

I-J

Irena Żukowska-Rumin
Iwona Stokrocka (Heidelberg, Germany)
Jacek Pelian
Jacek Telus
Jan Lech Kurek
Janusz A. Ihnatowicz
Joanna Janda
Joanna Wójcik (Śnieżko)
Joanna Ros
Juliusz Erazm Bolek

esej:

Zofia Korzenska about Janusz A. Ihnatowicz

Irena Żukowska-Rumin
The Happy Island

This must be an island
in the Archipelago of Happiness
otherwise Sancho Panza
would not have worn down his shoes
would not have let to be beaten with sticks
would not have blindly followed
Don Quixote

there is no such island
this is a private island
out of family tale
and it has to exit somewhere

Irena Żukowska-Rumin
Don Quixote about his squire

I thought
he followed me like my guardian angel
when good was being done
beaten as threshed grain
he prepared potions
and oiled the aching body

but it is I who follows him
through twinkling paths
forked like a serpent's tongue
under vigilant eyes of Europe

**Irena Żukowska-Rumin
Sancho Panza – admiration**

Sancho Panza is basking in the sun
amidst thyme herbs and bearded caterpillars

Look, what a beautiful world – he says
how sweet is the idleness
when the yarrow and cricket season
comes to a standstill over us
and everything is such
as it always has been

Iwona Stokrocka

You flew away

Sometimes wandering along
The streets of memories
Stepping on the no lacing grief
Tore up my conscience

I stumble over a protruding longing
To this day no one has smoothed them

Pull my hands out of pockets
To support myself
Falling down again
In the same places

And slow down a step reaching there
Where someone led me by the hand

I stop for a moment
When the heart rate accelerates emotions
Tapping heels
Trying hasten to you

Even you have failed to
Teach me punctuality

Love comes and goes
When it wants to
Love would look ridiculous
Every now and then glancing at its watch

The more
When you, for it no longer wait

Translated by Bozena Helena Mazur-Nowak

Iwona Stokrocka

A FEW WORDS

I will paint a picture of your
With the colours which not exist
I'll find the colours in a drop of tears
As only needed

With words I will outline your shape
In the dictionary you can't find
Will ask wind - blow from somewhere
and the birds will help it

I create something with emotion forces
You give me all by yourself
But how these forces get from where
Still longing for you my love

Picture is still so colorless
Words empty and I can not hear anything
So as simply as possible
With the void deep in myself, I'll write

Translated by Bozena Helena Mazur-Nowak

Iwona Stokrocka
only silence was

Here no one is in a hurry
Time goes back memories
Like a dream that you're dreaming
Which already become true

Day still comes after night
Sun slides
At the smooth marble
As if trying to wake up
Frozen feelings

At dusk gives way
Heat of aching hearts
Flickering flames of candles

Maintain heat
Spoken words
Melt the icy past
Those, who are late
Words postponed

Do not wake up the sleeping
Are now whispering thoughts
Unfulfilled dreams
Which ran out of time

Here time is not running out
A moment lasts forever
This one ... in the cemetery dreams-diary
Is only silence

Until we can chase time
Do not regret the words

Translated by Bozena Helena Mazur-Nowak

Iza Smolarek

/men/

it's most apparent during intercourse -

equality in triangle's sides relative to the scale of its base is rare
yet without paying attention to mood it's easy to score a bruise
or some

such. In old age I'll likely get used to torpid rituals
breakfasting without another you and film stock like american
cinema

then hurt comes hardest from the poetics of a swelling snap of
kids in a wallet. sweet neurosis

calls me out to the centre of a dance floor. truth coming
only in imaginary tales – holding on to this I shove out of place
to quickly stammer out how it's not really though it seems it is
like a poem authored through semi-stuck eyelids. I bear this well
am pro-family, and so hold firmly – relations with strangers
I have known thus far

are insignificant and usually end in the death or in the serious
illness

of dazed plaintiffs. poor things squared! I shrug my shoulders
and

right then your arms begin to reach me
a little less. and you know how it is all cool and chilled and that
and everything

you'll explain away with the next glass of merlot or vodka
fuelled poetics of the random. nevertheless I stay near to life [do
forgive]

– my words come easier than men

Iza Smolarek

mojra

after all. we recline

dazed against one another and almost dozing
without clothes or shame though covered in popcorn
and early jarmusch
darkness easily absorbed by flesh

and we from the depths of mugs
sift coffee relating to one another
through two shelves of ambitious volumes
silent on the subject while on our lips

dawning

your shadow falls to the floor
chin up I say outside the window
the elder like a hurricane and our future poised
your arms drop

Iza Smolarek

visit

in small town dreams where thought turns into
roads better travelled they knocked on the door
silence climbing off the sofa tiptoeing
nerves growling crouching on the floor

I saw little through retinal pillars
breath quickly covering the blanket
instinct ruffling epidermis against the grain

the moment groaning beneath tears until
it snapped

.

disturbed by the groan they left without hurry
enfolding space with a well aimed '*ahem*'
whether they return and when nothing sane knows

Iza Smolarek

I-laze

in fly-like sticky tango of sweet trickles
I sieve chitinous light through the slits of hundreds of eyes
lightly ever so lightly I am taken by persistent buzzing
'is it only with me after all ah all right I will bring you breakfast'
(not that I would go blindly into the fire, but his
ratio of muscle to hair is quite so so) I think

a moment later push even thought away
cinnamon towers tease the libido fresh cream beating
record breaking IQ I annihilate bi-sex there is none
[our father who art like any other guy and sometimes wear
tight jeans and whose hair is ruffled
rising in the morning from heavenly bedding
and sometimes stand before a mirror tensing buttocks]

'we should order pizza' - I've gone mad - *'darling pass me the phone'*

Iza Smolarek

grey apples

my mother has been dying without conviction
for the past fourteen years me I'm painting my lips
studying the fine wings of my eyebrows
fixing the armchair year after year ever more rocking
the sun reading through silver blinds
franz kafka abandoned on the table

a pale fruit fly
in a coat of grey apple carefully studying the flow
of time and whether from this flow it is possible to salvage
the taste of things obvious tender sticky mark

my mother is dying the same mother who read so much
rymkiewicz eliot brecht
and is now lost in dimitri's eighth quartet flowing
somewhere from the direction of the pear tree and I say
mummy
let death be she since morning has been uneasy

Jacek Pelian
I am just a little prince

I'm just like a little prince
Abandoned by life on the planet Earth.
In my eyes the image of rose
With which I want to live a new one

She is after all the queen of flowers
I am just a little prince
I miss her spikes and flakes
And their magnificent view

Maybe by my loneliness
I long so for for my rose
Or the emptiness of the universe
I just can not stand any more

Although I sigh to her
And to the stars I direct my face
Nothing can replace my rose
She is the only my love

And the grain of my longing
So tiny just microscopic
Is normally just like that
In the cup of it is closed

A dew on the petals purple
Drops to the ground at down
This are just my tears
Of happiness and so the last one

The vastness and greatness of the universe
Master of Providence provides
I am just a little prince
And the rose is only one queen of flowers

Translated by Bozena Helena Mazur-Nowak

Jacek Pelian
Writing poems

Someone sometime about poem ask me.
How it is with writing?
That's why I'll briefly answer on it.
Just straight from run and straight from head.
Poem I write always... when I'm ready for it.

Someone sometime about rhyme ask me.
How to create it?
I answer briefly... up and down.
But always I have someone's well-being on my mind.
Before darling rhyme to the poem I shove.

Someone sometime about poetry ask me.
Why do I made it?
I answer him that... though I don't know if it's rigth or
wrong.
Simply just like we need water and air.
I write poems... from heart to heart.

Translated by Karolina Pelian

Jacek Pelian
Field flowers

Nothing will replace beauty of field flowers.
White daisies and red poppies.
I love these meadows spread with pansies.
Goldened with rye and waving with flax.

Above it magnificent, always setting sun.
It baths in flowers of the fields and green meadows.
Then throws the last light beams,
> On the forest, on lakes and hills.
>
> This all images I carry in heart.
> Because they delight my soul, so I carry for Creator
them.
> In acknowledgements for allowing me see them.
>
> And when time of my earth path will come,
> then my heart will ask about one.
> Let my grave with field flower decorate.

Translated by Karolina Pelian

Jacek Telus
The Sun

If you consider it
Man –
A Sponge

Never mind
There are no chances
Though the Sun always rises

And tempts, tempts
It tempts

Though it doesn't have to
Really
Be careful

Translated by Barbara Voit

Jacek Telus

Rielke

And today I saw the Word -
Anew
A Boat on Enormous Sea of Trinity
Which is an immeasurable infinity
That doesn't end but begins

Well...
I don't know if it's closer
Or further away
Guilt

Translated by Barbara Voit

Jan Lech Kurek
Do not put love away...

Do not put love away for later
Look dreams blossomed of hope
Promising us another day of gold,
Though our temples in autumn are white

Your hands are so very tiny
But you fit in them all fate and life
In them escape is from all the sadness
And secure and hide from the pain.

When you throw on my neck affectionately,
Happiness soul faints amazed
Only then because it knows he's alive
And when proximity pulsing in my temples

Translated by Bozena Helena Mazur-Nowak

Janusz A. Ihnatowicz

A CONFESSION

We who grew up during the war have our
phantoms
our paraphernalia of terror,
small wonder then that our feet
bear us most readily to the cemetery

We who grew up during through the war
remain children for ever
we cross strange courtyards on our little legs,
bearing a hump still as big as a city
fleeing the graves that gave us birth

Translated by Christopher Zakrzewski

Janusz A. Ihnatowicz
A ROMAN TRIPTYCH

1. Dawn at Saint Peter's Square

Day breaks over Saint Peter's
with the clear splendor of a crystal stream
the sun brushes its lips against the papal win-
dow
and like a bird flies blithely out into the world

The apostles gaze blind-eyed into the sky
a cloud of doves, a dove-like cloud fly overhead
silence, silence
a bell tolls, the clatter
of rapid steps on the stones:
a widow bitterly waking the city from its sleep
hurries off to meet the cruel people

Translated by Christopher Zakrzewski

2. Prati at Noon

Aerials and laundry sail over the roof-tops
driven noonward by the sun's breath
languid time hangs among chimney-stacks
from the depths of the courtyard
Beethoven's chords cascade on the keyboard
one more hour drips down in heavy drops
from no place to nowhere
a telephone rings, the piano stops,
piercing the stillness like a fist a canon booms
on Gianicolo, and the bell of Saint Peter's re-
sponds

Translated by Christopher Zakrzewski

3. The Forum Romanum at Night

Shards of greatness threaded on dark streets
sail through the night, beads of extinguished
glory
overhead – a golden moon,
and under the moon
yellow eyes of cats
that have outlasted caesars

Translated by Christopher Zakrzewski

Janusz A. Ihnatowicz

MONUMENTS IN THE JARDIN DE LUXEMBOURG

assembled here are the great of another time
who sailing away from life it seems for a moment
stopped (so a butterfly that in its course
wavered and was fastened on a pin for ever
poised to fly) this everlasting flight of figures
by pedestals pinned to the ground

so death in the stone portrayed
struggles with spring erupting in the buds
and children with their play-boats by the pond
weave that silent struggle into a tapestry of sound
like Rafaelo's tangled battle on a bridge of Rome:
but noise departs at the rattling of the gate
and the monuments remain alone among the trees
surrounded by gilded spears on the guarding fence.

Janusz A. Ihnatowicz

LETTING GO

*To Olga and Edward, in thanks
for a dinner and many conversations*

Do not desire my now my dear
let the ashes dream their dreams
we are too sad now to sail again
on the golden passion of the sea

do not love me now my love
but without tears without regrets
watch my bored shadow sink at last
into the soiled bed of the earth

do not go bury me my life
stay at home listening to the night
hearing the sky fall drop by drop
into the world's weeping eye.

PAROUSIA IN THE SERVANTS QUARTERS

We haunt nowhere: the void under the stairs
where spirits do not depart but tired sink
into the mounds of coke and oven ash
too weak to moan upstairs at night
their chains in corridors to clank

there in that dark and empty place we hand
damp rags, threatening but half expired,
kitchen slaveys of the above kingdom,
neither damned nor redeemed but suspended
between time and parousia, leaves altogether weightless

above we hear noises: the halls of heaven
are collapsing and the dead are rising
there is a lot of walking from this side to that
and then all is quiet, now we must
wait for a bell to call us up to be judged
severely.

A Literary Silhouette of Janusz Artur Ihnatowicz

written by Zofia Korzeńska

Translated by Marek Marciniak .

Fr. Janusz Artur Ihnatowicz, a poet and literary critic, writing in Polish and English, a professor of theological studies in Houston (Texas), the Kościelski Foundation laureate, he was awarded the medal Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Cross by Pope John Paul II.

Priest Janusz Artur Ihnatowicz was born in 1929 in Vilnius, from 1969 he resides in Houston (Texas) after a long emigration and after his philosophical and theological studies in Dublin, Kielce, Ottawa and Rome. He is Professor Emeritus at St Thomas Catholic University. He is also permanently connected with Kielce (Poland), as a priest he was ordained by the Bishop of Kielce and belongs to the Kielce Diocese. Since 1980s, when the Polish borders were opened for him, he has been paying an annual visit for some weeks to his seat in Kielce, being constantly in contract with the professors of the Kielce Theological Seminary.

He engages himself intensely in scientific work, writes theological dissertations, not forgetting his literary activity- though not on a large scale. He started as a poet in 1950 in a foreign press, belonged to „Kontynenty” (Continents), a literary group in London, keeping his stylistic individuality. He has published the following collections of poems:

Pejzaż z postaciami (Landscape with Figures) London 1972, Wiersze wybrane (Selected Poems) (Kraków, Znak 1973), for which he was awarded a prize of the Kościelski Foundation in Geneva,

Displeasure (poems in English), (London 1975), Wiersze wybrane (Selected Poems), (Houston 1990), Niewidomy z Betsaidy (The Blind Man from Beth-Said), (Warsaw 1991), Czas co pochłania (Rzeszów, 2002), Epigramat o nadziei i inne wiersze (1992-2003) (Rzeszów, 2004), Od czasu kto nas wyzwoli? Wiersze 1950-2006 (Toronto, 2007) in which nearly all Part III called : "Doczekiwanie" (Waiting) are new poems. The last collection, presently issued, is Poezje zebrane (Collected Poems)

(Toronto-Rzeszów, 2012) edited and with an introduction by Alicja Jakubowska-Ożóg from the University of Rzeszów. Fr. Ihnatowicz translated also on a large scale from Hebrew, eg „Song of the Songs” and from English he translated high-rank poets such as T.S. Eliot, E. Pound, W. B. Yeats and others.

He was influenced mostly by T.S. Eliot's poetry as well as by Imagism (mainly by E. Pound) to which he has been faithful for a long time. Imagism as a style in poetry originated in England, in North America it was started by E. Pound. Imagism had a great influence on contemporary poetry, its topics, language and the overall structure. It changed the poetry thoroughly and refreshed it. The heritage of Imagism, existing in contemporary poetry and its directions has the following features: picture and metaphor dominating in the structure of a poem, concreteness, clarity and intellectual precision, a poem being liberated from regularities and metric constraints, dominance of free verse. That movement was supported by T. S. Eliot who shared his own ideas in his paper „The Egoist” with the ideas of Imagism, not being a member of any Imagist literary club himself. In Poland we can also see the traces of Imagism. Poets Jozef Czechowicz and Stanisław Piętak were opting for this style and used its artistic achievements. Ihnatowicz's poetry exhibits many features of Imagism.

What are the most important features of Ihnatowicz's writing? Professor Zenon Ożóg states: "in those poems there are dark, catastrophic tones domineering. The main theme focuses at inter-war catastrophic tradition, but the visions of destructions built in the atmosphere of unclear intuitions and fears are *post factum*". Clearly, personal fate of the poet influenced the character of his poetry. Most poems are devoted to solitude. Those pictures of solitude are not only the fate of the priest-poet. The author stressed he did not want to write about himself. He wanted to write about the world and people. We should not regard the solitude of the author literary because the lyric subject of the poetry talking about himself casts the light on the fate of all the poets living abroad, all people emigrants. One should stress that personal details or episodes from poet's life are generalization of human fate. So it is a generalization of the fate of the poet-emigrant, the fate of the poet-priest, in a broader sense - the fate of any human being as everybody has their existential feelings of loneliness, towards existence, towards another man, towards God.

The poet thinks that quite common and very painful social phenomenon is the problem of empty human insides, unproductive thinking, pointless talks, illusions of love, etc. all described by T. S. Eliot's metaphor „The Hollow Men”. Ihnatowicz stresses this especially in his collection „Landscape with Figures”. The last period of activity of the author of „The Epigram of Hope” is great reflexive poetry, mainly eschatological and metaphorical. Most of the poems of this period have a concrete aphoristic form with thoughts expressed being surprisingly witty.

In the last collections – containing much hope, expressing agreement with human fate and cheerfulness – there are melancholic poems expressing sadness as a result of loneliness, for example in the poem „Święta emigranta” (The Emigrant's Feasts) „when I share the wafer from Poland with myself”.

Fr J. A. Ihnatowicz's writing was thoroughly analyzed by Prof. Alicja Jakubowska-Ożóg from the University of Rzeszów in her monography *Poeta i świat. Twórczość literacka ks. Janusza A. Ihnatowicza* (Rzeszów, 2009). See also an essay about the great poetry entitled *Los człowieka w poezji Ks. Janusza Artura Ihnatowicza* included in the book *Godność człowieka*, ed. by A.

Smolińska (Kielce, Busko-Zdrój, 2009)

Translated by Marek Marciniak

Joanna Janda
impression

in an empty frame
of a picture
painstakingly removed
by the long since
experienced
no longer important

in a trail of dust
settled across the years
on gold foil
like sweet cream
before it chills
and forms a skin

in the grey thread
hanging
in the top right corner
of an artist's canvas
conveying what was
at the time
of utmost importance

in an empty frame
an ethereal water colour
of imagination

Translated by Graham Crawford

**Joanna Janda
walk**

I met love today
walking along a path in the park
through the botanical gardens
(the ones in Schönbrunn, you know...)

gingerly
cautiously she walked
swerving round puddles
stones and dust

she tightly held the hand
wound her fingers around
adorned with the rings
of arthritic changes

he (the fiance)
with a blank gaze
gathered from her hair
the importunate wind

I met love today
walking along a path in the park
through the botanical gardens
like an oath -
to the edge of day

Translated by Graham Crawford

Joanna Janda

I was on duty when they brought her

she said

I am as light as mist

my feet don't touch the ground

I am borne into the distance on wings

steering my kite with kisses

then they came

there were two of them

they lifted her easily expertly

placed her on a soft white cloud

attached the azure sky

to the intravenous milky way drip

and she slipped away bright and beautiful

today

on sands soaked in tears

there are no footprints

the wheelchair tracks

lead nowhere

Translated by Graham Crawford

Joanna Kurowska

The End of the World

Everyone hid in concrete.
Busy with final errands,
some remained out in the streets.
They could see the sky above.

The sun, too close to the moon,
burst suddenly. We saw through
the concrete's dirty windows,
it was dark and cold outside.

Dense fog came. "If I must die,
I want to go out and see
how the world ends," said the child
in an old woman's body.

The air was too pure to breathe
at first. She lay on the ground,
expecting death. The high sky,
the color of mud, bubbled.
Drops were falling like stars;
then burst into a vapor
Huge flowers formed in the air,
intensely green and solid.

A wall of fantastic shapes
unrolled. Her death behind her,
she only feared the woman
with a child, once seen on a train.

The child called "Let's go and pick
dandelions!" The woman snarled,
"Sit down!" Their train keeps rolling
through a world that never ends.

Poem appeared in *Off The Coast* and *Levure littéraire*.

**Joanna Kurowska
God – An Apology**

when I speak
you understand the language
of my language
even the language
of its body

when I don't pray
you hear my silence

when you are not
you are

and when you are
it isn't you

when I ask you
about that Darfur woman
her belly slit by the soldiers
her fetus thrown to the dogs, alive

you say
I am that woman

Poem published in *Vineyards*; the Polish version published
in *Pisarze.pl*.

Joanna Kurowska

depletion

after all the aurum
became extracted
from the dirt and
made into bullion,
the earth lost its
golden vein that
flowed like music
through its flesh

now there are just
empty corridors. we
can study them,
layer by layer;
each of the same
density — naught;
each of the same hue
— a pure black

Poem published in *The Green Door*.

Joanna Kurowska

The Bishop's Suit

a business street in the suburbs,
like any other – save
the sunlight's golden spell

the aura is middle-class;
pedestrians walk, sated,
mindful of each dollar spent

folds of patterns and colors
in the display window
of the local Vogue

amidst dresses and trousers,
quite out-of-the-blue,
a bishop's suit

hangs dolefully incomplete
—a skin missing a body
with its sins, its prayers

beneath the notch
for the saintly neck
a black cross glitters

I peek inside the store – but,
no nuns here, bent
over an embroidery

no angels fixing the rip
between heaven and earth,
with a golden stitch

just two underpaid seamstresses
arranging mother-of-pearl buttons
upon a piece of silk

Poem appeared in *Solo Novo*; the Polish version appeared
in *Fraza* (Rzeszów).

Joanna Kurowska

Nothing

I am thankful for nothing.
I can carry it in my purse,
in a suitcase, a cart
or in my backpack.

sometimes it envelops me,
drags after me like a shadow
or rests on my head
like a vessel for water.

In full humility
I tremble in its presence,
and consider all the things
I can fill it with.

I can saturate it with love
for all humanity,
that is stronger than the love
for my irksome neighbor.

I can turn my nothing
into heaven or hell
governed by a triune god
angry, loving, and just.

I can fill it with dreams
about a crystal palace,
on the walls of which I hang
endless collectibles.

I can fill my emptiness
with strong convictions,
thoroughly differentiating
between myself and Others.

I can fill it with questions
about planets and stars
I can stuff it with answers
about the meaning of life.

Poem appeared in *International Poetry Review*; Polish translation published in *Fraza* (Rzeszów).

Joanna Roś

Taken back after stricke
quiet woman's inside
holy land

enter it barefoot
but do not take of your armor

We create free relationships
that give birth to symbols metaphores
comparisions

to touch one another quickly
just like pencil touches paper

Joanna Wójcik (Śnieżko)
(Warszawa, Poland)

A Tree and Me

I want to be
a tree
with roots reaching the heart of the ground
branches striving for blue skies
caressed by wind
stroked by warmth of rays of sun
with birds' nests in them

I do not want to be a whim of an aura
I would rather remain human
'cause when something is bothering me
and hurting
I can escape
into the land of dreams and imagination
covering my eyes with my hands
I can laugh and cry
I can walk
all over the world
and a tree

is not to be transplanted

Translated by Dorota Zegarowska

Joanna Wójcik (Śnieżko)
(Warszawa, Poland)

PONDERING (Zamyśliłam się)

PONDERING.....

Pondering

The condition of infallible thoughts

I am surrounded by void

is this dreaming in the daylight

pieces of puzzle made of bones

do not fold fit in

and yet I know

I hear and I feel

but what for

the wind is flapping with emotions

laughing

it knows what to do

a picture of an empty space is inside me

with so many faces calling me by my name

their hands reaching to me

to take me to the bubbling bottom

of man's loneliness

nothing will bring me back from pondering

here I am standing at the crossroads

where God once showed me my way

I returned and I cannot walk any further

Translated by Dorota Zegarowska

**Joanna Wójcik (Śnieżko)
(Warszawa, Poland)**

By The Roads (Alejami)

By the roads where the last leafs
tremble like astray souls
in the fog that covers
everything like a curtain
that should be an answer
to my questions
about eternity
where life begins
and body dies
Lord, what is left
of my dreams
only a trunk of a tree
ripped of its bark
all whims of an aura
and yet
I am calling You
throughout the grey of the day
You alone
know my heart and my thoughts
You outline my life
not by breath of loosing
not by words

Translated by Dorota Zegarowska

Joanna Wójcik (Śnieżko)
(Warszawa, Poland)

Love (Miłość)

you will ask
if I know
what it is about
is it a passion
with closed eyes
a bit of romance with raspberry juice
bathed in a ray of sun
in a drop of amber
is it a hum or waves and twinkling sparks
this shine that warms up a cold heart
and a breeze
cooling my face
love
how can one understand
comprehend
and taste it
when a man is building a wall around him
running away and searching a protection
in order not to follow it
and yet
keeps calling it
by its name

Translated by Dorota Zegarowska

John Guzowski's writing has appeared in Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac*, *The Ontario Review*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Modern Fiction Studies* and other journals both here and abroad. Czeslaw Milosz wrote that Guzowski's first book of poems *Jezyk Mulow/Language of Mules* "astonished" him and that he had "an enormous ability for grasping reality." Guzowski's poems about his parents' experiences in Nazi concentration camps appear in his book *Lightning and Ashes*. He blogs about them and their experiences at <http://lightning-and-ashes.blogspot.com/>

John Guzowski

My People

My people were all Polish people,
the ones who survived to look
in my eyes and touch my fingers
and those who didn't, dying instead

of fever, hunger, or even a bullet
in the face, dying maybe thinking
of how their deaths were balanced
by my birth or one of the other

stories the poor tell themselves
to give themselves the strength
to crawl out of their own graves.

Not all of them had this strength
but enough did, so that I'm here
and you're here reading this poem
about them. What kept them going?

Maybe something in the souls
of people who start with nothing
and end with nothing, and in between
live from one handful of nothing
to the next handful of nothing.

They keep going--through the terror
in the snow and the misery
in the rain--till some guy pierces
their stomachs with a bayonet

or some sickness grips them, and still
they keep going, even when there
aren't any rungs on the ladder
even when there aren't any ladders.

A B R A C A D A B R A
A B R A C A D A B R
A B R A C A D A B
A B R A C A D A
A B R A C A D
A B R A C A
A B R A C
A B R A
A B R
A B
A

**Juliusz Erazm Bolek
DEVIL**

have you ever felt the devil
like a storm wave
swim right to the threshold
as you and a girl make love
and with the voice of a choked stream
demand help
perhaps to cut
your dream life short
when tulips flower
so very sad
bereft of time
that he might share
something heroic
at the games others invent
in stories of unfinished fights
and fictional as many things
possessing eyes
lighting fires
hands that can shake the world
and thoughts to wring out
violence from every man
but worst
to feel the devil as you stroll
with promenaders
amongst fresh fruit stalls
still sitting
strangely quiet
without even a
bottle of beer
just sitting
watching you
and waiting

Translated by Anita and Andrew Fincham

**Juliusz Erazm Bolek
NEONS**

neons
slowly light up
on your face
red face
blue face
red face
blue eyes
red mouth

neons
blink to me
in your eyes
blue eyes
green eyes
blue eyes
green eyes
red eyes

neons
pulsating in my head
nervously run
on white spirals
on grey spirals
on white spirals
on grey spirals
on red spirals

neons
neons
which nobody ever
switches off
which always break
red neons
green neons
blue neons
grey neons
white neons
and only then
it gets light

Translated by Anita and Andrew Fincham

Juliusz Erazm Bolek
GOLD VEIN

gold vein of the city
lights at evening
rips from night's skin
blinds, engrosses

All see, desire
the gold vein
none can buy it
or even touch
you never know
where its light leads
even the cat can't know
who walks the roofs

grains of gold sand
run down the streets
rushing to steal the new born day
and when the sun's eye lifts its lid
the gold vein disappears
none know this magic
none saw the witch

Translated by Anita and Andrew Fincham

Juliusz Erazm Bolek
THE OLD HOUSE

it worries you
this old house
for years destined
to be demolished
you dip
into its memories
its whispers
and heavy breath
if you could but
make love
to this house
those like it
might never
be born
it worries you
the old house
in a district
destined to be forgotten
you won't manage the weight of the rubble
and you will not
come round

Translated by Anita and Andrew Fincham

Juliusz Erazm Bolek
SQUARING THE CIRCLE

a square
is perfect equality
of a four-sided world

a triangle
is a poor square

a circle
is a perfect square

a sphere
is absolute

but only
squaring the circle
is invincible

Translated by Anita and Andrew Fincham