
das keiner mehr Zeit fand
auszutrinken
bevor es bitter war.

First, the poem evokes an atmosphere of repression using the key term of “silence,” which is used in a total of five “subversive” poems. (RACHOWSKI, 2008, p. 112).⁵ What makes matters worse is that this silence turns bitter, suggesting that people may be quietly turning against the GDR. At least, the state’s suspicion is that Rachowski may be agitating for people to turn against the GDR. What makes this poem specifically explosive, however, is the reference to someone who has been expelled

⁵ The word used here is “verstummen,” which typically is translated as “to go silent.”

because such a reference openly addresses a political taboo. A repressive state that considered itself to be the workers and farmers' paradise had difficulties with people who did not want to live in that paradise and who, worse, already been expelled from that paradise for their "subversive" ideas and activities. This type of offense could only be an offense in a repressive police state.

This leads to the second type of offense: guilt by association. Utz Rachowski does not generically evoke "some" person who was expelled; he makes it specific by dedicating "Thuringian Legend" to Reiner Kunze – just as he specifically mentions Jürgen Fuchs and Peter Huchel in two other poems of the "subversive five." These three poets represent three successive generations who had no place in the GDR. Jürgen Fuchs, who died in 1999, was of Rachowski's generation; Reiner Kunze was born in 1933; and Peter Huchel was born in 1903. Huchel was the "independent-minded editor of the influential magazine *Sinn and Form*" (STOEHR, 2001, p. 297), which was not only the GDR's premiere literary publication but which also has survived in unified Germany. "Huchel had printed texts that he considered to be of high literary quality, mostly Modernist works by authors of whom the official party-line aesthetics was suspicious" (p. 297) which led to him being accused of ideological coexistence. As a consequence, Huchel was finally expelled from the GDR in 1962. In a nutshell, all three poets – Fuchs, Kunze, and Huchel – were considered enemies of the state. It is evident that in the mind of the state police, Rachowski was an enemy of the state simply by aligning himself with these poets.

Third, as if the afore-mentioned two aspects were not enough evidence for state-perpetrated paranoia, the Stasi interrogation of Utz Rachowski reveal paranoia running rampant and seeing things that are not there. "Thuringian Legend" includes an allusion with the word "jasmine." In the paranoid sense, it is completely irrelevant what the word may mean because it is not read poetically. Instead, it is read politically as an encoded secret message: It is read as a man's name! Of course, it is the Stasi's job to find out the identity of that man. During an interrogation, Utz Rachowski

was indeed asked: “Who’s that guy Jasmin, Rachowski?” (RACHOWSKI, 2006, p. 174). This willful and paranoid misreading of “der Jasmin” (which translates into “jasmine,” as in jasmine tea, in English, which loses the ambiguity that makes the misunderstanding possible in German) makes sense only if one considers the following two facts. First, all nouns are capitalized in German as are all proper names, and a proper name may be preceded by a definite article in some dialects. As a result, a somewhat overtaxed interrogator could assume that “der Jasmin” was a reference to a specific person. This is no laughing matter because the overtaxed interrogator had all the power of a repressive state behind him. Second, in the repressive (and, again, paranoid) mindset, everything is suspicious, especially in the Cold-War antagonism of West versus East. Therefore, a veritable metonymic chain of paranoid states of mind is unleashed. A poetic allusion *has* to be a veiled reference to a specific person; people *cannot* follow their own innocent interests, such as reading or, as Huchel did, publishing Modernist literature; there *has* to be a sinister plot in play, a plot that *has* to be steered by an enemy country in the West.

In this poem, “jasmine” actually alludes to a poem by Reiner Kunze (“Invitation to a Cup of Jasmine Tea”). When Kunze was expelled, he was followed by his poetry and his jasmine tea, both of which he invited people to share with him in silence, that is, in a space where people can be themselves in the presence of others. Rachowski picks up this image as well by evoking one “glass of tea made of silence” that was left behind. In sum, Rachowski’s “Thuringian Legend” is a sophisticated work of art. It blends private and political aspects. Clearly, the Stasi read it as a crude political document. What the Stasi read as “subversiveness,” Utz Rachowski understands in terms of realism and love of country that he could not help but write about: “I described the *tristesse*, the melancholy, the dreariness of our country, the devastated environment, and the political conformity – because I indeed loved my homeland and still do” (RACHOWSKI, 2018)⁶. Rachowski would undergo the experiences

⁶ Louise Stoehr, interview with Utz Rachowski in this issue of *Revista Texto Poético*.

of *tristesse*, melancholy, dreariness, devastation, and conformity in their intensified forms during his imprisonment, to which he responded with a new creative phase.

THE PRISON POEMS⁷: POETRY AS A DRUG

In her groundbreaking study of German prison literature before 1933, Sigrid Weigel emphasizes the complexities of prison literature within the dynamics of “writing and delinquency” (WEIGEL, 1982, p. 17). A major goal of our previous discussion of Rachowski’s “subversive” poems was to elaborate on the complex character of delinquency itself as it effectively shifts to the Stasi as the perpetrator of state-sanctioned repression. Not the prisoner is guilty but the repressive state that imprisons him. Sarah Colvin rightly observes that “[p]rison experience is not the same in all places, times, and political situations” (COLVIN, 2017, p. 440). Still, there also seems to be an uncanny structural similarity in how repressive regimes handle what they perceive as critical voices; in the end, these individuals are not prosecuted for actual crimes; rather, they are innocent but persecuted for political reasons.

The complexities of prison literature continue with how it functions as literature. “Writing in prison,” Weigel points out, is a “survival strategy”: “Writing – or a silent inner monologue if writing is forbidden – gains a central importance for this: literature as a space where freedom can be reproduced by the subject under the condition of incarceration” (WEIGEL, 1982, p. 7). Therefore, prison literature is also “literature of resistance” (p. 7).⁸ By resisting, prison literature is protest literature as well. In a broader context, John Stauffer defines protest literature as “the

⁷ We are not making any theoretical statements concerning prison literature as a genre; we are using the term “prison poems” because Utz Rachowski uses its German equivalent “Gefängnis-Gedichte.”

⁸ See also: COLVIN, Sarah. *Unerhört? Prisoner Narratives as Unlistened-to Stories (and Some Reflections on the Picaresque)*. *Modern Language Review* 112, n. 2, p. 445-446, 2017.

uses of language to transform the self and change society” (STAUFFER, 2006, xii).

Texts written in extreme situations, such as incarceration, invite three obvious questions about production conditions, subject matter, and reason of writing:⁹ How were these texts written, what are they about, and why were they written in the first place? The first issue of how Rachowski composed his poems in prison is readily addressed in the poet’s specific statements during interviews and in *Die Dinge, die ich vergaß*, the 2018 collection of his poems. What is more, Utz Rachowski’s explanation about the production conditions makes the third question even more pressing. We will elaborate on these three issues (conditions, subject matter, and reasons) in the discussion of the following poem.

COTTBUS ELEGY

Standing at my machine
and dreaming I were a tree
who breathes you in
like a rain shower

Standing at my machine
and thinking
that nothing blooms
if it cannot die
Standing at my machine
and dreaming there’d be a day
that, after the night, has a morning
with all your warmth

(RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 147-148, our translation)

COTTBUS-ELEGIE

Steh’ ich an meiner Maschine
und ich träume ich wär ein Baum
der dich einatmet
wie einen Regen

Steh ich an meiner Maschine
und denke daran
dass nichts blüht
wenn es nicht sterben kann
Steh ich an meiner Maschine
und ich träume es gäb’ einen Tag
der nach der Nacht einen Morgen
mit deiner Wärme hat

⁹ While our focus is mostly on the production side of prison poems, there are also other issues. For the reception of prison narratives (though not by Rachowski), see COLVIN, Sarah. *Unerhört? Prisoner Narratives as Unlistened-to Stories (and Some Reflections on the Picaresque)*. *Modern Language Review* 112, n. 2, p. 440-458, 2017.

The city of Cottbus, which gives its name to this elegy's title, was the location of the "real" prison to which Rachowski was sent after he was sentenced to twenty-seven months of prison. The "writing" conditions turned out to be most difficult because writing was forbidden in both GDR prisons where Rachowski was held – with the exception of writing monthly letters home, and even that was allowed only under strict supervision (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 141). It seems as though the East-German Stasi learned from the experiences that the Nazis' Gestapo had with such writers as Albrecht Haushofer, whose prison writings survived their author as a testimony of sacrifice and resistance to a repressive regime.

At the Cottbus prison, the prisoners "were forced to work in a three-shift system," Rachowski recalls and continues to explain: "we had a pencil and were able to get our hands on paper. But I wasn't stupid enough to hold onto a slip of paper for longer than a day" (RACHOWSKI, 2018)¹⁰. As he had done before during the seven months of Stasi detention in Karl-Marx-Stadt, where he had been held for interrogation before his trial and where he "didn't even have a pen or pencil, not a bit of paper" (RACHOWSKI, 2018)¹¹. Rachowski memorized each poem. After he was released into the West on November 20, 1980, he found refuge in the West-Berlin apartment of his friends Lilo and Jürgen Fuchs. There, Rachowski says, "I locked myself into my room on the first days and hastily wrote down, as though I were still hounded, the texts from memory" (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 141). These texts consist of a radio play and several poems. While the radio play was first broadcast in 1983, most of the prison poems remained unpublished until the 2018 publication of *Die Dinge, die ich vergaß*.

The title "Cottbus Elegy" already suggests the subject matter. "Cottbus," again, refers to the prison, and "elegy" designates a poem that traditionally mourns the loss of something – this poem mourns the loss of freedom, privacy, and love. Actually, the combination of the experience

¹⁰ Louise Stoehr, interview with Utz Rachowski in this issue of *Revista Texto Poético*

¹¹ Louise Stoehr, interview with Utz Rachowski in this issue of *Revista Texto Poético*

and the colloquial tone almost gives the poem the characteristics of the blues: Here is the hard-working man who mourns being separated from his love because he has to work – except both hard work and separation are forced upon this man because he is in prison. He goes to work in the prison, and when he returns from work, he is in a different building but still in the same prison. The “author’s double role as subject who writes and as object of institutions and methods of punishment,” (WEIGEL, 1982, p. 18) which Weigel considers central to prison literature, is obvious in this poem.

A prisoner is indeed an object in the prison system. Forced labor is part of the speaker’s punishment, which is evoked only by mentioning the “machine” in “Cottbus Elegy.” The poem does not provide any more information about the specific circumstances, such as what kind of work, what kind of machine, and what kind of product. The readers only know that the work is forced labor being done in prison because the poem is printed in the section of “prison poems.” In principle, this provides minimal but sufficient information for readers to understand the poem in the context of prison. Information given in a footnote grounds the poem in Rachowski’s own experience: the machine was a lathe, and Rachowski assumes that some of the items they produced were used for IKEA furniture. (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 148). More information on Rachowski’s experience is available, for example, in interviews. Rachowski knew that not only were his freedom and self-determination taken away, but so was his privacy because “[t]he prison guards inspected our cells (there were eighteen prisoners in one cell) on a daily basis when we were at work.” (WEIGEL, 1982, p. 13).

In a poetically subtle way, Rachowski asserts his own subjectivity against the objectifying structures of the prison system. What makes these poems subtle is the fact that he creates two types of freedom: on the one hand, by providing minimal information in his prison poems, he creates freedom for the readers to use their own imagination; on the other hand, he employs poetic devices to establish his own sense of detachment and freedom.

Allowing freedom for the readers to use their imagination seems to be unusual for prison literature because it is typically seen as confronting its readers with stark and shocking detail “to question respected norms and normality,” (p. 13) even to the extent that readers will doubt the veracity of what they read. Colvin formulates this as the question of “can this be true?” that readers will raise over and over again. (COLVIN, 2017, p. 450-452). In contrast to this and to Rachowski’s own prose texts about his prison experience, (RACHOWSKI, 2006, p. 119-133) his prison poems are, indeed, different. One reason, as already observed, is Rachowski’s use of minimal information that suffices to evoke the basic situation, such as forced prison labor in “Cottbus Elegy.” In other poems, key phrases, such as “first interrogation,” (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 142). “metal bars,” (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 147). and even “Golgotha,” (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 143-144). produce this effect without adding shocking detail. Another reason that Rachowski’s prison poems do not to provoke the question “can this be true?” lies in the way he mediates his experience poetically.

In “Cottbus Elegy,” the positive images of yearning for his love create a subjective space of freedom. This prison poem becomes a love poem. Each of the three stanzas begins with the actual prison situation by way of mentioning the “machine” that the speaker relates to as “my machine.” In contrast to the speaker’s vague state of mind when he drifts off into thinking and daydreaming, the stanzas are systematically arranged. The middle stanza, which contains the general thought that death gives value to life, is framed by the more-specific first and last stanzas, which both address the absent “you” with dreamlike images of rain and warmth that validate the love between speaker and “you” and, in this manner, give power to that love. The poem ends with the wish that the “night” of incarceration may give way to a new “morning” of love. This is also an inversion of the medieval aubade, or morning song, which traditionally ends with the lover’s parting. In “Cottbus Elegy,” the speaker wishes to be reunited with his love in the morning. This inversion also indicts the speaker’s incarceration as illegitimate (relegated to the night), while it

holds up love as legitimate because it will be openly visible in the morning, at the first light of day.

The poetic devices that Rachowski employs in his poetry in general, and even in his prison poetry, are inclusive in the sense that they allow the readers' imagination to enter the world of the poet (and of his poems' speakers, if author and speaker are not identical). This inclusiveness is a rhetorical strategy that makes Rachowski's poetry powerful. In general, John Stauffer counts "empathy and shock value" among the "rhetorical strategies" of protest literature. (STAUFFER, 2006, p. xiii). Rachowski's prison poems do not have a "can this be true" shock value; instead, they have surprise value in the tradition of Heinrich Heine's poems, which often end in ironic twists. Again, as with the inverted aubade in "Cottbus Elegy," the ironic twist in Rachowski's poems include the readers, that is, the readers are not shocked but may take delight in appreciating the surprise value. In the context of incarceration, such delight and appreciation are not simply in response to the aesthetics of a poetic device but also to the moral value of the twist because it expresses the speaker's resistance to the objectifying powers of the prison system.

Such resistance begins with the author's perhaps surprising attitude that, in a repressive police state that persecuted him and hundreds of thousand others for petty political reasons, he was "in the right place: in prison." (RACHOWSKI, 2018)¹² The ironic twists in the poems are further expression of resistance. The most direct example is perhaps the very short six-line poem "First Interrogation." The readers learn that "Words were / her / only weapon" and, therefore, may expect to find out what words the woman used. Instead, the ironic twist follows swiftly: "She / resisted: / She was silent." (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 142, our translation). In the poem "My Favorite Animal," (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 146, our translation) the judge yells at the defendant: "Now / you've let the cat out of the bag." As in other poems, minimal information (here, the mention of the judge) provides sufficient context for this poem. It is

¹² Louise Stoehr, interview with Utz Rachowski in this issue of *Revista Texto Poético*.

a dangerous moment for the defendant at trial, yet in the very moment, his thoughts drift off to what one says about cats, such as that cats always land on their feet or have many lives. This encourages the defendant to return to the situation at hand by giving the cat a new name, effectively reclaiming the judge's reproach as a weapon for the defendant's sense of justice: "Now / I call it / truth."

In real life, prison was the place Rachowski barely survived; therefore, the question remains of why he would compose texts while in prison under circumstances that would have been difficult even for a healthy person. In general, his attitude mattered, and his poems give voice to his will to resistance and survival. In practical terms, creating these texts in his mind and memorizing them gave Rachowski a purpose that transcended his prison sentence early on: "After some time in prison, I crafted exact plans in my head about how I would be able to describe everything that I was experiencing." (RACHOWSKI, 2018)¹³ It is clear that Rachowski's poems are both autobiographical and poetically mediated. They occupy a space in the dynamic field of poetry, prison literature, and protest literature. Even if his poems could be pinpointed as prison literature, this "genre" has its own complexities. Studies ranging from the history of the prison (for example, by Michel Foucault) to literary criticism of prison writings (for example, by Weigel and Colvin) emphasize the complexities of this field of research.

To capture these complexities and to focus our approach, we would like to suggest using the metaphor that poetry is a drug that saves lives. We understand this in the sense of Donald Davidson's general discussion in his 1978 essay "What Metaphors Mean," which "treats metaphors as a rhetorical phenomenon," (WHEELER III 2003, p. 191) that is, not in terms of semantics but of pragmatics. Davidson explains the effect of metaphors in terms of dreams and jokes and even of "a bump on the head" that "makes us appreciate some fact – but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact." (DAVIDSON, 1984, p. 262) In this sense, Davidson suggests performing a paradigm shift, that is, shifting from one frame to

¹³ Louise Stoehr, interview with Utz Rachowski in this issue of *Revista Texto Poético*.

another: “Metaphor makes us see one thing as another by making some literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight.” (p. 263).

In our discussion of Utz Rachowski’s prison poems, this would mean that we shift in our thinking from the frame of poetry to another one, that is, the frame of drugs. Using this metaphor, we have not reduced any existing complexities, such as the type of writing, its production and reception conditions, and its subject/object dynamics. However, we have gained another, more focused, way of thinking about the role of poetry for a political prisoner like Utz Rachowski. What is more, the metaphor of “poetry is a life-saving drug” remains relevant as Rachowski moves from one surreal situation (persecution and prison) to the next (exile).

EXILE: REAL AND PROLONGED

It is indeed difficult not to think of the concept “surreal” when being confronted with lives of many GDR writers, artists, and activists whose biographies seem as though they could come straight out of the works of Franz Kafka: arrest by a paranoid secret police, political trial with exaggerated charges, unjust sentencing, life-threatening conditions in prison. All of these injuries to body and soul were then followed for some people, including Utz Rachowski, by what must have seemed like insult added to injury, that is, the paradoxical situation of being exiled from one Germany to the other Germany, two states that stood on opposing sides of the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. The following poem captures these ironies of history.

VOGTLAND

This earth
as though
plowed with

knives

DAS VOGTLAND

Diese Erde
wie
mit Messern

gepflügt

blood-red
after the harvest
gray in October

blutrot
nach der Ernte
grau im Oktober

in the end

zuletzt

they took us away

brachten sie uns fort

gray silence a crow's caw

graue Stille Krähenschrei

memories of metal bars
leaning
sundial and seasons

Erinnerung an Gitter
gelehnt
Sonnenuhr und Jahreszeiten

learned by heart
newly born and too clever
to know

learned by heart
neugeboren und zu klug
zu wissen

Just this:
this earth
plowed with knives

Nur:
diese Erde
mit Messern gepflügt

Schönfels Castle
in the window
of the transit train
knights and
blue soldiers
mirrored in the window pane

Burg Schönfels
im Fenster
des Transit-Zugs
Ritter und
blaue Soldaten
im Spiegel der Scheibe

behind which
we are at home
there where we no longer are
(RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 110-111, our translation)

hinter der
wir zu Hause sind
dort wo wir nicht mehr sind

The poem “Vogtland” takes its title from the name of the region in eastern Germany where Utz Rachowski was born and raised – and now lives again. Rachowski wrote the poem in 1981, the year after he was ransomed from East-German prison and exiled to West Germany. The poem is effective in capturing the experience of exile by employing three strategies: it tightens its imagery, incorporates the poet’s victimization in the GDR, and closes with evoking the paradoxical situation of his exile.

While Rachowski does not mention “the Wall,” his poem evokes its effect. The term “the Wall” was most specifically a reference to the Berlin Wall but, by extension, also implied the German division in general, which meant a fortified death trap of a concrete wall – complete with no man’s land, barbed wire, watch towers, mines – running along the entire length of the border between East and West Germany. Seeing the physical border, people may have felt as though the earth was “plowed with / knives.” Rachowski uses this image twice in the poem. Moreover, he adds emphasis to the image because he opens the poem with it. Here, the image is phrased as a simile. Donald Davidson argues in general that “all similes are true” (DAVIDSON, 1984, p. 257) in the trivial sense that everything is “like” something else in one way or another. When Rachowski uses the image for the second time, toward the end of “Vogtland,” he rephrases it as a metaphor, even in hard juxtaposition (that is, without auxiliary verb): “this earth / plowed with knives.” For Davidson, not only are “most metaphors [...] false” (p. 257) when it comes to semantic “meaning,” the effect of metaphors is to make people think about something in terms of something else. Applied to “Vogtland,” we may argue that the movement from simile to metaphor tightens the poem’s meaning because, in the Davidsonian sense, the simile’s comparison is just one of several possible comparisons. In contrast, the metaphor zeroes in on the one fact that the poem leads its readers to think about when considering the border between the two Germanys: this border is the injury inflicted upon “this earth / plowed with knives.”

The tightening of the meaning, which reflects the speaker's thought process as he expresses the impression the border has made on him with more certitude, is almost necessitated by the choice of language. The poem's first word is "This." Its use throws the readers into the middle of something: "This earth" implies that the readers should know where they are. The use of the word "this" usually requires an antecedent, something that is mentioned earlier so that it can be referred back to by "this." The sudden start may cause a slight irritation on the readers' part that, however, is resolved over the course of the poem as the location of the speaker is eventually identified as being on a "transit train."

Just like the train, the speaker is in transit: mentally moving from his past in the GDR to confronting the conditions of his current exile in the Federal Republic while, at this specific moment, traveling through a type of no man's land. Transit trains traveled along approved transit corridors through GDR territory between West Berlin and the Federal Republic. Riding on such a train, the speaker sees the fortified border, "plowed / with knives," and goes through a series of memories that are both enigmatic and specific, that is, specific experiences are evoked by way of brief references that may seem general. For example, he recalls being arrested ("they took us away"), being imprisoned ("metal bars"), composing poetry in prison without being able to keep written copies ("learned by heart"), and being released into exile ("born again").

The situation of what the speaker sees through the window during the train ride in the poem "Vogtland" resonates with a sequence in the 1994 documentary film *Die gefrorene Zeit*, (REICHELT; ZIMMECK, 1994) which shows Utz Rachowski reliving the same exact train ride that he evoked in his poem more than a decade earlier. The transit train took him straight through the Vogtland region; but being on a transit train then, he can only get on or off in West Berlin and the Federal Republic. A mere "window pane" in a train separate from his home, which he cannot visit. As a result, home has become an elusive concept. "Vogtland" ends with the paradoxical statement that captures yet another surreal experience: "we are at home / there where we no longer are."

The paradoxical statement corresponds to the paradoxical emotions of ambivalence about home that are expressed in several of Rachowski's other poems. There are hopeful and playful moments, such as when the speaker of a poem meets the moon "in the streets / of exile," and the moon, upon being asked what it is doing there, answers: "I shine." (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 109) Mostly, however, exile means loss for Rachowski. The poem "Glances," (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 15-16), for example, adds personal exile to political exile when his first wife leaves him. Taking the subway, he then feels the "eyes of emigration" staring at him; those are the eyes of the serpent that had expelled him from paradise eons ago. This imagery, combined with its Biblical tone, is indeed powerful as it evokes the overwhelming realization of the finality of exile and the loss of home.

The preceding examples are from poems written in the nineteen eighties, but the feeling of exile in the sense of not feeling quite at home extended past the actual exile. After German unification in 1990, Rachowski returned to live in his hometown. In a 2008 poem, for example, he registers his thoughts about one of many routine return trips home (perhaps, from shopping that same day or from a short trip of a few days). While his considerations are mundane (such as about the money for the train ticket) and remain hopeful, lingering doubts have infected the speaker's daily life: "Hopefully it is / still home." (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 25). Other poems retain the melancholic humor and ironic twists. For instance, he admits that there is no divine protection for poets – but not from poets either. (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 109). He playfully invents a "vogtlandian Sea" for his landlocked home region. (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 34). Within the multiple tonality of Rachowski's poems, a somber and more melancholic tone seems to dominate during the years of real exile (1980 to 1990) and even the following years. Not surprisingly, the 2011 poem entitled "Requiem" (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p.102). is a poem about love. It does not quite end in resignation, but its appeal to the power of love also suggests the speaker's doubts:

Das muss uns genügen dass wir gelebt haben
an verschiedenen Orten und Zeugnis gegeben
mit dem TROTZDEM der Liebe
Wir waren die mit dem flatternden Herzen

It must suffice that we have lived
in different places and given testimony
with the NEVERTHELESS of love:
We were the ones with the quivering hearts

Walter Schmitz argues that the past for Utz Rachowski means “persecution and exile.” (SCHMITZ, 2018, p. 296). Returning to his hometown in the Vogtland could not mean that Rachowski truly felt at home because, in a way, his past was still present. As with many people, the good things in life, such as family and friends, are difficult to enjoy because life seems under a shadow. It was as though he, who once was so sure that prison was the right place to be in the country that once was, no longer knew where the right place for him was now. However, this personally uncertain period of Rachowski’s creative career finds expression in powerful poetry. Again, we propose thinking in terms of the drug metaphor because these poems derive their power in part from Rachowski using them to cope with life in exile and post-exile. While this metaphor of “poetry is a drug” has so far helped our understanding of the role of poetry in Rachowski’s career as a poet, his next creative phase requires us to be more specific in our use of the metaphor.

MISS SUKI AS THERAPY

In 2012, Utz Rachowski had the major realization, as Schmitz explains, that “home is not a place but a condition of life.” (p. 295). Rachowski’s new experiences added a new tone to his poetry – and a new subject: a dog. When Rachowski spent the 2012 spring semester as writer-in-residence at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, he also housesat for

a colleague in the German department and took care of her Cavalier Prince Charles spaniel, Miss Suki. Rachowski's experience with Suki led him to share in what has been called in general a mounting "awareness of the intricate and massive interdependence between humans and other animals." (DEKOVEN, 2009, p. 366). As Rachowski does with the real animal in his poetry, Susan McHugh calls on literary criticism to "[take] literary animals seriously." (McHUGH, 2009, p. 491).

Encountering Suki seems to have given Rachowski back his old certainty of knowing what the right place was for him, or, more specifically, what the right conditions of his right life were. While "[i]t is well worth questioning what we humans can ever know about other species" (p. 492), this endeavor leads us to further question ourselves. If we follow Cary Wolfe's reasoning that "'we' are always radically other, already in- or ahuman in our very being" (WOLFE, 2009, p. 571), then we will encounter an animal as a (somewhat strange, perhaps) fellow being, just as Rachowski does when he spends time with Suki.

The poems about Suki are deeply affectionate. They reveal that Rachowski appreciates the dog's innocence and self-possession and that he experiences their connection as based on mutual trust, which was a feeling that was often lacking in the GDR or misplaced as eventual access to the once-secret Stasi files unmasked friends spying on friends, family members on family members. Rachowski's specifically German experience fits the general argument "that many have turned away from our own species in dismay [...] and turned toward other animals as a locus [...] of many of the things, that in our various modes of ethics, we value: purity of affect, unselfish altruism, absence of genocide and infrequency of random, unmotivated violence, and connection to what is for us a source of powerful spiritual experience." (DEKOVEN, 2009, p. 367).

Rachowski's "new start" (SCHMITZ, 2017, p. 296) was quite momentous and productive. So far, Rachowski has published two collections of poetry on Miss Suki; excerpts from both are included in *Die Dinge, die ich vergaß*. The new tone and subject matter do not, however, simply replace, but rather add, to the mature quality and poetic devices of

Rachowski's previous poems. The discussion of the following poem shows that the new gentle and lighter tone is complemented by the political awareness and ironic twists Rachowski has long used as poetic devices.

[MY DOG AND I ARE LISTENING]¹⁴

My dog and I are listening
to songs by Theodorakis

Mein Hund und ich hören
Lieder von Theodorakis

just slightly

ganz leicht

our walk outdoors is delayed

verzögert sich der Gang zur Gasse

since we're watching another film
about Federico Garcia Lorca

den wir schauen noch einen Film
über Federico Garcia Lorca

for all that unlike me
my clever dog doesn't need glasses

zu allem benötigt wie ich
mein kluger Hund keine Brille

my doggie has such long ears
ranks number forty-four

mein Hündchen hat lange Ohren
liegt auf Platz vierundvierzig

on the dog intelligence list
they told me
my place among humans
no one has told
me

der Hunde-Intelligenzliste
sagte man mir
meinen Platz unter den Menschen
benannte mir
keiner

(RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 158-159)

This poem expresses joy of life as it evokes a quiet evening that the speaker and Suki spent together listening to songs and watching a

¹⁴ This translation and all translations of Miss Suki poems in this article are by Louise Stoehr as part of her translation project of Rachowski's 2013 collection, *Miss Suki oder Amerika ist nicht weit*.

film (and, presumably, going for a walk). In these endeavors, the speaker not only accepts Suki as his equal but also ends the poem with a self-deprecating, yet kind, ironic twist about their standing in their respective canine and human IQ rankings. What is playful in the poem is actually borne out in research “that shows many species of animals to have affect and sometimes high intelligence.” (DEKOVEN, 2009, p. 366). What is more, however, are the poem’s almost casual references to who wrote the songs and whom the film is about. Like Rachowski himself, Theodorakis and Lorca were persecuted, Lorca even murdered. An additional irony, of course, is that Theodorakis and Lorca were both victims of fascist regimes.

The political dimension of the Suki poems varies. On the one hand, a poem can be political in very subtle and playful ways, for example, when Suki sniffs out the “truth” in “Truthahn,” the German word for “turkey” in the poem “Thanksgiving.” (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 191). It is surprising to see an English word hidden across the internal word boundaries in the German compound noun, where “Trut-” is etymologically uncertain (perhaps, onomatopoeically reproducing the sounds turkeys make) and “-hahn” is a cognate to English “hen.” In another poem, Suki’s body turns political. The three colors of her fur are to be kept secret “[s]o they never become a flag,” that is, so that her colors can never be misused in the name of any political regime. (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 160). Nevertheless, sometimes politics does intrude more directly and interrupts daily life, for example, when “a large bird” frightens Suki. (p. 169). This poem is written in second-person from the perspective of Suki, and when the speaker says, “You became / very / frightened,” he seems to be also consoling the dog by expressing what she felt when she saw the warplane. Here the speaker practices what the poem “Evening” (p. 182) expresses as a shift in priorities and new moral imperative: “Look after the animals / first.”

The new priority does not neglect “matters of / humanity,” and it may just be a shift in perspective. However, it encapsulates the insight

that Rachowski took away from his experience of caring for Miss Suki. This experience had a major impact on his poetic production because the animal's behavior changed Rachowski's perception of what behavior is also possible for humans, such as trust and fierce loyalty. The latter is the subject of "Legend of Your Origin" (p. 194), in which Rachowski recounts the apocryphal story that Maria Stuart's Cavalier King Charles spaniel "did not let himself / be pulled from her side / before her head fell," and he ends the poem addressing Suki: "I believe / his soul passed down // to you." The encounter with Suki had a profound effect on Utz Rachowski, which he transformed into a new level of poetry.

We argue that poetry has remained a life-saving drug while the encounter with Suki has provided the therapy that was needed in addition to the drug. First of all, Rachowski is fully aware of Suki's role as "therapy dog" as evidenced in the poem "Report / About a Colleague." (p. 243-245). This poem is playful because the "colleague" turns out to be a colleague of Suki, that is, another dog Jette who "works" as a "therapy dog" in a counseling practice in Berlin. At the same time, the poem feels starkly realistic as it not only quotes information from "scientific studies" about, for example, how many political prisoners still suffer from psychological disorders "37 years after / their political imprisonment," for example, "45% of the prison victims / from *psychosomatic / stress disorder* (PTSD) // 43% from relevant anxiety / 40% from depression." But it also reports about the slow process Jette made possible for a man who used to keep hearing "the voice / of his interrogator // that speaks to him / day and night." While it is clear that the poem sympathizes with this man and other political prisoners (which, of course, includes Rachowski himself), the feeling is, as one would expect from a "report," somewhat detached – until the two last lines change the tone of the poem. It closes with the sudden personal insight: "There is something that you, too / must have saved in me" as if the context of general suffering allowed for a fuller understanding of individual suffering.

It is significant that Utz Rachowski is aware of the therapeutic function that Suki has in his life. In “Letter / During the Week,” (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 213) he tells Suki about calling a neurologist on behalf of one of his friends who survived three years of prison. The poem identifies various symptoms of the friend’s “*posttraumatic stress disorder*,” such as the friend’s no longer being able to “ride a bus / use an elevator / walk across a large public space.” This poem, too, ends with a recognition of what Suki accomplished because the poet has suffered from the same or similar symptoms: “all of this, you took // just because you exist / away from me.” It is evident that Rachowski’s encounter with Suki played an important role in his therapeutic process. It is also significant that Suki made it into Rachowski’s poetry. While encounters with animals are multifaceted and cannot be reduced to just one element, this suggests that the encounter with Suki was also a form of therapy. It was lived experience.

At this point, we would like make our use of the “poetry is a drug” metaphor more specific. Lived experience is fleeting, even if it is life-changing. What changed Rachowski’s life was the epiphany that, as we already quoted from Schmitz, “home is not a place but a condition of life.” Poems condense language and experiences. In this sense, Rachowski’s Suki poems are a life-saving drug because they linguistically bring his life-changing experiences to the point and preserve them. Just as we imagine the process of creating a poem to be another epiphanic and cathartic experience, with every reading of these poems, the epiphany and catharsis can be re-experienced. The positive tone of the Suki poems is striking. This tone makes it easier for each of the poems to invite readers to share in each poem’s specific experience; at the same time, the backstory of these poems includes suffering, which is an experience that Rachowski is not only dealing with as a poet but also as a counselor.

CODA: THE POET AS COUNSELOR

Sharing experiences of suffering is difficult. In the daily lives of many people, it is often easier to remain silent. Generations of people

traumatized by war, incarceration, and other extreme events have remained silent about their experiences and not even confided in their friends and family. The experience of suffering divides people into those who went through the same (or similar) suffering and those who did not. “Rachowski’s belief that no one can understand him” (COHEN-PFISTER, 2010, p. 56) is tempered by his remark to his friend Salli Sallmann that they both have in common the secret of knowing what it means to have been in a Stasi prison. (p. 253).

Yet it is not silence that Rachowski valorizes in his poems as the medium through which people can come together in solidarity. He not only writes poems about suffering, especially his prison poems, but he also publishes them. This suggests more than a belief that there may be many readers with similar experiences who are likely to understand. It also suggests that Rachowski is likely to distinguish between being understood and sharing his experiences. Whether readers understand him or not, they need to hear and may benefit from hearing about his experiences in different way. Indeed, he has been looking for a wider audience to share in his experiences. As discussed in this article, he writes even his prison poems in a way that easily includes his readers. Of course, this does not mean that the readers will understand. However, while the first goal may not be complete understanding, these poems help create memory of the atrocities suffered and, thereby, do their part to ensure that these atrocities will not be repeated. Memory has its own politics. (TRODD, 2006, p. xxvi). It helps establish traditions for protest and change. These traditions stand against the traditions of repression, of which Rachowski is well aware. He recognizes the structures of repression in “the return / of the ideology of murderers.” (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 89). In another poem, he sees the need for “Human Rights” (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 89) all over the world when he visits Africa. What is more, he does not simply advocate for human rights; he lives them in person-to-person encounters: “Moi-dictatorship / Honecker-Era // Yes, I’d love to / roll you a cigarette // from my

tobacco / I am not a tourist.” These poems show him connecting with people who have had their own experiences with repressive regimes.

Yet communicating suffering and being understood by people who do not have these experiences presents an even larger challenge. All poets writing about suffering, including Paul Celan with his Holocaust poems, face this difficult task. And Rachowski, despite his doubts about people’s ability to understand him, nevertheless participates in reaching out to readers. After all, literature is a two-way street. In the documentary *Jeder schweigt von etwas anderem* (BAUDER, 2006, 2007), there is a scene when Anne Dewath, Utz Rachowski’s elder daughter, reads a poem by her father that was new at the time and that she had not read before. In the very process of reading, she suddenly realizes that her father is waiting for her to ask him questions about his past. His younger daughter Dagny Dewath had a similar experience. When she was in high school, Dagny wrote a research paper about her father. In the process of researching, she “was able to and had to” ask questions of her father, which changed their relationship: “Since then a real connection with my father has grown.” (DEWATH, 2012, p. 74).

While being understood by other people remains an important goal, it is at least equally important for Utz Rachowski to understand and help other people. Stauffer’s definition of protest literature, which we quoted earlier, includes the transformation of the self. Rachowski has remained true to himself, but he has also become even more of a human rights activist. As a member of the German exile PEN, he writes postcards, as he describes in a poem, to political “prisoners / around the world,” yet he also knows that “the people / of my town [...] will never / know // of the light // that is infinitely / far from them // of a simple / picture postcard // that falls in the crack / of a cell.” (RACHOWSKI, 2018, p. 78-79).

Moreover, Utz Rachowski works to help people who suffered like he did. For about sixteen years, Rachowski, who “is [...] vehement in his criticism of the Federal Republic for failing to address the offenses of the SED state on the basis of morality” (COHEN-PFISTER, 2010, p. 253)

has been working as a counselor for the state of Saxony in an official effort to help the victims of the repressive GDR regime. He began this work several years before he encountered Suki, but we like to imagine that this encounter has added a lightness to the heavy burden of this important work. In his capacity as counselor, he travels on a part-time basis from small town to small town to listen to the people and to give them information for their next steps toward receiving reparations. Ironically, now a man who doubts other people will understand him has taken on the task of understanding the suffering of others. Experiences from counseling have not entered his poetry. In this manner, he is not writing protest literature to call for social change; he is doing more by effectively making his contribution to changing society by changing people's lives, one individual at a time.

In conclusion, Utz Rachowski's poetic career has followed the outward events of his life. Because of five so-called subversive poems, he was sent to prison where he continued writing poems to resist and survive. This is our reason to think that "poetry is a drug" for Rachowski, which is a metaphor that also applies to his subsequent work. After being released from prison, he underwent the surreal experience of exile full of personal uncertainties, which nevertheless found expression in powerful poetry. A major change came about as the result of being responsible for Suki, which effectively provided a form of therapy that, in turn, led to a major new phase in poetic productivity. At this point, we may also be able to answer the question of why Utz Rachowski continues to embrace the drug that is poetry as he holds on to the virtues of "old-fashioned passion, moral seriousness, [and] melancholic humor." It seems obvious that he has never lost his passion for justice. He has been holding on to this passion and to moral seriousness because he sees that they are making a difference in the lives of the people whom he counsels. Finally, like his passion for justice, Rachowski never lost his sense of humor, but it grew more melancholic for a while, that is, until he met a little dog who renewed Rachowski's sense of trust and, as a result, made Rachowski's humor more gentle.

O POETA VICIADO: UTZ RACHOWSKI COMO POETA, PRISIONEIRO POLÍTICO E CONSELHEIRO

RESUMO

Através da análise de alguns dos poemas de Utz Rachowski, este artigo descreve as principais fases de cinco décadas de sua carreira como poeta. Primeiro, analisamos como a força policial da Alemanha, paranoica e repressiva, declarou que cinco dos poemas de Rachowski eram subversivos. Em seguida, analisamos como os poemas de Rachowski sobre a prisão afirmam sua subjetividade contra a objetivização do castigo, no qual o autor usando a metáfora “a poesia é uma droga” ajuda os leitores a entender seus poemas. Mais adiante analisamos como o exílio levou Rachowski a ter uma sensação de perda, já que o mesmo perdeu o direito de ser livre em seu próprio país. E finalmente, discorremos sobre a fase em que Rachowski cuidou de um cachorro em 2012 nos Estados Unidos, o que o ajudou a restaurar sua confiança em relação à sociedade, dando a suas poesias uma nova produtividade e um tom mais suave.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: poesia como droga; estado policial; exílio; literatura sobre prisão; literatura de protesto.

RESUMEN

Analizando algunos poemas escogidos, este artículo rastrea las fases más importantes de la extensa carrera de Utz Rachowski como poeta. En primer lugar, la policía de la Alemania del Este, paranoica y represiva, declaró subversivos cinco poemas de Rachowski. Después, con sus poemas sobre la prisión, Rachowski afirma su subjetividad contra la objetivización del castigo, como su metáfora “la poesía es una droga” nos ayuda a comprender. Más tarde, su exilio le llevó a la experiencia de pérdida del hogar. Finalmente, la fe de Rachowski en la confianza entre individuos se vio reforzada cuando se decidió a responsabilizarse de un perro durante su estancia en Estados Unidos en 2012 y dio a su poesía nueva productividad y un tono más suave.

PALABRAS CLAVE: poesía como droga; estado policial; exilio; literatura en la cárcel; literatura de protest

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