

UNIVERSITY OF RZESZOW  
PHILOLOGICAL FACULTY  
INSTITUTE OF POLISH PHILOLOGY

The Summary of doctoral thesis  
**The poetic work of Adrian Waclaw Brzózka**  
Agnieszka Motyka, M. A.

Supervisor: dr. hab. prof. UR Zenon Ożóg  
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## **The introduction**

Religious lyric, created by the clergy, has a centuries-old tradition in Polish culture. The relations between the poetry and the priesthood, not once resulted in outstanding works, but above all, allowed to find the answers to existential questions, bothering people regardless of the times in which they lived. Especially in the last decades of the twentieth century we have seen an unusual intensity of the subsequent editions of volumes of poems belonging to the so-called priestly poetry. Similarly important topic of Polish literature of the twentieth century is nostalgia for the past, for the past times of peaceful coexistence between Poles and Ukrainians in the Eastern Borderlands. These two issues, namely the religious issue and the one of the borderland, are of interest to the writer Adrian Waław Brzóka and they were discussed in the dissertation *The poetic work of Adrian Waław Brzóka*. The work includes a theological interpretation of the poet's poems regarded by the author as the poetry of the clergy, and it also aims at describing the characteristic themes of the lyrical motives related to his fascination of Volyn.

## **The status of the research and justification of the choice of the theme**

The choice of works by Brzóka is justified for - so far - no scientific elaboration of his rich, ten-volume poetry, has been created. His poems have been subjected to a deeper interpretation only by the author of this dissertation. In the articles: *The Bachelard's inside and outside in the poems of Adrian Waław Brzóka: "Pójdź za mną" ("Follow me") and "Jeszcze czas" ("It is Still the Time")* (2010); *Idiosyncratic Aspect of the Motif Passing Away in selected poems of Jan Twardowski and Adrian W. Brzóka in the Context of European Middle Ages and Romanticism Tradition* (2011); *The role of angels in the work of Adrian Waław Brzóka* (2013); *The Volyn mark in the poetry of Adrian Waław Brzóka* (2011) important topics for the poet's work have been outlined. Many of them are then developed in this work.

## **The aim and exemplification material**

The aim of the dissertation is to describe the most important themes characteristic of Brzóka's poetry, so the dissertation *The poetic work by Adrian Waław Brzóka* being the first monography of the literary achievements of the poet, focuses on two main themes of his works: the sanctum and the sacrum in relation to various manifestations of human existence and on the issues of the border, the so-called Eastern Borderlands, with particular emphasis on the image of Volyn. The volumes of the poetry by Adrian Waław Brzóka starting from the

one issued in 1995 *Ciche wyznania* ( Silent confessions) by successive volumes: from the year of 1997: *Milczące cienie* (Silent shadows) and *Ziarno gorczycy* (Mustard seed) , as well as the ones from the year of 1999: *Czekając na dotyk anioła* (Waiting for the touch of an angel) and *Powiedział kochaj jesienne liście* ( He told to love the autumn leaves) and *Uchylam nieba okiennicę* ( I open the shutters of heaven) from the year of 2003, *Zawieszeni w czasie* (Suspended in time) from the year of 2005, *Sny utraconej ziemi* (Dreams of the lost ground) from the year of 2007, *Spowiedź ciszy* ( The Confession of silence) from the year of 2009 – and the last book *Łabędzie nad rozlewiskiem* ( The Swans at the backwater) from the year of 2013, have all become the exemplification materials. The dissertation is a general look at selected issues raised by Brzózka in his poems.

### **The research methods and techniques of interpretation**

The most important motives of the poet's work has been described using a variety of research methods, because this justifies a dissertation topic which is the first monograph on the work by Brzózka. It is a topic which has become the primary criterion for selecting poems to discuss in this dissertation, therefore the opinions of Elżbieta Sarnowska-Temeriusz, Stanisław Uliasz, and Janusz Sławiński have been presented, justifying the ambiguity of the term. The findings of Uliasz stating that what determines the highlight of a topic is the criterion of repeatability have been established as binding, hence the most recurrent topics in the poetry by Brzózka have been discussed. The poems of the author of *Spowiedź ciszy* (*The Confession of silence*) have primarily undergone a theological interpretation. In the studies the assumptions of Jerzy Szymik perceiving fiction as specific loci theologici were used, hence the question of poetic theology present in this dissertation was brought. When interpreting the poems by Brzózka the Scripture was primarily used as the inspired source and other uninspired sources, together with the symbols of faith, the liturgy (including liturgical texts), a sense of faith, and the teaching: of the Vatican Councils, the Pope, the Church Fathers, the sacred art, the teaching of the theologians, philosophy, literature, and the faith and experience of the individuals. Equally significant are also the distinctions concerning the sacrum and the sanctum made, inter alia, by Stefan Sawicki, Maria Jasińska-Wojtkowska or Zofia Zarębianka and the styles of interpretation highlighted by Wojciech Gutowski in his book *Wśród szyfrów transcendencji* (*Among the ciphers of transcendence* ). In addition, it has been assumed that the fiction is the kerygma, which means that the work of the poet is based on the Word of God and is a kind of proclamation of the Good News. The detailed look at " the problem of the inside and the outside" present in Brzózka's poetry was examined with the help of the phenomenological approach by Gaston Bachelard. On the other hand, the problem of sin - closely linked to the issue of evil, has been considered by the reference to the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur, who was engaged in explaining the symbols helpful in understanding what the evil is , indicating the four myths dealing with the mystery of the evil: the drama of creation, "tragic" vision of the existence, "adamicki myth", "the myth of the exiled soul." Considering the way in which Brzózka presents the problems of the borderland, the author of this work states that you cannot discuss his poems without resorting to genetic methods, which take into account a variety of contexts that influence the shape of

his poems. The author relies in this respect on the research of Bolesław Hadaczek, who lists a variety of conditions affecting the shape of the borderland poems. These are the psychological, political, historical and biographical reasons. The poet also undoubtedly uses some borderland myths, which have been classified by Eugeniusz Czaplewicz.

### **The composition of the work**

The dissertation consists of an introduction, five chapters with subsections, and the ending.

## **I**

The first chapter entitled The Introduction to the subject matter has been divided into four subsections. At the beginning, due to the fact that - so far - no biographic elaboration about Adrian Waław Brzóka has been created, and the information concerning the poet was limited to short notes included in the volumes of his poems, a brief biography of the poet has been presented. It was pointed out that Waław Brzóka after a bereavement in his childhood by his father, and because of the different life perturbations he completed his education graduating from a vocational school in the profession of a furniture-building carpenter. After leaving school he found his vocation for the religious life and at the age of twenty-three he entered the Order of the Friars Minor in Krakow, and two years later made his first profession and took the name of Adrian. Alike St. Francis he had never wanted to be a priest, and his biggest dream was to go to foreign missions. His leave and a five-year long stay at the missionary facility in Volyn (1993 to 1998), not only caused him constant fascination of Ukraine, but also resulted in a poetic debut, because in May 1994, his first poem *Przeszłość* (The Past) was published in the "Dziennik Kijowski", a supplement to the newspaper "The Holos of Ukraine". During the stay on a mission the young poet published three volumes of his poems. After returning to Poland, Brzóka's life was determined for years by the two poles of religious vocation and writing poems since a poetic way of the author of *Spowiedź ciszy* (*The Confession of silence*) is a collection of experiences from which he created his poetry. Another important issue introducing the theme of the dissertation is to present the state of research on the work of Brzóka. The opinions about the poems by Adrian Waław Brzóka, which can serve as a research foreground in defining judgements about this poetry - besides the author's articles - are usually included in the introductions or afterword to his subsequent volumes of poems. They were written by, among others: Krzysztof Kołtun, Emanuel Krawczyk, Witold Kowalow, Henryk Radej, Ernest Bryll, Leon Knabit and others. Short reviews, evaluative for this work, also appear in the press, for example in the *Dziennik Wschodni*, "Gazeta Lwowska", "Dziennik Kijowski", "Franciszkańskie Źródło", "Wołanie z Wołynia", "Niedziela" and others. One can also encounter the reprints of the introductions or afterword from individual books.

The first chapter also presents an overview of the methodology used in the dissertation for describing the achievements of the poetic work by Brzóka. Moreover, the

subjects including the scope of the work specified in the concept of the research have also been described here as in the subsection entitled *Poezja kapłańska czy poezja osób duchownych* (The Poetry of priests or the poetry of clergy), referring to the flagship publications: *Słowa na pustyni* (Words in the desert), *Antologia współczesnej poezji kapłańskiej* ( The Anthology of contemporary priestly poetry), *Brewiarz i lutnia* (The Breviary and the lute), *Antologia poezji kapłańskiej* (The Anthology of priestly poetry) *Szaropolskie srebro* ( The grey-Polish silver ) and, inter alia, to the articles of Bożena Chrzastowska *Wierzę wierszem* ( I believe through the poem), *O poezji kapłańskiej* and the ones of Maria Kabata *Czy istnieje poezja kapłańska* (Does a priestly poetry exist ?”), as well as the dictionaries by Stefan Drajewski *Księża poeci* (The Priests Poets), Zdzisław Łączkowski *Poeci Pańskiej Winnicy* (The Poets of the Lord's vineyard), *Słownik osób duchownych piszących wiersze* (The Dictionary of the clergy who write poems) the identical circle of interests of the priestly poetry and the poetry of clergymen, has been noticed with the works by Brzózka included. The above findings allow for familiarizing with the nature of the lyricism discussed in the dissertation and form the part of the preliminary work.

## II

The most extensive chapter of the dissertation - the second chapter – describes a poetic interpretation of the image of God and His relationship with man in the poetry by Brzózka. This part consists of eleven subsections, which thematic arrangement is dictated primarily by words of the Apostolic Creed. The Sacred Scripture and the development of theological, philosophical, religious works and the documents of the Church have become the most important interpretive contexts for the works of the poet. It was also important to reach the Kerygma of the Bible, and thus the understanding of the essence of the meeting with the Book as the reading and the adoption of the Kerygma, that is, the Word of God, which is contained therein and the response to this word. In accordance with the title of the Chapter *Przestrzeń sanctum* ( The Space of the sanctum) it deals with the space of the sanctum, in which God the the Holy Trinity and a man come together. The first - initial subsection - contains an explanation of the terminology assumptions used in the later part, because relying on made by Zofia Zarębiana division into a poetry of the sacrum and sanctum dimensions as the one referring only to God and the belief of Józef Tischner, that man is a sanctum, because it is only man who can be indisputably good, the relationship between man and God in this poetry was named the sanctum.

The next subsection, “*Wierzę w Boga...*” (“I believe in God ...”) - an attempt at a poetic definition describes a poetic interpretation of the attributes of God, which in the poetry in question is made primarily by negative theology.

In the next part – “*Wierzę w Stworzyciela...*” (I believe in the Creator) the analysis of the image of the Creator shows its conformity with the doctrine of the Church, as the poet in his poems expresses a conviction of the perfection of God the Creator, which is evident in his works, and in the world – the God's gift - it is the invisible Creator, who is present . Though

man is the image of God and His most perfect creation, he cannot avoid falls and suffering, but all the hardships lead to the union with God.

In subsection four, Bóg-Ojciec ( God – the Father), it has been shown that the lyrical subject in Brzózka's poetry understands the attributes of God as follows: God – the caring Father - shows His omnipotence to the man accepting him as a son, caring for his needs and showing mercy through the forgiveness of his sins - keeping in mind that the Magisterium of the Church emphasizes that the fatherhood and the omnipotence of God are self explanatory.

Subsection Five – Poetycki obraz Jezusa ( The poetic image of Jesus) and subsection six – Jezus nauczyciel ( Jesus the teacher), show that Jesus in the works by Brzózka is God, the Creator and a friend of man's at the same time. The poet also recalls in his poems, that a disciple of Jesus must know how to listen and accept His words, after all, Brzózka's poems contain the elements derived from the teachings of Jesus through the introduction by the author of *Milczące cienie* (The Silent Shadows) simulated dialogues in which the lyrical hero is talking with Jesus or literal quotations from the Gospels because the words of Christ are to be a kind of signpost on the road to salvation.

Part Seven of the second chapter is entitled Eucharystia ( The Eucharist), as the poet in his work takes into account the Eucharistic motifs, although he is not a priest, so it does not serve the Eucharist. The starting point to describe the poems in this part of the dissertation are the insights of Bożena Chrzastowska who in her work *Otwarte Niebo* (The open Heaven ) shows "the signs of Eucharistic spirituality", as the highlighted by her: the adoring and personalistic types can be found in the poetry of the author of *Ziarno gorczycy* ( Mustard seed).

Brzózka is also affected by the problem of human suffering and the compassion of God, who in Jesus Christ shows his mercy to the man, thus an important part of Brzózka's poetic theology is the cross, and so was the eighth subsection of this dissertation entitled. The author of *Spowiedź ciszy* ( the Confession of silence) shows the man's struggle with his own weaknesses, and the importance of the cross in it - a poetic interpretation of the author of *Milczące cienie* (The Silent Shadows) understood most often as the pain, the evil, and the pain the man meets.

Subsection Nine – Bóg jest Miłością ( God is Love) shows that love is the most important measure that the hero of the poems applies in dealing with God, man and nature. The hero of this poetry still yearns for God, wanting to unite with Him. Homo religiosus turns to God - his love – in the imaging, so characteristic of the writings of the mystics'. In the poems dealing with love the author talks about the feelings of the soul longing for and seeking personal God. Although human love is after all only a gross imitation of the perfect love of God, the hero of this poetry also needs and seeks the love of man. The author of *Spowiedź ciszy* (*The Confession of silence*) draws attention to the love between a man and woman. The poems concerning this topic, can also refer to the love between God and man.

The final element of the poetic interpretation of God in the works by Brzózka is the image of the Holy Spirit in these poems. When the poet writes about the Holy Spirit, he repeats the patterns of the poetic interpretation, which he used in the poems about God the Father and Jesus. In the subsection "...Który się począł z Ducha Świętego" ("Who was conceived from the Holy Spirit") there were the three aspects of the poems about the Holy Spirit that it has been concentrated on, including: the perception of the Holy Spirit as the one providing the support for man in overcoming his sin, the requests lifted up to the Holy Spirit and finally persuading the recipient of this poetry to confess to the Holy Spirit: "I love you".

In the final subsection the conclusions on this part of the work have been presented.

### III

Chapter Three - *Communio Sanctorum*, which contains four subsections, refers to the dogma of the Christian faith, which is the communion of saints. After the preliminary findings, in the second subsection, the author of the dissertation analyses Brzózka's poems which talk about angels, and in the third and fourth subsections about the saints by means of theological interpretations, with a particular emphasis on the image of Our Lady and St. Francis, because they are the most important saints in the poetic theology of Brzózka's. The order of the interpreted poems was influenced by the teaching of the Church, saying that angels are present from the moment of creation, and therefore only the next subsections are devoted to the image of saints, historical figures who lived in a particular place and time. The angels and saints in this poetry show God, help people find Him in their lives. *Homo religiosus*, admiring the beauty and grandeur of the surrounding world in the Franciscan way, notes the proximity of his guardian angel, who defends him from evil, and does not let to forget about God. It is Mary, the Mediatrix and Advocate in each case, who leads the hero of the poems to Jesus. In poetic angelology by Brzózka angels have got human qualities, and the relations between them and the subject of the poems, we can define as informal. Similarly, you can describe the relationships linking him with St Francis. Only to Mary as the Mother of God and all the people, the hero comes with confidence, but also with due respect. In this chapter, like in the earlier part of the work, the Scripture, the documents of the Church, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and theological studies were helpful in the theological interpretation of the poems by Brzózka. As the author of *Spowiedź ciszy* (The Confessions of silence) in his works uses mainly the highlighted by Wojciech Gutowski the style of confirmation, it is important to constantly refer to the Magisterium of the Church. It has been determined in this way, how much Brzózka draws from the Christian tradition.

### IV

The fourth chapter analyzes - in reference to the teachings of the Church and its theology – the two important motives for the works by Brzózka: the death and eternal life. The author of the dissertation focuses on the paradox of the existence illustrated by the poet, based on the fact that everything the man wants, can be obtained only after his death. The intensive saturation of Brzózka's works by the theme of death allows for placing it in the foreground of the poet's discourse about human affairs. The author of this dissertation tries to answer the question: what is death and what is its point in this poetry? In this chapter, which is divided into four parts, the poems related to a wish of death expressed in various ways were described. Another issue raised here is the perception of death by the lyrical subject as a return to the Father's House. At the end of the chapter the author presented the musings of the lyrical subject about the agony - the moment of transition - and the eternal life, to which he constantly strives.

## V

The last chapter, consisting of six subsections entitled: Wstęp ( The Introduction), Tęsknota za Wołyniem (The longing for Volyn), Bratobójcz zbrodnia w latach 1942-1944 ( The fratricidal crime in the years 1942-1944), Rola kresowej przyrody (The Role of the borderline nature), Przebaczenie i pojednanie (The forgiveness and reconciliation), and Wnioski ( The Conclusions) discusses the poetic image of Volyn, which becomes the second big topic of the poetry by Brzózka. The borderline subject covers a range of issues, the author of this paper, however, agrees with the position of Stanisław Uliasz for whom the Borderlands are "the phenomenon as a cultural category." The works of the author of *Milczące cienie* ( The Silent shadows) associated with Volyn, was included in the dissertation as the literature of the borderline. This term in this work is used interchangeably with the name of the literature of the border. The particular attention was paid to the poems dealing with the mutual Polish-Ukrainian relations, "The Volhynian massacre", the lyrical hero's longing for the lost borderlands - a kind of Arcadia, and the relationship between man and nature. The studies on the so-called literature of the borderland and the border, as well as in the previous chapters, the texts in theology became the research for this piece of work. The ending is the summary of the argument and contains the conclusions resulting from the interpretation of the whole research material.

## **The Results and conclusions**

1. The adequate for this work is the use of the term the poetry of the clergy. Although the poet remains with his poems within the priesthood poetry , we cannot include in this case the criterion of the sacrament, as the constituent for the discussed poems in this dissertation because Brzózka has never become a priest.

2. The attempts to describe God in whom the man sees the meaning of his existence, in



Brzózka's poetry, do not go beyond the Christian tradition. In the works of the author of *Spowiedź ciszy* (The Confession of silence) God is best characterized by all the paradoxes. God in the poems by Brzózka is immanent, acting in the world, and transcendent to the world. The poet the most often describes Him using the apophatic method because the transcendent God is best spoken of through the negation, using the negative names passing only the partial knowledge of what God is like.

3. The poet in the description of sanctum, understood here as the relationship of the man and God, very often uses biblical themes, stressing in his poetry the connectivity of the message of the Old and New Testaments. The constant references to the Scripture also allow the recipient of the poems by Brzózka for a multidimensional reflection of his own life.

4. The most important style of interpretation in the poems by Brzózka - consistent with Christian tradition – the style of confirmation.

5. Although the discussed work is theocentric, in the poems by Brzózka apart from the poetic image of God in the Holy Trinity there are also the angels and saints who in the poetic theology by Brzózka become the man's friends and they constantly remind him of the most important values, he should follow in his life .

6. The achievement of the desired goal, which is to get closer to God - becomes the poetry foundation of human aspirations. The lyrical hero who refers to the truths of the Christian religion is looking at death with hope, because the death is not the end. The message of the poems, touching the issue of death and the eternal life can be summed up in the words: though the body dies, the soul lives, for the soul is immortal. It is thanks to the hope of the eternal life that the hero of the discussed poems finds the meaning of life and death.

7. The poetry by Brzózka that deals with the Borderlands is based on a myth and sacrum. It is the two elements the poet constantly refers to in his poems. Brzózka encourages to the openness and mutual forgiveness of wrongs, cultivating at the same time the concept of Polishness, understood as the memory of the martyrdom of common ancestors. The hero in Brzózka's poems, on the one hand, describes the world of Volyn from a certain time perspective, on the other hand, he is also the voice of the murdered victims, who stand up for respect and memory.

8. The fascination of Volyn for the poet is the source that allows to visualize the universal sense of the good and bad human experiences. As always in case of the described poetry, and so in the poems of the Borderlands, we find the references to the Christian religion. The Bible is a collection of the poet's moral standards and behavior patterns, which man of the border should follow.

9. Brzózka points to the inseparable relationship between the man of the Borderlands and the

borderland nature which anthropomorphised experiences the joy and sorrow, but also clearly feels the horror of "Cain's days and nights." The condition of the nature in this poetry is connected to the human condition, and their mutual impact affects the color of the described poems.

10. The most important feature of the texts of the author of *Ciche wyznanie* (The Silent confession) is the sacredness, understood as a reference - using a variety of linguistic means – to the sanctum. At the same time it should be noted that the poems by Brzózka have mostly didactic tone, though the poet is not a priest, he uses the means which are characteristic of catechesis. In this poetry it becomes important to recall the feelings and emotions of the receiver, since it has to call the reflection, and even encourage to alter the former life of the reader of this poetry.

11. The described poems also point to the spirituality of the poet himself, who as a member of the clergy speaks of God through the poetry and - generally speaking - of many aspects of the Christian life.

### **The prospects**

The findings made in the fields of theology, philosophy and literature are only an outline of the issues included in the poetry of the author of *Spowiedź ciszy* (*The Confession of silence*) and can be a starting point for further studies of the poetry.