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**ABOUT POLISH POETRY AFTER 1989  
(DEFICIENCIES AND 'SURPLUSES'):  
AN ESSAY IN LITERARY CRITICISM**

Poetry has nearly always been art. Even when theorists did not necessarily consider it as such, even when—as it may seem from the perspective of today—it was merely telling a story or narrating a theme. Its careful form, normalized in detailed ways, was transparent. The last body of norms of this type were versifying systems which started to crumble at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Decades of blank verse, utterances of Zbigniew Herbert divided into short verses, the loose surprising wispieness of Białoszewski, resulted in a situation in which poetry—in a common assumption, and also in the assumption of some critics and literary scholars—is anything which is written down in almost any way. We look at Miłosz at times distrustfully and precariously; we are trying to cope with the strength of his message, which is the result of very efficient words, which is attuned to these spheres of reality which we understand as existentially, socially prevalent; the spheres which we, so far, could not express. However, equally often we cannot do anything with what Miłosz left us with. We do not know what to do with this knowledge acquired in the area of poetic art, which is the result of the shape of these poems, which correspond with the traditional language of poetry on the map of twentieth century poetry. We glorify the last volumes of Miłosz in a way analogous to glorifying Mickiewicz's lyrical Lausanne poems; poems of a great poet, but what do we want to understand from them and their place in our times. Contemporary assessments of poetry seem to become more and more polarized;

on the one hand we have, for example, an audacious essay of Lidia Burska about city poets,<sup>1</sup> which positively assesses contemporary amorhpism and disintegration (things which are blatantly contrary to the eternal nature of poetry). On the other hand—ideological acceptance by poets of ideas which are social and political, lit by the attitudes of seekers of values, of moral and ideological hard core in the world that is constantly slipping from underneath our feet. The former and the latter—despite polarization—are often connected by a low awareness of the tradition of artistic language which they use, which is the starting point of their defeat.

It seems that in our time an attempt to replicate sentences, formulas and verses is the dominant one: the more the better, as long as they appear to be eloquent and ‘intellectual’. After all, we know that the highest linguistic skill and the highest intelligence do not guarantee good poetry or a successful poem, although each of them is indispensable for brilliant lyrical poetry to exist. This ‘something more’ is quite elusive. The nature of it has been dealt with by the best judges of lyric forms, and this is not the place to deal in detail with theoretical issues.

It happens more and more often, especially in cases of poetic contests and competitions—circumstances in which there is a need to create a hierarchy of poetry or so called poetry—that an external level of discourse is taken into account. Yes, what is taken into account is discourse, while poetry is not a discourse and cannot be one. Discursiveness goes against the nature of poetry (and what matters is not the external, literary shape, but the internal nature of utterances). The more words are connected, sometimes in a masterly fashion, the better the poetry—that is the assessment of jurors. Poetry requires its own space in time; how can we pronounce a winner if we have several dozen or several hundreds of poems to choose from? This is certainly not a good selection procedure for poetry, particularly

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<sup>1</sup> Lidia Burska, *Miasto i poezja*, w: *Co dalej, literaturo? Jak zmienia się współcześnie pojęcie i sytuacja literatury*, ed. by Aliny Brodzkiej-Wald, Hanny Gosk i Andrzeja Wernera, Warszawa 2008.

if we are concerned with authentic poetry which is to survive for a long time.

One of the critics, a member of the jury for the youngest pretenders to become poets, told me lately that these young people keep writing better and better, and that the general level of poetic initiations becomes higher and higher. I have browsed through many such poems; yes, verbal skills are brilliant—and, probably, nothing else.

Rilke, we remember it almost as a truism, wrote in *Malte* that one could write a good poem only after living for many years, and only rarely at the beginning of one's life. It seems that this statement is still true. It corresponds indisputably with the nature of poetry, which is not and which should not be intellectual juggling, nor a fashion show for the most exquisite ways of social or cultural negation; but it also should not be:

'a lyrical notebook', that is telling about emotions (or the world flavoured with emotions [...])<sup>2</sup>

"sumping mush" [...] poetry made of poetry or philosophy which already exist.<sup>3</sup>

Experiment, because such poetry usually becomes a play on words.<sup>4</sup>

Poetry used to mean an ontological possibility of human existence, the fulfilment of which leads to poetic works. If, however, apart from literary works, there exists 'poetry' as something which is equally real, then it may only be a way of existence of an individual man. *Die Poesie ist—die Seinsweise des Daseins*, this is the only correct expression which reveals in the context of poetic works the existence of an author and allows us to understand these works as a result of certain behaviours of this author. In Greek poetry [...] it means a certain behaviour of human beings, 'creation', poetry as *poiesis* is creation in the sense of creating to being what, so far, has not existed

<sup>2</sup> Janusz Połomski, *Poezja a filozofia*, „Twórczość” 1969, no. 9, 70.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

in speech, pronouncing what has not been yet pronounced. This statement may sound like a banal generalization, but its sense is not banal at all; if, while trying to understand it, we would differentiate speech from language and word from terms, as Greeks, following Plato, used to do [...]. In the manner that there exists a classical concept of truth and freedom, there also exists a classical concept of poetry—it has been presented above. We should preserve it. It allows us to *separate poetry from non-poetry, that is from varieties of the literary movement*, and find out what is most specific with the poetry of each authentic poet.<sup>5</sup> (Emphasis – B.K.Ch.)

Various epithets will not help: metaphysical poetry, (non) metaphysical poetry, female or male poetry, religious or non-religious poetry; something is poetry or it is not poetry. Such a maximalist vision of the existence, place and role of poetry enters, of course, into a sphere of problems of the structure of the native language of the one who writes. How should these structures be used? To what extent is it possible, and to what extent is it simple, important, indispensable? It is the language which in the process of its development has already discovered a lot, revealed a lot in its historical existence, but in order to keep on discovering, it must transcend its own tradition. In order to transcend one's tradition one must, first of all, know it, and be able to use it, and using it make 'constructions' of a higher order. Paul Valery once said, somewhat hyperbolically, that each poet must know all rhymes possible in his/her native language. I think that rhymes are not necessarily so important, and the problem is not necessarily as Valery chose to see it; what matters is that any writing person should have something akin to a deep experience of picturesque, associational and metaphorical possibilities which have been performed within a certain language. Then, a poet could use this language appropriately, to move on forward, rather than spin around pretending to be making breakthroughs.

After these introductory statements, which are far from complete, I would like now to discuss *some selected examples*. I will repeat, I am

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 72.

not *interested in the so called 'literary movement'*, that is contests, competitions, prizes, favourites of critics who have lost their tools, numbers of published volumes and conducted meetings with readers, attempts at publicity; *I am interested in poetry.*

I will start with authors whose presence in the unwritten canon I would like to reduce a bit.

Adam Zagajewski, a well-educated poet (well versed in the tradition and culture), who easily maintains an intermediate, somewhat classical level. What is worth mentioning is maybe this classicism, the ease with which Zagajewski enters the level introduced to a certain extent by Miłosz and to a certain extent by other poets of the twentieth century, clearly geared towards tradition. A poet publishing prolifically, multiplying the number of volumes.

I take his latest volume *Asymetria (Asymmetry)*, published in 2014 (publisher: Wydawnictwo a5), and at random open a poem "Noc, Morze" (Night, Sea) (p. 44)

W nocy morze jest ciemne, matowe  
i mówi ochrypłym szeptem  
w ten sposób poznajemy  
jego wstydlivy sekret: ono świeci  
odbitym blaskiem  
W nocy jest biedne tak jak my wszyscy,  
czarne, osieroczone;  
cierpliwie czeka na powrót słońca.<sup>6</sup>

I do not know what in this poem allows us to put it above the level of a secondary school student's exercise. I do not understand what sort of truth has been revealed. Assuming for now, my clumsy perception, let us consider the system of epithets and metaphors in this poem: "dark and opaque sea", "hoarse whisper", "shining with a reflected

<sup>6</sup> "At night the sea is dark, opaque and/speaks with a raspy whisper in such a way/ we learn about its bashful secret it/shines with reflected glare/At night it is poor as we all are/black, orphaned/patiently awaiting the return of the sun."

brightness”, and the surprisingly poor analogy: “[i]n the night it is poor, as we all are,/black, orphaned.”

The way in which individual figures are connected, and the phraseology are particularly unconvincing. It happens in poetry that unruly language and primitive pictures justify something, but I cannot find this justification (immanent and contextual) in this poem.

I open a poem at the end of this volume: “Nasze północne miasta” (“Our Northern Cities”)

Nasze północne miasta drzemią na równinach  
 Ich mury, grube mury, wiedzą o nas wszystko  
 To są więzienia, na ogół dobroduszne  
 Idziemy pod potężnymi stropami  
 Wiatr bełkoce w konarach bezlistnych drzew  
 Nasze domy. Nasze północne miasta,  
 ich ciężkie zegary wiszące na wieżach  
 jak dynie w jesiennych ogrodach  
 Nasze szpitale w ponurych gmachach, nasze sądy,  
 mroczne urzędy pocztowe z czerwonej cegły  
 i strażacy w srebrzystych hełmach  
 Nasze nieme ulice które wciąż czekają  
 Północne miasta są introwertykami  
 Wydają się potężne, niezniszczalne  
 lecz naprawdę są dosyć nieśmiałe  
 Rodzimy się w nich i umieramy  
 Lubimy wypalone krajobrazy południa,  
 ciemnogramatowe morze porysowane  
 białymi wstążkami fal, brązowe skały,  
 tamaryszek i figowiec pachnący słodkimi owocami,  
 ale przykuto nas do północnych miast,  
 i nie możemy ich zdradzić,  
 nie wolno nam porzucić  
 naszych ciemnych miast, ich długiej zimy,  
 brudnej bielizny topniejącego śniegu,  
 wstydu, smutku, zmęczenia

Musimy mówić w ich imieniu,  
musimy czuć, wołać.<sup>7</sup>

This poem does not entrance; it mortifies.

As a commentary one could only repeat earlier remarks (quality of observations and distance towards them, linguistic expressions) concerning the character of Zagajewski's verses.

I could also add, for example, a poem entitled "Nokturn" ("Nocturne") and some other similar cases. In one of the poetic texts (p. 74) I detect a metaphor "Atlantyk wieczności" ("The Atlantic of Eternity). I would not mention Peiper in this context, but I see that the poets of the Skamander group and other 'classicist' poets would be mortified by such inventions. Each fragment of anyone's writing, even if it is not particularly good, reveals the author's horizons, and tells us about the artistic and aesthetic qualities of someone's poetry.

In the volume of Zagajewski's poetry (and in many of his other books) there are some interesting poems, as I have written earlier—on an even level—but they do not open any doors, they do not point to worlds which cannot be sensed. Adam Zagajewski is, at best, an intermediate poet.

And now a totally different case—Marcin Świetlicki.

An intelligent poet, a cocksure poet, treating language condescendingly, of course he has the right to do so, and he often indirectly, naturally justifies and documents this. Consciously and

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<sup>7</sup> "Our northern towns snooze on plains/Their walls, thick walls, know everything about us/These are prisons usually avuncular/We walk under huge ceilings/Wind gibbers in branches of leafless trees./Our homes, our northern towns,/their heavy clocks hang on spires/as pumpkins in autumnal gardens/Our hospitals in gloomy buildings, our courts,/murky post offices made of red brick/and fire fighters in silvery helmets/Our mute streets which wait all the time/Northern towns are introverts/They seem so huge, indestructible/but in reality they are rather shy/We are born in them and die in them/We like sunburnt landscapes of the south/navy blue sea scratched with ribbons of waves/tamarisk and a fig tree smelling of sweet fruit,/but we are chained to northern towns,/and we cannot betray them,/we cannot leave them behind/our dark towns, their long winter,/dirty underclothes of melting snow,/shame, sadness, tiredness/We must speak for them,/we must keep vigil, shout."

very carefully, he has self-created himself as one of the most important figures of contemporary poetry. Literary critics have been quickly outmanoeuvred and accepted the process created by Świetlicki himself.

I take the volume *Czynny do odwołania* (*Open Till Further Notice*) (published by Czarne), the poem “Zabijanie” “Killing” (p. 50). This is also a random choice:

Przyjdiesz i zabijesz.  
Przyjdiesz i zabijesz.

Jeszcze o tym nie wiesz.  
Jeszcze nie rozumiesz.  
Jeszcze stoisz w cieniu.  
Jeszcze stoisz w tłumie,

ale  
przyjdiesz i zabijesz.  
Przyjdiesz i zabijesz.

(co się gnoju patrzysz?  
czegoś nie rozumiesz?  
przyjdiesz i zabijesz,  
tylko tyle umiesz,  
po to tutaj jesteś,  
po to się urodziłeś,  
po to tutaj jesteś,  
żeby mi się przyjrzeć)

Przyjdiesz i zabijesz.  
Bo tyle zrozumiesz,  
co zabijesz.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “You will come and kill./You will come and kill./You don’t know about it yet./You don’t understand it yet./You are still in the shadow yet./You are still in the crowd yet./but/ you will come and kill./You will come and kill../(why are you staring so, you asshole?/You don’t understand something?/You will come and kill that is all you can, you/are here to take a look at me)/You will come and kill./Because you will understand only as much as you will kill.”



Strong expression, and clear, I would say, although there is more to this poem—a moralistic message. The compact, unambiguous formula of the whole poem. But it does not lead me—a reader—far; I stop at the pessimism of observation, once the rules of some reality are revealed.

Or another poem "Zdradzanie" ("Being Unfaithful") (p.51)

Czy nadal mieszkasz, gdzie mieszkałeś?  
Czy nadal robisz tam, gdzie robiłeś?  
– oto pytania, które mi zadają  
najczęściej, gdy rozmowa mrze i  
nie wiadomo już o co pytać.

A tak powinna brzmieć kompletna  
moja odpowiedź: Otóż wszystko  
uległo absolutnej zmianie.  
Ja nadal mieszkam tam, gdzie mieszkałem.  
Ja nadal robię tam, gdzie pracowałem.

Lecz w to nie wierzę.  
Coraz bardziej.<sup>9</sup>

A subtle detection of what Rilke revealed in *Malte*, in a well-known fragment about writing letters. Truth embedded in the elementary experience of time. Again skilful use of the structure of the poem: compact, economical with words. But—again—it does not lead me as far as I would expect (as a reader). I find some very good, maybe brilliant, miniature poems in this volume, for example: "Wracanie" ("Coming Back") (48):

Późno i wszystko po nic. Wszystko po nic, na nic.  
Wrócić, rzucić się, zasnąć. Nie przesadzać, nie śnić.

<sup>9</sup> "Do you still live where you used to?/Do you still work where you used to?/-- these are questions they ask me most often,/when the conversation dies out and there are no more questions to/ ask/And this is how my full answer/should be: so, everything has changed/absolutely./I still live where I used to./I still work where I used to./But I don't believe in it./More and more."

Wracam. Ale nie przyjdę do siebie tak łatwo.  
Jeszcze trochę pochodzę od małpy.<sup>10</sup>

Or poems in the type of “Dnienie” (“Dawning”) (16):

Rozwidniam. Widzę. Jestem  
na dnie. I nie jest ładnie.  
Jawnie i dennie jest mi.  
Dnieje. Widzę dokładniej.  
A nieboskłonem odwrócone dno.<sup>11</sup>

As if Świetlicki was carried away by his power of language and his already careful – in this moment—observation of the internal world. These sharp, well played poems, far from appearances of banality, leave readers with a certain taste of need. If we were to use the axiological criteria of Władysław Stróżewski (the feeling of necessity, absolute affirmation, directing readers beyond texts into a space of higher level<sup>12</sup>), it will turn out that only the first condition has been met. Świetlicki has masterly control over words, practically not a single word in the quoted poem could be replaced by some other word. It seems that in the case of Świetlicki as a poet it was his attitude of contest which was crucial, but rebellion stopped being decisive in arts’ valourization a long time ago, and revisionism is rarely compatible with the nature of poetry. Świetlicki’s writings have evolved in an obvious manner, a ‘fruitful’ concord with readers seems to be getting stronger. However, still, a reader (that is me), while understanding (so it seems) the linguistic nuances and initiations of the lyrical ‘I’ of this poetry, cannot commit a full ‘affirmative act’.

<sup>10</sup> “It is late and all for nothing. All for nothing./To come back, to lie down, to sleep. Not to exaggerate/not to dream./I am coming back. But I will not come back to myself so easily./I will still be coming back from an ape.”

<sup>11</sup> I am dawning. I see. I am at the bottom. And this is not/nice./Clearly and bottomly I feel./It dawns./I see more clearly./And the firmament turned bottom up. (This poem is built about a play on words, mostly ‘rozwidniać’ (to dawn) and ‘dno’ (bottom) and their derivatives—translator’s note)

<sup>12</sup> Władysław Stróżewski, *O pięknie*, in Idem, *Wokół piękna. Szkice z estetyki*, Kraków 2002, 164-169.

cannot see the possibilities of this poetry to lead towards areas "where people have not yet trodden".

I do not see the greatness of poets, confirmed socially by media and 'canons' such as Stanisław Barańczak. (It is awkward to write about it so shortly after his death). Barańczak published eight volumes of poetry after 1989 and, as we know from elsewhere, his merits for Polish culture are very big. As a poet he seemed not to understand; he did not feel the multi layered nature of poetic language; even his translations were much closer to the philological than the artistic approach to translation. When we take into consideration the younger generation, the high position of Wojciech Wencel, so strongly promoted by right wing media, seems to be a mistake. From a very general perspective what is striking is his certain linguistic ineptitude, the surplus of words which are worn out (I have in mind words, not values, which are dear to me), the predilection to repeat the language of the past in a non-refined way, his ways of constructing pictures and associations present in his poems seem to be inadequate. I am writing these words with some regret because someone who undertakes issues so important for society should—I am going to use a lofty phrase here—aim at the truth of the world. S/he must also be responsible for the quality of words and the level of artistic verbalization of problems. The sound of truth depends also—particularly in the ears of those who do not know it—on the manner of articulation. A brilliant positive example here is, of course, Przemysław Dakowicz.

There also exist poets—this is a general statement—boosted by official media and literary periodicals to become leading poets of our times; poets who seduced with their sensitivity and freshness of outlook as well as the quality of artistic expression. And often these skills are to certain extent apparent; they lead to—in the process of an act of perception—solutions which turn out to be a *cul-de-sac*. Those who have managed to go through this line know that there is practically nothing there beyond noble emotions, convictions of freedom, careful representations of everyday experiences through the first reflexes of sensibility. Just emptiness. And we have been reworking emptiness since the times of Beckett and other authors,

who, despite the fact that they were writing about emptiness, knew that it was the feature of the human condition in the twentieth century. This emptiness becomes some of these poets, this emptiness seems to be a positive protagonist of their writing. Most often it is the nihilism in it which I do not accept; pretending to be noble, which, as it happens, turns to cynicism.

Opole is a very important city on the map of Polish contemporary poetry. The most interesting poetic phenomenon there, in my opinion, is Paweł Marcinkiewicz, a poet, a translator and an academic in the English Department of Opole University. He has written just a few volumes, tends to remain in the background, and he does not seem to be interested in having his name boosted in media. He is an authentic poet, important, first class. Since 1989 he has published four volumes *Zawieram z tobą przymierze* (*I Make a Pact with You*) (1993), *Świat dla opornych* (*The World For Dummies*) (1997), *Tivoli* (*Tivoli*) (2000) and *Real* (*Real*) (2004). The nature of his poetry is shaped mostly by personality issues—if we can call it so (besides this is the most important thing in lyrical poetry) and his philological education, linguistic awareness, assimilation of literary traditions (including the Polish one), his translations of poetry, his ability to observe the world very carefully. All these elements have led to very good poetry. I am going to quote some fragments of his poetry here. The first one is mostly situational, not quite typical for Marcinkiewicz:

Przepydam się za nimi przez labirynt  
pólek. Kiedy zatrzymują się przy stoisku  
z pieczywem, ja też  
się zatrzymuję. Ona bierze  
bochenek razowego chleba,  
on dwa rogalce; ja nic nie biorę.  
[...]  
Podsluchuję i przyglądam się  
ich odbiciom w szybie.  
  
A gdybym nagle zgasił światło i  
zapalił horyzont? Gdybym rozpiął

na niebie lunę i wypełnił powietrze  
opętańczym wyciem, pióropuszem dymu?  
Kto kogo by stratował, zrzucił  
ze schodów, zmiażdżył, udusił?  
[...]  
[...] Ile miłości i przyjaźni  
skończyłoby się wyścigiem między półkami  
do drzwi, do parkingu, i dalej, do autostrady?<sup>13</sup>

*Or a fragment from "Pamięci Josifa Brodskiego" ("In Memory of Joseph Brodsky") (from the volume *The World for Dummies*)*

And no one had the idea  
To stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone.  
Pour away the ocean, pack up the moon.  
Dismantle the sun, since they won't be needed any more.<sup>14</sup>

In a different place we have a rerun of Miłosz. Yes, it is a 'rerun', because Marcinkiewicz does not imitate, does not borrow, is not influenced:

This is the end of proud rhythmic speech. This  
entire expedition  
In search of the golden fleece of form will  
soon fit  
On a small chip. Perhaps what will survive  
Is some short entry in a one-volume encyclo-

<sup>13</sup> "Keymart. Apokalipsa" ("Keymart. Apocalypse.") I push after them through the labyrinth of shelves./When they stop at a stand with breadstuff/I stop too./She takes a loaf of/a wholemeal bread, he two croissants; I don't take/anything.//I eavesdrop and watch their reflections in/ the window.//And If I suddenly turned off the light and set fire/to a horizon?/If I hanged an afterglow in the sky/and filled the air with wild howls, a plume of smoke?/Who would trample whom, throw off stairs, smash, smother?/[...]/[...]how much love and friendship/would end in a race amidst shelves/ to the doors, to the parking lot and further, to the highway?

<sup>14</sup> Paweł Marcinkiewicz, *The Day He's Gone: Poems 1990-2013*, translated by Piotr Florczyk, Kindle Edition. (Spuyten Duyvil) Location 2421.

pedia,  
A few pictures, anecdotes, select dates.  
It turned out that our language is like the  
armor of reptiles  
Or the tail of pongid apes.  
It made us the rulers of the visible world,  
And now, useless, it disappears, while we  
return  
To the river of yell, to the magical valley of  
images.  
Be forgiving, word-processors, to the poet,  
For whom words were as necessary as love.<sup>15</sup>

And let us now have a fragment from the poem “Królowo dni”  
 (“To the Queen of Days”) from the volume *Tivoli*:

At the apartment block the janitor  
bangs around, with buckets. Steam rises of her ruddy neck.  
I am the queen of her meagre days,  
Burning out as if stubbed by a night, tart and vain.<sup>16</sup>

And—somewhere else—the view from the window onto a fragment  
of a large estate of tower blocks:

Someone’s life has passed but the view remains—  
It might even offer better vistas.  
Darkness or bloody welts don’t frighten it.  
The concrete scenery suits it better than square glasses.  
As if it was stirred by something other than sight.  
As if the progress of nothingness gave it wings.<sup>17</sup>

We see in these poems how skilfully and subtly, with minimal  
means and with the power of observation, Marcinkiewicz expresses:  
the transience of human existence, the passing of time, premonition

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Location, 2459-2468

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Location, 2521/

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Location 2120.

of eternity (?). Without noise and nervous hitting with overused words, which is often the case with poets described as 'metaphysical' and with the help of other similar lofty labels.

Paweł Marcinkiewicz uses seemingly simple, clear metaphors. He tells about the world with tangible lyrical logic. He often employs an elegiac way of presenting time, which seems to be the best approach in lyrical poetry.<sup>18</sup> When he turns to nostalgia—always strongly detached—it becomes a constructive emotion which reveals something of importance.

Paweł Marcinkiewicz is never banal. His masterly poetic skills prevent it, as well as his linguistic sensitivity, verbally controlled emotions, and ability to construct new combinations of pictures and visions. He can tell stories from his own life which are condensed by his erudition. He enters into ironic and humorous games with himself and his surroundings. In order to do so he employs colloquial language, puns, primitivism. His volumes of poetry have enriched the panorama of Polish poetry after 1989. In fact they have become among the most important volumes in this period.

And, at the end, 'old poets', classics who are no more; pillars of the holistic panorama of Polish poetry over the last twenty five years. The first one is obvious—Miłosz, with his late volumes, starting with *Dalsze okolice (Provinces)* (1991) to *To (It)* and *Wiersze ostatnie (Last Poems)*, still unmatched by other poets, with his precise language full of the noblest beauty, penetrating the deepest holes of the degraded, contemporary mind.

And the second pillar—Rev. Janusz Stanisław Pasierb—almost beyond the current of literary life, treading his own paths, endowed with a crystal clear sense of the observation of the world and introspection, connected with an unusual talent of naming, enormous linguistic culture and an authentic Christian-centric perspective.

In 1989 Pasierb published *Doświadczenie ziemi (Experience of the Earth)*, and later excellent volumes *Ten i tamten brzeg (This and*

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<sup>18</sup> I wrote about this problem in Paweł Marcinkiewicz's poetry in : *Jednak elegia (szkic do problemu)*, in *Z estetyki nieskończoności...*, op. cit., 109-120.

*the Other Shore* (1993), *Puste łąki* (*Empty Meadows*) (1993) and *Butelka lejdejska* (*A Leiden Jar*) (1995). His attitude to his colleagues-priests who wrote poems was warm but critical. (We remember that Pasierb, supporting himself with the judgement of John Paul II, wrote: „Poezja to wielka pani / rzadko bywa na plebanii” “Poetry is a grand dame, she rarely visits parsonages”). He was simply a first class Polish poet, after whom, a long, long distance behind there appeared others (I do not take into consideration here Rev. Twardowski; it seems that there is no need to do so). Pasierb, in a footnote to the title of “Poezja kapłańska” (“Priests’ Poetry”), wrote a telling phrase: „Jest tylko poezja albo jej nie ma”. (roughly meaning—“There is only one poetry”).