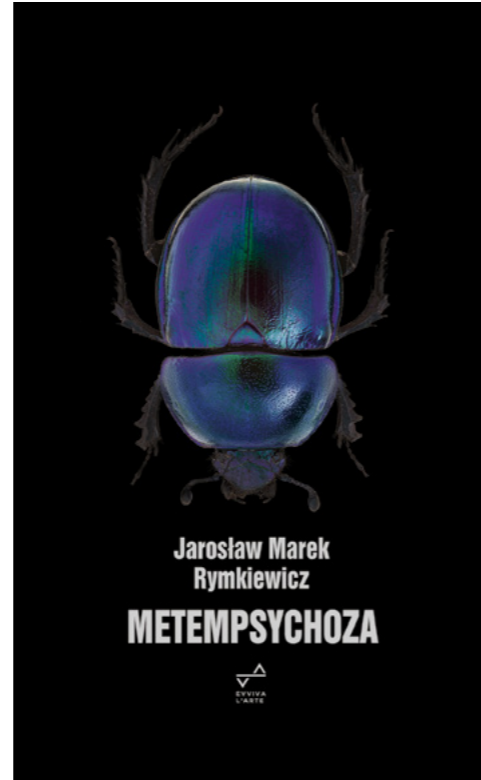


# Metempsychosis. The Second Volume of Octastichs

Poetry courageous  
in its directness,  
essential due to the gravity  
of its themes



ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT VOICES  
IN POLISH LITERATURE

Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz is one of Poland's most renowned poets, being also the author of numerous acclaimed essays, novels and stage plays, as well as the winner of several literary prizes. His work is often inspired by classicism and the Baroque, while his favourite topics include Polish history, national identity, existentialist reflections and the natural world.

In this series of short verses from his latest collection of poetry, he returns to previously explored themes, only this time in a seemingly lighter vein, speaking on a happier note, with a tangible tone of self-deprecation, typical of those reviewing their lives at a point when they feel they are nearing death. Lightly rhymed, at times apparently intentionally naive, epigrammatic or anecdotal, at times in the form of notes on the margins of the said book or additional footnotes: no more than scribbles of words connected by similar sounds, without any specific rhythmic equilibrium, this slim, episodic volume charts the author's whole life, for in these forty-four verses the poet exposes himself completely...

The first line of the opening poem *Deus sive Natura* posits the deistic thesis: "God animates Nature, moving every leaf in turn"; a declaration of faith the author will remain committed to until the very end – the end of the book and of his own life it seems, seeing

as this rhymed verse will deal with the topic of dying. But it will also be about rebirth, or rather about eternal returns. The poet wanders, but seemingly along the path of unorthodox theology, along tracts closer to scientific theories of spirituality dating back to the age of enlightened surrealism.

The metaphorical devices used in this treatise resolutely deal with the idea of poking around – digging in garden plots, as well as in books, poking about ageing bodies, or else poking about the corpuscular remains of spiritual substance.

These parallels are delicious; human flesh felt from within, the earthy tangibility of soil, the chokingly dusty air of old libraries. Rymkiewicz, as author and teacher, dissects his own "erudite clay", a substance he thinks he is composed of, since he was formed of it and will return to it in time. All of this, being closely connected, forms a structure of signs and symbols, arranging itself naturally into a treatise about the nature of things. But his treatise is a work of art, poetry courageous in its directness, essential due to the gravity of its themes. This is a truly rare and thus valuable thing these days. We therefore should take the time to reread this slim yet densely packed book time and time again.

Artur Grabowski, translated by Marek Kazmierski

## To be like grass

"To escape with one's soul and leap upon a small leaf" (...)  
Adam Mickiewicz, 1839 or 1840

To be like tall grass on a meadow untrimmed  
With its iris see skylarks roaming the blue above free

To be as green snails upon green leaves,  
And from there give the world signs so few perceive

Like autumnal rowanberry bunches oh so red  
Like the other side of this existence, not so easily read

Come the fall, feed baby hedgehogs at night from  
an open palm  
Be close to life like ivy climbing an evergreen  
tree so calm

## Two chickadees and titmice sitting on a branch

A blue tit and a European crested tit sit upon a twig  
Speaking, and if they speak it means there's things  
they twig

The blue tit with a wise head and the crested tit so grey  
Round here all creatures great and small try to know  
and say

Mirabelle plums and the withered apple tree also know  
such things  
Along dead branches their knowledge it forever springs

You too speak, maple tree, oh my trusted friend,  
For I am now rather old, my knowledge at an end

## A blind poet

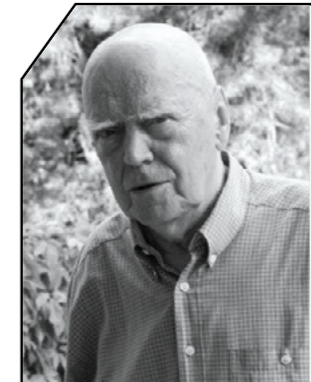
Darkness is blind – like me, like poetry  
As blind as baby Birch and grown Maple trees

They hold my hand as we walk along  
All of us humming the same jolly song.

Blind are the young Birches and Douglas fir trees  
True to its nature blind too is poetry

And so we walk along, the two of us – she walking ahead  
Blind darkness leading the poet of a blind garden bred

Translated by Marek Kazmierski



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JAROSŁAW  
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RYMKIEWICZ  
Born 1935

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### Poetry collections published

*Konwencje*, 1957  
*Ulica Mandelsztama*, 1983  
*Mogila Ordona*, 1984  
*Moje dzieło pośmiertne*, 1993  
*Zachód słońca w Milanówku*, 2002  
*Do widzenia gawrony*, 2006  
*Pastuszek Chelmońskiego*, 2014  
*Koniec lata w zdziczałym ogrodzie*, 2015

### Selected essay collections

*Czym jest klasycyzm*, 1967  
*Myśli różne o ogrodach*, 1968  
*Wieszanie*, 2007  
*Kinderszenen*, 2008  
*Samuel Zborowski*, 2010  
*Wielki Książę*, 2011  
*Reytan. Upadek Polski*, 2013

### Novels

*Rozmowy polskie latem 1983*, 1984  
*Ummschlagplatz*, 1988

### Foreign language translations

Germany, France  
Denmark, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania,  
Czech Republic, Colombia, Russia, Belarus, Romania,  
Cuba – in anthologies

### Foreign language translations

Zygmunt Hertz Literary Prize, awarded by the Paris "Kulture" (1986)  
Kościński Foundation Award (1967)  
Nike Literary Award (2003; nominations in 2000, 2002, 2005, 2011)  
Gdynia Literary Prize (2008, 2011) – nominations  
Józef Mackiewicz Literary Prize (2008)  
Julian Tuwim Literary Prize (2015)  
Identitas Literary Award (2016; 2015 – shortlisted)  
Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński Poetry Prize ORPHEUS  
(2016; 2015 – shortlisted)