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Poetic Reflection by Kazimierz Wójtowicz on the Biblical Pericope Lk (24:13–55): On the Series *Emaus* — *werset po wersecie* (Emmaus — Verse by Verse)

Introduction

Kazimierz Wójtowicz (DoB 1945) is a contemporary priest-poet, a monk from the Congregation of the Lord's Resurrection. For many years, or more precisely: since 1974, when he made his debut with *Kolęda spóźnionych* (Christmas Carol of the Delayed) in "Przewodnik Katolicki", he has belonged to the group of artists in cassocks.² He mainly practices poetry. He is also the author of literary translations; so far, he has translated, inter alia, Rainer Maria Rilke, Edith Stein, Rupert Mayer, Karol de Foucauld.³ A special role in Wójtowicz's poetry is played by the biblical Emmaus theme, developed by the poet in about 80 works. In various ways, Wójtowicz goes back to the story of the meeting of two disciples with the Risen Jesus, precisely described only by Saint Luke in the 24th chapter of his

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² See: *Poezja w sutannie*, wybór, opracowanie i komentarz [selection, elaboration, commentary] S. Radziszewski, Kielce 2011, p. 271.

³ See: K. Wójtowicz, *Z przekładów* [in:] id., *Dalej wkoło Emaus (tylko wolniej)*, Kraków 2020, pp. 561–607.

Gospel (24:13–35). The other inspired authors do not relate to this episode; the two-verse mention of Emmaus still appears in the Gospel of St. Mark (16:12–13). Wójtowicz's output includes three extensive volumes with the Emmaus theme displayed in the title: *Droga do Emaus. Wiersze wybrane* (The Road to Emmaus. Selected Poems), Katowice 1989; *Dookoła Emaus i dalej. Wiersze niemal zebrane* (All around Emmaus and further. Almost collected poems), Krakow 2012; *Dalej wkoło Emaus (tylko wolniej). Wiersze dozbierane z lat 2012–2019* (Further around Emmaus [only slower]. Selected poems from 2012–2019), Kraków 2020. He also released a separate collection (slightly smaller in volume than the previous ones) with only Emmaus poems *Po prostu Emaus. Wybór wierszy z lat 1978–2016* (Just Emmaus. A selection of poems from 1978–2016), Krakow 2016. The latter has an interesting composition. It has been divided into three parts, in which the author shows the presence of the Emmaus theme in the Proto-Word, i.e. *the Bible* (here he quotes a passage of the Gospel of St. Luke about Emmaus in various translations, including *the Bible of Jakub Wujek*, the *Millennium Bible*, the *ecumenical Bible*), in Word (this part collects Wójtowicz's non-ekphrastic poems about Emmaus), and finally in an image (it consists of ekphrastic poems).

It is no coincidence that writing afterword for the latest selection of Wójtowicz's poetry, Bolesław Faron used the headline *Emaus — niewyczerpane źródło inspiracji artystycznych* (Emmaus — an inexhaustible source of artistic inspiration).⁴ He recalled the author's love of the biblical story that took place on the road to Emmaus. Anyway, on another occasion, Wójtowicz himself admitted that the Emmaus theme is very deep, it has a large scope, and it connotes a lot of content. Let us immerse into the poet's voice:

[...] 'Emaus' jest takim zasobnym i pojemnym znaleziskiem, że można z niego wydobyć nieskończoną mnogość 'kopalin'. Jest tu więc: droga, wędrowanie, wspólnota, wiara z wątpliwościami, miłość przygaszona, resztki zduszonej nadziei, jest ucieczka, rozmowa, słowo Boże, zastuchanie, zauroczenie, zdumienie, dołącza Obcy–Gość, przychodzi gościna, gospoda, posiłek, wzruszenie, dzielenie chleba, Sakrament, rozpoznanie, kontemplacja, zaskoczenie, rozgrzanie, przynaglenie, przyśpieszenie, powrót do swoich.⁵

([...] 'Emaus' is such a rich and capacious find that it is possible to extract from it an infinite multitude of 'minerals'. So here is: the road, wandering, community, faith with doubts, subdued love, remnants of a suffocated hope, there is an escape,

⁴ B. Faron, *Emaus — niewyczerpane źródło inspiracji artystycznych* [in:] K. Wójtowicz, *Dalej wkoło Emaus (tylko wolniej). Wiersze dozbierane z lat 2012–2019*, Kraków 2020, p. 611.

⁵ K. Wójtowicz, *Przedślowie (od autora)* [in:] id., *Dookoła Emaus i dalej (wiersze niemal zebrane)*, Kraków 2012, p. 7.

a conversation, the word of God, listening, infatuation, amazement, a stranger-guest joins, hospitality, an inn, a meal, emotion, sharing bread, Sacrament, recognition, contemplation, surprise, warming, urging, hastening, returning to your people).

The Emmaus theme was commented on by two Popes: St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Their statements became the motto of the aforementioned volume by Wójtowicz, *Po prostu Emaus. Wybór wierszy z lat 1978–2016*. John Paul II describes the scene in Emmaus, paying attention to the gesture of breaking bread, which became the symbol of Christ. Benedict XVI, in turn, talks about the symbolism of Emmaus. These explanations coincide with Wójtowicz's reflections, as quoted below:

Są różne hipotezy i ma to swój urok, ponieważ pozwala przypuszczać, że w rzeczywistości Emaus symbolizuje każde miejsce: droga, która do niego prowadzi, jest drogą każdego chrześcijanina, każdego człowieka. Zmartwychwstały Jezus idzie z nami naszymi drogami, aby rozpałać w naszych sercach płomień wiary i wiary oraz łamać chleb życia wiecznego.⁶

(There are various hypotheses, and this has its charm, as it allows us to suppose that in fact, Emmaus symbolizes every place: the way that leads to it is the way of every Christian, every human being. The Risen Jesus walks with us on our ways to kindle the flame of faith and faith in our hearts and to break the bread of eternal life.)

The dominance of the Emmaus theme in Wójtowicz's poetry is undeniable. This is noticed by researchers of his poetry, e.g. Stefan Drajewski,⁷ Krzysztof Dybciak⁸ or Fr. Stefan Radziszewski. The latter discussed the final verse of the Emmaus series *Emaus — werset po wersecie (Emmaus — verse by verse)*, which was an extension of the verse 'They also told what happened to them on the way and how they knew him while breaking the bread' Lk 24:35, pain, wanderer, hope. Summing up, he stated that 'Wójtowicz postrzega Emaus jako metaforę całego życia człowieka'.⁹

In another sketch, Radziszewski again speaks of the symbolic approach to pericope by Wójtowicz:

Poetycka antropologia Wójtowicza zmusza do refleksji. Aby zrozumieć wiersze kapłana i poety, należy uważnie popatrzeć na wędrowców, którzy patrzą na nas z okładki *Dookoła Emaus*, na Łukasza i Kleofasa. Człowiek jest pielgrzymem,

⁶ Quoted after K. Wojtowicz, *Po prostu Emaus. Wybór wierszy z lat 1978–2016*, Kraków 2016, p. 5.

⁷ See: S. Drajewski, *...aby zapisać znakami*, "Kierunki" 42 (1989), p. 11.

⁸ See: K. Dybciak, *Zapisy nadziei*, "Znak" 5/6 (1983), p. 982.

⁹ 'Wójtowicz sees Emmaus as a metaphor for the whole human life'; S. Radziszewski, *Jeden wiersz o Emaus* [in:] K. Wójtowicz, *Dookoła Emaus i dalej...*, p. 726.

który podąża drogą do Emaus. Jest tym, który idzie na spotkanie z Nieznanym. W drodze prowadzi dialog z towarzyszami wędrówki oraz Nieznajomym, który przyłącza się do podróżnych. Ta wielka rozmowa tworzy kulturę ludzką.¹⁰

(Wójtowicz's poetic anthropology forces us to reflect. In order to understand the poems of the priest and the poet, one should carefully look at the wanderers who look at us from the cover of *Around Emmaus*, at Luke and Cleofas. Man is a pilgrim who follows the road to Emmaus. He is the one who goes to meet the Unknown. On the way, he conducts a dialogue with his travel companions and the Stranger who joins the travelers. This great conversation creates human culture).

Pericope Disciples from Emmaus in Biblical Commentaries

St. Luke on Emmaus, by the way, the longest account of the appearance of the Risen Christ, has received many comments from biblical scholars. The interpretation of this story goes in different directions. Researchers pay attention to three issues: the liturgical structure of the pericope, its contrast to the fragment from the Gospel of St. John (Jn 20:11–18), illustrating the meeting of the Risen Christ with Mary Magdalene, and finally the presence of the themes of travel, faith as vision and hospitality, elements frequent in the Gospel of Luke. The first verse of interpretation emphasizes the extremely regular structure of Luke's pericope, which — apart from the introduction and conclusion — consists of Jesus' dialogue with the disciples and the Emmaus feast. These two themes bring the story closer to the Christian liturgy, in which the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Liturgy coexist. In *Nowy komentarz biblijny* (the New Bible Commentary), we read that when talking about Emmaus, St. Luke did not accidentally use the same verbs as in the description of the Last Supper. Thus, 'posiłek w Emaus przeradza się w ucztę eucharystyczną'.¹¹ The disciples' conversation with Jesus prepares them for the supper in which the bread becomes the body of Christ. Importantly, some biblical scholars partially dispute the above interpretation, claiming that the meal at Emmaus does not have to be read as the Eucharist, but 'należy go jednak połączyć z tematem pokarmu, który Łukasz rozwija w całej Ewangelii'.¹²

¹⁰ S. Radziszewski, *Siedemnaście uwag o poezji księdza Kazimierza Wójtowicza* [in:] K. Wójtowicz, *Dookoła Emaus i dalej...*, p. 734.

¹¹ 'meal at Emmaus becomes a Eucharistic banquet'; F. Mickiewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, cz. 2, rozdz. 12–24, wstęp, tłum., komentarz [introduction, translation, commentary] id., Częstochowa 2012, p. 598.

¹² 'it must be linked to the theme of food that Luke develops throughout the Gospel'; *Katolicki komentarz biblijny*, ed. R.E. Brown et al., Polish edition: W. Chrostowski, tłum. K. Bardski et al., Warszawa 2001, p. 1106.

An interesting interpretation seems to be assuming that the story of Emmaus is a counterpoint¹³ to the account of St. John about the meeting of the Risen Christ with Mary Magdalene. The basis for compiling these passages is not only the thematic similarity but also the Gospel of St. Mark, where both episodes are reported almost simultaneously. Immediately after St. Mark mentions the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene and the disciples' disbelief in the resurrection, he sketches a scene from Emmaus (Mk 16:9–14). Luke's pericope is treated as a counterbalance to John's passage, mainly because Mary Magdalene only needed dialogue with the Lord, while the disciples needed not only a word but also a Eucharistic banquet. Only then did it become possible to recognize the Risen Christ.

Many biblical scholars emphasize that the pericope on Emmaus contains elements characteristic of the account of St. Luke, for whom the motives of wandering, faith as vision, and hospitality are very frequent. The authors of *Katolicki komentarz biblijny* (the Catholic Biblical Commentary) emphasize that 'ta piękna opowieść [...] mieni się wielością Łukaszkowych tematów. [...] Czytelnik powinien przypomnieć sobie Łukaszkowy temat podróży, który pełnił rolę dominującego. [...] Łukasz dodaje ostatnie pociągnięcia pędzla do obrazu wiary jako widzenia. Oczy uczniów, którzy ugościli nieznanego, zostały otworzone'.¹⁴ The above way of reading the pericope, at least to some extent, harmonizes with the thought of St. Augustine, who saw Emmaus as a symbol of the everyday life of every Christian. The life of the follower of Christ should include professing faith, discovering it in front of others, and practicing hospitality, moreover: perfecting this virtue.

Kazimierz Wójtowicz's Reflection on Luke's Pericope

As it has already been said, for Wójtowicz the Emmaus theme is important, deep, very popular, even inexhaustible, and that is why it still inspires our author. The priest-poet divides the poems about Emmaus into *Emaus w słowie* (Emmaus in the word) and *Emaus w obrazie* (Emmaus in the image); thus, he distinguishes between non-ekphrastic and picture-inspired poems. In the first group, the most important place is the series *Emaus — werset po wersecie*, consisting of 15 pieces discussing the following verses of the pericope from the Gospel of St. Luke

¹³ See: *Międzynarodowy komentarz do Pisma Świętego. Komentarz katolicki i ekumeniczny na XXI wiek*, ed. W.R. Farmer, Polish edition W. Chrostowski, Warszawa 2000, p. 1300.

¹⁴ 'this beautiful story [...] shimmers with the multiplicity of Luke's themes. [...] The reader should remember Luke's travel theme, which played the dominant role. [...] Luke adds the last brushstrokes to the image of faith as a vision. The eyes of the disciples who welcomed the stranger were opened'; *Katolicki komentarz biblijny...*, pp. 1105–1106.

(24:13–35). Wójtowicz commented on the biblical fragment very meticulously, almost verse by verse. Luke's pericope consists of 23 verses, only eight of which Wójtowicz omitted (18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 31). This series is unique, original, although in a sense it refers to 17th-century religious poems by Wespasian Kochowski based on references to biblical passages i.e. *Chrystus cierpiący* (the Suffering Christ) or *Ogród paniński* (the Maiden's Garden) (both from 1681) among others.

Biblical poems-paraphrases have clear identity of Wójtowicz's literary work. The priest-poet develops biblical quotations using the language of poetry on an unprecedented scale.¹⁵ This form has been present in his work from the very beginning. It appeared profusely in his debut *Przypisy do ziemi* (Notes to the Earth), Krakow 1982. The volume contained 22 biblical paraphrases, which is important: among them, there was a commentary on the verse 35 of the chapter 24 of the Gospel of Luke, which with time — as the last poem — was included in the series that we are concerned with. Until now, Wójtowicz has written a great many poems developing biblical passages. The author's compilations¹⁶ show that he paraphrased over 200 quotations taken from both the Old and New Testaments. To illustrate the enormous amount of creative work, let us only mention that he referred to verses from all synoptic gospels, also from the Gospel of St. John and the Apocalypse. From the Book of Genesis alone, he provided a lyrical commentary to as many as 13 verses. It is therefore reasonable (due to the multitude of poems commenting on one or another biblical verse) to distinguish poem-commentaries to a selected quotation from the Old or New Testament in Wójtowicz's literary output.¹⁷

Franciszek Kamecki (a priest-poet from the same generation) devoted much attention to this kind of works by Wójtowicz. After the Viennese edition of the book *On the Road* (1978), he shared his bitter opinion in "Więź":

Czytelnika jego [Wójtowicza — A.W.] poezji zadziwia i zastanawia niezliczona ilość cytatów z Biblii (12 utworów zaczyna się cytatami, jakby tytułami, do których autor dopisuje komentarze). Owszem, nie wątpię, powstaje pożądane napięcie między cytatem a poetyckim komentarzem, ale, po pierwsze, tak robił u nas i robi celnie ks. Mieczysław Maliński w swoich ramkach w „Tygodniku Powszechnym” (krążą w wydaniach książkowych i są chętnie czytane), po drugie — wprawdzie widać szczerą pokorę wobec Biblii, co się chwali, jednakże wyłazi niecierpliwie manieryczność i konflikt między artystą a kaznodzieją. To,

¹⁵ See: H. Brzozowski, *Powtórny debiut*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 42 (1982), p. 7.

¹⁶ See: K. Wójtowicz, *Indeks wersetów biblijnych* [in:] id., *Dookoła Emaus i dalej...*, pp. 793–795; id., *Indeks wersetów biblijnych* [in:] id., *Dalej wkoło Emaus...*, pp. 667–668.

¹⁷ See: S. Drajewski, *...aby zapisać znakami*, p. 11.

co konstruuje artysta, próbuje niejako zepsuć kaznodzieja. Może to trochę za mocno powiedziane, drogi Kazimierzu?¹⁸

(The reader of his [Wójtowicz — A.W.] poetry is astonished and puzzled by the countless number of quotations from the Bible (12 works begin with quotations, as if with titles, to which the author adds comments). Yes, I have no doubts, the desired tension arises between the quote and the poetic commentary, but first of all, this is what Fr. Mieczysław Maliński in his frames in “Tygodnik Powszechny” (they circulate in book editions and are readily read), secondly — although you can see sincere humility towards the Bible, which is praised, however, the mannerisms and conflict between the artist and the preacher emerge impatiently. What the artist constructs, the preacher tries to spoil. Maybe this is a bit too much of a word, dear Kazimierz?).

Kamecki’s review contains a valuable comment: Wójtowicz’s poetic comments on the Bible refer to Maliński’s practice.¹⁹ It should be added, however, that we can also find similar texts in the poetry of Fr. Wiesław Niewęglowski,²⁰ e.g. from the volume *Miniatury ewangeliczne* (Evangelical Miniatures), Warszawa 2001. Moreover: the latter — because they represent bound speech — seems closer to Wójtowicz’s poems than to Maliński’s considerations, taking the form of prose. It should be emphasized that Niewęglowski was inspired by Luke’s pericope, which he expressed in the poem *Emaus* (Emmaus), commenting on verses 24:28–31. Niewęglowski’s piece is extremely varied in terms of style. There are apostrophes to readers (an invitation to visit Emmaus, ‘najpiękniejsze miejsce świata’,²¹ biblical quotes, direct phrases, and questions to The Risen Christ, such as ‘Czy tak bardzo spieszyłeś się na jeszcze jedno spotkanie tego dnia — w Wieczerniku?’.²² There is also a philosophical, theological reflection, and finally, a personal prayer:

Spraw, Panie, niech moje Emaus nie będzie miejscem przejścia,
jak tamtego wieczoru,
ale miejscem spotkania.
Jeśli zaś będziesz musiał odejść niespodzianie, bo przynaglią Cię sprawy świata,
zanim znikniesz,
pozwól mi
od zaraz pójść razem z Tobą.²³

¹⁸ F. Kamecki, *Poetycka pielgrzymka*, “Więź” 2/3 (1979), p. 188.

¹⁹ See: G. Polak, *Kto jest kim w Kościele katolickim?*, Warszawa 1996, p. 226.

²⁰ See: *ibid.*, p. 257.

²¹ ‘the most beautiful place in the world’; W.A. Niewęglowski, *Emaus* [in:] *id.*, *Miniatury ewangeliczne*, Warszawa 2001, p. 85.

²² ‘Were you in such a hurry to one more meeting that day — in the Cenacle?’; *ibid.*, p. 87.

²³ *Ibid.*

(Please, Lord, let my Emmaus not be a place of transition,
 like that evening
 but a meeting place.
 but if you have to go away unexpectedly, because the things of the world are driv-
 ing you
 before you disappear
 let me go
 with you right away).

Let us take a look at Wójtowicz's series *Emaus — werset po wersecie*, which for many years matured in the artist's imagination. As it has been said, it was initiated by a verse-commentary to the verse 35 from the Gospel of St. Luke, published in the pioneering volume on the Polish market *Przypisy do ziemi*. The first edition of the collected poetry by Wójtowicz, *Droga do Emaus. Wiersze wybrane* included two pieces of the series. In addition to the above-mentioned text, also the text, which is a poetic interpretation of verse 32: 'Czy serce nie pałało w nas, kiedy rozmawiał z nami w drodze i Pisma nam wyjaśniał' (Did the heart not burn in us when he spoke with us on the way and explained the Scriptures to us). Another collective volume by Wójtowicz, *Dookoła Emaus i dalej* added seven more titles: 'A mówili oni ze sobą o tym wszystkim, co się wydarzyło, Gdy rozmawiali i rozprawiali ze sobą, sam Jezus przybliżył się i szedł z nimi, Jedenastu oznajmiło im: Pan rzeczywiście zmartwychwstał, Oczy ich były niejako na uwięzi, tak że go nie poznali' (And they were talking to each other about everything that had happened, When they talked and argued with each other, Jesus himself came near and was walking with them, the eleven told them: The Lord indeed rises, Their eyes were, as it were, captive so that they did not recognize him). Everything was ready in 2016. It first appeared in its final shape in the collection *Po prostu Emaus. Wybór wierszy z lat 1978–2016*. Four years later it was reprinted in *Dalej wkoło Emaus (tylko wolniej)*.

The series opening verse refers to the verse 'Two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus' (Lk 24:13). It is composed of four anaphorically beginning trios, stylistically similar. Each of them has a conditional sentence. The subordinate utterance always precedes the primary utterance, as illustrated by the excerpt:

Gdyby Wielki Piątek nie pogrzebał nadziei
 nie byłoby tego dnia
 owej drogi z miasta do wioski.²⁴

²⁴ K. Wójtowicz, *Po prostu Emaus...*, p. 44. The remaining quotations from Wójtowicz's poems are marked in the main text by giving the page number in parentheses, always according to this edition.

(If Good Friday did not bury hope
there wouldn't be that day
the road from town to village).

The speaker exposes the reasons why the disciples left the city for the village of Emmaus. These are disappointed expectations, the tragedy of Good Friday, loss of hope, the desire to run away, looking for something new. Ultimately, however, the lyrical 'I' states that Christ planned Emmaus because — as we read at the end of the monologue — the disciples 'would miss Emmaus / to go as far as possible' (p. 44). The second song is an illustration of the verse: 'And they talked with each other about everything that happened' (Lk 24:14). Here Wójtowicz reactivates a stanza forgotten in Polish versification — *quinela*,²⁵ at the same time reflecting on both conversation and silence. The dialogue of those going to Emmaus becomes the starting point for philosophical deliberations. Already in the first stanza, the lyrical 'I' directly teaches that there are matters in which it is not right to remain silent. One must boldly speak out on issues that need to be settled. The last stanza, which takes the form of instruction, has a strong overtone. The subject speaks of an obligation, more: necessity, reaching the truth:

I nie dorabiać sylab do niesprawdzonych pogłosek
nie wdawać się w dyskurs ze stugębną plotką
tylko czyste fakty łączyć w łańcuch zdarzeń
każde ogniwo z różnych stron oglądać
w jasnym świetle prawdy (p. 45).

(And not to add syllables to unverified rumors
not to engage in a discourse with a hundred-tooth gossip
only pure facts to be combined into the chain of events
watch each link from different sides
in the clear light of the truth).

Wójtowicz's third poem about Emmaus proves that this poetry is at the service of the word. The priest-poet often plays a kind of a linguistic game, he

²⁵ A five-verse stanza (quintile) — typical of Spanish poetry. Due to its oddness, it is not often used by Polish artists. It is considered troublesome due to the way of rhyming, because if each verse is to have its own rhyme counterpart, a two-chime combination must appear. Then one rhyme has two components and the other has three. Moreover, the quintile is a fairly large grouping of verses between which the author must form a strong bond. Polish definitely prefers even stanzas; among them the most popular are quatrains, octaves and distances — See: S. Furmanik, *Z zagadnień wiersyfikacji polskiej*, Warszawa 1956, pp. 81–82; M. Dłuska, *O strofie — preliminaria* [in:] ead., *Prace wybrane*, t. 3, Kraków 2001, pp. 92–114.

talks about the value of the word, about responsibility for it. He also refers to the phrase that opens the Gospel of St. John ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (Jn 1:1). Thus, it reaches ‘to [...] a broad, theological understanding, having its origin in the Bible’.²⁶ In the poem commenting on the pericope: ‘When they talked and argued with each other, Jesus himself drew near and went with them’ (Lk 24:15), we get an interesting juxtaposition of the everyday word and the Gospel word. In reflecting on the word (written in lowercase), metaphors are intertwined with a linguistic game:

słowa spłoszone tajemnicą
 kryły się za znaki zapytania
 ignorując szkolną gramatykę
 wybiegały z szeregu na margines
 i tak cała mowa
 z gruntu niezależna
 rwała się na części
 jak przy klasycznym rozbiórce
 na lekcjach języka (p. 46).

(words scarred by mystery
 were behind the question marks
 ignoring school grammar
 ran out of the ranks to the margins
 and so is all speech
 independent
 was tearing apart
 as in a classic partition
 in language lessons).

The above somewhat humorous discussions are closed with a serious ending, dealing with the God-Eternal Word: ‘the Word has joined / binding / the end with the beginning’ (p. 46).

The next work, developing the verse ‘Their eyes were, as it were, on a tether, so that they did not recognize him’ (Lk 24:16), is a reflection on man, human egoism, or altruism. It is filled primarily with figurines (often elaborate, some original and interesting), which determine the eyes or sight, e.g.

²⁶ M. Tęcza, *Poeta-kaplan. O wartości słowa w poezji ks. Kazimierza Wójtowicza*, “Przegląd Powszechny” 11 (2002), p. 216.

Jakie wrogie siły
zatrząskują powieki od środka
zwijają czujną siatkówkę
przed zmysłem spojrzenia (p. 47).

(What hostile forces
they slam the eyelids from the inside
collapses the alert retina
before the sense of seeing).

In the analyzed work, the eyes are ‘trapped’, directed only at themselves, but they wait ‘aż ktoś zwolni [je — A.W.] z uwięzi/ i podniesie na wysokość nieba’ (p. 47)²⁷. The key phrase for the speaking subject is: ‘their eyes were [...] captive’. The condition of the biblical heroes, their impotence, and the inability to properly perceive reality²⁸ are appropriate — the lyrical subject seems to say — to many people. Therefore, in the last stanza there is a collective subject:

A więc wzrok nasz cielesny
jak balon przycumowany do ziemi
czeka aż ktoś zwolni go z uwięzi
i podniesie na wysokość nieba (p. 47).

(So our carnal sight
like a balloon tied to the ground
waiting for someone to release him from the tether
and will raise to the height of heaven).

In the poem illustrating the verse 17 of the biblical story of Emmaus (‘He asked them: What are these conversations with each other on the way? They stopped sadly’ — Lk 24:17), the priest-poet focuses primarily on the verb ‘stop’. The subject speaks as metaphorically as before. First, briefly, but very poetically, he presents the situation of the apostles detained by The Risen Christ:

Tylko Obcy może zatrzymać —
zgodnie z biegiem akcji
pod nogi uciekających rzuca pytanie

²⁷ ‘until someone releases [them — A.W.] from the tether / and lifts them to the height of the sky’.

²⁸ Fr F. Mickiewicz (*Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, p. 696) says more emphatically that the disciples even experienced depression because of Jesus’ death.

jak szlaban na przejściu granicznym
między wczoraj a jutro (p. 48).

(Only a Stranger Can Stop —
according to the course of the action
he throws a question
at the feet of the fleeing people
like a barrier at the border crossing
between yesterday and tomorrow).

After a while, the biblical episode generalizes; the monologue takes on the features of a wisdom reflection. The speaker analyzes the conditions of a person ‘stopping’ (that is, interrupting, ceasing something). They are an act of will, an open heart, and the memory of the past. And in this part, the speaker does not shy away from figuration. Let us listen to at least a passage of this confession:

Żeby się zatrzymać
trzeba usłyszeć to pytanie
co żarem zajmuje wysuszone serce
i blaskiem chłosta spłakane oczy
trzymane nadal na uwięzi
trzeba stanąć i wylegitymować się
choćby skrawkiem pamięci (p. 48).

(To stop
one must hear this question
which with heat takes up a dry heart
and with the light of the whipping my eyes
were tearful still tethered
you have to stand up and identify yourself
even a scrap of memory).

The next verse of the series that covers us deals with verse 21, with the provision that Wójtowicz does not refer to the entire pericope, but only to its initial parts: ‘And we expected’ (Lk 24:21). The author’s idea is similar to the previous texts — it is about generalizing the Gospel verse and relating it to the present day. The piece is laconic, only two-sided. The first verse is devoted to the past, the second to the present. The list is contrasting. The voice is taken by a collective subject which, characterizing the past time, focuses on people’s dreams of success, dignity, and success in life. He speaks very pessimistically about the present; it even lacks the old expectation of the fulfillment of desires:

A dzisiaj o zmierzchu
 gdy oddaliła się młodość
 i z latami coraz mniej sił i czasu
 wypatrujemy powrotu starej nadziei (p. 49).

(And tonight at dusk
 when youth departed
 and with the years less and less time and energy
 we look for the return of the old hope).

The next seventh text in the series seems to be formally identical to the previous one. Like the latter, it consists of two tetrastichs. It is an attempt to interpret a passage of the verse 24 of St. Luke's pericope, more precisely: it concerns only the clause parts 'But they did not see him'. The whole pericope reads as follows: 'Some of our people went to the tomb and found everything as the women told them, but they did not see him'. This poem confirms the correctness of the thesis put forward by Wiesław Jan Wysocki years ago that in Wójtowicz's poetry one can 'doszukiwać się zbliżeń do Zbigniewa Herberta, Stanisława Grochowiaka, Jerzego Harasymowicza, a nade wszystko do ks. Jana Twardowskiego. Nie jest [Wójtowicz — A.W.] jednakże zależny od nikogo, a jeżeli już mówić należy o zależności — jest nią autentyczna zależność od wiary'.²⁹ The subject pauses over the issue signaled in the title, and discusses a personal encounter with Jesus. He cites the biblical example of Zacchaeus climbing a sycamore tree to see Jesus pass. St. Luke writes about this in chapter 19 of his Gospel. Wójtowicz's subject argues that Zacchaeus saw Jesus and became convinced of His existence. The rest of the kerygmatic monologue shows that there is a need for an authentic meeting with Jesus

[...] przede wszystkim odsłonić swoje oczy
 ofiarować dar z siebie i pamiętać
 że dobrze widzi się tylko sercem
 przemienionym Jego łaską (p. 50).

([...] first of all, reveal your eyes
 offer a gift of self and remember
 that you only see well with your heart
 transformed by His grace).

²⁹ 'look for closeness to Zbigniew Herbert, Stanisław Grochowiak, Jerzy Harasymowicz, and above all to Fr. Jan Twardowski. He is not [Wójtowicz — A.W.], however, dependent on anyone, and if he does that one should speak of dependence — it is genuine dependence on faith'; W.J. Wysocki, *Poetycki zapis wiary*, "Kierunki" 6 (1979), p. 11.

In the above passage, it can be seen that Wójtowicz associated the Bible with the *Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, he paraphrased the well-known quote ‘You can only see well with your heart. What is most important is invisible to the eyes’.³⁰ After reading the poem, the following conclusion arises: to see Jesus is to accept His teaching, to renounce selfishness.

The next lyric develops the opening parts of verse 25: ‘O foolish and lazy in heart’, which is translated differently in the Millennium Bible, reads: ‘O foolish, how slow are your hearts to believe everything that the prophets have said!’ (Lk 24:25). Kazimierz Wójtowicz selects a version from the *paulist Bible*: ‘O foolish and lazy in heart! You don’t believe what the prophets said!’ (Lk 24:25). This verse is called by biblical scholars the ‘double rebuke’,³¹ by which Christ rebukes the disciples and at the same time teaches that ‘man comes to faith with both his mind and his heart’.³² Wójtowicz’s lyrical subject, referring to the first epithet (‘the foolish’), resembles the Praise of the Stupidity of Erasmus of Rotterdam, and then, using euphemisms, he defines irrationality. He calls it ‘insufficient reason’, ‘poor intelligence quotient’ (p. 51). In this piece, the Emmaus theme seems a bit camouflaged (if not for the quote in the headline, it would be difficult to recognize). The lyrical ‘I’ focuses on the characteristics of modern man. Unfortunately, it does not speak flatteringly about him; moreover, euphemisms are no longer used in this part of the monologue. It condemns stupidity (not rationality!), While this — as stated — ‘drags / the heavy chain of the sin of laziness / stuck with comfort and indolence’ (p. 51). The piece that occupies us confirms the correctness of Marek Mariusz Tytka’s thoughts, in which we read:

Wychodząc od motywów biblijnych, [Wójtowicz — A.W.] dochodzi do życia współczesnego i zestawia ze sobą myśli ewangeliczne z rzeczywistością zgoła im przeciwną, jaką niesie współczesny nam świat. Te zestawienia niebanalne budują świat przedstawiony, pozwalają dookreślić miejsce człowieka [...]. Autor nie stroni od trudnych tematów, czasem gorzkich i niewygodnych, uważając, że człowieka należy oddać w pełni jego realności, wraz ze słabościami, grzechami, upadkami, a zarazem ukazuje światło nawrócenia ‘połamanego’ duchowo, zagubionego, osamotnionego, skrzywdzonego czasem człowieka.³³

Starting from biblical motives, [Wójtowicz — A.W.] comes to contemporary life and juxtaposes the evangelical thoughts with the reality quite opposite to them, which is brought by the contemporary world. These remarkable juxtapositions

³⁰ A. de Saint-Exupéry, *Mały Książę*, tłum. J. Szwykowski, Warszawa 2018, p. 47.

³¹ F. Mickiewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, p. 595.

³² Ibid.

³³ Quoted after: K. Wójtowicz, *Po prostu Emaus...*, p. 129.

build the represented world, allow to define the place of man [...]. The author does not shy away from difficult topics, sometimes bitter and inconvenient, believing that man should be fully presented to his reality, along with weaknesses, sins, failures, and at the same time shows the light of conversion of a spiritually 'broken', lost, lonely, and sometimes wronged man).

The ninth poem of Wójtowicz's series on Emmaus also fits in perfectly with the above reflection. The priest-poet in the title of the poem includes the abbreviated verse 28 from the Gospel of St. Luke about Emmaus. It reads in full: 'They approached the village where they were going, and He showed as if He was going to go on'. For Wójtowicz, the clause part is important: 'He showed that He was going to go further'. The shortening of the pericope serves to generalize the biblical theme of Emmaus. The poet seems to push the scene described by the evangelist to the background again, more precisely: he looks at it more broadly, pointing to the presence of Christ in human life. It is clear from the monologue that the story of the two disciples going to Emmaus is repeated in the biography of each person (hence the use of the plural):

Idzie z nami ale jakby Mu na nas nie zależało
jakby nasza droga nie była Jego drogą
jakby tylko na chwilę i przypadkiem
zbliżył się do nas (s. 52).

(He goes with us, but as if He doesn't care about us
as if our way were not His way
as if only for a moment and by accident
approached us).

In the above stanza, the subject speaks perversely, as in a moment he will negate the earlier statements. He will convince the reader of the constant presence of Christ in human life. The journey, signaled in the title of the piece, is common; takes place — to paraphrase the final of the poem unit — under the watchful eye of Providence. This poem, like most of the ones discussed above, resonates with the commentaries of biblical scholars who read Luke's pericope symbolically, emphasizing the elements of the road, itinerancy, and encounter in it.

The aforementioned themes are also developed in the poem, illustrating the pericope 'Stay with us, for it is almost evening and the day is almost over' (Lk 24:29). This time, however, there is a close relationship between the monologue and the biblical scene. The voice (as in the pericope) is taken by the disciples going to Emmaus. A collective lyrical subject recounts the journey and the supper at Emmaus. Here is the relevant passage:

Gościńcem idziemy już od dłuższego czasu
 dawno nastąpiło spowolnienie kroku
 wleczeni się noga za nogą
 ciągniemy za sobą coraz dłuższe cienie

Ale On wciąż idzie z nami
 dalej stawia badawcze pytania
 komentuje tajemnicze wydarzenia
 i wyjaśnia niewyjaśnione (s. 53).

(We have been going along the road for a long time
 long ago there was a slowdown in pace
 we are dragging foot by foot
 we drag longer and longer
 shadows behind us

But He still walks with us
 continues to put research questions
 comments on mysterious events
 and explains the unexplained).

A collective lyrical subject, impersonating the apostles, speaks in everyday language, without artistic embellishments. The last stanza about the present, while the previous stanzas dealt with the past, contains a punch verse — an assurance about the Lord's constant presence, about His staying with those 'whom He bestowed with friendship and love' (p. 53).

At this point, a digression is needed. A similar approach to Emmaus, more precisely: the theme of Christ's journey together not with His disciples, but with a man, can be found in the poems of two other priest-poets: Janusz Stanisław Pasierb *Po południu* (In the afternoon) and Franciszek Kamecki *Uczniowie z Emaus* (Disciples from Emmaus). Here is the vision written by Pasierb:

dziś po południu
 jeszcze raz od początku
 w drodze jak zawsze
 naprawdę dalej idący
 nieznajomy
 cierpliwy
 bliski.³⁴

³⁴ J.S. Pasierb, *Po południu* [in:] id., *Poezje wybrane*, wybór, wstęp i oprac. [selection, introduction and elaboration] B. Kuczera-Chachulska, Warszawa 1998, p. 61.

(this afternoon
 again from the beginning
 on the go as always
 really going on
 unknown
 patient
 close).

The title *Uczniowie z Emaus* from Kamecki's poem have the features of modern people: they have experienced war, fear, injustice, and have buried hope many times. On the way they are accompanied by a wanderer in whom, however, they do not recognize Jesus. Expressing their disappointment, they speak in the language of the apostles: '[...] and we expected that he would rebuild the world in our hearts'.³⁵ Disciples from Emmaus, transported by Kamecki into the realities of the 20th century, unlike their biblical prototypes, have 'eyes tied' to the end, remain in a darkened state (to refer to the Bible by Rev. Jakub Wujek), partially lose their sense of reality. Ultimately, they fail to recognize the Savior accompanying them.

The next, eleventh poem by Wójtowicz about Emmaus, the shortest in the entire series, only six verses, refers to the opening parts of the 30th biblical verse about the disciples of Emmaus: 'When He took his place at the table' (Lk 24:30). The reflections of the lyrical subject do not focus solely on Emmaus. The speaker tries to describe the table:

właściwe miejsce
 na prawdziwe spotkanie
 [...] zatrzymuje i łączy
 [...] jest poświęconym ołtarzem
 na którym połamany chleb
 staje się sakramentem (p. 54).

(the right place
 for a real meeting
 [...] Stops and connects
 [...] Is a blessed altar
 on which broken bread
 becomes a sacrament).

³⁵ F. Kamecki, *Uczniowie z Emaus* [in:] id., *Ten co umywa nogi. Wiersze zebrane z lat 1960–2000*, Pelplin 2001, p. 378.

The poem discreetly refers to the liturgical interpretation of the pericope of St. Luke, and it recalls that a mystical transformation of the bread took place in Emmaus.

The lyric is nice, for which the title was the question of the apostles, noted by the evangelist: ‘Did our heart not burn in us when he spoke to us on the way and explained the Scriptures to us?’ (Lk 24:32). The author’s lyrical subject compares the personal situation of the disciples going to Emmaus. He repeats twice that he experiences unpleasantness, pain due to — to quote a fragment of the poem — the lack of ‘heart fire / and first-hand exegesis’ (p. 55), which once happened to the apostles on their way to Emmaus. The subject, speaking on behalf of the poet, sadly states that if the scene from Emmaus had repeated in his life, unfortunately, like Cleophas and the other disciple, he would have shown immaturity. The piece has a curved composition; it begins and ends with an apostrophe to the Lord. The final direct turn is more elaborate, what is more: it is closely related to the scene from Emmaus. The speaker asks:

Panie
rozwiń przed nami drogi
na których zbliżasz się do ludzi
wykładaj cierpliwie Pisma (p. 55).

(Lord
unfolds the roads
ahead where you approach people
interpret the Scriptures patiently).

Wójtowicz’s poetic commentary on the biblical verse 33 from St. Luke’s story about Emmaus breaks down into two equal parts (nine poem verses each, therefore nona). The first one directly refers to the biblical story, the second — the general one is about the man. These two stanzas are parallel to each other. The lyrical subject first talks about the sudden return of the apostles to Jerusalem, then — to emphasize the universality of the scene from Emmaus — he paints a vision of the sudden, unexpected return of every person to the ‘common home’ (p. 56), New Jerusalem, known from the Apocalypse of St. John. This work proves that evangelical motifs, so numerous in Wójtowicz’s poetry, are sometimes treated freely, in an unrestricted manner, deviating from the original.

Humor is marked by the penultimate poem of a serious, profound series on Emmaus, which is an attempt to interpret the pericope ‘The Eleven told them that the Lord has indeed risen’ (Lk 24:34). This humour is surprising, moreover: it amazes, above all because it accompanies reflection on the theological truth about the resurrection. This truth is contrary to life experience, the so-called common sense. We hear about its irrationality at the beginning:

Kto mówi o zmartwychwstaniu
nie ma żadnych szans:
przeciw sobie ma wszystkich umarłych
z ich wielkim milczeniem (p. 57).

(Who is talking about the resurrection
no chance:
all the dead are against him
with their great silence).

In the further part of the monologue, the subject does not break with contrarieness, because he states that the resurrection — for now — is an individual case in the history of the world. In the final, we have perverse, successful contamination of the rhetorical question and the phraseological relationship:

Co by dzisiaj było
gdyby zaraz na wejściu
wieść o tym [zmartwychwstaniu — A.W.] rozeszła się po kościach
żywych i umarłych (s. 57).

(What would be today
if right at the entrance
the news of this [resurrection — A.W.] spread through my bones
the living and the dead).

In these verses, Wójtowicz proves that he can play with words, he is sensitive to the word, its songs — to repeat after Małgorzata Tęcza — ‘they are full of invention and wit’.³⁶ Due to the combination of the above phraseologism with the form of an apparent question (thus not requiring an answer), Wójtowicz does not reflect so much on the state of the world in which the truth about the resurrection has been denied, but shows its inalienable nature in the world.

The piece closing Wójtowicz’s series about Emmaus, referring to verse 35 from the Gospel of Luke. As we mentioned, he was thoroughly and expertly penetrated by Fr. Stefan Radziszewski.³⁷ This poem stands out for several reasons. First of all, there is a collective subject in it. The content of the monologue is the confessions of two disciples who met The Risen Christ on the way to Emmaus. The overriding organizing principle is contrast, which occurs with increased frequency. First of all, the first three stanzas are in contrast to the last one, they

³⁶ M. Tęcza, *Poeta-kaplan...*, p. 216.

³⁷ See: S. Radziszewski, *Jeden wiersz...*, pp. 721–726.

are different from it. What is more, all the verses form two opposing pairs. The first group consists of the first and second stanzas, a separate one — the third and fourth stanzas. In the first part, the speakers perform a self-characterization (emphasizing the sincerity of their confession), while the last two stanzas — although the apostles still speak — are dedicated to Christ, called the ‘Unrecognized Wanderer’ (p. 58). Here are the parallel verses from the first part of the song:

Uciekaliśmy tamtego dnia [...]

Uciekaliśmy jak najdalej [...]

Wracaliśmy do lat wczorajszych [...]

Uciekaliśmy jak najspieszniej (p. 58).

(We ran away that day [...]

We ran away as far as possible [...])

We were going back to yesterday’s [...]

We ran away as quickly as possible).

Parallelism is also the overriding principle that organizes the second part of the poem; here the stanzas begin as follows: ‘He found us / [...] He changed our hearts’ (pp. 58–59).

As we said, the contrast is also visible when we group the stanzas according to the scheme 3 + 1, i.e. we treat the first three stanzas as a whole (they are connected, for example, due to the sound similarity of the initial verses: ‘You can’t hide’, ‘There is no what to hide’, ‘There is nothing to hide’ — p. 58), and we consider the last one as separate because it begins differently: ‘You have to confess it’ (p. 59). Bearing in mind the abovementioned contrast, Radziszewski says that the work that concerns us as a whole is a confession ‘written into four parts’,³⁸ with the proviso that in the finale, ‘confiteor turns into credo’.³⁹ The lyrical monologue accumulates changing, sometimes extreme emotions, feelings, and moods tormenting Jesus’ disciples from Good Friday to the memorable meeting on the road to Emmaus. We learn about fear, disappointed hopes, joy, and finally, we hear a declaration of faith.

Wójtowicz’s lyrical commentary on the verse 35 from the Gospel of Luke follows the verse of biblical scholars; The liturgical interpretation is intertwined with the symbolic one. The work also corresponds with the theologians’ thought

³⁸ Ibid., p. 723.

³⁹ Ibid.

that the Risen Christ brings to His disciples the gift of enlightening the mind and strengthening their hearts⁴⁰. The discussed poem corresponds with the work by Jan Twardowski *Rany* (Wounds). This bond results, inter alia, from the presence in the first of the phrase ‘He used to separate bread with His pierced hand’ (p. 59). The lyrical subject from Twardowski’s poem in the initial apostrophe paraphrases the verse 35 from the Gospel of Luke (24:35): ‘They say that you were known in the breaking of bread’.⁴¹ He uses this passage a little perversely, more precisely: to prove that the more important identification mark of Christ, exceeding the gesture of breaking bread, are the wounds after the crucifixion: ‘wounds bear more witness than the hands have given away’.⁴² It should be emphasized that both poets emphasize the liturgical aspect of the pericope on Emmaus, and at the same time introduce the theme of the redeeming death of the Savior. Twardowski goes further — he shows the advantage of the latter motif over the sign of dividing bread.

Bearing in mind that belles-lettres often play the role of locus theologicus, and therefore may be a place where theological thought⁴³ is revealed, it is appropriate to answer the question of how theology manifests itself in Wójtowicz’s series. Earlier, however, let us recall that — according to an expert on the subject, Jerzy Szymik — in a literary work it is sometimes expressed directly (explicitly) or only implied (implicitly); finally, there are works from the so-called ‘theology à rebours’, that is inverted, contradicted. Let us listen to the explanations of this researcher:

⁴⁰ See: S. Grzybek, J. Kudasiewicz, T. Olszański, *Biblia na co dzień. Komentarz do Ewangelii*, Kraków 1975, pp. 247–249.

⁴¹ J. Twardowski, *Rany* [in:] id., *Wiersze*, Kraków 1996, p. 289.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Today, no one is surprised that literature is a kind of locus theologicus. The kerygmatic view of a literary work has received many theoretical studies. At this point, it is necessary to recall the valued works of Fr. Jerzy Szymik (*Teologia na początek wieku*, Katowice–Ząbki 2001; *Problem teologicznego wymiaru dzieła literackiego Czesława Miłosza*, Katowice 1996; *W poszukiwaniu teologicznej głębi literatury. Literatura piękna jako locus theologicus*, Katowice 2007) or Magdalena Ochwat (*Rzecz o relacji między Słowem a słowem, czyli teologia w literackiej optyce i refleksji*, “Initium. Czasopismo Teologicznych Poszukiwań” 40, 2010, pp. 92–99). Literary historians (in the analysis of specific titles) quite willingly show common points between literature and theology, in highly artistic writings they seek theological depth, describe literary works in terms of the presence or absence (reversal) of the kerygma. This kind of analysis was made by Marian Maciejewski („*Ażeby ciało powróciło w słowo*”. *Próba kerygmaticznej interpretacji literatury*, Lublin 1991), Zofia Zarębianka (*Miejsce święte: Bóg, który jest ciemny: dynamika przedstawień Boga w twórczości Reinera Marii Rilkego* [in:] *Święte miejsca w literaturze*, red. Z. Chojnowska, A. Rzymka, B. Tarnowska, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 425–429), Bożena Chrząstowska (*Otwarte niebo: literackie świadectwa przeżywania Eucharystii*, Poznań 1992), Małgorzata Krzysztofik (*Literatura a teologia. Interpretacja kerygmaticzna jako metoda lektury tekstu poetyckiego* [in:] *Ut pictura poesis. Wokół korespondencji sztuk*, red. P. Rosiński, Z. Trzaskowski, Kielce 2015, pp. 137–158).

Dzieło literackie może zawierać teologię wyrażoną ‘wprost’ [...] i będzie ona wówczas odczytywana w sposób niejako narzucający się, łatwo uchwytne. Ale również może ona mieścić w sobie teologię ukrytą — czasem głęboko, w różnych składających się nań komponentach. Będzie to teologia uprawiana i wypowiedziana ‘nie wprost’ (implicite [...]). Ten drugi przypadek zachodzi o wiele częściej i — co ważniejsze — wydaje się bardziej ‘właściwy’ dla literatury i bardziej ‘interesujący’ z punktu widzenia teologii. Jest to jednak jednocześnie teologia o wiele trudniejsza do zrekonstruowania i wyinterpretowania. [...] Literatura zawiera również przykłady tzw. ‘teologii à rebours’. [...] To literatura [...] rozwijająca i snująca myśl teologiczną w ‘negatywie’, o zróżnicowanych stopniach ‘teologicznej inwersji’. Może przybrać postać teologii ‘zbuntowanej’, a występować [...] w kształcie para-, quasi- czy antyteologicznych summ, będących transformacją chrześcijańskich prawd.⁴⁴

The last of these methods is — of course — the most interesting, but also the most difficult, both for the author and the recipient. In Wójtowicz’s series, theology is felt at almost every step, it is expressed directly, and therefore in the least complicated way, too simplified for many. In the poems paraphrasing biblical quotations, however, this method seems to be the most appropriate.

Conclusion

Finally, it should be emphasized that the series *Emaus — werset po wersecie* fits well with three other non-decluttering poems by Wójtowicz: *Z Emaus do Jerozolimy i z powrotem*, (From Emmaus to Jerusalem and back), *Uczniowie z Emaus*, and *Raport z Emaus* (Report from Emmaus). This closeness is due to two reasons. First of all, the presence of the same biblical quotations, apart from that, in the last piece (as in one of the links in the series) a collective lyrical subject speaks — disciples who experienced an extraordinary encounter in Emmaus. As we said, the series is a paraphrase of verse 15 from the Gospel of Luke; some of them — based

⁴⁴ ‘A literary work may contain a theology expressed ‘directly’ [...] and it will then be read in an overwhelming, easily tangible way. But it can also contain hidden theology — sometimes deeply, in its various components. It will be a theology practiced and expressed ‘indirectly’ (implicitly [...]). The latter is much more frequent and, more importantly, seems to be more ‘appropriate’ for literature and more ‘interesting’ from a theological point of view. However, it is also a theology much more difficult to reconstruct and interpret. [...] The literature also contains examples of the so-called ‘theology à rebours’. [...] This literature [...] develops and spins a theological thought in ‘negative’, with varying degrees of ‘theological inversion’. It can take the form of a ‘rebellious’ theology, and appear [...] in the form of para-, quasi- or anti-theological summons, which are a transformation of Christian truths’; J. Szymik, *Teologia...*, pp. 300–301.

on quotations (less often paraphrases) — return in the poems *Z Emaus do Jerozolimy i z powrotem* (here you can hear the opening parts of verses 13 and 33) and *Uczniowie z Emaus*, where passages of verse 16 are quoted ('their eyes [...] as if tethered') and verse 35 ('they knew him while breaking the bread' and 'what happened to them on the way'). In the latter work, there are paraphrases of biblical verses. And so, the verse 'sparked in their hearts' (p. 39) is a remake of the verse 32 of the chapter 24 on Emmaus (which takes the shape: 'Did the heart not burn in us...'). In turn, the verse 'He opened their eyes' (p. 39) is a modification of the biblical verse 31: 'then their eyes were opened' (Lk 24:31).

In the poem *Uczniowie z Emaus*, we have an explosion of emotions known from *Emaus — werset po wersecie* (especially from the poem that closes the whole thing) and the feelings that most likely accompanied the apostles on the way to Emmaus, then to Emmaus itself, and finally on the way back to Jerusalem.

There is also a fairly strong relationship between the series of *Emaus — werset po wersecie* and the poem *Z Emaus do Jerozolimy i z powrotem*, in which the author performs an almost 'mathematical' analysis of a fragment of the Gospel of Luke (24:13–35). He states the asymmetry of this relationship, which results from the fact that the inspired author needs as many as 19 verses to tell the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus, while he speaks very casually about the way back. He only needs a passage from the Bible verse 33 to let the reader know that 'at the same hour they picked up and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven gathered together and others with them' (Lk 24:33). Fr. Wójtowicz, explaining the asymmetrical relationship of St. Luke, lined with humor, but it is — as Krzysztof Dybciak put it — a holy, salutary laugh that multiplies faith.⁴⁵

Wójtowicz's last non-frustrating poem showing affinity with the Emmaus series *Emaus — werset po wersecie* (*Emmaus — verse by verse*), especially with its final link, commenting on verse 35, is *Raport z Emaus* (*Report from Emmaus*). The element that binds these titles is, above all, the collective lyrical subject. In *Raport z Emaus*. (*Report from Emmaus*), the speakers only report on the course of the supper. This relationship is truncated compared to the monologue that completes the verse closing the series in question. In the latter, the apostles' confessions concern not only a joint supper with the Unrecognized Wanderer, but also the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus and back. In the Emmaus Report, the account of the supper is detailed; it mixes artistic and colloquial styles. Once speaking, they reach for a metaphor, e.g. 'a flash from the sunny sky / opened our eyes and moved our lazy hearts' (p. 38). At other times, they do not shy away from phraseological connections, which are a feature of colloquial language, e.g. 'We didn't stay long in Emmaus / we didn't stay in a cozy place' (p. 38).

⁴⁵ See: K. Dybciak, *O Bogu humoru i fantazji*, "W Drodze" 5 (1989), p. 91–94.

Emaus — werset po wersecie, is Kazimierz Wójtowicz's poetic reflection on the evangelical pericope. It is the view of a mature priest and poet at the biblical fragment. Wójtowicz's poetic reflection has great artistic value, but it is also kerygmatic. It is based on semantic transformations, parallelisms, uses the principle of contrast, and contains elements of verbal play. It does not lack original, surprising solutions for the reader, such as giving the floor to the apostles, juxtaposing the everyday word and the Eternal Word, evangelical allusions to St. John, a clear reference to *the Praise of the Stupidity* of Erasmus of Rotterdam or a reflection on the table as a meeting place, preceding the main theme. Wójtowicz's series echoes the comments of biblical scholars who interpret the pericope of St. Luke in symbolic terms. Here, there are plenty of motives of the road, wandering, meeting, coming to faith, recognition, and hospitality. This way of reading the biblical story is also chosen by other writers, including Roman Brandstaetter (*Spotkanie w Emaus*; Meeting in Emaus), Zygmunt Marek Piechocki (trilogy *Emaus I, Emaus II, Emaus III*; Emmaus I, Emmaus II, Emmaus III), Andrzej Szczypiorski (*I ominęli Emaus*; They missed Emmaus). To a lesser extent, Wójtowicz refers to liturgical interpretation. In the priest-poet series that is interesting to us, he does not refer to the contrapuntal nature of the story of Emmaus to the fragment about the meeting of The Risen Christ with Mary Magdalene. A gentle allusion to this way of reading Luke's pericope was included in his ekphrastic poem *Droga do Emaus (według Scarselino)* (The road to Emmaus [after Scarselino]), also from the volume *Po prostu Emaus. Wybór wierszy z lat 1978–2016*.

Poetycka medytacja Kazimierza Wójtowicza nad biblijną perykopą Łk (24,13–55). O cyklu *Emaus — werset po wersecie*

Streszczenie

Artykuł traktuje o bezprecedensowym w polskiej poezji cyklu Kazimierza Wójtowicza *Emaus — werset po wersecie* włączonym do tomu *Po prostu Emaus. Wybór wierszy z lat 1978–2016* (Kraków 2016). Prezentowana refleksja jest podzielona na cztery segmenty. Pierwszy ma charakter wprowadzenia. Pokazuje fascynację kapłana-poety biblijnym motywem Emaus, o czym świadczą rozliczne jego liryki ekfrastyczne oraz nieekfrastyczne, przez autora klasyfikowane jako *Emaus w słowie* oraz *Emaus w obrazie*. Druga część jest próbą usystematyzowania komentarzy biblistów na temat perykopy św. Łukasza (24,13–35). Omówione zostały trzy główne kierunki interpretacyjne: liturgiczny, symboliczny oraz uwzględniający kontrapunktowość perykopy o Emaus wobec fragmentu opowiadającego o spotkaniu Zmartwychwstałego Jezusa z Marią Magdaleną. Trzeci segment — najobszerniejszy — przynosi analizę 15 liryków składających się na analizowany cykl, parafrazujących większość wersetów z perykopy św. Łukasza. Opis kolejnych utworów nie

jest rozbudowany ze względu na skromne rozmiary tego artykułu. W części ostatniej podkreślono, że poetycka medytacja Wójtowicza nad perykopą św. Łukasza posiada walory artystyczne, ma też charakter kerygmacyjny. Komentując wersety biblijne za pomocą języka poezji, autor nawiązuje przede wszystkim do symboliki perykopy. W mniejszym stopniu sięga do interpretacji liturgicznej. W zakończeniu podjęto próbę zestawienia cyklu z innymi lirykami Wójtowicza o Emaus.

Słowa kluczowe

Kazimierz Wójtowicz, motyw Emaus w literaturze, polska poezja współczesna, *Emaus — wersety po wersecie*

Keywords

Kazimierz Wójtowicz, Emmaus motif in literature, contemporary Polish poetry, *Emaus — wersety po wersecie* (*Emmaus — verse by verse*)

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