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*POLISH*  
**POETRY**

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**JULIA HARTWIG**

**RYSZARD KRYNICKI**

**EWA LIPSKA**

**PIOTR MATYWIECKI**

**KRYSTYNA  
MIŁOBĘDZKA**

**JAN POLKOWSKI**

**JAROSŁAW MAREK  
RYMKIEWICZ**

**PIOTR SOMMER**

**BOHDAN ZADURA**

**ADAM ZAGAJEWSKI**

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The poems presented in this catalogue were born out of the conviction that words are free, and that poetry is the word used justly...



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## **FOREWORD:**

### ***WORDS USED JUSTLY***

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#### **1.**

The poems presented in this catalogue were born out of the conviction that words are free, and that poetry is the word used justly. The lines of these poems trail into the unknown – they burrow between meanings, dig into the resonant layers of the Polish language and rummage through their dark corners. By the same token, in some mysterious way, they stretch outside of the language’s framework. They teach us about freedom and safeguard it for us. They discover a true reality and thrust it into the spotlight. They break through the silence of the world. They free us from the grip of clichés. They mind the language with tenderness, as one would a sleeping child. They are solicitous and open to what exists beyond the words. They unravel lost threads from the cloth of existence, capturing them in tangible forms, giving the imagination freedom to roam, and then proceed to call a spade a spade, with dazzling certainty.

#### **2.**

If this poetry lives and breathes freedom, if it is the word used justly, then it restores voice, it is a new covenant between word and thing, between the poem and existence. As such, poetry becomes attentive listening – it lends an ear to the world, apprehending its real presence. This is why it forcefully resounds with the elements of life – whether this be the stuff of waking life or of dreams. This is why it so often reflects a material existentiality. This resonance of real experiences correspond to the event of the poem – the movement of speech, its pure shudder. This shudder reveals an intimate idiom, without which we would remain mute. And the words careen through the wilderness – and by thus careening, we learn how to live.

### **3.**

The Polish poetry of the last six decades has been keenly aware of its linguistic nature, and open to the sheer potentiality of linguistic events; it has been the music of the Polish language, but it has also been a form of attentive being-in-the-world – amid people, toward animals and plants, toward existence. This attentiveness is enacted in words and through words. It makes the poem a crack in time – the past appears before us dressed in hallucinations, blackened by events that have yet to come. At the same time, it is the present coming to fruition. This shows its authenticity. Further on are the questions – dramatic ones with no answers. These most fully reflect that real presence that poetry attempts to achieve.

### **4.**

There is a great deal of irony in these poems – matter-of-fact, bitter, inflected with the grotesque. Sometimes, with the dexterity of an illusionist, they shuffle the words and use them to play a game of poetry – they determine the scope of this game and rewrite the rules. Sometimes they play with blocks of meanings, make faces, or banter, jeering at themselves or the reader. More often, however, we find the gravity of words and the meanings sealed within them, the gravity of an ethical intention. You will find no simple answers or facile sentiments, no affectations; but there is delight and joy. There is also a fine sense of true reality in its strangling force, in its naked horror.

## 5.

Time and again, the poems by the Polish poets presented here express the need to find a pure tone for the essential things – to find and extract it from the barren prattle of words running their errands, the tumult of misleading words exuding hollowness. These poems have a humility that shows they know their weaknesses. They have something liturgical about them – they celebrate mystery. And they show an instinct for the truth. Led by this instinct, they come out to meet the things that are compelling and important. They safeguard the scraps abandoned somewhere on the outskirts of the contemporary world. They take responsibility for the world. They recall the depth and gravity of our life. They recall its spiritual dimension. They peek under the surface of the world. They see sharply and clearly. They know how to stare with delight, but they do not shy from staring into the abyss. They do not shut their eyes to the wounds of existence, to the barrenness festering within them, the void that suppurates inside them. They do not retreat before horror and pain, before the touch of evil and darkness. They know misery and tears, but they also preach hope. They can be like a breath of fresh air. Or sometimes, like a blow to the gut. They can be luminous, crystalline, bafflingly simple. They can be murky, dark, and unsettling. They can be delicate and tender. They can touch us to the core. And for this reason, too – in their combination of registers, in the cracks and scars that run through them – they tell us something well worth listening to.

*Paweł Próchniak*

**1.**

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**JULIA HARTWIG**

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Julia Hartwig (1921) writes wise, cautious, and discreet poetry. She is careful and sparing with her words. She hits no dramatic tones. She seeks no shallow effects. She knows literature through and through – she is a splendid translator, a perceptive reader, and a careful commentator. But she does not make literature from literature. Her poetry does not derive strictly from words. She writes poems true to the pulsing of her heart, true to real scenes and images, however fleeting or momentary. She is true to the unknown part of us that flickers and is like a self-fulfilling promise we have forgotten. These twinges of sensitivity are also twinges of the world. They help the things and events of existence. Teaching them to survive. And opening our eyes to what is fading and vanishing. They cull bits of reality from the darkness, providing support. They give us a sense of what is going to happen. They tune the ear to register the “shout of the young, hollering birch trees amid the dark silence of the pines” (“Returning to the Childhood Home”).

Julia Hartwig’s poetry sides with life. It lets us perceive how abundant life is, the strength with which it embraces all that exists. How life sprouts in even the most barren places, in the cracks and the open wounds. This flow of life buoys us, snatches us up and fascinates us. But this is not the extent of the poet’s gaze. Julia Hartwig also looks to the places touched by death – tarred by darkness, smothered in the lichen of destruction, the creeping void. She sees how they are scarred over – shattered, stripped of their existence. How their pulse fades, dies out, comes to a stop. How they are flooded by a wave of another life and the oblivion that follows.

Poetry stands firm against this demise and disappearance. In its mysterious fashion a poem dresses the wounds of life, grows into the grooves notched into life’s substance and reinforces what has no strength to exist on its own, to what cannot simply be, to what has drowned in the gathered waters, tumbled into the abyss of death, succumbed to annihilation, combusted in the wake of destruction. In the dim and dazzling light of poem that which is absent reveals itself to the eyes like a drop of ancient air trapped in amber –

The Latin teacher's voice seemed a bit sharper  
when she addressed them  
(never by the first name).  
Miriam was always perfectly prepared,  
Reginka weaker but correct.  
They kept together  
and together left the classroom before Religion.

The last time we met unexpectedly  
at the end of Lubartowska Street,  
on the border of a freshly created ghetto.  
They stood there timidly as if something shameful  
happened to them.

("Classmates", trans. John and Bogdana Carpenter)

A poem like this is a stone. It is a tombstone. It endures.  
It resists destruction, opposes the ultimate annihilation. A poem  
like this shelters the frailty of existence. And it shelters hope  
- it is a kind of certainty that pure and flourishing existence  
will come back to us -

there will be no cinders or ruins  
everything will be preserved just as it was before the  
[annihilation  
it will be lit up in bloom

("it will be so," trans. Danielle Lehtinen)

This blooming radiance restores innocence, reestablishes  
an unblemished continuity from the first days of creation. It is  
of these the poet says: "it will be so." And she allows us to see  
that they are on their way here, that they are "coming out [...] of  
the past like a girl with oil lamps" ("Returning to the Childhood  
Home"). And thus that pure moment is restored, back when we  
did not know -

what might be  
or [...] what will be forever  
taken away

("it will be so," trans. Danielle Lehtinen)

The poems recall precisely this moment, this flash. And they  
await its return, quiet and calm, like a stone lying in a mountain  
riverbed.

*Paweł Próchniak*

**SELECTED BOOKS:**

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*OBCOWANIE*, WARSZAWA: CZYTELNIK, 1987  
*CZUŁOŚĆ*, KRAKÓW: ZNAK, 1992  
*BEZ POŻEGNANIA*, WARSZAWA: SIC!, 2004  
*TO WRÓCI*, WARSZAWA: SIC!, 2007  
*JASNE NIEJASNE*, KRAKÓW: A5, 2009

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# I WILL PERFORM THIS MIRACLE FOR YOU

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*Dedicated to H.*

They love her so much that they hate the old age growing in her. Tall and handsome they walk by her side and look at her with the eyes of their childhood.

Until now they hear her voice ringing in their ears like an Easter bell swinging in the friendly wind. It always accompanied her quick movements, carrying objects toward her.

So when she trips in the street, they hiss: Grandma, don't pretend!

And when she hunches over, they call: Grandma, straighten up!

Hearing it, a stranger would consider them cruel.

But once more she makes the effort, straightens up, her face flooded by the light of love.

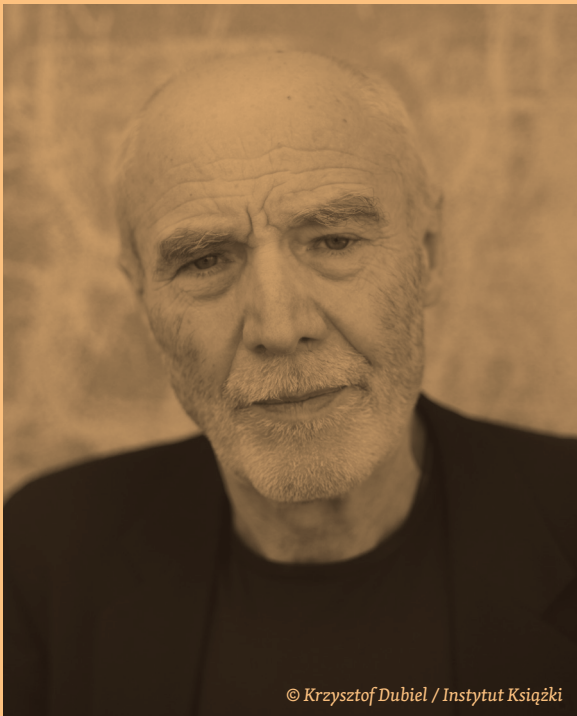
*Translated by John and Bogna Carpenter  
("Zrobię dla was ten cud"  
from *Mówiąc nie tylko do siebie*, 2003)*

2.

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**RYSZARD KRYNICKI**

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Ryszard Krynicki's (1943) poetry happens in a space of questioned and abandoned truths and in a time of discarded and forsaken taboos. And although it was not the poet himself who established these truths and taboos (we might suppose that he is more ready to be their caretaker), in the name of sym-pathy for man (not necessarily for humanity) he shoulders the hardship of being an artist in these unfavorable conditions and hostile circumstances. The sacred submerged in the gutter, dignity stomped in the dust of the street – these are no arguments for forsaking an attentive being-in-the-world. Krynicki feels no contempt for the world, he seeks no easy justifications for turning away from its humiliating convulsions or its idiotic triumphs.

This desire not to let anything come too close makes Krynicki's poems beautiful, simple, and challenging. For although, like few contemporary poets, Krynicki shows a perfect control of his words, a reading of his works is complicated by their metaphysical hermeticism. He generally uses short forms, written in an almost evangelically plain language. And like the stories of the Gospels, they can be interpreted in a great number of ways. Undoubtedly Krynicki's main postulate is the good, or more precisely, the desire to be good; this postulate, however, does not blind him to all the possible complications that arise when it comes to fulfilling this desire.

These few comments primarily pertain to Krynicki's mature work. In the case of the present poet, this means practically his entire oeuvre – except that, for the past ten years, his work has undergone a shift. He is increasingly distilling his poetry. Krynicki began by writing sprawling epics that were ironic, grotesque, and sublime. Over time, he abandoned this for crystalline and gnomic miniatures using the most basic, the loftiest and most simple words. And now the poet has returned to his extravagant epics and his transparent miniatures, trying to cleanse and hew them of their excess of words and false (overhasty?) emotions. Why? Is he aiming to change the past? To perfect his image? I do not believe so. It is more a sign of great humility. A poem, Krynicki seems to say, is (almost) never ready. For a poet must live through time, along with his poem. The days that pass change a person. As such, a person has to give a truer account for one's life – in Krynicki's case, through poetry.

The existential humility, the ethical intent, the metaphysical trembling is reflected in Ryszard Krynicki's poetry with increasing perfection.

Apart from Krynicki's poetry, his publishing and translation work is essential. In 1989 he and his wife, Krystyna Krynicka, founded a5 Publishers, which swiftly became one of Poland's key poetry publishing houses. a5 has released books by Poland's most important poets: Zbigniew Herbert, Wisława Szymborska, Stanisław Barańczak, Adam Zagajewski, Julia Hartwig, and Ewa Lipska. To this day, Krynicki edits a series publishing the most interesting Polish poets. The other side of Krynicki's publishing work involves translation, including Paul Celan, whose work he has been translating into Polish for a quarter century. One of a5's most ambitious publishing projects has been the preparation of the first complete collected edition of Zbigniew Herbert's poetry.

Marcin Baran

**SELECTED BOOKS:**

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*PEŁD POGONI, PEŁD UCIECZKI*, WARSZAWA, POZNAŃ: ZSP, 1968  
*ORGANIZM ZBIOROWY*, KRAKÓW: WL, 1975  
*OCALENIE Z NICOŚCI*, KRAKÓW: ŚWIT, 1983  
*MAGNETYCZNY PUNKT. WYBRANE WIERSZE I PRZEKLADY*,  
WARSZAWA: WYDAWNICTWO CIS, 1996  
*KAMIEŃ, SZRON*, KRAKÓW: WYDAWNICTWO A5, 2005

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# RUE DE POITIERS

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Late afternoon, light snow.  
The Musée d'Orsay's on strike, nearby  
a gray heap lies bundled on the sidewalk's edge:  
a bum curled in a ball (maybe a refugee  
from some country caught In civil war)  
still hunched on the grate, packed in a blanket,  
a has-been sleeping bag, the right to life.  
Westerday his radio was playing.  
Today coins cooling on a paper shape  
constellations, unreal moons and planets.

(November 1995)

*Translated by Clare Cavanagh*  
(“Rue de Poitiers” from *Kamień, szron*, 2005)

3.

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**EWA LIPSKA**

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Ewa Lipska (1945) is one of the most important and one of the most solitary voices in contemporary Polish poetry. From her debut volume, published in 1967 to her latest works, we recognize her inimitable style and find recurring motifs. By the same token, Lipska's poetry is a work in progress. The thematic range of her poetry gradually expands, her way of creating images based on paradox, shattering threadbare collocations, and her use of disarming metaphors allows her to view the world and our relations with our fellow man differently every time, naming our eternal human emotions and anxieties in a revealing way.

Her relationship with language – her mistrust of the abuse she finds in public discourse, combined with a consciousness of its power as a precise tool for analyzing and subverting reality – unites Lipska and other poets of her generation, those of the New Wave (Ryszard Krynicki, Stanisław Barańczak, Adam Zagajewski, Julian Kornhauser). She is also like the New Wave in her rejection of the ideologization of culture and her sensitivity to the language of propaganda, the communist “Newspeak.” Some of her poems of the 1970s have an evident political slant, and the *Przechowalnia ciemności* [Darkness Deposit] collection (1985) appeared in an independent underground publication, as the critiques of the realities of Martial Law, though expressed with Lipska's characteristic sense of distance, did not pass the censorship of the time.

Lipska's work always walked its own, individual path. “Its topics are existential anxieties, nightmares, illnesses, and madness. Its tone is calm, matter-of-fact, sometimes ironic. Her style is marked by precision and strength,” wrote noted critic Jerzy Kwiatkowski after the release of *Drugi zbiór wierszy* [A Second Collection of Poems] (1970). The motif of illness, constant threat, surviving on the verge of life and death, all tied to her personal experience, resonate in Lipska's early poems with particular force. Lipska was and remains a poet of love, though she writes of it discreetly, from a distance, in a way that is utterly bereft of sentimentality.

Over the years, her poetry began to cover wider ground, insightfully diagnosing the contemporary world, the wilderness of mass culture, and the traps of civilization from the perspective of an individual's existential experience. Lipska's eleven

volumes of poetry and poetic prose from the past two decades assemble to form an astonishingly sweeping panorama of the world at the turn of the millennia. At the heart still remains the same distanced, somewhat alienated, slightly ironic, yet sensitive observer. Experiencing a sense of passing and often returning to the past, though with the sensation that it is not a secure shelter, for Arcadia never existed, and it was never innocent.

Critics have often sought a correspondence between Ewa Lipska's poetry and the work of Nobel-Prize winner Wisława Szymborska. A comparison of these two brilliant poetesses of different generations seemed to suggest itself, if only because of the friendship that bound them. As time has passed, however, clear differences began to emerge, despite the unquestionable kinship in their views on the world. In their concision and density of metaphor, Lipska's poems sometimes resemble poetic rebuses, always striking a powerful final chord, creating a private and fascinating microcosm. They are like pictures which allow you to perceive the artist's hand at the very first glance.

*Tomasz Fiałkowski*

**SELECTED BOOKS:**

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*DRUGI ZBIÓR WIERSZY, WARSZAWA: CZYTELNIK, 1970*

*PIĄTY ZBIÓR WIERSZY, WARSZAWA: CZYTELNIK, 1978*

*LUDZIE DLA POCZĄTKUJĄCYCH, POZNAŃ: A5, 1997*

*JA, KRAKÓW: WL, 2003*

*POMARAŃCZA NEWTONA, KRAKÓW: WL, 2007*

*CZYTYNIK LINII PAPILARNYCH, KRAKÓW: WL, 2015*

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# CITIES

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Dear Frau Schubert, there are cities that could testify against us. We kept leaving them suddenly and without explanation. We were pursued on the motorways by traumatised addresses and hotel beds. Do you remember Venice's dilated pupils? Slighted Manhattan? Ambitious Zurich, the kinfolk of Thomas Mann? The cities of our birth resented us but puffed their chests. They knew we'd be back. Like all the children of chastened old age.

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# LABYRINTH

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Dear Frau Schubert, greetings from Labyrinth, an ambiguous resort which leads me astray. I'm searching for the hot springs of our love, the pump room for mineral words, our therapeutic hours together. I find myself lost in twisting memories, crossroads; I fall in a geometry trap. I get entangled in the cables of dates. Now, everything that loved us, dear Frau Schubert, has no way out.

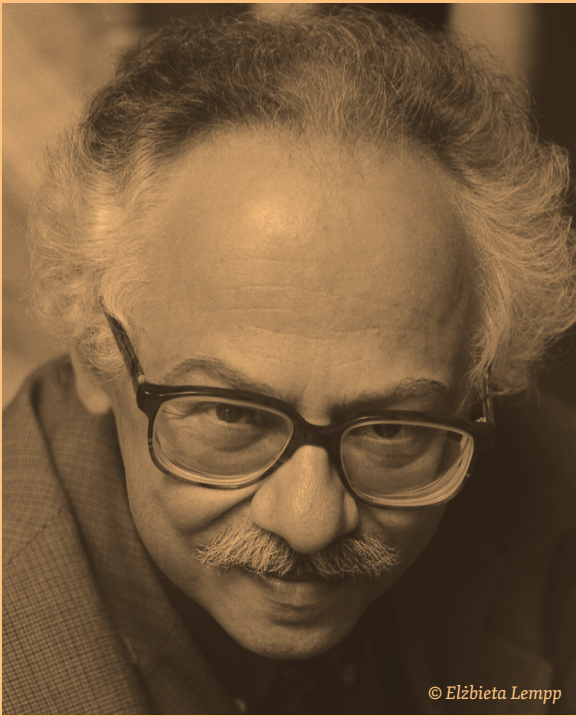
*Translated by Barbara Bogoczek and Tony Howard  
("Miasta" and "Labirynt" from Droga pani Schubert, 2012)*

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**PIOTR MATYWIECKI**

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Piotr Matywiecki's (1943) book of poetry poses for the reader a major interpretive task. The gravity and difficulty of this task involve adopting the author's perspective, and fundamentally pondering the weight of the meanings locked in words. For Matywiecki is among those poets who reject the feeling of security that humor can bring a poem. This is poetry written in all seriousness, not without its moments of pathos, consciously flying in the face of the reigning model of the "poetry game."

In his brief note to *Air and Black* volume, Marian Stala observes: "Piotr Matywiecki's (...) poetry speaks of fundamental experiences. They are fundamental, and therefore concrete, accessible to practically everyone." But they are also: "fundamental (...), leading us toward the questions that philosophy raises." It would seem that the distance between the veristic notation of a real experience and its philosophical grounding is so vast that no poem is able to walk this path without the painful recognition of its own impotence. And it is precisely the "impotence" of speech, its problematic status vis-à-vis experience that is the poet's *clou*. In Matywiecki's "The Adoration," his standpoint as a writer is basically outlined: "I adore the world, for it has no wish to be adored, / and I adore the word "world" for it does not wish to signify. // Thus I can live and speak." In light of this strategy for living and writing, there can be no negotiation between experience and its literary rendering. The dynamic and intellectual power of paradoxes that entangle the subject, trying to define his existential stance through literature drives most of Matywiecki's poetry, framing its semantic mechanics and the nature of its extreme statements. How else to apprehend such a declaration: "I know no languages / or even what speech is / and therefore I translate / everything to myself"? This sort of comment, evoking the figure of the "demiurge poet," attempting to rename the world of chaos, challenges the reader to take part in creating a new structure and hierarchy of meaning. This new structure can only be created at the price of renewed historical and metaphysical reflection. The substance of this reflection in Matywiecki's work is the infamous drama of the annihilation of God and man in the incinerators of Auschwitz. This is not tantamount to claiming that this poetry is wholly immersed in the odium of negative experience, which is always

linguistically camouflaged in Matywiecki's poetry. We ought to read his poems in the wider scope of a tradition that includes such figures as Paul Celan and Emmanuel Lévinas, found in the conclusion of a beautiful piece ("\*\*\* you waited for someone") in the couplet: "don't arrange a meeting / just go ahead and meet." This positive program for a new covenant between people and the world surrounding them marks a great many of the author's poems, and is also found in his essays. We would also do well to perceive Matywiecki's books in the context of his literary oeuvre as a whole, which includes countless pieces on poetry, and monumental biographies of writers the author admires in *Border Stone*. While the poetics of his works remain principally the same, his poetry project tends toward the building of a holistic narrative. Nor is it insignificant that the poem titled "Dream of a Novel" openly states its ambitions. Though Matywiecki tends to be curt in his lines, and his poems seldom spill beyond a single page, we might easily read them as a "tome" written in fragments, laboriously stitched from the notes of this singular and unique existence who cannot state his meanings otherwise than through quick jottings, suppositions, and guesswork.

An uncertainty toward its own judgments is the hallmark of this poetry, offering the reader the hazardous adventure of verifying his convictions about the world. This partly explains the difficulty and the moral challenge in Matywiecki's work. You leave these poems feeling somewhat changed, with a deeper awareness that, as the poet writes, "the inexpressible is in fashion," which then turns the focus onto ourselves and what we might be prone to claim without ado. In this sense, Piotr Matywiecki's poetic oeuvre as a whole lays bare the facile emotions that fill our lives.

Krzysztof Siwczyk

**SELECTED BOOKS:**

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*PLANETNIK I ŚMIERĆ*, WARSZAWA: PIW, 1981  
*ZWYCZAJNA, SYMBOLICZNA, PRAWDZIWA*,  
WARSZAWA: OPEN, 1998  
*TA CHMURA POWRACA*, KRAKÓW: WL, 2005  
*POWIETRZE I CZERŃ*, KRAKÓW: WL, 2009  
*KTÓREJDY NA ZAWSZE*, KRAKÓW: WL, 2015

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# THE WANDERER

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I found myself on the corner of two well-known streets.  
And at that very moment I lost my way.  
The way ahead could not begin here.  
Nor could I find my end here.  
The way to the zenith was up high,  
and below as yet there was no room for me.  
My heart was not at my centre,  
I did not hear the bells of the Church of the Holy Cross.  
The suburbs crisscrossed and at the end thought over  
the places, where I stood crossed by far roads,  
the stain of absent blood flowed out like a plan of the city,  
a curious plan, not drawn in space,  
but in time: from a prehistoric forest to that of asphalt.  
No one saw me and everyone saw  
the onlooker on the corner of two well-known streets..  
A passerby came up to him and enquired:  
'My good fellow, which is the way forever?'  
But he broke into laughter, crossed the road, took a shortcut,  
through the city bricks and concrete,  
purchased one of the latest, all-knowing monitors  
and a child's windmill, so the ages be more comfortable.

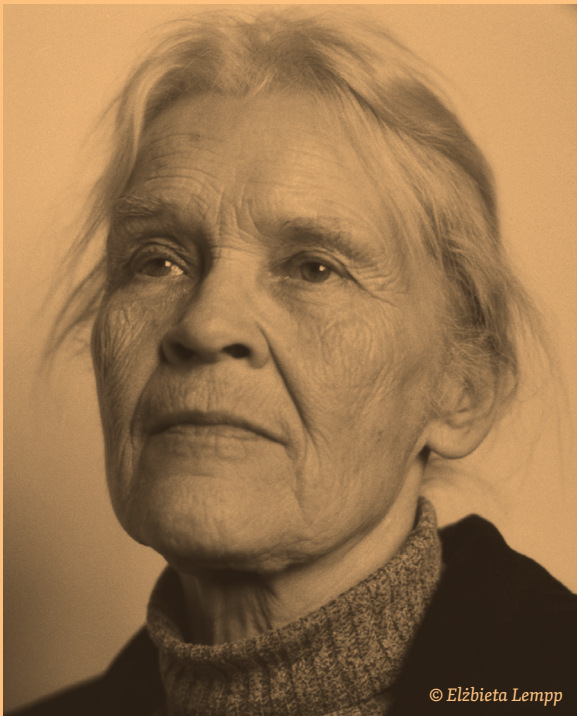
*Translated by Richard Reisner*  
(*"Wędrowiec"* from *Którędy na zawsze*, 2015)

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**KRYSTYNA  
MIŁOBĘDZKA**

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Krystyna Miłobędzka (1932) holds a special place in Polish literature. Miłobędzka's poems – she herself humbly prefers to call them “notes” – are short, remarkably intense works that touch the basic facts of our lives in the world. Their narrator represents the point of view of a mother, a daughter, a woman tangled in life relations, with the surrounding nature, the people closest to her, her own body (“mine suddenly alive all over”). Life and all its manifestations are elemental here – constantly changing and re-imagining themselves into new forms.

In these attempts to express her own life (along with the universal human condition) the most important issue is, of course, finding a way to articulate and register it, one devoid of linguistic clichés and the repetition of things that have been oft-formulated. This is why nearly every one of Miłobędzka's poems is, in a way, a compromise between silence and a falsehood born from trust in imposed linguistic gestures, mummified by widespread use. In trying to speak her truth “for the first time,” unlike anyone before her, she not only struggles against the clichés of our language. Miłobędzka also tries to delve into what came before the word, the sentence, the poem. She tries to grasp what is only intuited and thought. In one poem we read: “The interval from I think to I say. How to dash across this interval? Speak more fluently, dash more dashingly. (I say the loud remains of what I think in silence. I write the remains of the remains).” Another “note,” only a single line, is a poem as an incantation: “finally for once to say something beautiful and without remains.”

This imperative to find words that are fresh and as precise as possible means that Miłobędzka often has an unorthodox approach to how far Polish grammar and syntax can be stretched (this obviously causes certain difficulties in the translation of her work into other languages, which, one might presume, is the chief reason for their unjustified near-absence in the non-Polish-speaking world). Nor is it inconsequential that Miłobędzka is the author of plays for children and a theorist of children's theater – an unbiased, “childlike” approach to words is a fine description of her creative intentions.

Yet we must stress that Miłobędzka's poetry is exceptional for how it has grappled with the fundamental problems of literature

for decades, and yet is in no way “difficult.” On the contrary, it speaks quite directly and appeals to every sensitive reader. The humility and openness of the author also undoubtedly play their part in this, declaring uncertainty and ignorance rather than offering any conclusive answers to the questions she poses. These are questions which are, or become, important for Krystyna Miłobędzka’s readers as well. It is also extraordinary that Miłobędzka, a poet who is intensely private and miles from commenting on current events, also wrote “I Remember,” one of very few artistically outstanding reflections on Martial Law in Poland in the 1980s.

Krystyna Miłobędzka’s poetry combines remarkable concentration and insight; at the same time, there is a simplicity and truthfulness in her expression. Even when the author stubbornly pursues a way to express the inexpressible.

This combination of simplicity and refinement means that Miłobędzka’s notes emanate a special kind of noble pathos found in only the greatest works of art, leaving no reader indifferent.

*Marcin Sendeki*

**SELECTED BOOKS:**

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WYKAZ TREŚCI, WARSZAWA: CZYTELNIK, 1984

PAMIĘTAM (ZAPISY STANU WOJENNEGO),

WROCLAW: WYDAWNICTWO A, 1992

IMIESŁOWY,

WROCLAW: WYDAWNICTWO DOLNOŚLĄSKIE, 2000

PO KRZYKU, WROCLAW: BIURO LITERACKIE, 2004

ZBIERANE, GUBIONE (1960-2010),

WROCLAW: BIURO LITERACKIE, 2010

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# WHAT COMES TO MIND IS MEADOW...

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what comes to mind is meadow the meadow of meadows  
the one for my old age

slowly I'm getting used to the passage of faces

a small grave in the sand a small cross and some flowers  
"I need to see who it is, seagull fish nothing" in a wave it'll  
be gone

sea that much of it as I stand on its shore unattended it spills  
slurs into the grey I don't know

that's the same pink forest carnation "soon none of these  
will be left", my father used to say

a fly walking on my arm

I'm lying it's so flat that apart from a few single words to  
name things beside me nothing happens

a rose - briefly I think of its thorns piercing my hand that's  
my live opening onto the other why only such a short slight  
pain can connect me to anything out there?

I wish what's around me would hurt me but instead it exists  
and exists and waits

is uttering you a big thing? bigger than you bigger than  
everything than smaller?

don't count the world before it is hatched

what a pity these low clouds are so rarely seen

same with my father similar sightings in photographs in  
dreams

sightings hearings touches

*Translated by Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese*  
(*"nasuwa się łąka..."* from *Wykaz treści*, 1984)

6.

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**JAN POLKOWSKI**

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In the 1980's, Jan Polkowski (1953) was the most important poet of the independent underground. He was associated – not without reason – with political opposition literature, in strong, unequivocal, and unfaltering rejection of what he called “inhuman rule,” and “its criminal activities.” By the same token, Polkowski’s poetry was – and continues to be – more than a show of dissent, a battle cry, a gesture of speaking out against the absurdity and barren terror of Socialist Realism. From the late 1970s until 1990, or from his debut in the underground *Zapis* magazine to *Elegies from the Tymowski Mountains*, now published through an official press, Polkowski established a new tone in Polish poetry. A high, pure and compelling tone. He extracted something from that corrupted Polish language that sounded – and still sounds – like a confident chord, like a pure musical phrase that harmonizes the scattered notes and tones of existence into a tight weave, blending words and the imagination, the lofty heights of culture and the prose of life, the tingling of memory and the shudder that runs through the body.

Polkowski’s poetry borrows something from music – it is pure and ethereal. But this same poetry always stays the path of real existence, remaining true to it. It always investigates the mystery of our existence and the existence of the world in manifold ways. And the words always adhere to their proper use. It cocks an ear to our shared past, it is flung into the past, descending into the abyss. And it gives the floor to the past. It allows the poet to speak of what we have lost, what is veiled by death and oblivion. It suggests a new shape for something we have abandoned, though it could have saved us – something vital in us and in the world, which remains orphaned and rots, decaying, which vanishes, consumed by darkness. In other words, Polkowski’s poetry does not shy from what is important and compelling – things for which we have no name, though they are there at arm’s reach. It culls simple and ordinary things from the silence, showing them to be moving and full of significance – like our lives, and ourselves.

Polkowski’s poems – both the old ones and the new, written after nearly two decades of silence – come from a premise that involves stifling desires, forgetting oneself “at least for a twinkling,” in opening oneself to an “anonymous, inexpressible

message.” They embody a state of careful listening, sensitivity, remembering, the incarnation of a lost existence in a word. This poetry strains to hear the silence which holds the dead and forgotten. And from this silence he learns to sing. From the dead he learns fidelity. From the forgotten – silence, in which our destiny is fulfilled. This poetry stares into the chasm of death – it tries to penetrate something that smolders in the breath of the chasm, of non-existence. At the same time, it tries to “come close,” as “close as possible” to “staying” and “traveling” and “resurrection,” yet is “effaced and unacknowledged and scattered and unborn” (*Voices*). The dead live on in this odd and most unsettling manner. So, too, does love exist, keeping them in contact with the living. Unguarded and helpless love – simple, naive, and bold. Sometimes hidden in powerless rage, in stored-up, silent pain, in despair. And thus so very similar to our love. In this kinship is human fate – the fate of the living and the dead. The fate of us all – ever forgotten, disappearing, smothered by the darkness.

I do not know how to capture it exactly. It remains a mystery to me how it happens that the words Jan Polkowski arranged into lines of poetry seem to be words used properly. Perhaps the poem transforms them into a real presence, into true existence? Perhaps they make thoughts remain alive, they keep the imagination from perishing? Perhaps they give access to the tenderness with which poetry cleanses words’ wounds? Perhaps I am repeating the phrases the poet culls from the darkness, letting them inhabit me for a time, hoping that “someday they will again become prayers”? I do not know. So I cock an ear to that pure tone of the Sunday morning – to the “psalm of the chasm.” I do so with the sensation that Polkowski’s poems have the gravity and necessity of words you hear in your dreams, like an intimate rite, a holiday liturgy we attended in childhood and which lingers on inside of us.

*Paweł Próchniak*

**SELECTED BOOKS:**

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*ODDYCHAJ GŁĘBOKO*, KRAKÓW: ABC, 1981

*DRZEWA. WIERSZE 1983-1987*, KRAKÓW: OL, 1987

*ELEGIE Z TYMOWSKICH GÓR I INNE WIERSZE*,

KRAKÓW: ZNAK, 1990

*CANTUS*, KRAKÓW: A5, 2009

*GŁOSY*, SOPOT: BIBLIOTEKA TOPOSU, 2012

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# THOUGH MORTAL, I DESIRED YOU

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O white fish of November (the city is just now falling asleep).  
Ashes of kings, smoke, stone masks of beggars  
and informers (now famished time  
falls asleep).  
Only the wind survives, only the wind's  
trunk with its bark stripped off;  
sing (oh, sing,  
my escape).

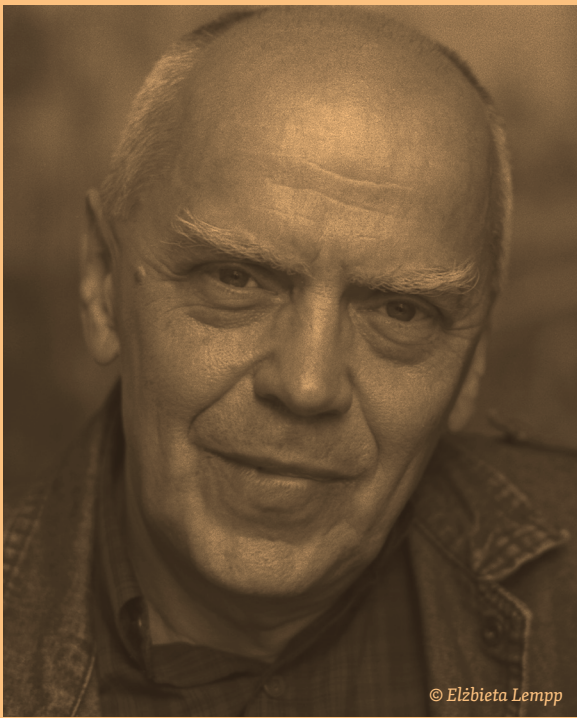
*Translated by Stanisław Barańczak and Claire Cavanagh*  
*("Pragnąłem Cię, chociaż byłem śmiertelny"*  
*from Drzewa, 1987)*



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**JAROSŁAW MAREK  
RYMKIEWICZ**

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Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz (1935) is a living classic, which does not mean he is appreciated by one and all. His works are given awards, but they are also criticized, and even attacked. The literary right-wing praises Rymkiewicz, but does not always approve of the poet's dark metaphysics, which strays far from orthodox Catholicism. The left wing has even more difficulty with Rymkiewicz, seeing him as a dangerous nationalist. This controversy arises from Rymkiewicz's commentaries on Polish politics, his historical essays (such as "A Hanging"), and sometimes his poems as well. Inspired by the funeral of the Polish President, who perished in 2010 in the Smoleńsk catastrophe, the poet wrote the ode "To Jarosław Kaczyński", the head of the conservative Law and Justice Party. In this poem he claimed that Poland had split into two parts, an inferior one that wanted to be "liked by the world," and a better part, "which they haul behind them," and the two could no longer be joined. Rymkiewicz soon thereafter published his *Political Poems* collection, in which he included older works, reminding readers that politics in its broader sense, rooted in the defense of freedom, had been an important subject of his poetry from the outset. This volume contained compelling poems in which he protested against Martial Law in Poland and exposed the cruelties of Soviet totalitarianism.

Yet politics is not at the heart of Rymkiewicz's poetry. It is more of a consequence of a stance the artist took practically when he began writing. In his famed essayistic and poetic manifestos of the 1960s he declared himself a classicist who "records what is remote and recurring," who "reiterates the models of a bygone era," convinced that "the past is the present." A classicist who believes himself to be an heir to an ever-timely European culture, yet is assailed by rising waves of nihilism. Rymkiewicz's poetry, contrary to the spirit of the times, is forged in constant dialogue with the past. It is very deeply rooted in Polish and European culture. It has a kinship with the Baroque and Romanticism, its key points of reference are Calderon, Eliot, Mandelstam, Schubert, and Mozart. Rymkiewicz's poetry is a far cry from the avant-garde cult of the new, progress, and modernity.

The overriding theme of this poetry is, and always has been, death. Rymkiewicz describes the death that is omnipresent in existence. He records the destruction of people, nations,

cultures, and civilizations, but also animals, tress, plants, and even things... He shows death in its corporal, at turns terrifying and grotesque ugliness. He philosophizes on death with a peculiar and very black sense of humor. He is a metaphysical poet, for he is interested in existence and the dark paradoxes of being – its frailty, its sensual, even fairy-tale beauty, which is always tinged or flanked with nothingness. Rymkiewicz's poems often evoke the Nietzschean motif of the Eternal Return, and there are frequent references to Heidegger, Schopenhauer, and the Gnostics as well; Christianity is an important reference point here, as are the Polish messianists. At the same time, this poetry is deeply rooted in the poet's small homeland of Milanówek, where he lives in his family house with its surrounding garden. Comical self-portraits increasingly appear in his works as well.

Rymkiewicz has developed his own poetic idiom. His poems cannot be confused for works by anyone else, if only in terms of their peculiar musicality. The poet is attached to regular poem structures, he likes the form of the couplet, he plays with rhymes, and evokes his beloved composers: Schubert, Schumann, and Mozart. Balladic, even song-like at times, the light, even frivolous melody of Rymkiewicz's poetry strikes an astonishing contrast with the dark stories it tells us.

*Maciej Urbanowski*

**SELECTED BOOKS:**

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ANATOMIA, WARSZAWA: CZYTELNIK, 1970

THEMA REGIUM, WARSZAWA: CZYTELNIK, 1978

ULICA MANDELSZTAMA I INNE WIERSZE Z LAT 1979-1983,  
WARSZAWA: CZYTELNIK, 1983

ZACHÓD SŁOŃCA W MILANÓWKU, WARSZAWA: SIC!, 2002

KONIEC LATA W ZDZICZALYM OGRODZIE,  
WARSZAWA: SIC!, 2015

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# SPINOZA WAS A BEE

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We were not here. Plato was a spider.  
We were not here. Spinoza was a bee.

The bee suffices. It is here and there  
It is a July of clouds, a July of July.

The attribute of sting, the argument of sting.  
So much for the bee: a central buzzing.

Spinoza the philosopher? Just a nightmare of the bee.  
In the dream of the bee. A sovereign being.

A mathematical being. A buzzing cipher.  
An analogy of the bee, the pure act of the bee.

Such is the fate of angels. Spinoza was a bee.  
He was a predicate of the bee, the bee the subject.

There was no predicate. That was the fear of the spider.  
That was the dream of the bee. There was no Spinoza.

So much says Nature. Here the bee suffices.  
It is related to the sun, it is here and there.

This bee is only a cipher. A sovereign being.  
A dream of Spinoza. Contradictory beings, what of them?

*Translated by Czesław Miłosz  
("Spinoza był pszczołą"  
from Człowiek z głową jastrzębia, 1960)*

8.

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**PIOTR SOMMER**

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The protagonist in Piotr Sommer's (1948) poems is fascinated by the world's potentiality ("I wonder how the world / joins tomorrow and the following day"), its virtuality and indecipherability ("If the thing is in something else, / do tell me what it is in"). He poses very straightforward questions, and these suddenly reveal themselves to be philosophical or existential; his poems converse with flair, giving his works a healthy dose of rakishness. Sometimes he speaks directly to the reader. Sometimes he allows himself to ramble or gossip. His language is filled with colloquialisms, family stories, and subjective truths – as if a poem were to finally provide a sincere and exhaustive response to an offhand greeting: "What's new?" For example, in "Morning on Earth" the subject first reports on the weather, then smoothly shifts to the people he encounters that morning: "Here's / The electric company guy I like, / And no sign of the gas guy / I can't stand. / And all of a sudden two Mister M. / One I've fallen for, the other / A bit of a hotshot; / Coming back, both nine years old, / Just passing the jasmine bush, [...] Behind the door / the dog's excited [...]." Sommer's world is made up of parts that illuminate and complement one another, even if for the reader they only signal someone's privacy. Children are forever darting through Sommer's poems, because this is "fatherhood" poetry in the purest sense, and the *condition humaine* of the narrating subject is expressed through a concern for the welfare of others (of the child who cracked his head on the terrace, of children crying at night), and secondly – the linguistic imagination of the poet remains that of a child fascinated by, for example, what lies on the other side of the Miedzeszyński Embankment. The reality beyond the embankment appears to be an entirely different world for Sommer. It is only children that have this view of the world, as well as those poets who, as adults, have not lost the courage to trip over their tongues, to banter, and to use poetry to say just what's "on their minds." It is from these serious, yet entirely chance discoveries that Piotr Sommer's poems emerge, filled with childlike astonishment at the nature of language and the possibilities it creates. "For if a man hears himself / then perhaps he exists, [...] and later, from the voice, / he even recognizes himself," the poet states. The stakes in the world he creates are for a subjective form of speech, profoundly idiomatic,

full of existential details to ground us in the “I” narrating the poem and the “you” to whom the poem speaks. The poet puts special emphasis on the world of the child and the individual; what is relational and interpersonal, but also accidental and impersonal (and thus what goes on between the lines, and what might only be defined as self-reflexive); finally, he also reminds us to notice what is peripheral. His critics call him “a declared provincial” (it is no coincidence that he once signed his poems “P. Odmiejski” [“P. Nonurban”]); in turn, it is said of his poems that they are full of “details of life in Warsaw’s environs” – in Otwock, where Sommer grew up, and Sulejówek, where he lives. Sommer’s idiomatic language can make literally anything a part of the private realm – space, time, people, and events. The poet is interested in details; for life, in his opinion, “is increasingly composed of details.” Sommer has assuredly inherited his faith in the poetic strength of the small, the private, and the concrete from the Anglo-Saxon poetry he translates. The gossip in Polish poetry circles is that “even the way that Sommer orders a cup of coffee is an event of sorts in the Polish language”; this is because the poet is remarkably attuned to the melody of words and sentences. His message is: “Read as though you were to listen, / not to understand.”

*Karolina Felberg-Sendecka*

**SELECTED BOOKS:**

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*PAMIĄTKI PO NAS*, KRAKÓW: WL, 1980

*CZYNNIK LIRYCZNY I INNE WIERSZE (1980-1986)*,

LONDYN: ANEKS, 1988

*PIOSENKA PASTERSKA*,

LEGNICA: CENTRUM SZTUKI - TEATR DRAMATYCZNY, 1999

*DNI I NOCE*, WROCLAW: BIURO LITERACKIE, 2009

*PO CIEMKU TEŻ (WIERSZE Z KSIĄŻEK)*,

POZNAŃ: WBPICAK, 2013

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# ŻEGARY IN AUGUST

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And yet the grapes this year  
have not forgotten, they still remember  
how to be good,  
despite all the days  
marked scrupulously  
in the calendar, and despite  
the very different places, since  
next to the date you could write in a name  
from the calendar of places.

And even now nothing good can be thought  
of someone like you, only the days  
carry on oblivious  
to other days, regardless of  
whatever happened between them—  
long evenings, short nights—  
and what exactly happened, tell me  
if you know, ok?

*Translated by Halina Janod and Christian Hawkey  
("Żegary w sierpniu" from Dni i noce, 2009)*

9.

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**BOHDAN ZADURA**

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Bohdan Zadura (1945) is among the most important Polish poets born after the World War II. In terms of idiom, his poetry evolved in the late 1970s from classicist, strongly rooted in culture and the reality found in books, to “ubiquitous,” fascinated by the world; from a controlled mosaic understood as decorative style to a mishmash of styles and languages; from an apolitical stance to a poetry that can be biting political commentary; from concept to strategy; from program to standpoint.

2018 will mark half a century since the publication of *In a Landscape of Amphorae*, Bohdan Zadura’s debut. We should recall that this 1968 volume was regarded as “the most mature debut of the year.” “What next?” asked the critic at the time. “Could his following works hope to do more than repeat the same range of variants, to dance within these masterfully executed conventions?”

It would appear that Zadura understood quite early that instead of opening up the world, classicism could very well serve to gag him. The problem the critic perceived concerned not only his poetic voice, but – perhaps more imperatively – his take on reality, both as it appeared through the window of the poem and in the language. The answer to “what next?”, i.e. the layering of classical forms, is perceptible as early as in *Small Museums* (1977) and *Disembarking* (1983).

If today we were to ask which of the poets born right after World War II (or shortly before) had the greatest influence on the young poetry scene of the 1990s in Poland, perhaps most critics and commentators would name Bohdan Zadura. Through such volumes as *Silence* (1994), *A July Cough* (2000) and *Avian Influenza* (2002) he became a model for the younger generation, a father, an anti-priest. For all this, he was also a joker, an ironist, a serious clown.

In his later poems, the “ubiquitous” poet became “embroiled in style,” treating the “poem as an event” and “the language of final recourse.” He is an author of books that show that abandoning the high style need not constitute diminishing the quality of the poem, while lowering the tone can also communicate a humility toward the emancipation of languages – private and official, those which are often used for vulgarities on the street, or which the media foists upon us. Zadura “samples reality”:

he watches television, mulls over advertisements, listens to the radio, analyzes spam in his e-mail box and news on the Internet. The poem thus becomes autonomous, it can absorb everything, and in this freedom is its great critical power. This is a poet of paradox (if only in terms of a sensitivity to linguistic inconsistencies), one who understands that from the collision of meanings, from the differentiation of voices, arise poems that can only be themselves – and nothing beyond what they are. Slogans, advertisements, aphorisms, press bulletins, or political statements are often points of departure for his poems. But this is only one side of the literary coin. We must bear in mind that Bohdan Zadura is also a seasoned translator of poetry from many languages, an anthologist, prose writer, and a literary commentator.

Zadura's recent volumes – whether verbose or comparatively short-winded and “gnomic” – are anecdotal, allusive, and have a fine ear for the Polish language. Their main quality is their colloquial, sometimes flowing language, their detail, which can serve as a pretext for a poem, and finally, his personal privacy. There is often a pure impulse to write a text and then, for example, his dreams speak in poetic language, and an epic or a series of hospital poems is a compelling contemplation of sickness or old age as such. This is what happens in his three last books, which I believe to be important – *The Resurrection of a Bird (Poems and Dreams)*, *Dotting the i*, and *Open Now*. But elsewhere as well.

Bohdan Zadura's poems are right. Always. For they exist.

Karol Francuzik

**SELECTED BOOKS:**

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CISZA, POZNAŃ: A5, 1994

POEMATY, LEGNICA: BIURO LITERACKIE, 2001

PTASIA GRYPY, LEGNICA: BIURO LITERACKIE, 2002

WIERSZE WYBRANE, POZNAŃ: WBPICAK, 2011

KROPKA NAD I, WROCLAW: BIURO LITERACKIE, 2014

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# OVEREXPOSED PHOTOGRAPHS

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The sky's depth can only be seen on a plain -  
acquaintances coincidences clouds stars  
plants similar and yet slightly different and birds  
more trusting or maybe only sleepier

If there are aseptic days  
in the sense of spotless and watering the lawn  
you don't frighten off the starlings and at any moment you  
[might  
place a rainbow in the grass

it wouldn't be pointless to ask When  
and how you'll pay for it Or who Since nothing's free  
There must be something to it if moments

mimic eternity A poem is patient  
That's true But not a mule However hard  
you drive it it won't bear everything

*Translated by Piotr Sommer and Michael Kasper  
("Prześwielone zdjęcia" from *Prześwielone zdjęcia*, 1990)*

*10.*

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**ADAM ZAGAJEWSKI**

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Adam Zagajewski (1945) is a poet, essayist, and prose writer, and one of the most famous contemporary Polish writers in the world today. He made his debut in the late 1960s as a founding member of the New Wave poetry movement, standing up against the falsifications of reality and the appropriation of language by communist ideology and propaganda. He joined Julian Kornhauser in writing the flagship book of the New Wave – a volume of sketches titled *Świat nie przedstawiony* [The Unrepresented World] (1974). It contained a critique of literature that avoids contact with reality, does not serve the collective, and overuses allegories. “Speak the truth you serve” reads one line from a poem by Zagajewski that became a slogan for those times.

Like other New Wave poets, particularly Stanisław Barańczak and Ryszard Krynicki, Zagajewski joined the democratic opposition in the 1970s. At the same time, his writing began to depart from the New Wave program. In the *Solidarity, Solitude* volume of sketches (1986) published in Paris, where he went for personal reasons a year after the outbreak of Martial Law, he underwent a major shift of focus. More important than identifying with the collective was the solitary spiritual quest, contemplating the real world and the world of art, which often intersect, and travels, which are stages of indoctrination. Subsequent collections of poems, beginning with *To Go to Lvov*, brought marvelous epiphanies, records of almost mystical experiences resulting from careful and sensitive observation of nature, people, works of architecture, pictures, listening to music, readings by poet friends of different generations, and philosophers.

The title of the above-mentioned volume, taken from one of its poems, introduces another important trope in Zagajewski’s poetry: the lost little homeland. Zagajewski’s family comes from Lvov, a multiethnic city that was an important locus of Polish culture which was incorporated within the borders of the Soviet Union after World War II, and presently belongs to Ukraine. The poet was born in 1945, in Lvov, but a few months later his family moved to Gliwice, in Upper Silesia. Memories of Lvov kept alive in the family home have nothing to do with resentment claims in Zagajewski’s work; rather, they serve to construct the myth of an ideal city, a private Jerusalem, and the poet-exile who is forever on the road.

Zagajewski is a poet of delight, bedazzlement, affirmation and fundamental existential questions. In more recent books, he has also become an author of moving elegies, in which he converses with deceased parents and bids farewell to fading friends. He is a defender of ardor, but also of seriousness, which does not exclude humor, and the high style, which ought not to be confused with pathos; in this respect he resembles Czesław Miłosz, whom he admires and whom he befriended. The American poet C.K. Williams has noted Zagajewski's "astonishing talent for metaphors," while Caribbean Nobel-Prize winner Derek Walcott has praised the "secular holiness" and "purpose of the missal" in his poetry books. They are always more than the sum of their parts; their inner structure, the recurring themes, and the relationships between them are just as crucial. But the universality of Zagajewski's poetry was confirmed during an extreme situation – when *The New Yorker* reprinted his poem "Try to Praise the Mutilated World" after the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The magazine's editors believed that, although the poem was written before the tragedy, it unquestionably hit the mark.

*Tomasz Fiałkowski*

**SELECTED BOOKS:**

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KOMUNIKAT, KRAKÓW: WL, 1972  
JECHAĆ DO LWOWA, LONDYN: ANEKS, 1985  
PLÓTNO, PARYŻ: ZESZYTY LITERACKIE, 1990  
ZIEMIA OGNISTA, POZNAŃ: A5, 1994  
ANTENY, KRAKÓW: A5, 2005  
ASYMETRIA, KRAKÓW: A5, 2014

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# I LOOK AT A PHOTOGRAPH

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I look at a photograph of the city where I was born,  
at its lush gardens and winding streets, at the hills,  
the Catholic roofs, the domes of the Orthodox churches,  
where on Sunday the basses sing so mightily  
that neighboring trees sway as in a hurricane;  
I gaze at the photograph, I can't tear my eyes away,  
and suddenly I imagine that they're all still alive  
as if nothing had happened, they still scurry to lectures,  
wait for trains, take sky-blue trams,  
check calendars with alarm, stand on scales,  
listen to Verdi's arias and their favorite operetta,  
read newspapers that are still white,  
live in haste, in fear, are always late,  
are a bit immortal, but don't know it,  
someone's behind with the rent, someone fears consumption,  
someone can't finish his thesis on Kant,  
doesn't understand what things in themselves are,  
my grandmother still goes to Brzuchowice carrying  
a cake on her outstretched arms and they don't droop,  
in the pharmacy a shy boy requests a cure for shyness,  
a girl examines her small breasts in a mirror,  
my cousin goes to the park straight from his bath  
and doesn't guess that he'll soon catch pneumonia,  
enthusiasm erupts at times, in winter yellow lamps  
create cozy circles, in July flies loudly celebrate  
the summer's great light and hum twilit hymns,  
pogroms occur, uprisings, deportations,  
the cruel Wehrmacht in becoming uniforms,  
the foul NKVD invades, red stars  
promise friendship but signify betrayal,  
but they don't see it, they almost don't see it,  
they have so much to do, they need  
to get coal for winter, to find a good doctor,  
the unanswered letters grow, the brown ink fades,  
a radio plays in the room, their latest buy, but they  
are still worn by ordinary life and death,  
they don't have time, they apologize,  
they write long letters and laconic postcards,  
they're always late, hopelessly late,  
the same as us, exactly like us, like me.

*Translated by Clare Cavanagh*  
(“Patrzę na fotografię” from *Niewidzialna ręka*, 2009)

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We are now **12** years old. We have **2** branches, in Krakow and Warsaw, and **11** editorial boards. Our grants have supported the publication of almost **1,800** translations of Polish literature into **45** languages. We have organized **3** World Congresses of Translators of Polish Literature: the first featured **174** translators from **50** countries, the second had **215** translators from **56** countries, and the third had **237** translators from **47** countries. Our seminars devoted to Polish literature have been attended by **129** foreign publishers. We have organized **5** editions of the Four Seasons of the Book Festival held in Poland **4** times a year. We have published **60** New Books From Poland catalogues in **7** languages, in which we have presented over **760** Polish books. Our website - [bookinstitute.pl](http://bookinstitute.pl) - has almost **200** biographical listings of Polish contemporary writers, **1,227** reviews of Polish books, and many more short publication announcements in **2** language versions. In **2015**, our website was visited by over **300,000** people. We have organized The Year of Czesław Miłosz, Bruno Schulz, and Janusz Korczak, and also three International Miłosz Festivals. The Translators' College we run has hosted **84** scholarship winners from **34** countries. We have granted the Transatlantyk Award **11** times, and the Found in Translation Award **8** times. We currently have **1,412** book clubs under our patronage, which bring together **12,816** readers across Poland. Over the past **9** years they have organized and taken part in more than **7,000** meetings with authors. We also run the Library+ program, which has remodeled or equipped library centers throughout the country. We have re-trained **5,600** librarians. We have developed the MAK+ integrated library system, used by over **1,800** libraries and **220 000** readers. Thanks to the Library+: Library Infrastructures government program, by the end of **2015** we managed to build or modernize **240** public libraries throughout Poland.

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