*Chosen task:*

*Please write a short critical statement (1-1,5 pages) in which you take a part in the "Kaputzenjackendebatte" (started with the Andrzej Franaszek's article about young poetry) on classical vs. politically committed verse referring (also) to contemporary poetry in German. Please include Maja Staśko's text in your thinking (it is published in a poetry and criticism anthology of young politically committed verse in Poland).*

I had not come across the “Kapuzenjackendebatte” before I prepared the material for our workshop, and I had a weird experience reading the translated excerpt of Andrzej Franaszek’s text, from not understanding various aspects of it (including the line of argumentation and the metaphor of the *bluza z kapturem*) initially to being really surprised about the fact that a serious critique verbalized and published such a position in a big and left-wing liberal newspaper in 2014 to the insight that there were some aspects of Franaszek’s argumentation that I thought about longer than I wanted to and did not find that easy to completely neglect. On one hand, this might be part of Franaszek’s trick – his argumentation is so vague and general that it isn’t even that easy to dispute it in a conventional way. On the other hand, I gradually came to the impression that however absurd Franaszek’s argumentation appears in the way it is presented, there are various arguments I sort of feel familiar with since I recognize them from debates around contemporary poetry in German that are argued out more or less explicitly in literary magazines, online platforms on poetry critique or even on social media platforms.

So I chose to accomplish the given task by not providing a coherent statement on Franaszek’s text (like Julia Fiedorczuk and Jacek Gutorow did in a way I found quite convincing) but pick certain aspects of it and relate it to debates that I came across especially in the German speaking context. The way I refer to these debates might be a bit speculative – but I feel that this could be a bit symptomatic since not all discussions on contemporary poetry (for instance in Germany) are taking place in a format that is quotable. I want to frame it as a first attempt to understand the whole a bit better from my point of view – though I feel very uninformed about the context in which it took place.

One short note before I start: It might be obvious, but Franaszek’s argumentation works on two levels I find useful to distinguish between: on one hand his claims on what constitutes “good poetry”; on the other hand the way he comes to the conclusion that these “criterions” are not fulfilled in contemporary Polish poetry. His argumentation on the first level is problematic for many reasons, but maybe above all because of its careless concept of the “universal” that (also) without hesitation claims the white male perspective as the one that is universal. His argumentation on the second level can even without knowledge on Polish contemporary poetry be unmasked on a text-immanent level by the fact that he is only referring to two new poetry books (none of them written by a female author) in a way that is, as also Fiedorczuk and Gutorow point out, so uninformed and superficial that it serves to pseudo-support the points he had in mind far more than being a profound analysis of tendencies in the landscape of contemporary Polish poetry.

So after these introductory remarks, here is my selection of aspects from my Franaszek’s argumentation (colored by my rather free interprentation of his text) that I thought about longer than a second, including my ideas and associations with regard to contemporary German poetry.

**Franaszek’s dualism between “linguistic poetry” and “poetry that is chasing for reality”**

The way I read it, the dualism that Franaszek opens up in his text initially is less one between classical vs. politically committed verse but rather between (classical) poetry that he claims to be “chasing for reality” and (contemporary) poetry that he in an extremely generalizing gesture labels as “linguistic poetry”. I have troubles understanding for which reasons Franaszek automatically assumes that the former category is less narcissistic and self-referential than the latter, but I did have a certain glimpse of what Franaszek might mean with the term of (new) “linguistic poetry” (though I doubt that poetry that takes pleasure in playing with the self-referentiality of language is a completely new phenomenon). Of course there is poetry that tries to pay justice to the digitalization of our lives for instance by trying to imitate the way algorithms deal with language or even use language-material generated by algorithms in order to “recycle” it into poetry (as Hannes Bajohr does for instance in his book “Halbzeug”); and some of this approaches might be grounded in the assumptions that, as Maja Staśko claims in her text on *repetitorium*, the equilibrium between signifiers and signified items gets disturbed in the digital room and poetry should pay justice to it by neglecting the signified items. I do think that it is legitimate to discuss this approach in a controversial way; and I am not sure if I completely agree with Staśko’s position that the advancing digitalization is crucial for the understanding of contemporary poetry. It might be an important aspect that different poets pick up in different ways, but neither from the texts for instance of Joanna Mueller and Justyna Bargielska that I read in preparation of this workshop nor from more recent publications in the German-speaking context I get the impression that the predominant attitude of new poetry production is to dissolve from reality and give space only to the self-referentiality of language. On the contrary, I feel that at least in German poetry there is a recent tendency of combining a creative and inventive approach to language with giving space to very personal and intimate experiences, which can for instance be noticed by a frequent use of the personal pronoun “I” in texts or even that a lot of books contain texts where the name of the author is literally written down. Examples for poetry books that I would claim to have this approach are (among many others) *Wer A sagt* by Sandra Burkhardt, *Es könnte auch schön werden* by Martina Hefter and *Gestohlene Luft* by Yevgeniy Breyger.

**The idea of poetry having a cathartic or even “rescuing” potential**

During a workshop of the last edition of the *Akademie für Lyrikkritik*, Hendrik Jackson stated (in a way which was hard to define regarding its level of irony) that he thinks that someone who intensively dealed with the poetry of Oswald Egger could impossibly be a fascist. One of the participants, Irina Bondas, took that as a cause to write a talk that began with the statement “poetry won’t rescue us” (“die Lyrik wird uns nicht retten”). The article was later published on the online portal *54books.de,* also causing partly quite emotional debates on Facebook. I think the question of the political impact of poetry is very complicated and a profound discussion of it demands differentiations on many different levels. But I think Franaszek’s claim that a “classical” poem has the “natural” potential of providing a cathartic experience is misleading in many ways, the fact that what he considers as “universal” refers to a very specific and privileged group being only one of them.

**Discussions on the degree of implicitness or explicitness poetry deals / should deal with its political content and situatedness**

In relation to the question if and to what extend one should ascribe the possibility of a political impact to poetry, I observe that there are a lot of debates on the question on how explicitly poetry should thematise question of (identity) politics and how much space poetry criticism should give to these topics (and also in which way). I think that there a contemporary poets (for instance Max Czollek and Lea Schneider) that consider it as important to be explicitly political in their poetry, whereas others (for instance Sandra Burkhardt, Martina Hefter and Yevgeniy Breyger whom I mentioned above) have a more “subtle” or maybe even “implicit” way of being political, abstracting from a personal experience which of course is shaped by the political circumstances they live and write in. Whereas some writers seem to naturally understand their production of poetry as political work, others complain that they do not feel taken serious with their aesthetic position when critiques of their work talk much longer about their biography and their minority background than they do when they write about works by persons lacking such a background. I find it really interesting to observe such debates and to try to look at them as differentiated as possible. Coming back to Franaszek, there is one thing that stroke me as weird during the process of writing this text – his *bluza z kapturem* paradoxically seems to me rather a gadget that helps disconnecting from reality than facing it – with the hood on, the field of vision is severely restricted. And I think that even if one can have all kinds of expectation in poetry – the restriction of vision is probably should not be among it.