

Agata Brajerska-Mazur / Edyta Chlebowska (eds.)

On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays

Vol. 3. Interpretations



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On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays

The book is the third volume of an extensive four-volume monograph devoted to the work of Cyprian Norwid (1821–1883), one of the most outstanding Polish authors. The impact of Norwid's oeuvre does not fade, as he addresses fundamental and timeless issues, such as the moral and spiritual condition of man or his place in the world and history, and seeks to answer universal questions. The book contains an extensive selection of interpretations made by eminent researchers, who represent different approaches to Norwid's works: his poems, short stories, dramas and lithographs.

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On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays

POLISH STUDIES
TRANSDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

Edited by Krzysztof Zajas / Jarosław Fazan

VOLUME 41



PETER LANG

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Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

The Publication is funded by Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland as a part of the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Ministry cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



NATIONAL PROGRAMME
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITIES

Cover illustration: Portrait of Cyprian Norwid, photography by Michał Szweyca, ca. 1856 (copy before 1930). Image source: National Library in Poland.

ISSN 2191-3293

ISBN 978-3-631-87776-0 (Print)

E-ISBN 978-3-631-88068-5 (E-PDF)

E-ISBN 978-3-631-88125-5 (EPUB)

DOI 10.3726/b19817

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Peter Lang – Berlin · Bern · Bruxelles · New York · Oxford · Warszawa · Wien



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This publication has been peer reviewed.

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Edyta Chlebowska

Editor's Notes

The articles collected in this publication were written over a span of almost a century. Some of them were published prior to the publication of eight out of the 18 volumes critically edited by Sawicki, as well as the complete edition of the poet's *Pisma wszystkie* edited by Gomulicki. Up until the 1970s, researchers were using many different editions. If this status quo were continued, we would be dealing with chaotic textual criticism. Given this situation, the decision was made, for the sake of the contemporary readers' (especially foreign readers') convenience, to allow for bibliographical anachronism, in compliance with the binding rules of scholarly critical editing adopted by Norwidology. Thus the quotations have been adjusted – wherever it was possible – and based on the critical edition of *Dzieła wszystkie* prepared by the team led by Stefan Sawicki: Cyprian Norwid, *Dzieła wszystkie*, Vol. III: *Poematy 1*, ed. Stefan Sawicki, Adam Cedro (Lublin: TN KUL, 2009); Vol. IV: *Poematy 2*, eds. Stefan Sawicki, Piotr Chlebowski (Lublin: TN KUL, 2011); Vol. V: *Dramaty 1*, ed. Julian Maślanka (Lublin: TN KUL, 2015); Vol. VI: *Dramaty 2*, ed. Julian Maślanka (Lublin: TN KUL, 2014); Vol. VII: *Proza 1*, ed. Rościsław Skręt (Lublin: TN KUL, 2007); Vol. X: *Listy 1: 1839–1854*, ed. Jadwiga Rudnicka (Lublin: TN KUL, 2008); Vol. XI: *Listy 2: 1855–1861*, ed. Jadwiga Rudnicka (Lublin: TN KUL, 2016); Vol. XII: *Listy 3: 1862–1866*, ed. Jadwiga Rudnicka, Elżbieta Lijewska (Lublin: TN KUL, 2019) (hereinafter referred to as DW, a Roman numeral indicating the volume, and an Arabic one – the page). In other cases, Norwid's texts have been cited according to: Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, zebrał, tekst ustalił, wstępem i uwagami krytycznymi opatrzył J.W. Gomulicki [*Pisma wszystkie*, collected, compiled, introduced and critically annotated by J. W. Gomulicki], Vols. I–XI (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971–1976) (hereinafter referred to as PWSz, a Roman numeral indicating the volume, an Arabic one the page). This decision, motivated by the present editorial status of Norwid's literature, involves discrepancies in the graphic conventions used; particularly in the case of Norwidian emphases, which in PWSz were rendered in the form of so-called spaced out print while in DW – with the use of italics.

The bibliographic records and notes have been unified in order to produce a synthetic entirety with a coherent and logical message. Concerning Norwid's texts cited in the articles, beside the original (Polish) version, the philological

English translations have also been given, their boundaries clearly marked by square brackets. Sometimes the existing translations of Norwid's poems into the English language were quoted. In such cases, the source of the translation has been indicated in a footnote. Additionally, the volume has been provided with indexes of the names and titles of Norwid's texts. It was also considered appropriate to list the sources of the printed texts.

Tadeusz Makowiecki

Promethidion

Abstract: The paper presents an interpretation of *Promethidion*, the first longer work that marked Norwid's programme and poetic uniqueness. The content of this piece is diversified; apart from basic elements, such as two versified dialogues and an epilogue in prose, it is notable because of various mottos, a poetic dedication, a poetic introduction, an introduction in prose, and finally footnotes. According to the eponymous declarations, the first dialogue, *Bogumił*, is to be devoted to the content, namely goodness. The second dialogue, *Wiesław*, to form, that is beauty. The third, with the light of truth, binding the three dialogues together as a whole. In fact, both versified dialogues deal with this classic triad: goodness – beauty – truth. Over half of *Bogumił's* dialogue is devoted to the apotheosis of love, while the rest of the monologue is composed of verses praising work and related concepts such as, practicality, activity, execution, embodiment, and performance. Norwid claims that beauty comes from love or work; beauty (art) calls for awe, motivates man to work, to execute love in the real world, and to be resurrected. In the second dialogue, the anticipated concept of goodness does not appear even once. Truth is frequently discussed, although it has various properties, from approaches that are from a logical nature to ontological, or even metaphysical. It may be said that *Promethidion* discusses five concepts: art, love, work, conscience, and continuity. This piece is not a philosophical treatise in the form of Platonic dialogues, but a literary work, distanced from any grand Romantic concepts and displaying original composition and style properties.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, *Promethidion*, dialogue, Platonic dialogue, Platonic triad, goodness, beauty, truth

I.

The author of *Promethidion* is the most common and, admittedly, a highly proper designation used to refer to Norwid. *Promethidion* is perhaps not his most perfect work, neither his greatest, nor the most original, but it is certainly Norwid's first major creative work. This work, the one that distinguished the poet from other creative writers by turning him into a literary name and... providing a pseudonym. Moreover, this work indeed contains and expresses numerous key features of Norwid's creative persona which in other works was often developed more strongly but rather unilaterally. Finally, it contains many new and innovative ideas in Polish literature presented in a lapidary form, which makes it possible to memorise them. Consequently, it is not surprising that this particular work gained the greatest fame, readership, and scholarly investigation. *Promethidion's*

recognition may be measured by the largest number of printed issues and the largest number of research projects either written as separate studies, or individual chapters in more general reviews on Norwid's writings.

Nevertheless, there are many concepts in *Promethidion* that are still not sufficiently explored. Most scholars have been devoted to commenting on Norwid's views embedded in this work and trying to arrange his poetic statements into a relatively consistent system of judgments which would reflect the entirety of the poet's aesthetic, philosophical and social beliefs and convictions. Although many are highly insightful, these works outlined Norwid's views accurately yet mostly unilaterally; they highlighted the aesthetic, religious-philosophical or social assumptions, trying to fully explain them all by using only several of his views.

Apart from this main and most important group of publications, other studies were supplementary or (those that were more extensive and devoted to other issues), by necessity, only briefly mentioned the ideas presented in *Promethidion*. Some showcased the relationship between the views presented around the time of writing *Promethidion* as well as earlier or later works by Norwid, while others tried to pinpoint foreign influences (Plato and Platonists, German idealistic philosophy, the Bible, French social utopists, etc.). Finally, there were those that showed the innovative nature of the poet's theories against related later theoreticians in Poland and abroad. The studies of strictly literary issues, literary properties, and values of this work were marginalised; if mentioned, these publications were always discussed from a general standpoint and reluctantly in almost all instances. However, it is becoming more typical that the ideas in *Promethidion* are being met with approval and frequently with the greatest enthusiasm.

As the studies of interpreting and systematising the poet's views have greatly advanced our understanding of *Promethidion*, we shall skip the issues such as, for example, the relationship between art and work, the connections among various arts, their ties with craftsmanship, criticism of imitation, recognition of the great value of the form-letter, and the project of extending the scope of exhibitions, etc. This article will move on to typical literary issues to hopefully shed more light on the research of Norwid's views.

Let us begin with the most superficial and simple matters, namely the arrangement of the parts of *Promethidion*. The title with a subtitle and a motto by Pliny chosen by the poet are followed by a poetic dedication (to Łubieński); next, again with a motto, comes as a poetic introduction ("Witajcie anieli pokornej pracy" [Welcome, angels of humble work]); after that, there is one more introduction, in prose (*Do Czytelnika*), and only after them, the first dialogue *Bogumił* (with a motto), the second dialogue *Wiesław* (also with a motto); finally, we arrive at

an epilogue in prose, singular, but composed of twenty fragments. Once several footnotes (some a half-page in length) are taken into account, we may fully observe the inner diversity of the work. It is even more impressive as the entire publication is only forty pages long and prose constantly intertwine with verses, and dialogues with monologues.

There may be various reasons for such a diversified layout of the work. One of them may be the author's careless haste when of gluing together distinct small units to form a single publication. Another reason might lie in the slow progression of the work, as it was being written for several years and under various circumstances and published later, without changes and deletions out of respect towards the organic development of the entire creation. There is, in all likelihood, that the poet chose two out of dozens of dialogues written between 1847 and 1851, added introductions, footnotes, and an epilogue at the end, thus creating the whole work. Whichever perspective is chosen for the time preceding the publication of *Promethidion*, the fact remains that, while preparing the work for printing, the poet selected some elements from his personal portfolio, omitted others (numerous dialogues were written in that period), arranged them in a specific and predetermined order, and added introductions, mottos, footnotes, and dedications; in short, he somehow managed to compose his publication. Still, the same question remains: what are the notable compositional features of the work in the form it was originally printed?

They seem to correspond with a certain characteristic of Norwid's style which transpires in many of his literary works and is extremely important and emblematic to this poet. It consists of coating the heart of a certain matter (an image, a word, a gesture) with rich pulp (descriptions, considerations, side notes, etc.) and husks through which you have to break and bite off before you get to the proper hidden seed, usually simple and mature. It must be noted that this compositional method has nothing to do with the pursuit of an impressive denouement, if only for the straightforward reason that Norwid's seed is far from glamorous and unique, it is almost always plain and simple.

Furthermore, it is not tied to the method of using other literary resources, such as the attitude frequently employed by some authors who deliberately accumulate motifs and situations to stimulate the curiosity of the reader or listener, to enrich, or to "sensationalise" the simple and uncomplicated content. No, Norwid's works belong to a completely different compositional type.

Let us use some analogies. Musical instruments that rely on the sound of strings must have resonant chambers, whether they are bodies of violins or cellos or those of pianos. They do not need echo-related arrangements that are essential for flutes or clarinets. Certain writers create similarly resonant chambers within their

works. Joseph Conrad is one of the most recently famous writers in this category. His intricate compositions, moving the action several years back, introductions, episodes, numerous descriptions, etc., create a great acoustic background onto which the author then throws a short song that roars and vibrates with all the richness of tones that were accumulated beforehand. Norwid composed in a similar manner. Of course, the similarity only pertains to the fact that he also creates great acoustic interiors in his works, as Norwid's songs are completely different and the resonant components are dissimilar and otherwise arranged. The works of those two writers resemble each other only in the manner of extracting all sounds of a specific note thanks to the previously built-in echo arrangements.

To move from metaphors to concrete information, let us consider, for example, how many tones the poet utilises in the "Fortepian Szopena" [Chopin's Grand Piano]; how he shifts from caressing the keys of the goldbee song to the vision of the Cossacks charging, so that the last words may resonate with a lot of giggling sounds: "Ideal – sięgnął bruku –" (PWsz II,147) [The Ideal – has reached the street –].¹ It is the manner Norwid mostly arranges his lyrical prose or dramatic works – not focusing on the action, plot and descriptions as his main creative highlight. Especially in his later works, from *Quidam* to [Cleopatra and Caesar], he finds extraordinary depth in every tone and semitone, every word and manner of pronouncing it, every act and gesture through the concealments accumulated beforehand.

Promethidion belongs to the first, yet already mature period, of Norwid's creativity. The question arises: if and how was the poet building his system of resonances in this particular work? It seems that *Promethidion* belongs to Norwid's first original and distinctive compositions also in this respect.

II.

The first group of elements preceding and preparing the resonant background in *Promethidion* is themed. The poet states several times in the poetic introduction as well as later in the prosaic one that "do sztuki powraca jak do matki" [returns to art as if to the mother], or that both dialogues are about the appreciation of what is called art. The first dialogue begins with the words: "Taka rozmowa była o Chopinie / (Który *naczelny* u nas jest artystą):" (DW IV, 99) [And they talked about Chopin again, / – – Our foremost artist, you know],² and then presents the

1 Trans. Danuta Borhardt in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), p. 77.

2 Trans. Jerzy Peterkiewicz and Burns Singer, *Five Centuries of Polish Poetry*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1960), p. 78.

dispute between the assembled (about music, beauty, order) on the next several pages; finally, after discussing these related issues, he lets Bogumił speak about art.

The large number of allusions to the main theme is a frequent tendency in various literary works. Although, of course, there are writers moving directly *ad rem*, or even beginning as if halfway through the main plot, only gradually passing through the hints in the text to reconstruct the introductory parts that were not stated out loud before. Therefore, concluding that Norwid belongs to the first type of writers who foreshadow the main theme of their work in advance is not an entirely trivial assumption.

More important, however, is the second resonant group. The very title serves as an opening. The word *Promethidion* is dignified, mysterious and serious, portends momentous and rather difficult content, and prepares what is needed – the tone. The same task is even more prominently performed by the dedication to Łubieński: “Tobie – *Umarły*, te poświęcam pieśni” (DW IV, 94) [To you – *Deceased*, I devote my songs]. These words intend to, apart from the tribute to a friend, instil the belief in us of the deepest earnestness of the text that follows. It is not governed by even the most sublime whims of imagination, but by the truth and sincerity of intentions under the patronage of the spirit of the deceased. Calling him as if a witness to the stand evidences the validity of the raised issues:

Bo *cień* gdy schyla się nad pergaminem,
To prawdę czyta, o podstępach nie śni...

(DW IV, 94)

[For the *shadow*, when it leans over the parchments
Reads the truth, does not dream about deception...]

The introduction has a similar tone: “Witajcie, Anieli / Pokornej pracy” (DW IV, 95) [Welcome, Angels / of humble work]. The remarks in the preface written in prose aim at the same goal using slightly different means: “W dialogach podobnych najważniejsze dla ludzkości pytania rozstrzygały się” (DW IV, 97) [The most important questions for humanity were settled in similar dialogues]. The poet suggests, as if in passing, the formal affinity of his work with Plato’s dialogues, where the most important issues were resolved “as well,” thus suggesting the importance of the issues Norwid raised. Finally, the introduction ends with the poet’s remark that his deliberations are aimed at wisdom “która tak od *bojaźni w Bogu* zaczynając, kończy na *wolności w Bogu*, / musi sobie *krzyżem*, to jest bolesnym bojowaniem, drogę pierwej otwierać” (DW IV, 98) [which begins with

the *fear of God*, ends with freedom in God – it needs to use *the cross*, meaning the painful fight, to open the path first]. It is done without explicitly calling out the name of God, after all, the poet uses words and notions that denote the highest emotional eminence. The author seems to be putting priestly robes onto his work before entrusting it with an important text to be read.

The dialogue itself begins with sociable small talk about Chopin, art, and beauty. From those discussions, jumping from one topic to another, going around in circles, and repeating the same common beliefs, one thing becomes apparent: the understanding of how very difficult the main problem is. This is their compositional role in the resonant series, intended to prepare the listener to comprehend the entire load content of the poet's claims that will soon be revealed. One of the participants suddenly interrupts the dispute:

– Przestańmy! cyt... uciszcie się, moi kochani –
Władysław wołał – wkrótce Bogumił zaśpiewa...

(DW IV, 105)

[– Let us stop! hush... be quiet, my beloved –
Władysław called – soon Bogumił will sing...]

(Somewhat similarly to *Dziady* [Forefather's Eve], where Felix silences the fellow prisoners in the Philomates' cell and prepares the listeners for Konrad's song.) And Bogumił starts his great monologue, or rather his improvisation, and moves directly to the central point; but, which is highly illustrious, he does not formulate any judgements in his name, as if his own words are not yet important enough. In the 6-verse invocation, the poet inserts a resonant lens once again:

– Spytam się tedy wiecznego-człowieka,
Spytam się dziejów o spowiedź piękności;

...

“Cóż wiesz o *pięknem*?”

(DW IV, 105)

[– I shall ask then the eternal – man,
I shall ask history for a confession of beauty:

...

“What do you know of *beauty*?”...]

* The name Bogu-mił [found pleasant by God] is, of course, deliberately chosen as the main defender of Norwid's theses, just as Wie-sław [praising wisdom] in the next dialogue dedicated to knowledge.

And only then, after nearly ten pages of the most diverse yet always indirect ways of preparing the recipient, does the poet consider the moment to be ripe enough so that three ordinary words, which he puts in a short sentence, may be heard with full power: “kształtem jest Miłości” [is the shape of Love]. After this lapidary statement, the poet formulates a long sentence full of enumerations as if he was trying to make up for the previous laconic claim.

Similar poetic resonance means are used by the poet over a dozen verses further in the poem when he defines another concept foundational in his views: work. He again turns to the eternal man in a longer apostrophe, again citing the man’s words instead of his own, after enumerating several words from the realm of the “sublime” (God, sin, beauty, conscience) gives a short summary of what work is, etc. The poet assumed an analogous stance also in the second dialogue, *Wiesław*.

The enumeration and full inventory of this type of poetic means is not the purpose of the current elaboration; a general characterisation will suffice at the moment. It is important to pay attention to the third group of “poetic amplifiers,” which consists of two types: one includes numerous mottos, the other, even more abundant footnotes (in *Promethidion*, there are four mottos and eighteen footnotes across nearly forty standard pages of text).

The mottos set the emotional tone for the larger parts of the text and create their atmosphere. For example, it is enough to quote two to comprehend their role: “Morituri te salutant, Veritas” and “Nie za sobą z krzyżem Zbawiciela, ale za Zbawicielem z krzyżem swoim” (DW IV, 98, 99) [Not after oneself with the Saviour’s cross, but after the Saviour with *one’s own cross*]. Moreover, this “resonant” or “overtural” role of each motto in general is widely recognised; it is only advisable to point out here that Norwid is one of those writers that utilise them very often. The type of footnotes used by Norwid is more important. They refer to smaller fragments of text but perform a motto-like role for them. They are not of objective-informative nature, as in the predominant group of authors, but rather subjective, often with strong emotional hues, digressive remarks, and frequently of polemical character. For example, to the words of the Count in the first dialogue, “Niech zatem każdy rzeczy swej pilnuje” (DW IV, 105) [Each shall care for *their own thing*], Norwid adds a footnote saying: “Nie rzeczy swej, ale krzyża swego, to jest rzeczy pospolitej – tak z chrystianizmem ... nauczaliby Hrabie ... Ojcowie spod Wiednia” (DW IV, 105) [Not *their own thing*, but *their cross*, which is the *res publica* – in this Christian way ... the Count would be taught ... by the Fathers from Vienna]. It is a typical footnote used by Norwid.

Another frequent element in the poet's footnotes are "personal" remarks written in the first person e.g. "zwracam uwagę" [I draw attention], "długo, długo myślałem i szukałem, aż przekonałem się" [I have thought and searched for a long, long time until I became convinced], "autor wykładał to już" [the author has explained it already], "tę myśl w zarysie naprzód rzucam" [I signal the sketch of this thought in advance], "że tu wspomnę Tadeusza Brodowskiego" [let me mention Tadeusz Brodowski here], "jaka ogromna szkoda!" [such a great pity!], "nie radbym przechodzić granic laikowi zastrzeżonych, wszakże" [I would not want to cross the boundaries for laymen, but...].

Almost all the footnotes in *Promethidion* refer to the text of both versed dialogues (*Bogumił* and *Wiesław*), not to the author's introductory or epilogue elaborations, which are written in prose, in the first person, and contain many personal remarks. Apparently, the footnotes for the latter were less necessary. When it comes to the text of the dialogues, already objectified through the very form and given as statements of someone else, the footnotes emotionally bring them closer to the reader. The author's constant and highly personal remarks in the frequent digressive footnotes undermine the distance from the views given by the characters in the dialogues, views as if only cited by the writer. Conveying the author's close, vivid association with the judgements, only supposedly reported, is the main compositional task of these footnotes. Of course, the footnotes also perform other, more proper tasks, and above all provide information; Norwid is particularly eager to explain certain words with their etymological analyses (usually remarkable).

The fourth group of resonant elements is very characteristic of Norwid's work. In the text, there is a number of words graphically highlighted by using italics or spaced-out print. Seemingly, these are completely superficial features. But first of all, they were not even roughly applied to such an extent by any other Polish writer contemporary to the poet. Norwid introduced them in such quantities for the first time; sometimes, 20 or 30 words are highlighted in this way on a single printed page. Furthermore, these graphic features are by no means only ornamentation, similar to interjections, initials or mixing letters in different fonts in some bibliophile publications. No. They are associated with the content in the closest way; the poet uses them, not only in prints, but also in letters or literary notes. They are purely resonant in nature; their task is to ensure that certain words or sentences sound stronger and more clearly when reading aloud, and if the text is read silently, this accent distinguishes them from the flow of sentences. Not belonging to the innately literary components but to the external, semi-technical elements of the work, together with the more obviously literary

elements, they co-shape the group of resonant motifs which Norwid surrounds the essential content of his work.

Using *Promethidion* as an example, which belongs to the poet's early larger works, the compositional distinctiveness of resonant motifs is noticeable, as usual in early works with particular clarity, even glaring. In his later works, Norwid embedded those elements into the main flow of his text more harmoniously and, consequently, made them less graspable. Therefore, knowing *Promethidion* from this perspective may grant us insight into the very specific and individual compositional properties of Norwid's works in general.

We see, furthermore, that the variety emphasised at the beginning and so evident in the structure of *Promethidion* is not a random patchwork, but a structural diversity where specific elements, such as introductions, mottos, footnotes, and accents, etc., perform different functions. The diversity here is surely one thing, differentiation. Certain elements alert the reader in advance, drawing attention to some elements of the text, other elements do the same "bottom-up," so through footnotes, and there are those that set the "tone" for some of the longer passages; graphic resources additionally highlight the more important places. Further, we may find verses intermixed with prose, and monologues with dialogues, and all of those, with digressions from the author; finally, after lapidary sentences with strictly intellectual judgements, voluminous emotional-mood elements are inserted so everything introduces a certain uneasiness and vibrancy to the main flow of the piece and is full of unexpected twists and shifts of viewpoints. This engaging the reader into the problems discussed in the work and making the reader constantly vigilant and collaborative becomes an increasingly important trait of Norwid's writing. As we see here, *Promethidion* is a symptomatic piece. And this restless diversity is especially typical for Norwid's works written in the period between 1848 and 1865, when, apart from *Promethidion*, he also wrote *Zwolon*, *Krakus*, *Wanda*, *Tyrtej* [Tyrtaeus] and *Za kulisami* [Backstage], and some poems: above all "Chopin's Grand Piano" and the *Vade-mecum* series. The later pieces gained more and more features of monumental works.

Finally, the last consideration raises two more comments. Capturing and distinguishing in a literary work all of the elements that make up a system of acoustic amplification, equivalent to acoustic chambers, allows the reader to better capture and extract the essential elements, the ones that perform the same role as strings in an instrument. At this point, we shall move on to those proper literary strings of *Promethidion*. However, we first have to consider the second remark arising from previous considerations which states the following: resonant factors do not always have to amplify the core melody. Sometimes, as a result of a not particularly agreeable setting, they can suppress certain notes and

drown out others, deforming the melody itself to a certain extent. It is necessary to always investigate what the main melody is, one devoid of the background. It seems that *Promethidion* shifts this right course, although only partly, because of the excess of certain elements.

Let us take a look at one more foreshadowing element of the system. The most dangerous passages of any form of author's introductions are constantly those which the author tries to summarise the content of his literary work. For the content of a literary work is expressed through its form and any attempts to translate the verses into the language of prose are highly dangerous; this seems to happen in *Promethidion* as well. In the preface *To the Reader*, the poet wrote: "W dialogu pierwszym idzie o *formę*, to jest *Piękno*. W drugim o *treść*, to jest o *Dobro* i o *światłość* obu, *Prawdę*" (DW IV, 97) [In the first dialogue, it is about the *form*, that is *Beauty*. In the second one, it is about the *content*, that is *Goodness* and the light of both, the *Truth*]. Judging from such foreshadowing, it is possible to assume that the topic of consideration in both dialogues would be to set the interrelation between the three classical and basic philosophical concepts: goodness, beauty, and truth. Norwid devoted two dialogues to these three concepts. The first one is to discuss the form, beauty; the second one is to focus on the content, goodness, and the truth performs the role of a mysterious connector that binds the content with the form. Already at first glance, the layout of the dialogues may seem unclear. This ambiguity will only expand when we examine the subtitles. Dialogue I is provided with the subtitle: "rzecz o sztuce i stanowisku sztuki. JAKO FORMA" (DW IV, 99) [On Art and the Standpoint of Art. AS A FORM]. So, we observe something similar to an internal shift, instead of beauty, there is art, a concept that is close and yet very different. In the second dialogue, which was supposed to focus on goodness (in the light of the preface), a total surprise awaits the reader. The explanation under the title foreshadows: "rzecz o prawdzie, jej promieniach i duchu" (DW IV, 119) [On Truth, its Rays and Spirit]. The problem of goodness is not present in the subtitles of both dialogues at all.

Another phrase is found in fragment IV from the *Epilogue* where Norwid states that art will develop "przez pojęcia nieco sumienniejsze o *formie życia* (a więc nie o formie "w ogóle" [remark by T.M.]), to jest o kierunku pięknego, i o *treści życia*, to jest o kierunku dobra i prawdy" (DW IV, 133) [through concepts more meticulous about the *form of life* (so not form as such [remark by T.M.]), that is on the course of beautiful and the *content of life*, meaning the course of goodness and truth]. Here the word "kierunek" [course] means, it is hard to comprehend properly.

Of course, demanding from any poet the precision of wording typical to a logistics specialist would only be a sign of pedantry. But it should also be noted

that the cited sentences are found within the prosaic, not the poetic parts of the piece; moreover, they foreshadow the main subject matter of the work. Therefore, let us turn off the megaphones of various signs for now, full of internal contradictions as it may be noticed and, forgetting about what is supposed to be in the dialogues, move on to what *is* actually there. At the same time, let us remember that the dialogue parts are only the frame and introduction to the great monologues, *Bogumił* and *Wiesław*.

III.

Bogumił, as it is known, begins his speech with the definition of Beauty; it is “kształtem miłości” [shape of love]. The very same phrase (“kształtem miłości piękno jest” [the shape of love is beauty]) begins the next passage of the monologue. After this part the paragraph ends with the sentence: “I tak się śpiewa ona pieśń miłości dawna” (DW IV, 107) [and so this ancient song of love is sung]. Further, longer batches of poems devoted to the concept of work are found; after those, often without direct relation to the concept of beauty, the theme of love returns.

“Kto kocha – widzieć chce choć cień postaci” (DW IV, 110) [Who loves – wants to see a mere shadow of the silhouette] these words open a 19-verse monologue passage, followed by a fragment beginning with the words: “Kto kocha, widzieć chce choć cień obrazu” (DW IV, 111) [Who loves wants to see at least the object’s shadow³]; the next ones begin similarly: “Bo Miłość strachu nie zna” [For Love knows no fear], “I wszelka inna Miłość bez wcielenia” [And all other Love without incarnation], “O! Grecjo – ciebie że kochano, widzę” (DW IV, 111) [Oh! Greece – I see that you were loved], “O! Rzymie – ciebie że kiedyś kochano” (DW IV, 112) [Oh! Rome – you were once loved]. Next comes a paragraph the central moment of which are the returning words again: “– Kto kocha, widzieć chce oczyma w oczy” (DW IV, 112) [– Who loves wants to look in the eyes], and the next fragment ends with the line: “Że to Miłości balsam brąz ten zlepił” (DW IV, 115) [That the Love’s balm glued together this bronze].

More than half of poems in Bogumił’s great monologue are devoted to the apotheosis of love. The rest of the monologue is almost entirely made of verses that worship work and concepts related to it, so practicality, action, realisation, incarnation, and performance. These verses start with the definition of work,

3 Translation Jerzy Laskowski, in: Adam Czerniawski, Jerzy A. Laskowski, Reuel Wilson, *Polish Poetry Supplement*, No. 7, “Oficyna Poetów,” No. 2 (29), London, May 1973, p. 13.

given by the poet in a manner as solemn as in the case of beauty. After this, several passages of the text directly following the definition of work and further – after the apotheosis of love – a few more full passages are devoted to the apotheosis of work. Again, it is possible to enumerate a long series of sentences which would either begin or finish a longer paragraph of text devoted to this issue: “w ziemię jak się pieśń przelewa, / ..., ilem jest praktykiem, / Opowiem” (DW IV, 107) [how into the ground the song is poured, /..., as I am a practitioner, / I will tell], “praca, by się zmartwychwstało” (DW IV, 108) [work so that one is resurrected], “I stąd największy prosty lud poetą” (DW IV, 109) [Hence the simple folk are the greatest poets], “Pieśń a *praktyczność* – jedno, zaręczone” (DW IV, 109) [Song and *practicality* – one, betrothed], “[sztuka], jako *chorągiew na prac ludzkich wieży*” (DW IV, 116) [(art), as a *banner on the tower of human work*], “Pomiędzy tymi *praca* się stopniuje” (DW IV, 117) [Among them *work* graduates], “Aż się i trudów trud wreszcie” [Until the hardship of hardships]. Also, many passages that praise love are combined closely with the celebration of its realisation, e.g. “I wszelka inna Miłość bez wcielenia / Jest upiornym myśleniem myślenia” (DW IV, 111) [And any other Love without incarnation / Is the ghastly thinking of thinking], etc. It is possible to notice that the subject matter of many of these paragraphs is the same.

In general, it may be concluded that in this monologue Norwid often uses the concepts of “art” and “beauty,” without distinguishing between them and that he further sees beauty (art) from two standpoints. At one moment he raises them out of love, where beauty is supposed to be its shape or, more precisely, its expression; and love, in a way, conditions beauty as its predecessor. The second definition of beauty is laid out by the poet using the concept of work. The work is, in a way, beauty’s successor; beauty (art) delights, inspires a person to work to realise the love in the real world until the moment of resurrection. And the supreme goal of a person is to raise from the dead, stop being a lifeless, passive pawn in the games of fate, and to become aware, as Norwid says elsewhere, the “zwolony” [being freed from captivity because of agreeing with God’s will] co-creator of reality. With only these two concepts, love and work, Norwid uses the words of Bogumił to determine another, the concept of beauty (or art); any other terms that appear in this dialogue are of tertiary importance. Especially “truth” is nearly marginal with the “goodness” being mentioned only once in passing when the poet says that “dobro ... na *wygodno* ... zdrobniej” (DW IV, 108) [goodness ... because of *comfort* ... diminishes].

By placing both concepts (love and work) in solemn and foundational definitions of beauty, and by dedicating the vast majority of the poems of the monologue to those concepts, Norwid disclosed the proper content of the first

dialogue. Even more so if we consider the poet's idea that love in people or peoples is a mere glare, a shadow of eternal, divine love; that in work, the realisation, he sees the only way to rise from the dead and believes that it is the essential "zguby szukaniem" [searching for the loss]. Thus, Norwid singled out both concepts.

In the second dialogue, *Wiesław*, the concept of Goodness, to which the entire dialogue was supposed to be devoted, does not appear even once. The Truth is mentioned many times indeed, but, as mentioned, the meaning of the word differs. It is used in a logical sense, as an indication of the correctness of certain truths being derived from others; it is also used in a rather ontological sense, as the suitability of some theses formulated verbally with the external reality, as well as in a metaphysical sense, as the existence of eternal truths, etc.

It is important that *Wiesław's* first words are: "co opinii głosem się nazywa, to jest ... cóż" (DW IV, 119) [what is called the voice of an opinion is ... well]; they take the form of a question formulated similarly to that in the first dialogue where the poet defines the concepts of beauty and love of work. In further parts of his monologue, *Wiesław* again and again formulates opinions: "Owoż – opinii jeszcze onej cieniem / Jest" (DW IV, 122) [That – a shadow of that opinion / Is]; "Bo ona – głosem Ludu! – głosem Boga" (DW IV, 122) [For it is *the voice of the People!* – *voice of God!*]; "Opinio! ojczyzn ojczyzno" (DW IV, 123) [Opinion! *homeland of homelands!*]; "Głos czegoś... nie wiem... głos jakiejś Opinii" (DW IV, 127) [A voice of something... I do not know... a voice of an *Opinion!*]; "O Polsko! ... tyś córq opinii, / Tyś głosem, który jest to – co głos Boga." (DW IV, 126, 127) [Oh, Poland! ... you are *the daughter of opinion!* / *The voice that is – what is the voice of God!*].

Further, a number of ideas emerge so that the poet may juxtapose them with an "opinion" and use them to replace it as they are its closest and appropriate equivalents. They are: "Głos ludu – głos Boga" [Voice of the people – voice of God], "wołanie na puszczy" [calling in the woods], "proroctwo" [prophecy], "przenajświętsze narodu sumienie" [the most sacred conscience of the nation] and frequently – "prawda" [truth]. Norwid constantly substitutes beauty and art in the first dialogue, while in the second one, he insufficiently differentiates between "truth," "opinion," and "conscience." Their interchangeable use, as they are seen as notions closest to one another, is possible only thanks to the peculiar way the poet understands these words.

Conscience is an internal voice that tells the individual which action is acceptable, and which should not even be contemplated, and the opinion has a somewhat similar role. Norwid does not consider it to be the average belief of the majority (with the hue of a trend or a cliché – as it is contemporaneously perceived), but as the collective experience of the general public which has been engraved into the shared consciousness as an impersonal truth and not the voice

of this person or another, but the voice of the common internal truth. This inner truth of collectivity (similarly to the conscience) speaks first and foremost about what is right and what is wrong in an individual's actions. Because it is the truth, after all, that rather stands on a different area, that of ethics. Hence Norwid's indecision about which subtitle is better for this dialogue, whether it is about truth or goodness. In fact, this dialogue speaks about something else, about conscience, or even more precisely, about the collective conscience, the opinion, the voice of the people, which is that – the voice of God. Wiesław's monologue was dedicated to this idea.

Extensive deliberations about prophets, bards, and seers are a consequence of their own relation to the truth, one that is ethically understood as a principle of action (“żeby walczyli prawdą i dla prawdy” [so they would fight by means of the truth and for the truth], according to their “astrem wewnętrznym” [inner astro] – the conscience of the nation). The main duty is to keep the atmosphere of truth pristine so that the inner voice may be heard. And the opposite of such an understanding of truth is the pollution of the moral atmosphere with the “omnifalsity of the outer world;” it disturbs this inner purity, “the pope of charm,” lies, pride, hypocrisy, vanity, so falsehood again, falsehood as the basis of action, behaviour, and, therefore, also a morality-related issue. Recently, Borowy accurately wrote that: “the most articulate of Norwid's poems are devoted to unmasking ‘beautiful’ falsehoods or delusions and showing the harsh (and sublime in its strictness) truth.”⁴

The establishment of the main problem in the extensive *Epilogue* is more difficult than in both monologues because the poet raised more issues in the 20 paragraphs of this conclusion. If, however, the multiplicity of the concepts raised there was to be expressed in a single basic principle from which the poet derived at least most of the problems, it would be necessary to recognise the organic continuity as the main feature of any matter or substance that is vital, healthy, and with a future.

This concept is the basis for the judgement that each nation should assert its participation in the arts on its own and avoid bringing foreign art from the outside as it will always be a weak exotic plant, not organically growing out of the soil. Uplifting the folk to the level of Humanity “by the inner development of maturity” (as in Chopin's music or any great work of art) is based on the same foundation. The judgement on the chain of crafts and handicrafts that combines

4 Waław Borowy, “Norwid poeta,” in: *Pamięci Cypriana Norwida*, collective work (Warszawa: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 1946), p. 38.

physical work with the work of the spirit, condemning the vacuum between the past and the future and between the folk word and the scientific word are similarly based. Also, comments on the “arcades of waterwork arts” and the non-separation of fine arts exhibitions from exhibitions of crafts and industries have at their core the principle of organic continuity which must not be broken if receiving real and viable results is the goal. Finally, Norwid’s words on the moral obligation of uplifting and ennobling matter with human work may also be derived from the principle of continuous growth.

Thus, if a conclusion needs to be drawn from recent considerations, it would be necessary to state that *Promethidion* does not discuss the three general philosophical concepts: beauty, truth, and goodness, but five issues: art, love, work, conscience, and organic continuity. They are the main topics of the poet’s considerations. All other issues either appear marginally or serve as an illustration of those five fundamental concepts.

It is a good time to turn from the present considerations to a reminder about Norwid’s life.

IV.

Norwid was a poet, a lyricist, and a playwright. During the *Promethidion* period, he also began to write in prose (“Menego”); He was also (perhaps especially then) a visual artist, studying in painting studios in Warsaw, a sculpture studio in Florence, and antique art (especially Etruscan) in the libraries of Rome and Berlin; he sculpted (especially bas-relief and medals), painted (oil and water-colour), engaged in graphic design, drew a lot, and also sketched architectural plans. So, he was, according to his own words, “sztukmistrz” (a magician / an art-master). For such a man, devoted to art so completely, creativity must have been a matter of life and death, immensely important and personal, and not a snippet of a solely intellectual concept or a link of some abstract reasoning. Not from books and not from aesthetic dissertations did Norwid learn about art.

The significance of Mrs Kalergis in Norwid’s life and work is so widely known that it is not necessary to recall it here. If all throughout his life, until the almost last works of the poet in his sixties (as in *Cleopatra and Caesar*), the experiences associated with this love interest still shaped (positively or negatively) the concepts of his certain works, the burning glare of that feeling in the age of *Promethidion* cannot remain unnoticed. The poet was then nearly thirty and months, not years, from dramatic conversations with Mrs Kalergis. Separated from her almost all the time (Mrs Kalergis constantly resorted to distancing), the poet knew the feelings expressed in these words from sources other than from books or theories:

– Kto kocha – widzieć chce oczyma w oczy,
Czuć choćby powiew jedwabnych warkoczy.

(DW IV, 112)

[– Who loves – wants to look in the eyes
Feel a mere whisp of the silky braids.]

Kto kocha, widzieć chce choć cień obrazu,
Choć ślad do lubej wiodący mieszkania,
Choć rozłożone ręce drogowskazu...

(DW IV, 111)

[Who loves wants to see a mere shadow of the image
A mere trace leading to the house of the beloved
A mere sight of the spread out arms of the road-sign...]

The concept of work must have been close to the poet in the age of *Promethidion* for entirely different reasons. After all, Norwid wrote it (or rather finished it) during the February Revolution, a time of accumulated irritability about social issues. It was the period in which the poet wrote his versed treatises (*Wigilia* [Christmas Eve], *Pieśń społeczna* [A Social Song], *Niewola* [Enslavement]), the themes of which were: freedom, equality and brotherhood, slavery, property, the Commonwealth, etc. The matters of ownership (“property without conscience”) and work “on its own” were especially important in those works. Finally, at that time, the poet moved away from his aristocratic friends and protectors and became estranged because of their dislike of his “incomprehension;” he lived in poverty, tried to keep his own work (artistic crafts) afloat, and came into contact with the working people. In addition, ever since the Warsaw period, Norwid held great admiration towards realisation, acts that transformed intent into material reality which grew even stronger in connection with the atmosphere of 1848. All of this must have embedded the concepts of “work” and “deed” within ideas particularly close to Norwid.

The next issue, to which the poet devoted almost the entire second monologue, is the matter of conscience (individual and collective). Norwid was a Catholic; a non-nominal Catholic, if not the most fervent, then certainly the most consistent Catholic in nineteenth-century Polish literature. Even compared to Krasiński, who was seen as an exceptionally Catholic writer for a long time, Norwid seems to be a much more legitimate and conscientious Catholic (let us even consider Krasiński’s works such as *Nieboska Komedia część I* [Undivine Comedy part I], *Syn Cieniów* [Son of the Shadows], etc.). And for a Catholic, the matter of conscience (a good conscience) is a central matter of life. Such a

person weighs every thought, word, and deed on the most sensitive scales of the inner weight. Simultaneously, this conscience, next to prayer and sacraments, is the surest way to approach God and to hear His revelations. Therefore, for a true Catholic, the matter of conscience is one of the chief problems in life.

One more issue remains, organic continuity. For Norwid, this was a crucial issue, “perhaps the main key to the edifice of his works,”²⁵ as I wrote elsewhere. For a poet (a recluse not finding the resonance in his society and unwilling to lower the level of his song to that of popularisation) the most horrific personal experience was crystallised in the words “over-complete actor,” with the most tragic feature of the generation expressed in the phrase: “w tej próżni zrodzone pokolenie – między *przeszłością a przyszłością* niezłączonymi niczym” (DW IV, 135) [a generation born in this void – between *past and present* not connected with anything]. Lack of continuity, gaps, and breaks were the cause of his greatest concerns and his most painful complaints. The problem of the marginality of life was the most personally tragic problem for Norwid until his death. It is, therefore, not surprising that the affairs of organic relationships, connections, and continuity must have been of particular importance to him and his views. And again, these principles did not stem from theoretical premises, but from Norwid’s most personal experiences.

All of these matters, each for a different reason, are among the most vivid, personal, and internally relevant issues in Norwid’s life in general, especially in the age of *Promethidion*. However, they belong as biographical messages to the set of mere side lights when illuminating the case of *Promethidion*.

Let us return to considerations that are stricter in literary nature. The main five strings in Promethidion’s lute are important, not only because the poet touched upon them so many times in his work while other matters were hardly mentioned. Also, not only because these five issues were singled out by using terms delivered in a particularly solemn manner. Finally, biographical considerations may be put aside as well. These five major issues were shown in the poem in a special literary, stylistic shape. For instance, let us take a look at just one sentence from Bogumił’s monologue:

O! gdybym jedną kaplicę zobaczył,
Choćby jak pokój ten wielkości takiój,
Gdzie by się polski duch raz wytłumaczył,
Usymbolicznił rozkwitłymi znakami,
Gdzie by kamieniarz, cieśla, mularz, snycerz,

5 Tadeusz Makowiecki, “Norwid myśliciel,” in: *Pamięci Cypriana Norwida*, p. 50.

Poeta – wreszcie Męczennik i rycerz
*Odpoczą** w pracy, czynie i w modlitwie...
 – Gdzie by czerwony marmur, cios, żelazo,
 Miedź, brąz i modrzew polski się zjednały
 Pod postaciami, co niejedną skazą
 Poryte leżą w nas, jak w sercu skały;
 O! – to bym w liściach rzeźbionych paproci
 I w koniczyny treflach, i w stokroci,
 I w kos zacięciu łukiem – i we freskach
 (O Bazylianek mówiących męczeństwie...);
 O! – to bym w drobnych nawet arabeskach,
 Z naturą rzeczy polskiej w pokrewieństwie
 Nierozplątany będących – doślepił,
 Że to Miłości balsam brąz ten zlepił...

(DW IV, 115)

[Oh, were I to see one chapel, even
 If it were like this room, this size, where once
 The Polish spirit could explain itself,
 Symbolize itself in flourishing signs,
 Where the mason, carpenter, wood-carver,
 Poet – eventually martyr and knight
 Would start afresh** in work, prayer and deed –
 Where red marble, ashlar, iron and bronze,
 Copper and Polish larch all were to unite
 In shapes which, furrowed by not a few flaws,
 Lie within us as in a heart of rock,
 Oh, then would I in the fern's sculpted fronds
 And in the clover's clubs and in the daisies
 And in the scythe's arching sweep, in frescoes
 (Telling of the Basilian nuns' martyrdom...),
 Oh, then even in minute arabesques
 Related to the nature of things Polish
 By ties unbreakable, I would detect
 That it was Love's balsam had fixed this bronze.]⁶

The fragment above, based on the anaphoric arrangement of subordinate sentences, with unheard-of bravado, and yet clarity, rushes through 19 verses in the same breath to give the verb only in the penultimate one. The dynamic

** *Re-create* means: *created a new*, created to the second power... (added by C. N.).

6 Trans. Laskowski: Czerniawski, Laskowski, Wilson, *Polish Poetry Supplement*, p. 14.

nature of the abundance of accumulated nouns overcomes the monotony of enumerations thanks to the changing cases in which these nouns are used and the continued rise of the anticadential parts of a sentence. In other instances, when the poet shows the indestructible beauty of antique works even if they are in ruin, the dynamism will be obtained by concentrating monosyllabic words and accumulating verbs in the imperative. The *enjambements* are also important for the flow of the text as they do not allow for longer stops in rhymed endings.

Statuę grecką weź – zrąb jej ramiona –
 Nos – głowę – nogi opięte w koturny,
 I ledwo torsu grubą zostaw bryłę;
 Jeszcze za żywych stu uduchowiona,
 Jeszcze to nie gład ślepy – jedną żyłę
 Pozostaw, wskrzesi!... i tę zrąb – zostanie

(DW IV, 116)

[Take a Greek statue – chop off its arms –
 Nose – head – legs in wedge shoes –
 Leave barely the thick lump of the torso:
 It is more spirited that a hundred living!
 It is not yet a blind stone – one vein
 Is left, resurrected!... chop this one off too – it will remain.]

Norwid writes with a comparable inner heat when discussing the subject of love. Sentences admiring love are rarely limited to quatrains; they frequently encompass 12-verse passages (e.g. “Kto kocha, widzieć chce choć cień postaci”), are full of repetitions, accumulations, anaphoras, *enjambements*, and resemble bursts of affection. For instance, in one of the fragments (“Kto kocha, widzieć chce choć cień obrazu”), the word “choć” closes five sentences in five consecutive verses; while in another paragraph (“O Grecjo – ciebie że kochano, widzę”) the locative form of the enumerations in seven verses appears six times, all of this creates the expression of a rapid flow of the sentence.

Not only these passages, in their very essence cultivated on the soil of the poet's feelings, are full of affective dynamism. Similarly, though in a different tone, Norwid adores work, and a passionate tone there does not seem necessary. However, when Bogumił asks the eternal man about this issue, he responds with sentences virtually breathing with emotions, but not those of longing or love, but contempt and then horror.

I ... i mówić zacznie tak: “Próżniacy!
 Próżniacy wy – ciekawość siły wam zatrwoży[...].”

(DW IV, 107)

[And ... will start to talk like this: "Vain ones!
You vain ones – curiosity will scare your strength [...]."]

Next, he states in a 16-verse sentence starting with critical remarks:

A teraz wróćcie do wyobrażenia,
Że jest rozrywką znudzonej materii
Odcedzać światło i czyścić półcienia,
(DW IV, 108)

[And now return to the imagination
That it is the entertainment of bored matter
To strain the light and clean the half-shadow,]

And triggers fear in the anaphoric accumulations of the ending –

Aż jaki piorun rozedrże zasłonę,
Aż jaki wicher na nowo rozbudzi,
Aż jakie fale zatętnią czerwone...
(DW IV, 108)

[Until a lightning bolt tears the drapes.
Until wind awakens it anew
Until waves pulsate red]

In the prose of the *Epilogue*, the emotional dominants are much fewer. Yet, it also employs several accumulations of synonyms working as emotional enhancements, e.g.: "Naród tracąc przytomność – traci obecność – nie jest – nie istnieje" [A nation, losing consciousness – loses presence – it is not – it does not exist] (DW IV, 137), or "przytomność i obecność – *był*" (DW IV, 137) [*consciousness* and *presence* – *existence*] or "aniołem, co przelata – upiorem, co przewiewa – zniewieściałym *niczym*... męczennikiem... Hamletem" [angel that flies by – a wraith that flows – effeminate as if... a martyr... Hamlet...] (DW IV, 135). There are quite a few apostrophes, e.g. "Weźcie z Żydów naukę, o! Rodacy" [Learn from the Jews, oh! Compatriots] (DW IV, 135), "Czytelniku obywatelu *dziewiętnastego wieku*" [Reader citizen of the *nineteenth century*] (DW IV, 139) or "zmiłuj się czytelniku" [have mercy, reader] (DW IV, 140). It also includes many questions, such as "Czemże ma pozostać?" [What it should remain?] or "i dziś oto – cóż czynią?" [and today – what do they do?], "Wieleż to talentów już zmarniało?" [How many talents have gone to waste?], etc.

It may be concluded that elements enhancing the emotional dynamics are not exclusively found in the fragments closely related to issues close to the

poet's heart; these elements are spread across the entire text. This group includes numerous exclamations, rhetorical questions, statements in the second person (O, Grecjo! O, Polsko! O, bracia! even: Opinio, etc. [Oh, Greece! Oh, Poland! Oh, brothers! even: Opinion, etc.]), as well as broken sentences (e.g. “dość – niech słuchacz w duszy swej zaśpiewa” [enough – if the listener sings inside the soul] or “skończyłem – życząc Czytelniku zdrowia” [I have finished – I wish you, Reader, good health]). Phrases addressed at listeners, interrupting the flow of sentences and referring to those who are present are also full of emotions. For example, when the poet mentions the voice of the people seeping deep into human consciences like blood in amphitheatres, he interrupts himself in this manner: “To strach! – Milczycie teraz? Strach to wielki ten głos” [It is fear! – You are silent now? Fear is this loud voice...]. Or in a different fragment: “Tu już nie pytam Was o pozwolenstwo – sam mówię” [Here, I do not ask for your permission – I speak on my own...].

Finally, the poet sometimes presents, solidifies, and in a way updates the expressed content of the experience. The ways of bringing those feelings closer frequently include the present tense of verbs, as well as large amounts of pronouns and demonstratives (e.g. “*ta* cała krata promieni” [*this* entire grid of rays], “pod męczeństw *tu* amfiteatrem” [under *this* amphitheatre of martyrdom], “milczenie *to* wasze *przed chwilą*” [your silence *a moment ago*], “choćby jak pokój *ten*” [even if it were like *this* room], etc. [emphasis – T. M.]). The combination of different stylistic means (questions, imperative mood, present tense, interjections, etc.) is visible, for instance, in such a sentence:

A chcecież widzieć tego – który mąci?...
 Oto – patrzajcie tam – stoi ten krwawiec
 I mówi: “Jam jest, który Pana strąci [...].”

(DW IV, 128)

[Do you want to see the one – who disturbs?...
 Behold – there stands that bloody man
 And says: “I am who will overthrow the Lord [...].”]

I do not know any other couplet in Polish literary system that would more strongly and succinctly express the depth of absolute conviction in the value it expresses:

Tak wierzę – tak jest – ile człowiek może,
 Że *jest*, powiedzieć – tak jest, Wielki Boże!

(DW IV, 127)

[So I believe – yes – as much as a man is able to
Say that He *is* – yes, it is so, Great God!]

Citing such frequent passages, and a lot more could be cited from *Promethidion*, allows for the conclusion that not only the elements of the content, not only the quantity or quality of the poems devoted to them, but also the strictly literary properties indicate that this work by Norwid differs in terms of style from philosophical considerations and aesthetic treatises. The features of this literary work, full of desire and passion, feelings of wonder, anger, contempt, despair, full of painful complaints and axioms of steadfast faith, and oversaturated with the evocateness of imagination, clearly prevail in this text.

V.

Norwid's feelings and beliefs originated, as already known, in the poet's most personal and strong experiences and were important and awe-inspiring in his eyes (also for other reasons, which will be mentioned later). To be able to transmit their weight and heat directly into the listeners' hearts, in addition to the strength of direct expression, Norwid wanted to surround them, as if from the outside, with an acoustic backstage that would intensify the voice of both monologues. The introductions, mottos, and footnotes mentioned at the beginning are most assuredly a later compositional addition. And here, in addition to the various factors already signalled, the poet also included the concepts of goodness, beauty, and truth.

Why? – Because he wrote in the mid-nineteenth century during the revival of the idealistic philosophies of Plato and Plotinus (numerous translations of Platonic dialogues), because he wrote in the era when not only Hegel's and Fichte's were students in Germany, but also French writers such as V. Cousin or Lammennais, and Norwid's friends in Poland (Cieszkowski, Libelt and Krasiński) moved into an enchanted triangle of those concepts which were essential for the era. He reached for this dignified trinity of concepts, so popular at the time, but incorporated it only within external resonant elements (*Introduction*, *Epilogue*, *Footnotes*) and in a way mislead the readers about the content of both dialogues.

Hues of validity must therefore be reset to not distort the judgement. From Skarga's *Kazania sejmowe* [Parliament Sermons], it is possible to extract the entire political thought advocated by the Jesuit; however, claiming these sermons are only a collection of political articles would be, despite the correct interpretations of Prof. Kot regarding their content, harmful towards the artistic qualities

of Skarga's writing.⁷ It must not be forgotten that *Kazania Skargi* is a wonderful monument to Polish prose, and the sermon genre belongs to literature. In the same way, Mickiewicz's historiosophical views may be drawn from the *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa* [Books of the Polish Pilgrimage]; nevertheless, the publication is not a political treatise or a historical dissertation disguised superficially in biblical robes, but a grand literary monument and an achievement in the history of Mickiewicz's poetic experience.

Similarly, *Promethidion* is not a philosophical treatise, encompassed in a form imitating Platonic dialogues and settling the relations between beauty, goodness, and truth, but a literary piece with particular compositional and stylistic properties, composed of three poetic speeches (two in verse, one in prose), in which the poet used words imbued with heat to lock his experiences associated with the things closest to him in those years, art, love, and work, conscience and organic continuity of life.⁸ However, to fit the above into the final formula, one other issue must be considered first – to conclude.

7 Piotr Skarga, *Kazania sejmowe*, ed. by Stanisław Kot (Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1925).

8 Note. The hypothesis that the entire *Promethidion* was later composed out of two previously written dialogues is supported by: 1. the compositional diversity of constituents, 2. content discrepancies between both dialogues and the notes and announcements in prose elements, 3. the existence of *Dialog z porządku dwunastego* [Dialogue from the Twelfth Order] (C. Norwid, *Pisma zebrane*, Volume A); which was found among the documents belonging to J. Koźmian. Norwid, who often complained in his letters about losing his works, must have had mentioned 11 lost dialogues. He never wrote about it. If we enumerate, alongside *Bogumił* and *Wiesław* — five dialogues (*Rzeczywistość* [Reality], *Pisarstwo* [Writings], *Ruiny* [Ruins], *Burza* [Storm], *Lilie* [Lilies]) released together as *Pięć zarysów* [Five Sketches] and separate dialogue about *O historii* [On History] (there are two persons that often take part in these conversations: *Wiesław*, *Maurycy*) — only three dialogues will be missing. And, if we include the conversation of Napoleon and Julius (*Vendôme*), Plato and Archimedes (*Epilog*), Byron and Raphael (*Rozmowa umarłych*) ([Dialogue of the Dead]) — we would have a full set of dialogues written in 1847–51 and in that period alone. 4. In both *Promethidion* dialogues, mentions of Greece and Rome (Italy) are quite frequent, while there are no recollections regarding France, where the poet stayed since the spring of 1849 — columns, flat antique roofs, arks, aqueducts, Caesar, Michelangelo, Benvenuto Cellini, Ugolino, alabaster canopies, acanthuses, the Roman codex, Basilian sisters' martyrdom — (and also Mother Macrina of Rome), *Bogumił* mentions only Venus de Milo — the word Frenchman (and Englishman) appear only in *Epilogue*. 5. In both dialogues, there are mentions such as — “te gmachy, / Gdzie, którzy z mędrców starożytnych ... na dachy wstępując płaskie” (DW IV, 104) [those houses / Where some of the ancient wise men ... going onto

Just as at the beginning, an issue emerges: since both dialogues (at least their main elements) were created at a different time than the *Epilogue*, since some traces of gluing them together are noticeable because the texts are not always and not completely harmonised with each other, the dialogues are probably mergers. However, when we consider that the dialogues singled out of a larger collection were created in the three-year gap of 1848–50, and that they were not separated from one another by many years, and when we recall the great number of later additions that were already mentioned (apart from the text of both dialogues but probably also within them) it is possible to clearly observe Norwid's compositional attempts to make *Promethidion* a whole. At the time of perfecting it, *Promethidion* was already a unified work. So, what is this balm Norwid used to merge various elements of his piece?

In the penultimate passage of the *Epilogue*, Norwid wrote: “Czytelniku Polaku, mamże ci tłumaczyć, czemu tu o rzeczach narodowych w tej *estetycznej* pracy mówię?” [Reader-Pole, am I to explain to you why I am talking about national matters in an *aesthetic* piece?]. And further: “Czym mogę, służyć – *słowem* i ... podnoszeniem twórczego ducha postaciującej siły naszej” (DW IV, 139) [Where I can, I serve – with *word* and ... uplifting the spirit shaping our strength]. And before that: “Tylko sztuce pojętej w całej swojej prawdzie i powadze Polak dzisiaj poświęcić może życie” (DW IV, 138) [Only to art understood in all its truthfulness

their flat roofs] or: “pod męczeństw tu amfiteatrem” (DW IV, 123) [under this amphitheatre of martyrdom (which Miriam already highlighted in the footnotes to volume A [*Pisma zebrane*, p. 802])]; “Karabinierów konnych” [Carabineers] (not Cuirassiers), finally, we encounter the following in the 6th sentence “I tak, w Italii, tej mojej Macosze, / Tak pięknej! ... / I tak, u Matki mojej – jest po trosze” (DW IV, 124) [And so in Italy – my Mommy-in-law/ So beautiful! .../ As if at my Mother's – a little bit]; which clearly proves that while writing *Wiesław*, Norwid considered Italy rather than France as his second homeland. It is also characteristic that while *Epilogue* mentions Chopin's grave, the conversation about Chopin in *Bogumił* does not reveal the fact that it was written after his death (1849). The main core of both dialogues was prepared before the February Revolution; after the unrests, while preparation for print, Norwid supplemented them with prose additions, and it is possible that he expanded some of the thoughts in both monologues. It is necessary to be diligent in discerning between the essential components of the work (both dialogues and the later main core of the epilogue) and the remarks as if seemingly marginal. For instance, the excerpt from *Bogumił* on the cascades of blood in the solar abyss — too close to “kaskadzie stworzenia na szlaku białych słońc” [the cascade of creation on the path of white suns], found in the dedication written already after the death of Łubieński, not to disclose that it was written in 1850, at the time of finishing the entire work before print.

and seriousness may a Pole devote his life]. And even earlier: “Weźcie z Żydów naukę, o! Rodacy” [Learn from the Jews, o! Countrymen] (DW IV, 135). These paragraphs contain numerous comments about sources of Polish art, Polish music, and the role of Częstochowa canticles, etc.

In Wiesław’s speech on the opinion as the voice of collective conscience, the most intense moments come from these words:

O Polsko! ...
 ... tyś córą opinii,
 Tyś głosem, który jest to – co głos Boga.
 (DW IV, 126, 127)

[O! Poland ...
 ... you are the daughter of opinion,
 You are the voice which is that of God.]

The aim of these words is, after all, that “wojnę prawdy Polska wygrała w sobie” [the war of truth Poland won inside itself] before it wins this war in the world.

In Bogumił’s monologue, after various definitions of art in general and art in the world, the closing fragment proclaims: “I tak ja widzę przyszłą w Polsce sztukę” [This is how I see future art in Poland] (DW IV, 116); in Poland, not as such. In other parts of the monologue, when talking about love and its forms of expression in Greece and Rome, the most painful complaint resonates in the words about the crooked cabins and barns in Poland, about the absence of even a single chapel “gdzie by się polski duch raz wytłumaczył” (DW IV, 115) [where once the Polish spirit could explain itself], about the absence of variety of lyrics, about the form disgraced in the country, and, consequently, about the lack of expression of the love of homeland (apart from music, poetry and the presence of martyrs). In a nutshell, in all the important moments of *Promethidion* the word “Poland” is used, reappearing throughout the entire piece. It comes as no surprise if we consider that *Promethidion* was written on emigration; like most Polish works of that period of exile, it addressed the country directly.

And only at this point the title, *Promethidion*, becomes understandable. Prometheus stole the gods’ fire, the fire of eternal life, and breathed that fire into the dead figurines of men made of clay to bring them to life. *Promethidion* is a plan to transfer the fire of great and true art, the embers of the great eras of history, the breath of eternal life and the truths of the divine taken from the circle of great, happy nations, great eras, and great cultural currents, and to transfer all of that to the earth of the graves and crosses to awaken from among his dead

brothers, Prometheus. For true art, combining areas of physical work with the sphere of spiritual creativity, the world of the people with the world of the civilisation, shaping the imagination of a nation and the scale of its emotions, has always been a measure and expression of love; art is an inspiration to work and to perform great deeds, and at the same time the comfort in daily struggles; it is not only important for cultural life in general, but becomes such for every nation full of life, and, of course, especially a nation in captivity, which it uplifts and bonds from within regardless of political conditions.

A similar effect is held by love and work. Only love realised in deeds and finding a visible shape fearlessly and creatively embedding itself into reality becomes true love, not a shallow platitude or self-delusion of sentimentality. Only work imbued with the love of great goals ceases to be a curse of fate and becomes the foundation of living works. And these truths are important, not only in life as such, but in particular in the life of a nation, testifying what true love of the nation is and which work is of value to a nation. Just as in the scale of individual “*zwolony*,” life where beauty enchants one to work and work inspires resurrection, in the life of the nation, they lead to rising from the dead, to no longer be passive but active contributors to the significant “*zwolony*” history of mankind.

Living in truth and living in accordance with one’s conscience is an issue discussed by Norwid in *Wiesław* from the level of importance to individuals up to the general level as he introduced the concept of opinion, the voice of the people, the voice of God. Finally, there is no need to write about the weight and seriousness of organic continuity for the life of a nation.

Thus, it can be concluded that *Promethidion*, along with aesthetic or philosophical and religious theses, has very clear tones of patriotic and national nature, to which, apart from personal reasons, it owes much of the fervour in the work’s general tone. This is consistent with the foundational beliefs of the poet proclaiming, “Co prawdą jest – jest nią w obrocie planet na niebiesiech, i w ziarnku piasku, i w sercu, i w kieszeni, i wszędzie – inaczej, to żarty!” (letter to Marian Sokołowski dated 2 August 1865; DW XII, 394) [What is the truth – is truth in the planets revolving in heavens, and in the grain of sand, and in one’s heart, and *in the pocket, and everywhere* – otherwise it is a joke!].

In short poems on socio-political issues (such as *Pieśni społecznej cztery stron* [A Social Song in Four Pages], “Wigilia” [Christmas Eve], “Jeszcze słowo” [A Word More]) written in 1848–49 and in several dialogues from these years, Norwid embedded his thoughts on current issues related to the February Revolution. He concluded them with a heated confession of faith, mainly in

the ending of the poem “Niewola” [Enslavement] in which he gave his “Credo,” but this “Credo” only pertains to the most general rules. Meanwhile, at that time in the West and in Poland, Romanticism was dying with all of its beliefs, convictions, slogans, dying in literature, art, philosophy, politics, and life; the transitional years had begun, a period between the fading Romanticism and the not yet germinating Positivism. Norwid was probably the first Pole to realise on such a scale the historic significance of that moment and felt responsible when writing his second “Credo,” more concrete and detailed, a Credo of an artist, a Pole, and a human being.

In Norwid’s mind, the ideals of Romanticism were being pushed further and further away. Even the poet’s youthful, rebellious attitude about the form and matter changed when Norwid saw them not as a curse, but the necessary ingredient of all content. Also, the Romantic apotheosis of folk songs would be corrected in the form of folk songs of Chopin, and only then, crystallised into perfect form, may they become a model of creativity. Finally, he adds completely new slogans: manual labour, organicity, and the rigour of conscience. During the twilight period of a certain era, the poet tries to ignite, or rather pass over from the depths of centuries, new lights.

After finally losing hope associated with the Spring of Nations, when it was necessary to move to everyday life under a yoke that bends the neck to the lows of utterly worldly affairs, the poet must have been afraid that he and his work as an artist as well as the contemporary derailed generation and the entire Polish nation who stood between remembering the past and the longing for the future, would wind up in a void on the shallows of history, away from the current of deep, real life. Feeling the validity of this horror of the historical vacuum, the poet wanted those few truths he had learned and the redeeming powers of which he believed, both clarified to himself – as a *programme* — and conveyed with all fervour — to “test” — to give to the nation without and further waiting for the topic to be precisely chiselled.

Piszę to dziś dorywczo, aby ślad pozostawić ... bo nie mogę zbyt na zdrowie moje liczyć ... Nie jest to, co winienem z podróży moich po cmentarzach sztuk przynieść, wszakże – z czasem opóźnić się nie godzi ... i dlatego zmiłuj się czytelniku: za to, co się *broszurą* dziś nazywa, testamentu sumiennej myśli nie bierz. (DW IV, 136, 140)

[I am writing it casually to leave a trace ... as I cannot rely on my health too much ... It is not what I should bring back from my travels through the graveyards of truth – in time, it is not honourable to be late ... so, readers, do be merciful: because *this*, what is now called a *booklet*, you should not consider to be a testament of a careful thought.]

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Konrad Górski

“Ad leones!” An Attempt at Analysis

Abstract: The article interprets Norwid’s short story “Ad leones!” It indicates that the writer’s artistic purpose is to show with the dramatic method the paths leading to the moral fall of the artist-protagonist and to the distortion of the original, ideologically monumental artistic idea. The plot shows that everything happens almost as if beyond conscious will and intention of the sculptor, who at some point is actually surprised with the course of events, becoming a toy of fortune and events. The article presents a detailed artistic analysis of the text, its events and the motivations of people which trigger those events; it also encompasses linguistic (lexical and syntactic) issues, focusing on many areas used for the purpose of irony. That irony disappears at the ending of the story, and the narrator sheds the mask of a satirist to show the face of someone deeply disheartened with the symbolism of the presented anecdote.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, short story, Rome, Christian art, sculpture, capitalisation

The work which is the subject of aesthetic analysis in this paper does not have a subtitle in the autograph. It would be a very interesting step in establishing Norwid’s poetics to consider the genres in which he categorised his own prose works. He termed “Garstka piasku” [A Handful of Sand], “Bransoletka” [Bracelet] and “Cywilizacja” [Civilisation] – legends; “Stygmat” [Stigma] was named a short story; and “Ostatnia z bajek” [The Last of the Fables], “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” [Lord Singelworth’s Secret] and “Ad leones!” received no specification of their literary genre, although it is apparent from the text of “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” that the author considered the work a short story.¹ Zofia Szmydtowa was thus right to apply the criteria of historical poetics to that work and classify most of the works listed here as short stories, including them in the category, Tuscan short story, despite strong individual characteristics and deviations from the form.²

1 Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma Zebrane*, ed. Zenon Przesmycki, Vol. E (Warszawa-Kraków: Jakub Mortkowicz, 1911), p. 92 (hereinafter referred to as PZ E, a numeral indicating the page) – The text of “Ad leones!” is also quoted after Miriam’s edition.

2 Zofia Szmydtowa, “Nowele Norwida,” *Przegląd Współczesny*, No. 196–197 (1938). It discusses the following works: “Menego,” “Bransoletka” [Bracelet], “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” [Lord Singelworth’s Secret], “Ad leones,” and “Stygmat” [Stigma].

For if one agrees to accept the definition of a short story which prevails among today's literary theorists (a concise, matter-of-fact story about some extraordinary event, symbolically concentrating some important problem; thus it is close to a drama, with an unexpected ending, one climactic action scene, meticulous composition and means of expression used very economically), all of those features can be found in most of Norwid's short stories, and definitely in "Ad leones!". A deeper insight into the piece may convince the reader (despite Szmydtowa's doubts) that it is actually one of the best written Polish short stories.

In his invaluable footnotes to the collective edition of Norwid's works, Miriam proved that "Ad leones!" was written by Norwid in 1881, influenced by a negative impression from an art exhibition in Paris.

That obvious fair, [wrote Miriam,] that adjusting, the efforts to obtain official commissions, that flattery to personal or democratic vanities, that soulless, creativeless tampering, that essential indifference to art, the readiness to sell it for some "thirty pieces of silver," that procuring attitude of the press and critics, that pimping, yielding, tuning, recommending – must have irritated him to the highest degree with their hypocrisy and insolence.³

The bitter reflections of the writer, for whom beauty in art was "kształt miłości" [the shape of love], also reveal the basic problem of the story of "Ad leones!": penetrating the psychological and sociological mystery of why the art that was contemporary to the poet was so horribly devoid of ideology. How come the artists themselves did not know what they were creating; that they were, in fact, merely good technicians ready to perform each commission regardless of its ideological content and moral sense?

Thus, a posed problem is expressed with the plot of the story about a certain excellent sculptor who had the idea of creating a group representing two Christians thrown to the lions in the Roman arena; but then, tempted by profit and skilfully entrapped by the editor of the newspaper organizing the entire transaction, he transformed the sculpture "ad leones" into a group representing the merchant ideal of "capitalisation." The glaring contrast of the two interpretative possibilities of the same sculptural group was conceived as a means of highlighting the fundamental problem.

The artistic goal pursued by the author throughout the story shows, with dramatic rather than epic means (without a psychological analysis of the main protagonist), what led to such moral derailment of the artist and distortion of the original idea, monumental in its concept. The entire construction of the story

3 PZ E, 290.

indicates a clear intention to emphasize the fact that everything happened somewhat beyond the conscious will and intention of the sculptor, who, at one point, is actually surprised with the developments and becomes a passive toy of fate and events beyond his power.

In order to realise such an artistic intention, the author divided the short story into two chapters; they are not marked with numbers, yet they are very clearly distinguished in the text.⁴ The first chapter provides a presentation of the people who are part of the event as well as information about the intended sculpture and the atmosphere which led to its creation; the second chapter consists of two scenes: 1. the main one – showing how its original idea changed as a result of a collective suggestion authored by one man; 2. the final one, containing moral judgment about the whole matter.

The presentation of the characters begins, naturally, with the sculptor, who may be at first assumed to be the main protagonist. It is only later in the story that one realises he is a mere mannequin in the hands of the editor, who is the character directing the entire plot. The sculptor's characterization begins with two significant features: “to nie był wcale ani mało obiecujący *talent*, ani mało dotrzymać mogąca *organizacja*” (PZ E, 127) [His was a *talent* by no means unpromising, nor was he of an *order* disinclined to persevere, the red-bearded sculptor].⁵ Both details are meant to emphasize the great artistic opportunities open to the artist. The mention of the endurance of his body is perfectly understandable as a condition for good development throughout his artistic career, as he is a sculptor and his artistic profession requires (or at least did in Norwid's times) much physical strength and health (forging statues in marble, granite, etc.).

Immediately after listing the two conditions which opened great opportunities to the sculptor, a longer section follows, devoted to the beautiful greyhound with whom the artist visited at Caffè Greco every evening. It follows from many conversations and discussions with various readers of today that the greyhound theme, recurring in several important parts of the story, may be interpreted in

4 Miriam distinguishes both chapter with graphic layout: the first one ends in page 136, the second starts in page 137; the autograph shows that the graphic distinction does not come from the author. The edition by Zrębowicz (*Czarne i białe kwiaty* [Black and White Flowers] (Warszawa–Kraków: Jakub Mortkowicz, 1922), pp. 43–55) has no separation of the two chapters. Similarly, the first print in *Chimera* (I, 34–46) has no division into two chapters.

5 Trans. Ilona Ralf-Sues, *Polish Short Stories* (Warszawa: Polonia Publishing House, 1960), p. 15 (hereinafter referred to as PSS).

various manners. Some see the stylisation of that fragment as a satirical quip against the sculptor; others see the greyhound as an aesthetic element of movement to enliven the plot based on an abstract problem.⁶ Yet, it seems that Norwid himself gave a clue sufficient to explain the role played by the dog in the very first sentence of the abovementioned fragment, in the words: “sam wybór zwierzęcia, które jednało (= jednoczyło) wdzięk i siłę w czytelnie naznaczonych muskułach swoich, dawać już mógł uważnemu postrzegaczowi do mniemania korzystnego o umysłowej godności osoby, która to a nie inne upodobała sobie stworzenie” (PZ E, 127) [the very fact that he had chosen so magnificent a creature, whose clean lines and lithe muscles combined both strength and grace, was in itself enough to make an attentive observer think highly of the intellectual dignity of the man].⁷ In the next sentence, referring to the words of General Jomini about the importance of horses for good cavalry, the author adds that “dobranie sobie tego lub owego psa rodzaju głośno o dobierającego poczuciach i umyśle znamionuje” (PZ E, 128) [the selection of a particular breed of dog is transparent evidence of the feelings and taste of its owner] (SR, 163) to an even greater degree. Therefore, doubtless that the greyhound serves to further characterise the sculptor, the question is, in what sense. There seems to be no irony in the quotes above on the testimony given by someone to their mind by choosing a specific animal as a daily life companion. This is most likely a completely positive thing: one more detail emphasising the special predispositions of the sculptor to become a great artist.

The entire artistic individuality consists of more than mere technical abilities (emphasised by Norwid in the main scene); above all, it is based on sensitivity to such sensual feelings which play a decisive role in a given type of art. Hence, the future of a musician is determined by their hearing; a painter's career by their sensitivity to colours; and a sculptor's abilities by their sensitivity to shapes, to the spatial arrangement of a solid object. Norwid continuously emphasises that the greyhound embodies beauty and monumentality of shapes, grace and strength, dexterity and majesty of lines. How significant is the episode in the main scene when the sculptor breaks away the nose of one of the statues with a disrespectful kick, “aż charcica, która leżała była pierwaj jak gryf odlany z

6 In her study “Nowele Norwida,” Zofia Szmydtowa compares the greyhound with the flowers from “Stygmat” [Stigma] and emphasises the contrast of the dog's beauty with the moral ugliness of the human environment, in particular of the editor.

7 Trans. N.B. Jopson, *Slavonic Review*, Vol. 11 (1932/33), p. 163 (hereinafter referred to as SR).

bronzu, podniosła się, powąchała odłamki gipsu rozbitego i powróciła ułożyć się w te same monumentalne formy i spokojność” (PZ E, 139) [thereupon he hound, which had been lying like a gryphon moulded in bronze, rose, sniffed at the broken pieces of plaster and resumed the same attitude of a monumental repose] (SR, 168).

It is that monumentality of its beauty which is the focal point, and the fact that the sculptor chose such an animal for his everyday companion characterises him as an artist. In the light of such preferences, it is not surprising at all that he is able to conceive gigantic ideas, such as the intention to create the group *Ad leones*, which is to “odbrzmiewać wewnętrznym ludzkości tragediom” (PZ E, 132) [reflect the inner tragedy of mankind] (PSS, 19).

The sculptor’s description ends with the fragment mentioning the greyhound. The reader knows that he has talent, a penchant for monumental beauty, and a strong body. That is all. Not a word about his mind, ethics, or understanding of art. For the entire duration of the story nothing is stated about any of that. As a human, the sculptor is left in the shadow of complete mystery. There is only an incidental mention of his appearance, stating that he also has some features of dignity and majesty (in a comparison of the red-bearded sculptor clad in black velvet to an old Venetian portrait – PZ E, 131–132).

The information that the greyhound was held in high esteem by *everyone* skilfully steers the story towards the presentation of other drama personae. The emphasised word requires a comment, enumerating “everyone.” Those are: the newspaper editor, a singer, a painter, a young tourist and his tutor; those characters constitute the “group” of the red-bearded sculptor, i.e. the environment of the artist outside of his working hours.

The indication that the people listed are the sculptor’s immediate environment is indirectly a continuation of his presentation. Yet, that conclusion comes later. The first thought is to focus on the new characters, without the old truth in the back of one’s mind that you can know a person by the friends they keep.

The author devoted a disproportionate amount of space to particular characters in this part. Of the painter it is only said that he was talented; he gives himself a character with one single statement during the main scene. The first information about the young man and his tutor is immediately ironic; the spiritual image of the young man is discussed no further. In his own words, he was sent abroad by his parents “dla kształcenia się w zapatrywaniu na rzeczy” [to develop his outlook on things] (SR, 164), and the news that the young man and his *ever-present* tutor seek each other all day throughout the city to then meet at Caffè-Greco in the evenings, evoke the old Latin saying *sapienti sat!* Similarly, the singer is characterised with a few banal features meant to convince the reader

that the man “nic nieczytelnego w swojej postaci nie przedstawił” (PZ E, 130) [did not present an unreadable riddle] (SR, 165).

The author’s attention is focused on a subtle delineation of the two actors who partake in the scene to come: the editor and the tutor. While all the others are various personifications of banality, inner emptiness and foolishness, those two present a more complex set of psychological traits which predispose them to play a sinister role in trading the group of Christian martyrs for “capitalisation.”

First comes the editor. Norwid does not immediately expose his character. The first piece of information is only that his profession as a journalist could be guessed by his behaviour (which does not bring any negative conclusions in itself) and... style. A brilliant situational comparison occurs which indicates the editor’s heartlessness and deadness of verbal expression, and, at the same, time it is the first warning against the man. The stylisation of the comparison combines not merely irony, but sarcasm with cold contempt. Yet, that presentation of the editor’s style does not give the reader the right to draw any conclusions of a moral nature yet, and the actual face of the character is only revealed in the main scene.

The tutor is treated more freely because his role in the said scene is simply the result of pretentious pseudo-erudition, not a conscious intention as it is in the case of the editor. Still, Norwid treats the character quite ruthlessly, drawing the figure of a braggart and a loafer cloaked in the pretence of learning. The character is sketched with features of external comedy (“parskał śliną, ilekroć w zapale się poczuwał” [he was spluttering saliva whenever he was in a fit of enthusiasm]) (PSS, 18), mockery is cloaked with praise (“niepłochy jednak bierał się do pióra” (PZ E, 131) [but he was quite adept with his pen] (PSS 18) as evidenced by the fact that the work he had been toiling for over a year had not gone beyond the first two words of the title), and finally, the contrast between his scientific claims and his inability of scientific reasoning about a simple physical fact, such as the movement of a billiard ball on the surface of a table is emphasised with irony and pity. All that information is the more comic for the fact that the author prepares a different first impression. When ending the description of the singer, banality incarnate, he says: “mniej wyraźnym typem był guwerner” (PZ E, 131) [a less distinct type was the tutor...] (PSS 17), while the text which follows draws the image of the man all too clearly.

After the presentation of the people comes a longer fragment about the work intended by the sculptor. A very important detail of the narrator’s account is the emphasis that “ażby mieć naprzód pojęcie o skutecznym jakiego artysty dziele, nie potrzeba na to (w przeznaczonym Rzymie) być do poufnego temuż artyście koła zbliżonym” (PZ E, 132) [However you need not belong to an artist’s intimate circle in our honoured Rome to have a preconceived idea of his work]

(PSS, 18–19). That emphasis allows the author to achieve two things: first, the narrator is shifted away from the circle of the sculptor’s closest companions; second, one more factor conducive to creating great art can be highlighted, namely the atmosphere of the artistic community in Rome.

Placing the narrator outside the immediate human environment of the sculptor is a consequence of their characteristics, well-motivated by the further development of the work. The narrator turns out to be someone from a completely different world; by the end of the story, the author makes him a moral judge of the whole event, and in such light his presence among the sculptor’s friends would be at odds with the nature of the character. Therefore, the narrator learns about the great work intended by the sculptor, not from the creator himself, but from news circulating in the artistic milieu of the “honoured Rome.” But the news coming from models waiting at the foot of Monte Pincio to be employed is not a mere rumour. The reader learns at this point that spreading the word about who is working on what is an expression of collective interest in works of art *in statu nascendi*. The fact that friends call the sculptor not by his first or last name, but with the expression “ad leones,” pronounced with the right stress, induces the narrator’s significant reflection on the beneficial influence of such a spiritual atmosphere on the development of art. This last detail is important, as mentioned previously, to complement all the auspicious circumstances accompanying a great idea. It becomes clear that the sculptor not only had the personal requirements for its execution, such as talent and physical health at his disposal, but also a favourable social atmosphere which provided moral support to the artist in his monumental undertaking.

It would seem that after a presentation of the main actors and the intended piece, the author should have moved to the main scene of the work. Yet one more scene appears, the narrator is invited to visit the sculptor’s studio. Moreover, the content of the scene is not limited to just the invitation; if that were the case, there would obviously be no need to add a whole scene, since a few words about the fact would suffice. However, the actual purpose of that scene is to present the character of the narrator.

Due to the role played by the narrator in the main scene and the character of a moral judge over the event, the author had to provide the narrator’s spiritual image. Clearly it could not be done by direct characterization, as was done with the other actors, so a scene was necessary to have the narrator reveal his attitude to art and thus legitimize his right to later act as a judge. In fact, the scene is mostly filled with the narrator’s words.

He speaks twice; the first time, in response to the actual invitation to the studio; the second time, to reply to the question of what he is working on.

The narrator's first speech illustrates his excellent orientation in the psychology of artistic creation. He realises that the meeting is not to show the finished work, but to exchange friendly reflections at a critical moment of creation – when extensive changes to the final shape of the intended idea are still possible. Such words from the narrator's mouth are not necessary to give him further presentation; they serve another purpose. The narrator is already playing the same role that he does later in the main scene: thinking only about the work of art and only in artistic terms, he unwittingly provides arguments for the transaction planned by the editor. Hence his words at this point foreshadow future events. The thesis that an artist should retain the option to make a complete change of his idea plays into the hands and intentions of the editor, who readily confirms the speaker's words. The narrator notes that action, stressing at the same time that with all the support to what was said, the editor "bacznie się w rozmowie utrzymywał" [was careful to keep abreast of the conversation] (SR 166). In a word, the editor has the whole plan of action ready, but is careful not to betray it.

The narrator's second speech in the scene says a lot about his attitude towards art. When asked what he is working on, he does not develop the idea of the plot of the painting because the conversation takes place in a group of professionals, but he immediately explains the essence of the artistic problem that he has decided to solve: extracting two expressive possibilities from the same gesture, namely the raising of the head. But the comparison of those possibilities characterises the artist who has chosen such an artistic task. The eyes of one character are turned upwards, yet they stop at some material object connected with the earth; the eyes of the other figure are raised heavenwards. Eliciting the difference between the former, a prosaic gesture, and the latter, a spiritual one, with their near-identical appearance, is a task which proves understanding of the art as an area of expressing the highest ascents of the spirit. An additional detail enhancing that impression is the fact that the narrator, despite his humble opinion of his own participation in matters of art, devotes much effort, bordering on torment, to that work. It is thus a conscious search for artistic tasks on the path of the most severe resistance.

During the first speech of the narrator, only the editor's reaction is mentioned; during the second, the reactions of both the editor and the sculptor are shown. They are both silent, but their silence bears completely different meanings. The editor makes pencil marks on the marble of the table; perhaps it is a gesture of uneasiness, perhaps of cynical disregard for that ridiculous idealist who, for reasons unknown, is struggling to create two heads looking up. In any case, the editor makes sure not to pick up the glove, not to start a discussion which might awaken a deeper instinct of artistic conscience in the sculptor. For the sculptor's

silence is rather disturbing; it is a sign of a deeper emotional and mental reaction within. It shows in the outer gesture of reflection (“podparł całe czoło silną swą ręką” [he rested his entire forehead on his strong hand]) and... in the behaviour of the greyhound. The animal instinctively feels that something extraordinary is occurring in her master’s soul. At the sculptor’s pensiveness, “charcica, u nóg leżąca pierwaj, podniosła się i poczęła wejrzeń swego pana poszukiwać” (PZ E, 135) [the hound which had been lying at his feet, rose and began to fathom its master’s look] (SR 167). Signalling the emotions turning inside the sculptor with the greyhound’s reaction is an extremely subtle idea. For the second time in the story, the sculptor is characterized indirectly with what is said about his animal. The animation of the soul caused by the narrator’s words is strong enough to arouse anxiety in the faithful dog, but not strong enough to arm the sculptor with inner resistance when the temptation of the dollar enters the stage.

The narrator’s reaction to being invited to the studio may raise the reader’s expectation that the meeting will concern only artistic matters. However, the illusion is partially dispelled before the main scene: the entire company of the sculptor from Caffé Greco has been invited to the studio, and the purpose of the visit is to determine the ultimate character of the sculpture in the presence of the American merchant who is to appear. The news takes expectations from loftiness down to earth and prepares the reader for the scene which is about to unfold.

The scene is actually composed of three smaller scenes, recreating the major stages of evolution from *Ad leones* to *Capitalisation*. The first of them shows the enthusiastic reaction of the people present at the sight of the completed part of the work; the second one presents a partial distortion of the original idea as a result of removing crosses from the hands of the figures; the third one reflects the definitive change of the sculpture’s character due to the suggestion made by the American merchant.

The sense of the first scene (apart from a short description of the group by the narrator) consists in shedding sharp, satirical light on the spiritual atmosphere in the closest environment of the sculptor. The narrator does not note any deeper reaction to the work, which was, after all, supposed to be “Eurypidesowego nastroju kompozycją” (PZ E, 132) [a composition in the mood of Euripides] (PSS, 19). After much initial applause accompanying the unveiling of the group from the wet canvases, comes the traditional jaunty celebration of a joyful occasion. The young tourist, who is the founder of the party, mindlessly exclaims: “Ad leones! ad leones!;” the sculptor assumes a tone “wyzywający świat do walki” [challenging the world to mortal combat] (SR, 168); the singer starts a revolutionary song; and the painter adds: “Anch’io sono pittore!” The behaviour of the artistic trinity (sculptor, singer, painter) has particular significance in the

scene. The crude gesture of disregard for the work performed before (breaking off the nose on Domitian's bust) is meant to express complete self-satisfaction in the sculptor's soul. Yet, what does that satisfaction concern? – the recognition of people whose mental and moral shallowness is revealed in every detail of their behaviour. Norwid continues the method of stark contrasts. The singer, the embodiment of banality, narrow-mindedness, and foppery, bellows in full baritone proclaiming in the song's lyrics the anger of the people and the final judgment over the tyrants of the world. The comic nature of that combination is soon surpassed by the remark of the talented painter, which is a prelude to what happens in a moment with the sculpted group. For, in such an artistic environment where the creator himself does not know what he has painted, and may consider the image to present Cleopatra just as well as the Assumption, it shall not be a too difficult task to turn the group *Ad leones* into *Capitalisation*.

Thus, the first scene, by revealing different types of spiritual reaction in the environment of the red-bearded sculptor, prepares the ground to understand the psychological and moral possibilities of the impending finale.

The discussed scene, however, has not one word about the editor. There is no need to present his attitude towards the work of art; the focus of the satire was on the psychology of the artists, which enabled the work of tempters like the editor. His role begins only at this point.

The editor's speech opens scene two. Despite the brevity of the speech, it contains all the basic points of a rhetorical composition. *Captatio benevolentiae* is expressed in the thesis that the intention of all the people present is nothing but to ensure the future to a work of a brilliant artist. *Narratio* presents the difficulties and costs of the final implementation of the idea. *Argumentatio*, indicating how to solve the issues, presents a proposal to remove crosses from the hands of the figures, using the arguments of prudence and aesthetics. *Refutatio* engages in polemics with anyone who may wish to place more emphasis on a "znak marty" [dead symbol] (SR, 169) than on the feeling, which is contained in the entire work anyway. *Peroratio*, warning against the consequences of such stubbornness, suggests a conclusion which is too obvious to even mention.

The sculptor's first reaction immediately reveals his lack of any ideological attitude to his own work. The artist shows little resistance, following the aesthetics of shapes: the crosses break the main lines. One can see that he is not going to put up a fight over the point and seeks the opinion of his environment and whether someone absolves him of his scruples. Despite some hesitation, he is already holding a boxwood tool in his hand to mutilate his own creation as the tempter suggests.

A questioning glance at the narrator forces the latter to speak. What falls from his lips now follows the same ideological line which could be observed when he was invited to the studio. The narrator answers as if he has not heard the editor's words about “prudence;” he only discusses the solution of a technical problem in the service of art as an expression of spiritual content. In his answer, he presents the matter in such an abstract and generalizing manner as if he were facing a work which has in some way already resolved the problem (“palec dotyka symbolu” [the hand touches the symbol]). His words sound evasive: “artysta, który to zrobi, potrafi wszelką kompozycję zrobić” (PZ E, 141) [And the artist able to do that can produce any composition] (SR, 169). But the man and the woman in the *Ad leones* group are holding the crosses in their hands; their fingers are touching the symbol, so the phrase “artysta, który to zrobi” [the artist able to do that] suggests that the sculptor has not solved the problem satisfactorily in his work. Naturally, the narrator judges others by himself, and it does not occur to him that emphasizing the difficulty of a task may deter someone rather than promote further efforts to achieve the goal. Since he himself is selflessly struggling to create two heads looking upwards in order to extract two possibilities of expression from the same gesture, he supposes that emphasizing the difficulty of grasping the cross with the hand can only encourage the ambition and imagination of the author of *Ad leones*. However, the result is different: by limiting himself only to the artistic issue, the narrator facilitates the realisation of the editor's intentions.

It is stated: “To więc jedna wielka trudność mniej!” (PZ E, 141) [That, then, is one difficulty the less!] (SR, 169) Who says it? First the editor and the *painter*, then the sculptor repeats the same thing. It is understandable, in light of his secret plans, that the editor reacts in such a way, but the painter? It is a new dig at the ideology-less artistic milieu of which the creator of *Ad leones* is a part of. As a side note, such consistency in details is a new testimony to the precise artistry of the story discussed.

The cross in the hand of the male figure is removed with two lightning-fast movements of the expert sculptor. Before the same thing happens to the second cross, the tutor intervenes. So far, the following elements have collaborated in the act of mutilating the *Ad leones* group: deviousness of a corrupt conscience (the editor), lack of ideology in the artists (the sculptor and the painter), and finally the naive evaluation of the others with one's own measure from the only person in the group who has a deeper attitude to art. Now, a fourth factor comes to the forefront: the pretentious stupidity of showing off with pseudo-learned arguments. The tutor goes along with the previously expressed aesthetic scruples of the sculptor and proposes to have the cross in the hand of the female figure

replaced with a key. When compared to the original meaning of the entire group, presenting such a proposal could be outright provocative if the author of *Ad leones* was guided in his idea by any impulse of true regard for the martyrdom of the first Christians. The tutor says: “Jeżeli dla załamania linii należy coś wetknąć w ręce kobiety” (PZ E, 142) [If anything has to be placed in the woman’s hand for the sake of breaking the main lines...] (PSS, 25) But expecting any reaction to that brazen “anything has to be placed in” would be in vain. The sculptor yields to the speaker’s suggestion and transforms the cross into a key “kilkoma biegłymi ruchy” [with a few deft strokes] (PSS, 25). Thus once again, his excellent mastery of the craft is emphasised.

At this point, the narrator interrupts the account and remarks that everything which has happened so far “działo się jakoś magicznie, przez ogólny nakłon pojęć i uczuć, a zupełny brak rozumowanej protestacji” (PZ E, 142) [happened almost like magic, the result of a common trend of feelings and ideas and a complete absence of rational protest] (PSS, 25–26).

Yet, the realisation that the group lost its sense as a result of the changes made finally reaching the sculptor’s consciousness. His reflection at this point: “Ależ to tym sposobem i z tychże względów cała scena Chrześcijańska musiałaby odmienić się” (PZ E, 142) [But in this way and for these reasons the whole Christian scene would have to be changed] (PSS, 26), is proof that his artistic conscience has finally awakened and a testimony to the fact that the sculptor did not know the editor’s plans and is surprised by the proposed changes in his work. That episode clears him of the accusation of a strictly money-oriented attitude towards art – but it does not save him as an artist in the readers’ opinion. It takes very little effort on the part of the editor and tutor to dispel his scruples. If his qualifications were not limited to “talent and order,” if he still had at least some awareness of what art is for (as understood by the author of the story), he would not succumb so easily to the arguments of the tempter and the pseudoscientific gibberish of a fool.

At this point, the editor’s argumentation is extremely perfidious. Thanks to their symbolism, the crosses in the hands of the figures were of decisive importance for the spiritual meaning of the entire group, as intended by the artist. The editor tries to downplay that meaning by treating the crosses as a secondary prop of historical authenticity. Just as both figures do not portray specific historical figures, external signs of the historical location of the recreated event are also deemed unnecessary. The conclusion is stretched because the editor prefers not to call things by name and say that he intends the group to have nothing to do with Christianity. To all appearances, the editor wishes to maintain the

continuity of the original idea, meanwhile obliterate the signs that allow the original meaning of the work to be recognised.

What the editor found difficult to express is stated by the tutor. The former is unable to openly express what he has long and consciously pursued; a bad conscience dictated by caution in every word. The latter does not have such inhibitions and can therefore state the conclusion: “to mogą być wcale nie Chrześcijanie rzuceni lwom” (PZ E, 143) [they need not be Christians thrown to lions at all] (PSS, 26). But what could they be? The tutor is aided in the specific formulation of the new sense of the work by his own mental chaos and cloudy phraseology. In that short fragment, Norwid synthesises all that has been said about the tutor so far. The favourite adjective returns, and that in the comparative form (“sciencyficzniejszy” [more scientific]), “rzut oka” [glance] returns, and at the end of the speech the reader learns that “zapluty nieco mówca otarł usta” [the slightly *drooling* speaker wiped his mouth] (PSS, 26). In short – the last performance of the tutor is meant to present him in his full mental capabilities and his appearance.

But that is not quite the last touch of sarcasm in scene two. It is expressed in two reactions: the sculptor’s gesture of gratitude towards the editor and the tutor for everything they said to absolve him from scruples of artistic conscience (“rzeźbiarz ścisnął ręce obu” [the sculptor shook hands with them both] SR, 170), and the quiet withdrawal of the singer, painter and young tourist from the studio in the face of discussions “próżno głowę kłopotujących” (PZ E, 143) [unnecessarily taxing their brains] (PSS, 26).

The stage has been set for the final act of the tragicomedy. The sculptor, the editor, the tutor and the narrator remain as the audience; the greyhound announces the merchant’s arrival with silver barking. The image of the new figure is limited to symbolic features of appearance: fresh, elegant clothes, a thick gold chain with keys and stamps made of precious stones; smooth manners, testimony to social polish. For an embodiment of the power of money, the portrait is sufficient.

In the scene now unfolding, Norwid serves justice to the editor who is briefly branded in the eyes of the other participants with a trait of degrading comedy. It was easy to remove the original meaning of the group by removing the crosses, but it is more difficult to invent a new interpretation. The tutor’s platitudes were sufficient to turn the sculptor’s head and to appease his doubts, but now they cannot be provided when the merchant asks for an explanation of the figures. The question should have been answered first by the sculptor, but he retreats instead, so as not to have to speak first. The situation has been composed perfectly in order to fully highlight the comedy of surprise. The editor feels responsible for

the transformation of the group, he understands the helplessness of the sculptor, from whom any reasonable statement can hardly be expected; and finally, he certainly does not wish the tutor to act as a commentator, so he takes the floor.

A compromising stuttering begins, without sense and coherence to it, typical of a surprised person who cannot tell the truth and cannot invent some intelligent lie on the spot. At that moment, the editor is playing a pathetic role and must appear a very comical figure in the eyes of the people present.

The comedy and sarcasm of the situation are raised further when the merchant's imagination, excited by the editor's chaotic verbiage, provides him with a new interpretation of the sculpture. It is psychologically understandable that, to a representative of financial spheres, a woman with a key in her hand becomes a symbol of savings, and a lump of clay intended to become a lion is a trunk for money. The sculptor follows the merchant's thought humbly without a word, giving the would-be lion the approximate shape of a trunk with a sickle as an emblem. The group *Ad leones* became *Capitalisation*.

In view of the extraordinary brevity of the short story "Ad leones!", it might be considered surprising why Norwid prolongs the sales scene, providing the text of both commercial documents mentioned in the transaction *in extenso*. Yet there are legitimate reasons for that.

First, that exchange of written documents requires time; as long as the merchant viewed the group and speculated that it represented *Capitalisation*, the sculptor could remain silent because he was not responsible for someone else's interpretation. The obedient transformation of a lion into a lump representing a trunk did not settle the sculptor's decision in a final manner; the dice have not yet been cast. But a written statement that the group represents *Capitalisation*, his own signature on such a document is an act of informed consent, given with no surprise and under no duress. Formulating both copies of the contract in writing allows for a clear understanding of the changes made and allows enough time to withdraw from the choice. The prolongation of the scene also emphasises the passing of time when the sculptor had a chance to withdraw after seeing the results of the editor's advice. But the sculptor does not withdraw. That is one point of the purchase scene.

Second, the author states twice in the official document that the group represents *Capitalisation*, enhancing the final effect. A moment later, the word recurs in the note that on signing the contract, the sculptor throws the wet canvases back on *Capitalisation*. There is no *Ad leones* group anymore, there is *Capitalisation!* The reader is pierced with four repetitions of the word within a short period, evoking a reaction of disgust and painful reflection in the face of such a change of the idea.

However, the purchase scene ends with yet another point. The leitmotiv of the greyhound returns here. At the beginning of the story, the beauty of the animal served to characterise the sculptor’s tastes, emphasizing his qualifications and the possibility of achieving the highest level of artistic creativity. Now, after signing the contract, the merchant congratulates the sculptor on such beautiful talent and such a beautiful dog. Compared to the opening of the story, where the passage about the greyhound immediately follows the mentions of the sculptor’s promising talent and physical endurance, it sounds like the words of the Knight in Wyspiański’s drama *Wesele* [The Wedding] to the Poet: “Wiesz ty, czym ty mogłeś być?” [Do you know what you could have been?] Alas! “Miałeś chlamie złoty róg” [You oaf, you had the golden horn [and lost it]].

The story has actually finished. But Norwid intentionally did not emphasise the ideological elements of the purchase scene, in order to be able to strongly illuminate the moral perspective of the whole event in one more final scene, which could be called the judgment scene. It is a short discussion between two actors who have been fully aware of their goals and their path throughout the story: the editor and the narrator, the dark spirit and the bright spirit. The main charge is not directed against the sculptor, but against the structure of the “słusznie przeklętego świata” [rightly accursed world,] (SR, 172) in which similar acts of Judas’ treason may occur. The narrator attempts to examine the conscience of the tempter: “Jak to jednak daleko od Wyznawców, dla wyznania lwom rzuconych, do *Kapitalizacji*?” (PZ E, 147) [How far is it from the Confessors of the Faith, from those who for their *confession* were cast to the lions, how far it is from them to *Capitalisation*?] (SR, 172).

The response of the main culprit is a mixture of shame and shamelessness. The gesture of uneasiness returns – tracing an outline on the pavement with the tip of an umbrella (in the invitation scene, there was a similar movement of a pencil on the marble table) – the culprit does not raise his eyes, but at the same time declares that they, i.e. the journalists, do the same thing every day with almost every thought and every feeling. The editor says it with some embarrassment, but simultaneously with a sense of some deterministic inevitability of such a state of affairs: “redakcja jest redukcją” [*Redaction is Reduction*]. The narrator’s answer: “sumienie jest sumieniem” (PZ E, 147) [*conscience is conscience*] (SR, 172), due to the opposition of the logical structure of the two sentences, is a protest against suggesting such determinism. In other words: if your conscience were a conscience, then editing would be editing because its essence does not imply that it must be *reduced*. Thus, over the course of the discussion, the editor indirectly admits his guilt, and the aphorism on editing serves as a mitigating circumstance (the alleged inevitability of such actions as a result of the profession

itself). Yet the author – with the narrator’s words – unmasks the falsehood of such a defence and ends the story with a statement of the uncompromising nature of an honest conscience.

Thus, the trial against contemporary art for its lack of ideology results in the condemnation of the artists, because they only see technical skill in art, and the condemnation of society, especially the press, for demoralizing artists with the corrupting influence of materialism. The plot of the story, and particularly the final judgment scene, place greater moral responsibility for such a state of affairs on the tempters rather than the artists.

The entire event is placed very generally. It happens in Rome, somewhere in the city’s artistic milieu, as emphasized by linking the plot to the famous Greco. The time is much less specific; it is clearly late nineteenth century, but any closer definition of the actual decade is difficult. The only clue might be that America is perceived as a country synonymous with the power of money, and since the tremendous economic development of the United States dates back to the end of the civil war in 1861–1865, the *terminus a quo* should be placed in the seventh decade of the nineteenth century. The national affiliation of the characters is even less clear. Due to the fact that nothing is said about their nationality, one may tacitly accept that they are Poles. Such a hypothesis may be supported with only certain moral details, such as the young tourist sent abroad with a tutor to gain sophistication and knowledge of the world; although it should be added that in 1870–1880 a young man in such a situation would be an anachronistic idea even in the context of Polish affairs.

Such a faint indication of the local colour is understandable in view of the transnational perspectives of the issue raised. It is not about the ills of Polish, French or Italian art, but about the future of contemporary art rooted in the European cultural circle. In all ages, art has been created upon someone’s request, but the conditions of its creation in the former era of patronage did not transform the artist’s atelier into a mere shop providing whatever the customer demands. And under the dictatorship of money, the artist is deprived of human dignity and becomes a trader – not only of their own works, but also of their own conscience. The issue stems from the general system, not the living conditions of one particular nation. Hence the general definition of location mentioned above. The only detail caught consciously by the reader is the setting of the plot in Rome among an international assembly of artists. In fact, as stated above, that detail serves to reflect the spiritual atmosphere conducive to the creation of great works of art. Norwid used the occasion to note that the external, even facetious, signs of public interest in works of art which are still to be created are beautiful and, “a północnym chłodnym nieznanym stronom” [unheard of in cold and northern

countries] (PSS 20). It was for that reason alone that Norwid placed the entire event in “honoured Rome” and brought the artists’ favourite café, Caffè Greco, to the stage.

Below, some remarks about the language of the story follow. It has been correctly noticed that the language of a short story should be halfway between the commonness of a narrative about the events forming the plot of the work, and the solemnity of great literary forms, such as epic or drama. The double character of the language corresponds, on the one hand, to the realism of events, and on the other to their symbolism (R. Petsch) that postulate, drawn from the practice of the great short-story writers in world literature, is fully realized in the story “Ad leones!”. There is a particularly striking contrast between the language of almost the entire story and the language of the final scene.

The consequence of an abstract basic problem is the prevalence of conceptual prose over poetic language. Fragments of unusual flair are few and refer almost exclusively to paintings presenting visual beauty. Such is e.g. the image of the greyhound:

Śliczny to był ów rudobrodego rzeźbiarza pies, zwolna przed nim idący z paszczą otwartą i w niej rozesłanym na białych kłach amarantowym językiem, do świeżego liścia purpurowego jakiego kwiatu podobnym. (PZ E, 128)

[Lovely she was, that red-bearded sculptor’s dog, pacing slowly before him, with open mouth, her amaranth tongue spread over the white fangs like the fresh leaf of some purple flower.] (PSS, 15)

Such a fragment is also evident in the description of Piazza di Spagna in Rome:

szerokie schody, we dwa skrzydła rozwierające się i podrywające na *monte pincio*, jak gdyby z bruku ogromny jaki, bajeczny ptak chciał wzlecieć i oczekuje tylko, aż się na piórach jego ludzie ugrupują. (PZ E, 132)

[wide steps spreading like two wings rising towards the Monte Pincio like same enormous legendary bird that wishes to soar from the pavement, waiting only for people to gather on its wings.] (PSS, 19)

But, as noted above, such extracts are necessarily rare. The ironic tone of the whole work requires the use of rather common and abstract language. Striking is the great number of foreign words, emphasising the transnational nature of the subject matter. Apart from the word *scientificzny* [scientific], introduced to illustrate the tutor’s mentality, the following foreign words appear, sometimes in a slightly different sense than commonly used:

atrybut [attribute], *organizacja* (= organism) [organization (= organism)], *elokwencja* [eloquence], *skulpturalny* [sculptural], *skulptor* [sculptor], *profan*

[layman], *period* [(time) period], *interes* (= zainteresowanie) [interest (in something)], *fawor* [favour], *kompozycja* (= pomysł) [composition (= idea)], *egzekucja* (= wykonanie) [execution (of a work)], *egzaltować* (= oddawać cześć, uwielbiać) [exalt (= worship)], *fortunnie* [fortunately], *monitor* (= dziennik) [monitor (= daily paper)], *choreograficzny* (= wyrażający coś gestem) [choreographic (= expressing something with gesture)], *protestacja* [protest], *komplement* (= uprzejmość) [compliment (= politeness)].

Etymologically Polish vocabulary has a tendency for archaisation and visible deviations from the meaning. Thus there are forms completely obsolete by the time of writing the story, as: *przedstawował* [(he) presented], *poprawując* [correcting], *uważywszy* [considering]; there is the archaic *sztukmistrz* [conjuror]; and beside them, there are words used in an unusual sense, e.g. *jednać* (= pojednać) [to reconcile (= to combine)], *postaciowanie się* (= uzewnętrznianie) [embodiment (= externalisation)], *znamionować* (= świadczyć) [characterise (= prove)], *porzucić* (= narzucić) [discard (= throw upon)], *przetrącić* (= przerwać) [break (= interrupt)], *uwidomić* (= wyrazić) [visualise (= express)]. Norwid shows particular fondness for the word *czytelny* [legible] and its derivatives, like *uczynelnić* [make something clear/legible], in the sense of: expressive, expressing something.

The language of the short story in terms of syntax is characterised by marked synthetics, expressed in a very specific order of words, as if modelled on Latin. That feature is visible in: 1. placing compound attributes before the noun they refer to; 2. placing verbal predicates at the end of the sentence; 3. starting subordinate sentences with sentence elements other than the conjunction, most often with the subject. Below listed are some examples of the phenomena, in the same order:

1. Eurypidesowego nastroju *kompozycją* [a composition in the mood of Euripides] (PSS, 19)
wewnętrznym ludzkości *tragediom* [reflect the inner *tragedy* of mankind] (PSS, 19)
tyle gościnne dla swojej pracy *powitanie* [so hospitable a reception of his work] (PSS, 20)
od mnóstwa lat przyjętym *zwyczajem* [a *custom* of many years] (PSS, 20)
ustalonym kawiarni greckiej *adresem* [to use the Greek café as your address] (PSS, 20)
zupełnego swej kompozycji *odmienienia* [complete *change* of his composition] and others.
2. cały i główny interes kompozycji we dwóch tylko głowach *zawiera się* [the leading idea of the composition is *embodied* in these two heads alone] (PSS, 20)
zaproszenie do pracowni rzeźbiarza bynajmniej mnie jak fawor wyłączny nie *spotkało* [my invitation to the studio was no a special] (PSS, 21)

redaktor w sposób następujący do rzeźbiarza pierwszorzędnie, lecz zarazem i do gości *przemówił*

[the editor, addressing himself primarily to the sculptor but simultaneously to the audience as a whole, spoke] (PSS, 24)

ażeby dzieło genialnego naszego przyjaciela i mistrza przyszłość zapewniłą sobie *znalazło*

[to see the work of our friend and great master *gain* its rightful place in the future] (PSS, 24)

3. dzień nawiedzenia rzeźbiarskiej pracowni *skoro* w swej pełni nadszedł

[on the day of my visit to the sculptor's studio] (PSS, 22)

co wraz użytym *gdy* zostało

[the immediate consumption *of which* helped to intensify the cheering] (PSS, 23)

uciszenie *skoro* do swej pełni doszło

[*when* silence reigned supreme] (PSS, 24), etc.

There are many more examples for phenomena 1 and 2, which may prove that the particular features of language are very important for the short-story style. They can be summarised by a thesis that all sentences gravitate towards their end. Norwid often put those words at the end which were most important and gave meaning to the whole sentence. That may be related to the frequent use of irony. The effect of irony is most often obtained – like any comic effect – by raising expectations of something important and valuable to then surprise one with everything turning unexpectedly into nothing (*nascitur ridiculus mus*). Hence an ironic style must have a tendency to use the point, i.e. to build sentences with meaning-heavy endings. Such is the structure of the sentence which begins with the tutor's praise that he does not practice reckless scribbling:

Niepłochó jednakże bierał się do pióra, ktoś albowiem, nienajdyskretniejszy, lecz bystrowzroki, rok temu u niego przyjmowany, gdy z rozsypanego na arkuszu białym tytoniu wiał sobie cygaretko, wyczytał był dwa pierwsze słowa tytułu i rękopismu: “*Rzut-oka*,” a jeszcze i wczora tamże i w podobnej okoliczności niewiecej zdarzyło się mu wyczytać. (PZ E, 131)

[But he was quite adept with his pen, for while rolling a cigarette, one of his none too discreet but observant guests had spread his tobacco on a sheet of white paper, and had there observed, a year ago, the first words of the title of the manuscript: “*Survey of*” Yesterday, in the same place and under similar circumstances, he could see nothing added to this.] (PSS, 18)

An ironic punch line was the author's intention in giving a conditional form to the Homeric simile meant to illustrate the editor's style. The excerpt reads:

Jeżeli kto uwagę kiedy zwrócił na rodzaj świdrów szklanych, obracanych przez ukryty mechanizm i do złudzenia naśladowujących bieg źródlanej wody; jeżeli widział takowe

szkiełka obracane w paszczach lwów gipsowych, obstawionych kwiatami i zielonością; i jeżeli wspomniał, jak liść żaden żadnego kwiatu nie czuje tam zbliżenia kropli wody, ani jej chłodu i życia; tedy ma on zupełne wyobrażenie o redaktora stylu i jego elokwencji. (PZ E, 130)

[If you have ever seen those glass gimlets (which by some secret mechanism perfectly simulate the trickling of spring water) put in position in the gullets of plaster lions, all bedecked with flowers and greenery, you will have noticed that not one leaf of one flower feels the presence of a single drop of water, not one breath of coolness and life. The parallel exactly fits the Editor's style and delivery.] (SR, 164–165)

The traditional syntactic form of the Homeric (or epic) simile is a comparison. But it was impossible to use the comparative structure in the short story. Such a syntactic form was too strongly associated with the style of a great epic to comply with the common language binding in a short story with the understandable dominance of conceptual language over poetry in prose narration. Therefore, Norwid chooses a conditional structure which, due to its intellectual character, naturally grows out of conceptual prose and does not evoke any associations with a great epic form. The conditional also allows for a much better ironic conclusion. With its traditional beginning (“like,” “similar to”), a comparison prepares a juxtaposition of some phenomena, and since the previous sentence ends with information about the editor: “i nareszcie, skoro już zaczął mówić, poznawało się po stylu człowieka pióra” [and finally, once he started speaking, you could recognise a man of letters by the style], one might expect to have the editor's style characterised using the started comparison. On the other hand, the conditional does not promise any analogy between phenomena, and therefore the completely unexpected development makes for an effective satirical point.

The final scene of the story is surprising from the very first word with its completely different language. Irony disappears. The narrator sheds the satirist's mask and reveals the face of a man painfully disheartened by the symbolism of the anecdote. In the place of sentences built to achieve an ironic point comes rhetorical syntax using anaphora to convey a lofty mood. Below, the structure of individual sentences is discussed.

Tak to więc

wszystko, na tym, słusznie przeklętym świecie,
wszystko, co się poczyna z dziewiczego natchnienia myśli, musi tu być
sprzedanem za 6 dolarów!... (TRZYDZIEŚCI SREBRNIKÓW) (PZ E, 147)

[*Everything* therefore in this rightly accursed world,
everything which is conceived by the virginal inspiration of thought, must be
sold for 6 dollars (thirty pieces of silver)] (SR, 172)

The glaring antithesis between the two parts, starting with the word *everything*, finds its solution in the part providing the predicate for both subjects. The final sign of the equation between the unexpected sum of 6 dollars and thirty pieces of silver is a sarcastic punchline which draws the sentence closer to the previous ironic style of the story.

I jakkolwiek obiecywałem sobie
nic wcale nie powiedzieć,
nic nie dodać,
nic nie powtórzyć,
 jednakowoż, przenieść na sobie nie mogąc całego ciężaru moralnego,
 rzekłem do Redaktora. (PZ E, 147)

[And although I had promised myself
 not to say *anything*,
 not to add *anything*
 nor repeat *anything*,
 I could not bear all that moral burden.
 I told the Editor:] (PSS, 29)

In the set of three anaphoric sentences starting with the word *anything*, some of the verbs used may seem illogical. The word *repeat* is hardly justified in this context. All three verbs are actually synonyms of the word *speak* and that is their only role. The narrator wants to emphasize three times that he has decided not to start a conversation on the whole event but was unable to keep to that decision. Hence the matter of the verbs' logical match with the situation is of secondary importance. The essential meaning of the sentence consists of expressing a certain emotional state, one which was so strong that it broke the resolve of the will, expressed emphatically three times in refusing to speak. The order of the verbs: *say* – *add* – *repeat* is not accidental, either.

The word that best reflects the logical meaning in question has been placed first, followed by others in accordance with the requirements of rhythmic symmetry: 3–2 – 3.

Jak to jednak daleko
 od Wyznawców,
 i dla wyznania
 lwom rzuconych,
 do *Kapitalizacji*. (PZ E, 147)

[How far it is
 from the Confessors of the Faith,
 from those who for their confession
 were cast to the lions,
 how far it is from them to *Capitalisation*.] (SR, 172)

The entire effect of the sentence is based on the antithesis of the notions of faith vs. capitalisation, with the evaluation emphasis placed on the first part, due both to the repetition of words of the same etymology and to the emphasis on the drastic consequences of being faithful.

On zaś,
 giętkie okulary poprawując, (a)
 począł coś parasola ostrzem kreślić na bruku (b)
 i
 nie podnosząc oczu (aa)
 odrzekł: (bb) (PZ E, 147)

[And he,
 as he set his glasses straight, (a)
 began to draw something with the tip of his umbrella on the pavement, (b)
 and
 replied (bb)
 without raising his eyes: (aa)] (SR, 172)

There is a perfect syntactic symmetry in the clauses describing the editor's reaction to the attack. Adjusting the glasses should be a prelude to looking at someone, however the second part states that the editor does not dare look into the speaker's eyes. Part b presents a gesture which replaces an answer; sentence **bb** introduces the long-awaited verbal answer.

Redakcja nie jest telefonem. (a)
 My podobnież przecie czynimy codzień
 z *każdą* nieledwie myślą (m)
 i
 z *każdym* uczuciem... (n)
 Redakcja jest redukcją. (b)
 To tak, jak
 sumienie jest sumieniem – (c)
 odpowiedziałem. (PZ E, 147)

[Editorial work is not like a telephone. (a)
 We actually do this kind of thing every day,
 for almost *every* idea (m)
 and
 with *every* sentiment... (n)
 Redaction is Reduction. (b)
 Even so,
 as *conscience is conscience*, – (c)

I replied.] (SR, 172)

The analogy of elements **m** and **n** is aimed at evoking an emotional effect: to reflect the malevolent influence of the press on the life of society; two complementary notions: *idea* and *sentiment*, are introduced here not as antithesis, but to reflect the comprehensive range of editorial work. On the other hand, clauses **a**, **b**, and **c**, due to their construction parallelism (subject, copula, nominal predicate), constitute an effective logical conclusion; and thanks to the ideological perspective – a moral and emotional one. Also, clause **b**, a typical paronomasia (the use of similar sounding words to emphasize a semantic contrast), comes from a range of rhetorical means of expression.

In a word, the polar difference between the ironic narrative of the whole and the pathos of the finale emphasises the difference between the realism of the plot and its simultaneous symbolism.

What conclusions about Norwid’s talent as a short-story writer may be drawn from the above analysis? It is likely justified to recognise the great simplicity and at the same time the purposefulness of a well-planned composition, along with a striking economy of means of expression, which is still completely sufficient to achieve the desired artistic impression (no unnecessary details or episodes), and finally an amazing adjustment of linguistic expression to the nature of the content conveyed.

Regardless of the position one might take towards the notions of art expressed here or towards the requirements set for art, “Ad leones!” has to be considered one of the most masterfully written Polish short stories.

Zofia Szmydtowa

The “Venetian” Novellas by Norwid

Abstract: This article presents an analytical approximation and comparison of two novellas set in Venice. The first, “Menego. Wyjątek z pamiętnika” [Menego. An Extract from a Diary] was written in the early period of Norwid’s work, while the second, “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” [Lord Singelworth’s Secret] was written in the final period of Norwid’s work. The former is a record of the last days of life for the painter Tytus Byczkowski (who in the text is constantly referred to as B.), marked by the drama of artistic unfulfillment and defeat which fully resounds against the background of the extraordinary and magnificent city, whose image is the quintessence of art – a perfect realisation of the relationship between art and life and between art and reality. In the second novella, which lacks a tragic plot, presents originality, beauty, and grace as a passive defence against enslavement. A peculiar maniac, the title character, is hovering over the city, silently protesting against his smallness and humiliation. In the heart of the city, in St. Mark’s Square, the Venetian patriot Toni di Bona Grazia, dressed as a jester and using clownish phrases and gestures, is fighting the same evil. Both texts, despite great differences in the outlined visions, are similar in the adopted lowered style. In the first text, it plays a major role in the statements of the painter B. as an expression of depression. In the second text, it is an intentional stylisation of triviality adapted to the role of a jester, which is in fact a mask, and a means of action in the given time, place, and situation.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, Tytus Byczkowski, Venice, novella, classical tradition, improvisation, lowered style, multi-style novella

Norwid recalled Venice from his memories for the first time in 1850. What happened seven years before (1843) was rendered in verbal form. The subtitle was: “Wyjątek z pamiętnika” [An Extract from a Diary], the title: “Menego” – ambiguous and disturbing; it pointed to a self-contained literary work. Its literary character was evidenced in the arrangement of the plot and clear rules of composition, and despite all its freedom of narration, the action gravitated towards the end and its strong closure. Thus, the story used the mechanism typical of a novella. Therefore, considering both the diaristic conventions and the layout of the work, Zenon Przesmycki, an expert on the subject, recognised it as an almost novella. This once seemed right to me since it was in line with the suggestion given in the subtitle. Today, however, I am worried about this cautious “almost” – through its ambiguity evasiveness. As it is known from practice, the diary allows for a combination of different styles, especially when

quoting someone else's utterances, kind of monologue, or dialogue clippings; it also allows for a small epic or lyrical forms to emerge from the main thread of memories and from interjected works of an autonomous literary character. We are also familiar with novels stylized as a diary, but also novellas, tales, and humorous sketches served in the form of pages from a diary. Both the genesis and the result of such treatments may be different. If an author cares about convincing the reader about the authenticity of the facts, he or she will obscure the presence of a literary convention in every way. But the opposite also occurs, and the diary can adopt the character of a novel. By announcing an excerpt from a diary, Norwid may have suggested that he gave a part of a larger whole, retaining, for example, the links to what preceded or was to follow that part. However, he did not follow that path; he isolated the event by creating a compositionally separated whole. Therefore, he understood the memoir writing as an account of what actually happened at a certain time and place. Does such a correspondence with reality reflected in the memory have to categorise a work somewhere between a diary and a novella? Should "Menego", due to its genesis, be considered an uncrystallised novella? Aristotle wrote extensively about relations between art and life, and it is worth recalling him here. Building his argument about the autonomous character of poetry, the Greek philosopher stated that "it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen" (*Poetics*, Chapter IX).¹ He seemed to separate poetry from life, but this was not the case. In the same chapter, a little further he wrote about the poet: "And even if he chances to take a historical subject, he is none the less a poet; for there is no reason why some events that have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker." On another occasion, Aristotle stated that certain tales were particularly suited to be threads of a tragedy, and therefore "a few families only, as has been already observed, furnish the subjects of tragedy. It was not art, but happy chance, that led the poets in search of subjects to impress the tragic quality upon their plots. They are compelled, therefore, to have recourse to those houses whose history contains moving incidents like these" (Chapter XIV).² In another place, the philosopher argued that, although a poetic work must have a motivation based on probability, the fact that something really happened increases this sense of probability. Thus, as we can see, this all boils down to the usefulness of a given mechanism for certain artistic purposes. When an artist recognises this

1 Trans. Samuel H. Butcher: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.2.2.html>.

2 Trans. Samuel H. Butcher: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.2.2.html>.

usefulness for his own purpose, he submits the thread to a verbal arrangement; he makes it present, alive, rich. In order for a work to be created, a plot, taken from the external world or invented, must be developed with the use of compositional links and with the participation of characters.

If “Menego” was to be part of a diary, Tytus Byczkowski, a portraitist of Mickiewicz and Słowacki, would appear in it. Meanwhile, the author used only the first letter of his surname when writing about him and preceded his appearance with a short chronological note, mentioning the year and season (spring 1844).³ He then gave a description of the Venetian coastline known as *Riva degli Schiavoni*, depicted from above in its full length with the intersections of green canals and white bridges connecting them. This two-coloured, white-green route is a haven for several thousand different ships, a route not shown from the ground, but from above. And after the presentation of this colourful topographic plan, created on the basis of various observations and impressions, there appeared a view of the harbour captured as a whole composed of three phases of the day – at dawn, noon, and night. The sequence of the images is so suggestive of a constant rhythm, as if all those spring days were similar to each other and all the nights were moonlit. At dawn, small fishing vessels with figures of apostles on sails, maintained in the strict Byzantine style, were put out to sea. In the fog it seemed that these apostles were leaving from the land and walking on waves. It is thus an optical illusion – an allusion to the miracle known from the Gospel. In the southern light, on a sunny day, of course, the mystery of the colours of Venetian painters is revealed; there people of different nationalities appear, in different costumes, in motion, with their eyes directed at ships. At night the ships disappear into the darkness and only on the moonlit silver-plated wave there appears a shiny axe at the bow of the gondola floating by, then the rower, then the cabin, the second rower, and the shiny wave. All the images follow one another in the rhythm of passing time in complete silence. No voice is heard as if the paintings were born in the spirit of art with the participation of a mime. Not even a splash, but the glow of the wave “skrzela wiosła odepchnięty w światłość księżycową” [pushed away into the moonlight with the gill of an oar] has its painterly meaning here. The oar acts as a fish gill, which brings a mute inhabitant of water to mind. The places shown in the general long strip, among bridges and canals, and thus in its unchanging plan, as well as in the permanently recurring and regularly coming mornings, noons, and evenings, acquire a special meaning.

3 The meeting took place in 1843. The signature: *Byczkowski* was placed only under the letter.

It is here, not elsewhere, on the shore referred to by the Italian word *riva*, that the author strolled with the artist in the spring of 1844 (1843), as we later learn, and talked to each other about the sculpture. When they approached the Doge's Palace, B. pointed to the artistic invention revealed in the capitals supporting the palace. Looking at the sculptures closely, they were both wondering about their creation. The author asked if they had been created based on an architect's drawing or if the sculptor had created them from observation, from memory, from imagination, stimulated by an object or thought. Among the figures taken into account by the sculptor could be his patron or wives, Adam and Eve, or a great merchant from the Far East "co przyjechał z dalekiego Wschodu na okręcie pełnym ... drogich kamieni na pieczęcie dla senatu Rzeczypospolitej, i zielonych papug dla panienek" (DW VII, 36) [who came on a ship full of ... expensive stones for the seals for the senate of the republic and green parrots for the ladies...]. Excitement and images coming from various sources could generate psychological readiness and energy that lent life to works of art. B. agreed with such an approach to the process of creation. They continued to talk about Roman architectural plans, "prostsze od najprostszycy figur geometrycznych" [simpler than the simplest geometrical figures]. And yet these sketches gave rise to *Pantheon, Colosseum*... B. smiled sadly at these words of the author, and a sad smile appeared on his face for the second time when the author assured him that what is truly beautiful and what was conceived out of love does not perish. They were just entering St. Mark's Square at dusk, thus "dokoła pod obiegającym czworobok placu korytarzem zaczynało być gwarno, i poroświecały się kawiarnie" (DW VII, 36) [around, under the corridor that was encircling the four sides of the square, it was getting noisy and the cafés were lighting up]. B. headed for a second-rate café which he visited as if he were born in Venice. Pointing out, as we guess, the serving boy he assured us that he would come there soon because they knew each other. After mentioning that coffee and cigars were served, preceded by a remark about the chess players there and the person writing the letter, the author introduced information addressed to the reader about B's life, about his great love for art, and about his long years of persistent work in Dresden and Munich under the guidance of German painters amidst "przeciwności zabójcze" [lethal adversities]. This man, who was so devoted to art, but with little genius himself, was subject to the masters' influence in his excessive humility and patience. He did not gain independence. When he approached his 60s, he found himself in Venice, and he faced the masterpieces of Venetian art. He felt their superiority — in spite of their "zaniedbanie rysunku" [neglect of drawing] and composition as if "z ulicy branej" [taken from the streets] — over the technical correctness of his teachers. They diminished in his

eyes in comparison with the old Venetian masters. Their authority collapsed, but at the same time his own defeat was apparent to him. “I niejeden *Cornelius* – mówił – ba! i zarozumiały sam *Kaulbach* uczyć by się z tego dobrze mogli” (DW VII, 37) [And not just one *Cornelius* – he said – oh well! even the conceited *Kaulbach* himself could learn well from it]. How great was the disappointment of a man who had been apprenticed for years to those whose conceitedness had stupefied him so that it was only at the end of his life that he woke up out of the illusion, discovering their smallness and his irrecoverable error. This happened in Venice when faced with its original painting. Both interlocutors agreed that great Venetian art grew out of the fertile native soil; that its dynamics came from a variety of excitement. Listening to his companion’s argument, B. stated that great painters “prosto z życia wzory brali” [took patterns straight from life] and that their paintings “są o życie zaczeplone” [are rooted in life]. The laconically formulated conclusions, almost truisms, acquired the status of conviction that came too late. This concerned, not only the fact of modelling on nature, but also a deeper thing – the participation in reality on a rich scale, as well as immediately grasping historical things in what is current and contemporary. In *Promethidion*, Norwid addressed the difficult ability to implement life in the arts of living. This includes the affliction of a wasted artist of similar stature. Pulled out of his contemplation by the author’s question about what he was working on, he answered at first that he was playing the violin, that he probably composed something, and that he would be happy to play; but he soon withdrew the invitation because he was not alone and had to reckon with those who had taken him to Italy. Indirectly, without explicitly mentioning any restraint, he hinted at his addiction. The author explained to himself that B. played the violin with special skill. Hence, he was a virtuoso musician too. Why did he then smile sadly even when talking about his own musical composition? Only after a while, as if his companion’s question escaped his memory, with some strange emphasis on the subject he mentioned the unfinished painting. He wanted to present a fisherman in it who, after working all day long and having only caught an empty shell, was surrounded by his children begging and stretching out his hand with this shell to passers-by. The subject was chosen not by chance. It was a strikingly clear analogy to the artist’s hardships. The end of the day symbolised the end of life. The futility of the fisherman’s efforts and his appeal to the support of the people he met occasionally indicated the similarity to the situation of a painter who, by someone else’s grace, found himself in Italy. Stating that the painting was close to completion, B. did not seem to want to continue the conversation, as he cried out loudly when he got up from the table: “Menego!” This was a boy’s name in a diminutive form, or rather a Venetian abbreviation for Domenico. Unlike when he had called him

for the first time, this time B. pronounced the name differently. By strongly emphasising the second syllable, he gave the word a different meaning. Menego, in the changed version, did not mean the boy's name; it was not a noun. A verb was created in the first person of the present tense: "I am drowning." The boy grasped the new meaning of the word and joked about the unjustified alarm. And it could have been an appropriate alarm in this very place, in a Venetian café during the rainy season. The boy would have not seen anything strange in such a cry if it had been under different weather conditions. With cheerfulness and wit, falling into the foreigner's word, he shouted: "jak to, *topisz się*, panie ... Jak to? – ... a wszakże dziś gondole po kościele świętego Marka nie pływały i suchutko w kawiarni" (DW VII, 38) [How is it that you are drowning, sir ... How? – ... and yet today, after all, the gondolas were not floating on St. Mark's church and the café is dry...].

It might have been different during the floods, but on that day in beautiful weather, who was calling out this way? Leaving the café, B. reacted to the boy's joke with the word "buffone" repeated twice. During the evening on the next day, the author received a letter from B. informing him that Mr and Mrs H. might leave the next day, and that he would go with them. He would be glad to yet visit the island where, as the author told him, Byron created "Mazeppa." Maybe they would meet there in the morning "niżli słońce zapiecze?" [before the sun becomes unbearable?]. In the footnotes, he added that he sent him a handkerchief which had been given to him at the beginning of his emigration to Dresden by "wielki nasz lord Byron" [our great Lord Byron]. He wrote to an admirer of Byron, but why did he decide to offer him an object that he valued so much? He also expressed his regret that he did not play the violin for him, i.e. that he did not say goodbye more solemnly. Was this supposed to be the last goodbye?

Thus, "niżli słońce zapiekło" [before the sun became unbearable], the author went by boat to the Lido. He presented it to the reader as a long strip of land between the lagoons and the sea; then walking across a meadow with faded stones shining among the greenery, because it was the cemetery of mighty Jewish merchants at the time of the republic, he reached the seaside gravel. And this is the factual ending which requires a direct quote because it is too laconic to be discussed without extending or complementing it. These are the author's own words:

Tam doszedłszy, spotkałem gondoliera; stał nad garstką bielizny, przy nim sługa z policji i dwie damy Angielki z albumami. B., zapłaciwszy gondoliera, powiedział mu, że użyć chce kąpieli... *ale za głęboko w fale zaszedł*. Grób jego jest na Lido. (DW VII, 39)

[Having reached the place, I met a gondolier there; he stood over a handful of underwear, next to him there stood a police servant and two English ladies with albums. B., having paid the gondolier, told him that he wanted to take a bath... but he went too deep into the waves. His grave is on the Lido.]

No one here speaks in this author’s account, although it is not difficult to guess that the author received the information from the gondolier. He gives this information like a fact communicated to him by a witness. So, no questions or answers are revealed and no mention of the recovery of the corpse. Since he mentions a grave, the recovery must have taken place, and there must have been a funeral. These successive stages were omitted. The composition particularly typical of the novella prevailed over the loose structure of the diary and its abundance of anecdotes. The laconism of the novella reached its highest level in the ending. None of those present, including the author, showed emotion, revealed anxiety, or expressed reflection. People who incidentally met on the seashore had nothing in common with each other; they were just standing over the “handful of underwear” left by a man “who went too deep into the waves”...

Reading the epigraph chosen by the poet for this particular novella from Krasicki: “Bajki wam niosę, posłuchajcie dzieci!” [I bring you fairy tales, children, listen to them!], we are not clearly aware of Norwid’s intention. He could have felt the bitterness of these allegorical miniatures not written for children. Or, given the unusual laconism that is a special feature of epigrammatic compositions, especially fairy tales, one can suppose that the poet had this feature in mind when choosing the epigraph. The ending of “Menego” cannot be summarised for the simple reason that it is extremely concise, just as it is impossible to summarise e.g. Krasicki’s “Ptaszkii w klatce” [“Birds in a cage”] without utilising special, almost charade-like methods. Or maybe the presentation of death in fairy tales in a way that is not only laconic but also mechanical was of importance here? If this was the case, we can say that Norwid distilled some deep pathos from this seeming insensitiveness which is obviously uncommon for fairy tales.

The death of B. was announced by the café boy, did he herald it or hint at it? The joke about the mispronunciation raised the inappropriateness of crying out due to the given situation. The boy was entertained by someone calling out that he was drowning in a dry place. Despite his sadness, B. clearly and vividly reacted to this joke. Thus, he did not realize it immediately, not yet then... From a letter written after 24 hours, it turned out that the change of date of his departure made him want to visit the Lido where he had not been yet, but where Byron was creating and wanted to say goodbye to the author. But why did he part with such a dear gift from Byron as if he had left him to a friend as part of his inheritance? Perhaps it was then that the joke made by the cheerful boy revealed to him

its true seriousness? The author deliberately did not want to explain the matter in detail. He probably decided that what he had revealed from the protagonist's long life, what had been expressed in his chronic sadness, and finally in the content of the image he had started, was enough. The painter opened his eyes to great art in Venice. Here, in a painting depicting the futile effort of a fisherman, he presented his own defeat. Here he learned the difference between pedantic correctness and original art fed with the rich juices of life. Venice and the poor, old man addicted to human help, his own passivity, and most importantly living under huge pressure from the school for years, clashed with each other, and Venice became the man's grave. It was as if it were his predestination. Here, the words uttered by Menego could have been taken as an oracle and could have suggested the man was dominated by sadness and the thought of going too deep into the waves of the sea.

The tragedy of human fate, shown in great shortcuts and allusions, was not expressed with pathos. The author consistently, and as if casually, revealed how pathetic the artist, tormented by ineffective effort, was in a city of dazzling beauty. Therefore, the charm of the initial image of the haven in its extension and in the changeability of lighting overshadowed the matters of wasted life. In the novella, Venice is linked with admiration and appreciation, whereas the unhappy man provides a contrast with his recognition of beauty and his persistent service to art until his energy and will to live have been exhausted. The artist's Sisyphean effort ended with death. This second pole of hopelessness, depression, and incurable sadness was overshadowed by the reflections of the interlocutors. No complaints or confessions, no protest. All of it covered with a sad smile which was revealed by the author in passing and only indirectly by the protagonist in the allusion to the painting he started, to his dependence on those to whom he owed his arrival in Italy, and, as we know, his accelerated death after a desperate experience of disappointment.

Norwid was able to bind the two poles together because of the fact the reflections concerned Venice and perhaps even more so because of the phrases used in the two contrasting areas, typical of colloquial speech. Thus, when watching the capitals supporting the Doge's Palace, the words are uttered which point to the heads seen at that moment: "Co może być ta postać ... albo owa w hełmie... albo tamta" (DW VII, 35, 36) [What can this figure be ... or this one in the helmet... or that one]. This is what people say when an object is in front of them. B. says something similar in the café: "Ten chłopiec mnie zna" [This boy knows me], when we do not know who he is referring to yet. While talking about the greatness of the masterpieces, B. states: "Nie mogę tu jeszcze dojść ładu" [I cannot figure it out yet], and later he says the same thing about the old

painters “co to prosto z życia wzory brali i co to się zwykle o tym czyta jakby jakie legendy... A teraz tu widzę, że podobno wszystkie stare obrazy to tak są o życie zaczeptione” (DW VII, 37, 38) [who took patterns directly from life, and one reads about it as if these were some kind of legends. And now I see that all the old paintings are probably rooted in life]. B. expresses this discovery, which is extremely important to him, with a certain awkwardness; he seems to draw his expressions from common phrases, which are repeated for the sake of clarity and using connections such as “co to” [which is], “to tak” [that is], “to zwykle” [it’s usually]. These are stylistic means which suggest unpretentious, lively speech. After all, the artists in Venice talk to each other about it and its art – one is enchanted with it to the point of suffering, the other has a mastery of the vivid and illuminating word. The author uses Italian words: *riva* (shore/coast) as well as the full, distinctive name: *Riva degli Schiavoni* (Coast of Slaves) to evoke the Venetian coast and harbour in his art. He also adds an archaeological note that another name, *Riva degli Slavi* (Coast of Slavs), can be read on the not yet effaced inscription. The extensive image of the harbour was captured by the poet in three phrases beginning anaphorically with the word “tam” [there] and pointing all the time to the same place. The author closed this rich description with casual words: “i tak tam gondole przepływają” [and so the gondolas flow there]. In a different function distinguishing the place, the adverb “tam” [there] appeared in the narrator’s enumeration of various experiences of old sculptors. After using “tam” three times, there appeared “ówdzie” [elsewhere/there] in the same function. The poet took the opportunity to mention, among the presumed models of the sculpted figures after Adam and Eve, the artist’s patron and his wife, the exotic figure of a great merchant from the Far East and his exotic, attractive goods such as fragrant wood, expensive stones, and green parrots. It is worth stressing this particular order of things that affects the artist’s imagination and the fact that the figure of the merchant as well as the contents of his ship were most strongly exposed. The author clearly wanted to emphasise the variety of impressions and what stimulated curiosity due to its peculiarity which drew the attention of both the commoners and the artist. The novella features poetic phrases such as “blask fali skrzelał wiosła odepchniętej w światłość” [the glow of the wave pushed away into the moonlight with the gill of an oar] or rhythmically renders the successive images. There is also a passage of rhetorical nature with growing tension justified by the admiration for great architecture which deserves to be distinguished in its entirety. It originates with the narrator and contains a significant allegorical layer concerning the creation of legends. The following utterance seems to be taken out of laudation:

Trzeba gmachu *pięknego*, ażeby mógł piękną być ruiną. Trzeba pięknej ruiny, ażeby dotrwała aż do końca, aż do posad budowy i do pierwszego planu rozłożenia, aż do głazu pierwszego, na którym legendy siadać będą w ciężkich wieńcach bluszczowych, aż do głębi pod głazem, gdzie medale stare w wazach leżą i pergamin żółty z opisaniem pierwotnego pomysłu. (DW VII, 36)

[It takes a beautiful building to be a beautiful ruin. It takes a beautiful ruin for it to last until the end, to the foundation of the building and the first unfolding of the plan, to the first boulder, where the legends will sit in heavy ivy wreaths, to the depth beneath the boulder, where old medals in vases and yellow parchment with a description of the original idea lie.]

The course of the event corresponds in the novel to the richness of the features rendered in the first painting of the Venetian harbour and the laconic sketchiness of the final picture. It suggests absence and lack of man, after which a handful of underwear remained on the shore. This is a reminder of the words of the poet from the poem “Do mego brata Ludwika” [“To my Brother Ludwig”], which is chronologically close to the meeting in Venice:

Bo jakże mało będzie ze mnie: *popiół*;
Ni tu *radości* godła, ni męczeństwa,
Ni tego słowa nad grobowcem: *dopią!*

(PWsz I, 71)

For how little of me will be left: *ashes*,
Neither the *joy* of an emblem, nor martyrdom,
Nor the word on a tombstone: he *gained* his end!

Having given all his efforts to art, B. did not achieve his goal; nor did he manage to finish the painting, expressing a silent complaint about a wasted life. A sad smile accompanied what he had said himself and what his companion claimed. However, despite such an important role of description and reflection (which also contained description) in the novella, they did not suppress the course of the action. Through artistic imagery and rhetorical argumentation, the author managed to suggest the monumentality and permanence of great art, while using laconic references, discrete allusions, understatements, and finally silence to create a sense of threat and fragility of man in his pursuit of a great goal. After all, B. was extremely talented. If it had been about the craft, he would have had no reason for despair. But he fought against grave adversities for a great thing that appeared to him in Venice as unattainable.

Venice was used as a place of action for the second time in “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” [Lord Singelworth’s Secret] (DW VII, 217–233). The author

announced that his mysterious regular balloon rides over various world capitals, which were met with mixed comments, would find a particularly strong resonance in Venice and would contribute to the spread of both horizontal rumours and deeper speculations. The city with stifled political life reacted to triviality as if to a momentous matter and also exhibited a kind of masked stand. Here, in St. Mark's Square, a folk improviser performed, who, by entertaining the public with jokes, mocked the invading governments in his country. According to the author's words, the descendants of the former patricians "żyli w Wenecji, jak gdyby się w niej znaleźli wygnańcami" [lived in Venice as if they were exiles]. They did not have the financial means to maintain their palaces which they inhabited only in part ensuring that the old chronicles testifying to the historical greatness of their families were not destroyed. The poet said with appreciation that these worthy descendants of patricians through silence, tact, and proud patience accepted the foreign government in their homeland. He also credited them with social qualities, elegance, and discretion. After all, these descendants of dignitaries, related to doges, lived in proud isolation and passivity. In the heart of the city, a bold, aggressive voice resounded which was aimed at the invaders and tolerated by them because it came from the mouth of a folk jester. Before this favourite of the audience, Toni di Bona Grazia, appeared on the scene; Norwid introduced him in a significant way: "osoba historyczna, którą wielokrotnie słyszeć miałem przyjemność" (DW VII, 221) [a historical personage whom I had the pleasure of hearing many times⁴]. In a footnote he added that the recently deceased improviser was presented in Italian illustrated magazines, in images that represented both his character and his outfit well; however, he expressed the following reservation:

Lecz, co do tekstu przy onym rysunku, śmiemy utrzymywać, że nasze kilka rysów w tej noweli spotkanych i wierniej, i właściwiej malują tę postać i jej talentu rodzaj. (DW VII, 233)

[Still as far as the caption accompanying the drawing is concerned, we dare claim that some of his traits observed in this short story portray this character and his peculiar kind of talent better and more faithfully.] (MPSS, 56)

As it can be seen, the poet was meticulous about capturing both the character and even more the nature of his improvisations. However, he did not start the novella

4 Trans. Olga Scherer-Virski, *The Modern Polish Short Story* (Hague: Mouton, 1955), p. 54 (hereinafter referred to as MPSS).

with the improviser's performances, but with the protagonist. He intrigued the reader with a number of unanswered questions. Here is the first:

Czy rzeczywiście były jakie ziemie Singelworth, we ważności baronii nadane przodkowi z linii prostej męża, o którym to moje wspomnienie zapisuję? (DW VII, 219)

Has there ever existed a shire by the name of Singelworth and was it ever bequeathed to a direct ancestor of the gentleman about whom I am now writing these reminiscences? (MPSS, 54)

This was followed by questions about the consequences of such a possibility, and finally about a totally different possibility. After all, could the Singelworths have been “zacnymi właścicielami rękodzielni, wyrabiającej perkaliki albo rzeczy cynowe i stalne?” (DW VII, 219) [the respectable owners of a dry-goods mill or a factory that made products of tin and steel?] (MPSS, 54). The author considered it appropriate for the novelist to resolve such issues but not the author of a novella. At this very point, he mentioned that he was writing “ulotną ... *nowelę*, za zadanie mającą wyjątkowe jakie spostrzeżenie psychologiczne utrwalić obrazem wiernym” (DW VII, 219) [a short story the object of which is to crystallize an unusual psychological observation in the form of a faithful image]. He pointed to the intended selection of facts and started the proper narrative with what Aristotle called the common belief. Thus, he concluded that in all the hotels in Europe and in the East, people used to greet the Lord saying: ‘Domine Singelworth.’ In addition, the Lord's daily balloon rides everywhere gave rise to various assumptions, discussions, and jokes. A professor claimed that the purpose of those flights was meteorological research while a French columnist speculated about the Lord's special care about digestion. This was also pointed out in the report by the governor of Odessa's subordinates, who mentioned the box with a round vase-like vessel that was carefully placed in the balloon basket. In Venice, this drastic and unbelievable version achieved such great popularity that Toni di Bona Grazia considered it appropriate to speak on this matter, including, according to the author, “historię aeronaukcji Lorda do przedmiotów swoich genialnych konferencji, na zaludnionym pod wieczór placu Św. Marka zagajanych” (DW VII, 221) [the story of his lordship's flights among the subjects of the brilliant twilight lectures he delivered on the crowded St. Mark's Square] (MPSS, 56). The author closed the first chapter of the novella with this announcement. The second chapter offers an introduction to the nature of these conferences; this was done with the beginning of the phrase closely related to the last words: “Co zaś Toni di bona Grazia zmierzył okiem” [What then Toni di Bona Grazia eyed up]. This was the beginning of a longer passage with a richly pictorial message. From one sentence we learned that he was gazing from under

a triangular hat with a sparkling eye, that he deliberately lisped in order to give a special tone to the words, “potrząsał na swoich piersiach wielkimi dekoracjami z kłów wieprzowych, muszli i błyskotliwych blaszek” (DW VII, 221) [his breast shook with huge decorations, made of hog’s teeth, sea-shells and spangles], that these were the ways of an harlequin (but a classic harlequin from the Etruscan times) and although the speaker was met with a snort of laughter, it did not pass by “jak klask i piana poruszanej wiosłem laguny” [like the splash and the foam which the stroke of an oar makes in the lagoon]. Thus, the Venetian spirit was supported by the antique tradition, and this was immediately followed by a remark that the Austrian dignitaries listened attentively to these “volgarne mówienie” [vulgar talks] and that the words of the improviser even reached the house of the governor of Venice’s wife. After this introduction, the author recalled that, in a conquered country, the folk improviser had to fool around and that his extensive buffo had to be flat. In the given situation, the improviser acted on the pretext that he wanted to defend “osobistą sławę podróżnika” [Lord Singleworth’s personal reputation] (MPSS, 56). He criticised the ridiculous idea that somebody would be hovering over the world’s finest places only “ażeby tam warunków poziomych higieny dopełniał” [to fulfil there the horizontal conditions of hygiene...]. He does not think it is possible for one’s heart and soul not to be moved by the mere sight of the monuments in any capital; in Venice itself, although the prisons and the Bridge of Sighs are similar to creeping vermin when seen from above, the four horses on the basilica cannot leave one indifferent. It must be assumed that the aerial balloon hides a deep mystery that will only become clear after centuries. The speaker assures his listeners that he knows the reason why it is not thought about it; instead, something totally different is suggested. It is said that paper fell from a balloon basket on the island of Murano, which, to people with a refined nose, said everything. Here, diverging from the topic, he admitted that he, too, when observing things thrown away, was sometimes imagining intricate stories. Perhaps this paper also revealed the Lord’s secret. He ended his speech, not by confirming the version about the paper, but with an ironic praise of “dorodne nosy policji Państwa Apostolskiego” [the fine-looking noses of the Papal State police], making it clear that it particularly suited them as rumours distracted attention from great matters and from the thoughts about the future. The speaker did not doubt that the Lord’s secret concerned the future and better years.

The first part of the improvisation – in its rhythm, in its sequence of interrogative sentences, in its transition from addressing those who harm the Lord to the obvious grandeur of historical things – vividly resembles the introduction of Cicero’s first speech against Catiline. Both its first invocation in elevated tone

and its fundamental scheme – the juxtaposition of what is unworthy with human dignity and grandeur of history – brings this analogy. Compare the two texts together with the Latin original provided in the footnote. First, the beginning of the improvisation by the Venetian speaker, Toni di Bona Grazia:

– Dopókiżde ... dotykać będą nierozważnie latającego na powietrzu, którego *dotknąć* niepodobna? I do myślenia będą dawać: jakoby ktoś nad najznakomitszymi na świecie miejscami dlatego tylko unosił się, ażeby tam warunków poziomych higieny dopełniał ... Jestże podobieństwem, aby sam widok monumentów stolicy jakiej nie poruszał ducha i serca? Wieże-wysokie świątyń, łuki triumfalne, kolumny zwycięskie nie mająż uroczystej siły zachwytu? (DW VII, 222)

[– ‘How much longer’ ... ‘will unreasonable mortals *touch* the one flying in the air, the one whom it is impossible to *touch*? And they imply that a person rises above the most illustrious places only to *expectorate*! ... Is it in any way possible that the very sight of a capital’s monuments would not move his heart and soul? Do not the tall towers of the churches, the arches of triumph and the columns of victory possess a solemn power of delight?] (MPSS, 56)

And here is the beginning of Cicero’s speech:

When, O Catiline, do you mean to cease abusing our patience? How long is that madness of yours still to mock us? When is there to be an end of that unbridled audacity of yours, swaggering about as it does now? Do not the nightly guards placed on the Palatine Hill—do not the watches posted throughout the city—does not the alarm of the people, and the union of all good men—does not the precaution taken of assembling the senate in this most defensible place—do not the looks and countenances of this venerable body here present, have any effect upon you?⁵

Continuing his speech, Toni di Bona Grazia stated, “nie myślę, ażeby konie cztery Świętego Marka kiedy zarżą płucami złotymi i zachwieją grzywami z korynckiego brązu w słońca blasku, widokiem były obojętnym!” (DW VII, 223) [I do not think that the four horses of St. Mark’s, with their golden lungs neighing and their manes of Corinthian bronze swaying in the sun’s radiance, constitute an indifferent sight!] (MPSS, 57). The whole speech shows that the

5 M. T. Cicero. *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, lit. trans. by C. D. Yonge (London, 1856) (<http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0474.phi013.perseus-eng1:1.1>). The Latin text after: Ciceron, *Les quatre Catilinaires*, (Paris 1898), *Oratio prima*: “Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? Quamdiu etiam furor iste tuus nos eludet? Quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia? Nihilne te nocturnum praesidium Palatii, nihil urbis vigiliae, nihil timor populi, nihil concursus honorum omnium, nihil hic munitissimus habendi senatus locus, nihil horum ora vitusque moverunt?”

improviser directed his attack through wandering digressions, changes of voice, and loud hissing at the foreign power imposed on Venice. In this arrangement, the image of horses became a symbol of greatness and triumph. In the closure of the speech, there was a cutting remark directed at the Austrian police:

Nie ubliży się wcale policji Państwa Apostolskiego, gdy powiemy, że bywają w niej nosy tak dorodne, jakich i pomiędzy Neapolitańczykami spotkać niełatwo! (DW VII, 223)

[The police of the Apostolic State will not get offended at all when we say that among them there are noses so fine-looking that it is difficult to find such ones even among the Neapolitan people.]

Thus, the Venetian improviser announced by the author refers to the classical tradition by following the rhythm, tone, and preserving the two-partite introduction of the great speaker of Rome in his first speech against Catiline, which is considered to be an improvisation. The harlequin turned out to be a consul. He did not attack an individual man, an organiser of a conspiracy that threatened the republic, but the powerful imperialist state whose “apostolicity” has been sharply and ironically called into question.

Serenissima no longer had a senate or senators. In the public square under the open sky, a representative of the Venetian people who was dressed as a clown spoke to everyone for those absent. He had to protect himself from strangers by hedging and skilfully aiming the mockery as if at himself that supposedly he himself reads the secrets from rubbish tips, so the paper could also give the police the Lord’s secret. The improviser skilfully mocked himself, claiming that his muse was probably a ragpicker. Cicero’s pathos in the speech of the improviser took on the appearance of a parody, seemingly finding application in a trivial subject. Toni di Bona Grazia seemed to treat it as a trivial thing – a curiosity arousing sensation with comical exaggeration. In this way he evaded the unintended audience, using irony and self-irony, as well as oscillating in and out of the intention, the targeted audience were supposed to guess and the anecdote presented in such a way that strangers would not refer to themselves if the speaker nodded to them. The author described the speaker’s speeches differently. He called them brilliant conferences, vulgar speeches, and rhapsodies. It was like a Single Actor Theatre. After the performance was over, the listeners tossed coins into a handkerchief laid on the cobbles as if “do kasy zwijającego się teatru” [to the cash-box of the show, now at an end] (MPSS, 57). The author included a small set instructions for the director in the text of the speech in italics indicating the change of intonation. He also emphasised the play of the improviser, drawing the audience into an apparent dialogue. The author’s comment reads: “tu monologista biegly odmieniał nagle głos, jak gdyby ktoś zza sceny wdał się w rozmowę” [at this

point the skilful monologist's voice suddenly changed, as though someone from behind the stage had interfered with his speech] (MPSS, 56).

First, the improviser spontaneously came up with the idea that the Lord's secret concerned the future, and thus when this speculation was confirmed by the explanations of the aeronaut, Toni di Bona Grazia was more eager than ever to proclaim to himself and to strangers that the traveller was a man of mission, a forewarner and herald of

Wielkiej Epoki nowej, która ma stać się dla ludzkości całej rodzajem puryfikacji i czymś do *Revivalu* amerykańskiego podobnym... *Revivalu*, o którym (mówiąc i szczerze, i na stronie) ani nasz stary, *ukształcony i niewolniczy* kontynent nie ma słusznego pojęcia, ani byłby na siłach, ażeby go u siebie spróbować i zaszcześcić!... Archeologia tu raczej, lubo *wstecz*, ale żywo i świetnie działa: (DW VII, 232)

[a great new epoch which is to become one of purification for humanity, something resembling the American Revivalist Movement, a movement (speaking frankly and off the record) our old, cultivated and slave-bound continent interprets wrongly and would be unable to attempt to inculcate on its own lands! In this respect archaeology acts with splendid energy – though with a somewhat backward trend.] (MPSS, 62)

The paraphrased statement contained the thoughts of the Lord accusing the European continent of immediately turning everything that cannot be understood into laughter, but it also expressed the author's view that "wir archeologicznego szafu ... nie bez pobudek uwzględniła roztropna austriacka policja" (DW VII, 233) [whirl of archaeological folly ... which the Austrian police tolerated.] (MPSS, 62). Already in the previous speech, the improviser's deliberations on the rubbish-heap were already typical of Norwid; here, as a result of the Lord's confessions, especially his historiosophy, but also due to the use of reported speech, the people's speaker became even closer to the author of the novella.

The only man in Venice, a harlequin with classical traditions, in whom Serenissima had its own erroneous knight, immediately intuitively grasped the deeper meaning of the Lord's strange actions. Among the horizontal gossip that overwhelmed the tops and bottoms of society, he considered it necessary to rise, like the aeronaut, above flat, confusing conjectures, to symbolically revive St. Marc's horses, to threaten the rapists of freedom, to ridicule them with a deliberate wit and rudeness. The people's speaker came first when it comes to public affairs; the rhythm of the speech against Catiline, despite appearances of parody, sounded in his mouth like a warning and a wake-up call. The author of the novella kept it, gave it his own knowledge, enriched its style, but did not lose the expressiveness of the character, gesture, mimicry and theatrical qualities. He

offered a suggestive rendering of the speaker’s fervent patriotic feelings, the dexterity of hiding them, and the situational appropriateness of that *buffo*, about which the author so aptly wrote that it had to be flat, being spacious, and therefore capable of holding everything. In the author’s words, a people’s speaker in a conquered country had to speak in this way. Norwid exercised his copyright in shaping the improviser’s statements and giving him some of his thoughts and words. However, he did not add himself as one of the characters to the crowd of the improviser’s listeners, but to the group of educated, socialised people who frequented the hotel where the aeronaut stayed. They got so caught up in the local gossip that the difference of opinion led to a wager. The author using the documents, when it would come to convincing the Lord of the old English tradition of making a wager, immediately stressed that

Nie szło ... już o same rozstrzygnięcie węzła wątpliwości tyczącej obyczajów oryginalnego jednego Anglika, ale szło o rzecz wenecką i niecodzienną, czyli: pod czym nazwiskiem w dzień narodowej Regaty św. Marka zajaśnieje na Kanale Wielkim świetna złocista nawa? (DW VII, 227)

[the question thus ceased to be one of resolving a doubt connected with the daily habits of one eccentric Englishman, and now rather became a truly Venetian affair, and unusual one at that: under whose name would the magnificent golden ship appear on the canal on the day of St. Mark’s national regatta?] (MPSS, 58)

Here, too, the author placed emphasis on the place of action. And he did so throughout the whole story, starting with the fact that in the White Lion Hotel the arrival of the Lord was announced, that he was overtaken by an aeronaut sent to the Lido. The Lord, preceded by his *maiordomo*, came alone in a separate boat to the hotel and “wystąpił ze smukłego i czarnego statku na lizany słońą wodą kamień progu” (DW VII, 220) [stepped from the graceful black ship onto the wave-lapped stone threshold] (MPSS, 54). This is how one arrives in Venice to the hotel or palace from the front. We learn about another way from the author – the entrance from the narrow streets. The author called this road more confidential. One had to “odczytać naprzód ginące w murze małe wnijście” [read ahead a small entrance lost in the wall] and touch the brown knob to find oneself in a medieval courtyard. And here, according to local custom, a ceremony not known elsewhere took place:

Jeżeli przyjętym nie mogłeś być, spuszczał się bezosobiście kosz na linie – wkładałeś weń kartę swoją i wychodziłeś nie widząc nikogo, a wszystko w ciszy, coś inkwizycyjnego, staro-weneckiego w sobie mającej. (DW VII, 224)

[If you could not be accepted, a basket was impersonally dropped down on the rope – you put your card in it and left without seeing anyone, and all this in silence that was somewhat inquisitional, Old Venetian in nature.]

As the action goes on, we also learn about gossiping, which was particularly characteristic of the conquered Venice, and about its buildings, both flat and elevated – all this from the mouth of the people's speaker, and the author assured us that the words of the speaker did not pass “jak klask i piana uderzonej wiosłem laguny” (DW VII, 221) [like the splash and the foam which the stroke of an oar makes in the lagoon] (MPSS, 56). After the performance of the Single Actor Theatre, the square began to fill up with another audience. Grand ladies, Austrian officers who were polite to them and announced the military music and, above all, the pigeons who flew over the square last time before the nightfall. It was at this very moment that the author presented further historical metamorphoses of the place. The city in its foundations on “pierwowieczny” [proto-eternal] construction on stilts, then a fish market and a shelter for refugees, then a city of “kramarzących z fenicka przedsiębiorców” [Phoenician-like merchants], then a Republic formed by them, but not as strict as Sparta. This ended the material characteristics, and later a figure emerged in slow motion, as “bisior szeroki leniwo włókł się za złotym jej sandałem, nieco na azjacki lub wschodni sposób szpiczastym i w górę podkrzywionym” (DW VII, 224) [a wide byssus lazily dragged behind his golden sandal, slightly pointed and curved upwards in an Asian or Eastern style]. An expensive fabric flowing freely onto the feet and the golden elongated sandal captured in motion are elements of the outfit indicating wealth and splendour. This visual evocation of a person, as if disappearing in a crowd, is followed by the author's statement that in its history the city experienced an idyllic and dramatic period, that it also abused comedy and tragedy, and that like “znudzona wszystkim wielka dama, pozostało piękne i czarowne” [like a grand lady, bored by everything, remained beautiful and fascinating] (MPSS, 57–58). The fact that this reflection was made from the heights of history results from the author's cry that closes these remarks: “O, historio!” [Oh, history!]. And yet even then, when Austrian officers appeared on St. Mark's Square in the evening, Norwid stated that, contrary to appearances, Venice remained itself “nazbyt będąc oryginalną, ażeby i mogła być ostatecznie ujarzmioną” [being too original for it to be ultimately subjugated]. The descendants of the patricians living in the collapsing palaces “ruinę własnej historii za swojego dobrego miewali sąsiada” [considered the ruin of their own history to be their good neighbour]. They were the ones who protected the chronicles of the former Republic from annihilation; coats of arms and doges' hats were preserved on the stairs of their houses. Moving

from "amfiteatr dziejów" [the amphitheatre of history] to the present, the author began discussing the matter of the dispute and wager with a humorous comparison, reminding us that the action is taking place in Venice: "Rzecz skoro się tak wyraziła, jak wysokość mostu Rialto ..., uważano za dobre mnie jako delegata naznaczyć" (DW VII, 227) [As soon as the matter became as clearly obvious as the Rialto Bridge in all its height ..., it was considered best to designate me as a delegate] (MPSS, 59). Once the Lord had set the time for the reception of the delegation for the next day before breakfast, the author seemed to have forgotten, or perhaps he regretted that he had handled Venice so harshly, reproaching it for its resemblance to a grand lady bored with everything, he returned to the matter of its originality and charm. He could not escape its charm, it became for him a creature like no other, a unique one, and thus flowed the words of praise:

Wenecja ma misję świadczenia człowiekowi, że jest fantastyczna sfera życia, że stolica nie jest tylko samym scentralizowaniem administracyjnym kilku biur, że plac może być salonem, ... że na kościele katolickim może igrać cztery brązowe konie rydwanu Apollinowego, nic nabożeństwu nie szkodząc... I że przeto śmiertelny ... godność żywego członka bytu we wszech-stworzeniu ... ma, a przeto samo może się i zadumać, i za-rozmawiać, i zabawić!... (DW VII, 228)

[Venice is endowed with the mission of proving to man that it harbors a fantastic way of life, that a capital is not merely the administrative centre of a few public offices, that the public square can be a drawing-room as well, ... that four bronze horses of Apollo's chariot can make merry on top of a Catholic church, without disturbing the religious service in the least... That is why a mortal ... possesses the dignity of a membership of being in omni-creation ..., and is therefore free to engage in meditation, conversation and entertainment!] (MPSS, 59)

After this commendation of Venice, we move on to a social conversation and to the fate of the Venetian-style wager, among Venetians overwhelmed by the Lord's mystery and excitement, in a comedic way, about the sensation of the current days. Thus, Venice and the Venetian character is also revealed from other perspectives. It is no different with its admirer who is sensitive to different features of its existence. The author appears as a private man, having friends in the city among the descendants of patricians, also knowing the famous improviser, as a thinker evaluating the history of Venice and its culture, as an artist sensitive to beauty, and finally as the creator of the given novella. The role of the author is revealed in the way he presents matters and people on different levels, in different moods and sections, in prompting his characters' utterances, in the style of their speeches. He also reveals himself directly in the side remarks in his reflections. One of them defines the novella as a work focused on one striking observation that is visually captured, which puts it in contrast with the novel.

With great emphasis, with a polemical stress, but without naming his opponents, Norwid considered it an unwavering certainty that art cannot reject the hearty content, because only by saying everything it can reveal motion and life.

The author, as a member of the group meeting the conditions of the social ritual, has given himself, as well as the entire group, comic features. When it turned out from the Lord's solemn speech that his air rides were aimed at protesting against the prevailing conception of cleanliness, the author was going to ask the speaker for a clearer definition of the principle of actions. This did not happen, however, because no one wanted to speak first by being overly polite to the other members of the delegation, and that is why the Lord reopened his monologue, explaining further the meaning of his protest: "Czystość zależy na podniesieniu, nieczystością zaś jest ponizenie się lub kogo... Czystość, która musiałaby degradować ludzi, ażeby siebie utrzymać, byłaby bez-plamną?" (DW VII, 232) [Cleanliness depends on rising high, while uncleanness is descent ... of those who ... seem obliged to degrade others] (MPSS, 62). Rising up was therefore meant to be a protest against degradation. The wager was resolved, the author along with the whole social group was ridiculed to some extent. Even their conjectures came from foreign sources. Those who asked the Lord and listened to his confessions – and among them the author – left chastened. Toni di Bona Grazia spoke from himself and for them for the second time about the Lord. This second improvisation, presented in reported speech, has strengthened and consolidated the first. The one who intuitively guessed the deeper sense of the Lord's aeronautics and then considered him to be "uprzedziciel i zwiastun wielkiej epoki nowej" [the forerunner and herald of a new epoch] (MPSS 62) was thus the awakener of national dignity and fighting spirit, the people's speaker and actor. Serenissima had in him a fervent defender, from whom the times demanded that he wear the clown's dress. His speech was secretly filled with the author's reflections on human matters that can be read from the trash, on monuments that evoke mixed feelings, if one knows and thinks of suicide, throwing themselves down from them in despair. The Lord's biting remarks concerning the European continent, which the people's speaker called slavish, also adds to that. Although the Lord's monologue, interrupted by pauses, is much longer than both of the improviser's speeches, he is a working figure, not the Lord, who merely gives the opportunity for Venice, its people and Venetian character to manifest their multifaceted nature; however, the main centre of Venetian life was shown in its people. The words of the Venetian harlequin about archaeology working backwards have aligned with those of the author when at the end of the novella he presented a picture of a deserted city in which only pigeons – alone and uninterrupted – were walking on wide cobblestones. The sudden emptiness

resulted from the fact that, on St. Mark’s day, all the inhabitants found themselves at the Grand Canal watching an “nieporównaną” [incomparable] regatta. This is how the author describes the moment of this inherently Venetian impulse in a concise and, at the same time, eloquent way:

Wszystkich oczy w-igrane lub wlepione były w ten wir archeologicznego szału, który nie bez pobudek uwzględniła roztropna austriacka policja. (DW VII, 233)

[All eyes were absorbed in that whirl of archaeological folly which, not without ulterior motives, the Austrian police tolerated.] (MPSS, 62)

The play of great matters under the cover of clownery, which is characteristic of the work, with sensation erected on the pedestal of a solemn ceremony, as in the case of this wager, does not lead to satirical focus. Despite the regret that Venice lost its historical grandeur, the novella still conveys an impression of its charm, which takes the author’s satirical pen out of his hand. When Zenon Przesmycki stated that in “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” we find “the whole soul of the colourful tale of the golden and marble city of the Doges,” he expressed the assumption that perhaps “it was the main and first stimulus to write the work.” We have seen that Venice embraces everything here, it shapes people’s clothing, houses, their interiors, reminds us of the proximity of the lagoon, of St. Mark’s Square in an ever changing light and different audience, and depopulated. Here the harlequin utters his pathetic and derisive words. Being the background and creating the atmosphere, Venice makes one perceive the word spoken by a gondolier in the local dialect together with “słony powiew lagun” [the salty breeze of the lagoons]. On one level there are things that are connected by comparison, emphasising the Venetian character seen from different sides and in different moods. Thus, the costume of the improviser, the place of his speeches, and the way he speaks, are all combined with an equally Venetian phenomenon expressed in the comparison to the clasp and lagoon foam moved with an oar. Even the stars over the city going to sleep “przepadają [w lagunach] kręgami złotymi ... drżące, jak dożów szlubne pierścienie” (DW VII, 224) [(in the lagoons) sink in golden circles after the manner of Doges’ wedding rings] (MPSS, 58). The expression of a real or allegorical figure here and in other Norwid’s novellas is similar. A gesture, a detail of an outfit make both an animate object and a person visible, or rather make them present. The personified Venice is covering a certain segment of the stage in no hurry, as the author managed to notice the exact shape of its golden sandal, indicating Byzantine influences, as well as the lightness of the wide, expensive fabric falling freely on its feet. The poet was no different in recognising a known person when he landed in the Piazzetta, i.e. a small square at the Doge’s Palace. This is the image of a figure in a crowd, characteristic of the way Norwid portrayed it:

odgadujesz z dala śród przechodniów mantylę znaną albo wstążki pomieszane z wachlarzem, z niesfornym puklem włosów i ze srebrnymi włóknami promieni księżycowych... (DW VII, 225)

[among the passers-by, from afar, you recognise a known mantilla or ribbons mixed with a fan, with an unruly curl of hair and silver moonlight fibres...]

The novella consists of six chapters combined into two parts, each consisting of three chapters. In the following we will take a look at their introductions and endings. The work begins with the words: “czy rzeczywiście były jakie ziemie Singelworth” (DW VII, 219) [Has there ever existed a shire by the name of Singelworth] (MPSS, 55) – a question which, as we know, together with the other ones is left unanswered. The first chapter ends with the announcement of the improviser’s “genialnych konferencji, na zaludnionym pod wieczór placu Św. Marka zagajanych” (DW VII, 221) [brilliant twilight lectures held in St. Mark’s Square, populated in the evening] (MPSS, 56). The second chapter brings, in an opening sentence, a seemingly direct reference to the initial information from the end of the previous one, as it is common in an oral conversation after a short break: “Co zaś Toni di Bona Grazia zmierzył wzrokiem” [What Toni di Bona Grazia measured with his eyes], but this is an introduction to a complex, rich whole, to a bipartite section of great capacity, indicating both the details of the outfit, the expression of the eyes, the way of speaking, as well as the classical tradition of the harlequinade and the speaker’s influence on the audience. The chapter concludes with the speaker’s words of admiration for the fine-looking noses of the Austrian police. The third one again offers a seemingly casual verbal reference to the previous one in the words: “Tak gdy improwizator zamykał rapsody swoje” (DW VII, 223) [As the improviser was closing his rhapsodies], giving the impression of the naturalness of the phrase while raising the tone by using the word “rhapsody.” The ending refers to the mentioning of exquisite company in great Venetian hotels. In the fourth chapter, Count Antonio speaks again as if referring to someone else’s words: “To jest tak dalece trywialne” [This is so unusually trivial], but the further course of the sentence – in its word order, rhythm, and phrasing – becomes evidence of craftsmanship. The author announces in openly sophisticated language, with a tone of irony hidden in pathos, the consequences of the wager made: “Rzecz skoro się tak uwyraźniła jak wysokość mostu Rialto i skoro przeto bytu jej przyczyn zaprzeczać nie można było, uważano za dobre mnie jako delegata naznaczyć” (DW VII, 227) [As soon as the matter became as clearly obvious as the Rialto Bridge in all its height ..., it was considered best to designate me as a delegate ...](MPSS, 59).

The last, sixth chapter opens with the following sentence: “Chcieliśmy coś odrzec, ale że dawaliśmy sobie wzajem pierwszeństwo głosu, nikt go nie podniósł” (DW VII, 231) [We all wanted to say something, but as each gave priority to the other, nobody took the floor] (MPSS, 61). The phrases of spoken language, mainly in the introductory references, are included in wider developed wholes. The improviser, who follows the course of Cicero’s speech, uses verbal invention typical of the farce to comment on the tragic fate of people. For instance, speaking: “z tych gotyckich wież, z tych triumfalnych łuków i kolumn, tego rana, wczora i w różne onegdaje zrucali się rozpaczą gnani śmiertelnicy nieszczęśni” (DW VII, 222) [from these towers, from these triumphant arches and columns, this morning, yesterday and on days of by-gone years, unfortunate mortals, pursued by despair, jumped to their death ...] (MPSS, 56). “Różne onegdaje” [days of by-gone years] can be regarded as a verbal element of a clownish game accompanied by loud nose wiping or sneezing.

One of the important characteristics of the syntax in this novella is what Konrad Górski, when analysing “Ad leones!”,⁶ called the gravitation of sentences towards their ends. It is worth noting that the last word or phrase does not necessarily have to be a predicate or be a verb – it can also be a noun (e.g. wager, price), an adverb (e.g. flightily, to and fro). The striking elements of the language of the novella are also negations where one would expect affirmative forms. Here is one example from the Lord’s monologue:

Niechże nie będzie teraz rzeczą na jowialny jedynie uśmiech zasługującą, skoro przystąpię i do technicznej formy mojej protestacji. (DW VII, 231)

[Let it not be a thing worthy merely of a jovial smile, as I now move on to the technical form of my protest.]

Archaisation is clearly visible, but it also opens the way to neologisms. Therefore, next to the word “śniadać” [have breakfast], the author introduces derived adjectives in the expressions such as: “godzinna śniadanna” [breakfast hour] or “przedśniadanna” [pre-breakfast]. Alongside the revived Old Polish words such as: “udziały” [done], “zdawa się” [it seems], “dawa się” [it can be done] etc., there appears “uręczyć” instead of “zaręczyć” [affirm], as well as a phrase which is probably not grammatical in Polish: “dolegany pytaniami” [ailing with questions]. Based on the old formula, next to “obiadować” [have dinner] or “śniadaniować”

6 Konrad Górski, “Ad leones’ (Próba analizy),” in: Konrad Górski, *Z historii i teorii literatury: Seria druga* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1964), p. 235 (in this volume published as: “Ad leones! An Attempt at Analysis.”)

[have breakfast], the author introduced the form: “sprawozdawało się” instead of the commonly used “zdawało się sprawę” [realise]. Foreign words were used to add exotic features or to emphasise importance.

Thus, various language tendencies, which are interlinked with each other, appeared in “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth,” i.e. there are features of colloquial or common speech, rhetorical mastery, suggestive, and pictorial expressions. Inversion played an important role in the syntax of the text. Foreign phrases were also associated with erudite expressions related to the knowledge of laws and customs of different countries and continents. In the author’s narrative there even appeared a neologism taken from Aristophanes – “wyeurypidować” [lit. euripidesise] to designate a skilful way out of a difficult situation. Given the clear effort to freely introduce words, the style of the novella is sophisticated, with ironic reversals and deep pathos flashing out from underneath it.

In “Menego,” the author constructed the statements made by the painter B. in a lowered style. With the touching awkwardness of a man aware of his defeat, the unhappy artist stumbled on words, clung on to them, seeking verbal salvation.

There is no tragic action in “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth,” although historical ruins accompany people. Originality, beauty, and charm remained as a passive defence against captivity. A peculiar maniac is hovering over this unique city, beloved by the poet, despite all the errors and abuses of history – a maniac protesting in silence against smallness and degradation. In the heart of Venice, in St. Mark’s Square, someone fights with the same evil for a better future for his once great homeland, an awakener of the fighting spirit in a clown costume and with the help of clown phrases and gestures, a Venetian patriot – Toni di Bona Grazia. A maniac and the clown who intuitively guessed the gesture of the maniac. This particular closeness, with all the external contrast between the Lord and the harlequin, could lead to a sharp satire on the dignified, refined, and educated Venetians. But since their characters, houses, and culture were part of the charming city, the author revealed, even though he saw their passivity, the best features of these descendants of the patricians – tact, discretion, and gentleness.

In the multi-style novellas dominated by sophisticated language, the lowered style had to be even more striking. In both works, a slight adoption of this style occurred in the author’s narrative, while it was most focused and played the main role in the first novel in the statements uttered by painter B. as an expression of depression, while in the second one, it appeared in a conscious, trivial style typical of a clown. On 18 July 1856, Norwid wrote to Trębicka:

wybrałem naumyślnie dzień i pozę, i moment najzaniedbańszy do fotografu mego, tak jak najzaniedbańsze dobieram wyrazy tłumacząc myśli i uczucia moje, bo uważam za konieczne prezentować istnienie moje *w najniższej jego kategorii* ... (DW XI, 79)

[I have deliberately chosen the most negligent day and poze and moment for taking my photograph, just as I choose the most negligent words to explain my thoughts and feelings, because I consider it necessary to present my existence in its lowest category ...]

In B.'s comments we can find something akin to negligence that comes from a long silence or from a paralysing word of sadness. In the public speeches of the improviser, the lowered style became a consciously adopted mask, a means of action at the given time, place and situation. However, the intended triviality also spurred lofty, prophetic, Tyrtæan words addressed to his own people, which is why the author also referred to his lectures in the square as rhapsodies.

Anna Maria Klimalanka-Leroux

On the Theatrical Form of *Cleopatra and Caesar* by Cyprian Kamil Norwid¹

Abstract: The paper attempts to reconstruct the stage vision for *Cleopatra and Caesar*. Norwidian tragedy was written, as the poet declared, “for the stage and according to its technical capacities.” The article presents how the author possibly imagined staging his work and its functions when it comes to specific elements contributing to the theatrical shape of the drama, subordinate to visual and auditory perception; finally, what kind of tasks Norwid set for actors, directors, and scenographers. Group scenes and custom-ceremonial scenes shape the space, monumentalise it, and saturate it with sacral seriousness. They are the carriers of the cultural stigmata of confronted civilisations, which are the basis for the drama’s main purpose. Characters are related to the concept of space, they create sculpted figures and images in its background; the poet showcases them with light and colour, sees them in costumes and provides with props. Semantic sensitivity and precision of the theatrical vision decide on the richness and diversity of words, depending on the situation on stage or the identification of a specific character with one of the cultural circles. The most important role is played by the intonation and strength of voice, preserved in a specific manner of graphically arranging the text. Through certain staging decisions, which are an integral part of the text of *Cleopatra and Caesar*, Norwid tried to reinforce his original theatrical vision. This vision allowed the drama’s concept to be recognized: the problem of living and dead cultures, the dusk of a civilization and dawn of a new era, historical fatalism and tragedy of an individual, utter love and revenge. The mysterious, ceremonial character of the drama and its ability to merge the poet’s vision with uniquely Norwidian realism make *Cleopatra* a sample of great synthesis in theater. In the last part, the article tries to compare Norwid’s staging ideas to the common European theatre practices at around 1850–1870 (mainly in France).

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, tragedy, theatrical vision, theatre practice, theatrical shape of the drama

Zachodzę do tunizańskiej kawiarni – tę wybrałem. Murzyn nalewa mi kawę tunizańską ... Tunizańska dziewczyna, w kwefie na włosach i z naramiennikami złotymi, niesłychanie do *Kleopatry* podobna... Całą archeologię-profilów czytam na tej twarzy i w tych ramionach i gestach... Coś *fenickich*-księżniczek i coś *faraońskich*-córek, i ani jednego innego rysu ani gestu – jakby zatrzymały się wieki jedną Epoką na tej twarzy i

1 I am deeply thankful to Prof. Irena Sławińska and – particularly – Prof. Zbigniew Raszewski for their priceless remarks concerning this article.

jakby uśmiechnęły-się-umarłe wieki, mówiąc: “To sen!” – 1867, czerwca, w tunizańskiej kawiarni na placu Marsowym – Paryż. (PWsz VI, 207–208)

[I go to a *Tunisian* coffee shop – it is the one I chose. A black manis pouring me some Tunisian coffee ... A Tunisian girl, with a veil on her hair and golden epaulettes, unbelievably similar to Cleopatra... I read the entire archaeology of profiles on this face and in those arms and gestures... Something after Phoenician-princesses and something after Pharaonic-daughters, and not a single different feature or gesture – as if centuries stopped in one Epoch in this face and as if the-dead-centuries smiled saying “It’s a dream!” – 1867, June, in a Tunisian coffee shop on the Fields of Mars – Paris.]

It is the first time Norwid’s writing mentions the name of the Egyptian queen, shrouded in the ancient past, by-gone-centuries and dreams of tradition. This poetic image simultaneously *expressis verbis* introduces the circle of searching, associating, reflecting, and theatricalising the world, typical for the poet. A few years later, Norwid writes a drama related to the history of Cleopatra VII and her love towards Julius Caesar, a poetic reverie concerning the historiosophy of the Egyptian-Roman circle of civilization.²

Norwid’s attitude towards theatre and the fascination with this “atrium of heavenly matters” were described in many writings, with his dramatic output being an important part of the portfolio. Only *Kleopatra i Cezar* [*Cleopatra and Caesar*] – written at the dusk of his poetic activity – gained the name of his “beloved tragedy” as he acknowledged it to be the theatrical sum of his creative output. In this exact case, the poet points to the staging capacities most often. The content of the subtitle notes that *Cleopatra* was written “ściśle w równi do grania, jako i do odczytów” [in precisely equal potential for being staged and read]. The drama was given an introduction in which Norwid included numerous explanations pertaining to the text, e.g. “as for acting;” unfortunately, this fragment did not survive to date. Finally, in a letter to Zaleski, the poet says clearly that *Cleopatra* was written “dla sceny i wedle jej technicznych warunków – arcyনিমালা konstrukcja!! doprawdy –! –” (PWsz IX, 524) [*for the stage and its technical capacities* – a monumentally large construction!! Indeed –! –]. It is a formula that provokes research for many reasons. It is possible to skip the absolute rule of the poet’s responsibility for his words or the fact that in the next paragraph of the cited letter Norwid argues about Romantic dramas by Krasiński,

2 The determination of the date of this tragedy (1872), its origin and manuscript, see: Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki, “Metryki i objaśnienia,” in: PWsz V, 413–424. Further in the paper, the Norwidian abbreviated title – *Cleopatra* – is used.

Mickiewicz, and Słowacki.³ Most of all, *Cleopatra's* theatrical history and its constant absence in contemporary repertoires call for returning to the piece and confronting it with the poet's testimony.⁴ Does Norwid confirm the theatricality of his score? Which theatrical and dramatic features determine this "monumentally large construction?"

This contribution does not pose as a comprehensive analysis of the theatrical issues of this drama or an immanent investigation into individual elements of this rich vision, or regarding setting them in their proper historical contexts. That would exceed the scope of the paper. Some problems will be discussed in detail while others will only be mentioned. However, the primary focus is placed on answering the question of how the poet probably imagined staging

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- 3 "Ś.p. Zygmunta grać nie można – ubałwochwalony Mickiewicz nigdy scenicznego ładu nie podjął – acz zapewne byłby potrafił – zaś *Konfederaty* r ó ż n e , po francusku pisane, są nie najodpowiedniejszymi wielkiemu Jego pióru – Juliusz gdyby nie był rozdrażniony i opracował był swe tak zwane dramata, byłoby to piękne – tak, jak są, są to a m f i d r a m a t y c z n e arcydziełka." (PWsz IX, 524n.) [The late Zygmunt cannot be staged – the idolised Mickiewicz never took up the scenic order – although he probably would be able – while v a r i o u s *Konfederats*, written in French, are not suitable for his grand pen – Juliusz, if he was not that annoyed and actually perfected his so-called dramata, that would be beautiful – as for now, they are simply amphidramatic little masterpieces]. Most importantly, Norwid consciously argues with Shakespeare: "Brakuje mi pół ostatniego aktu do mojej ukochanej tragedii, którą po Shakespeare'u długo wahałem się być pisać: *Kleopatra i Cezar*, w trzech aktach. Ale że u Shakespeara jest tylko *Antoniusz*, przeto pozwoliłem sobie tej zbrodni stanu, aby po nim przedmiot dotykać." (PWsz IX, 524) [I am missing half an act of my beloved tragedy which, after Shakespeare, I was afraid to write for a long time: *Cleopatra and Caesar*, in three acts. But, as Shakespeare has only *Antony*, I staged this coup d'état and touched the matter after him.]
- 4 The drama waited half a century to appear on stage. The preview took place in the Lviv Grand Theatre (1933) as interpreted by W. Horzyca (see: Zdzisław Jastrzębski, "Sceniczne dzieje Norwida," *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1960); Anna Maria Klimalanka, "*Kleopatra* Norwida we Lwowie w inscenizacji Horzycy (1933)," *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, Vol. 23, No. 3–4 (1974), p. 447). After the war, *Cleopatra* was staged by K. Dejmek in the National Theatre in Warsaw (1967) and K. Brauna in J. Osterwa Theatre in Lublin (1968) (see: Anna Maria Klimalanka, *Trzy inscenizacje 'Kleopatry' C. K. Norwida w teatrze polskim (Horzycy, Dejmka, Brauna)*, (Lublin, 1971, manuscript in KUL Library)). The last two performances cannot be considered fully successful, but they confirmed the staging capacities of this work. One more fact should be considered, namely that since the first issue, until now, many literary and theatre critics have deemed this drama as unfit for the stage.

this drama. What was his goal here and why; what are the functions of the elements of the theatrical form of the drama, subjected to visual and auditory perception; what are the tasks that Norwid set before the theatre for the actor, the director, and the scenographer?⁵ The conclusions attempt to compare the poet's idea to the convention of theatre of that time (mainly French) and the context of those dramatic practices. This confrontation answers one more question, what in Norwid's concept is original and what belongs to commonplace theatrical practices of European scenes around the period of 1850–1870.⁶

1. THE CONCEPT OF SPACE: STAGE STRUCTURE

It might be said from the very start that the scenic design in *Cleopatra* is very vivid; the poet shapes it meticulously and determined its important role in the drama and its theatrical vision.

Generally speaking, two concepts of space might be differentiated here: a scene that is architectonically framed and enclosed with a back wall (act I and III) and an open scene (act II). Also, this space is never flat, shallow, or just a single-plane. The Norwidian division of the scene into “front” and “deep” or “bottom” is common in his staging vision. He conscientiously highlights this

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- 5 The terms: “theatrical form” or “staging form” or “staging vision” relate to their well-known theoretical definitions after Zbigniew Raszewski (see: “Partytura teatralna,” *Pamiętnik teatralny*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1958), pp. 380–412; “O teatralnym kształcie *Balladyny*,” *Pamiętnik teatralny*, Vol. 8, No. 1–3 (1959), pp. 153–186) and Irena Sławińska (see: “Struktura dzieła teatralnego. Propozycje badawcze,” in: *Problemy teorii literatury*, ed. Henryk Markiewicz (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1967)) pp. 290–309. It is mainly about interpreting those elements of *Cleopatra*'s structure that – as parts of a work that should be staged because of its nature – were equipped by the poet with both dramatic and theatrical functions. The sum of such elements, as the author of the paper believes, outline the theatrical form of the drama, reveal the idea of its author.
- 6 When it comes to publications on *Cleopatra*, one name has to be mentioned here: Irena Sławińska and her articles entitled “Reżyserska ręka Norwida;” “Ciąg scenicznych gestów;” “Metafora w dramacie;” “Problemy teatralne *Kleopatry*” (in: *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1971); “O teatrze Norwida,” *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1960), pp. 13–22. “Reżyserska ręka Norwida” as “Norwid's Producing Hand” was published in the first volume of *On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019), pp. 153–172. Also, the author of the paper would like to mention Kazimierz Braun's *Cypriana Norwida teatr bez teatru* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), where he analyses the dramatic works of the poet, also *Cleopatra*, from the perspective of a theatre practitioner.

dichotomy in stage directions as it determined the location of décor elements often about the scenic movements, especially on the arrangement of groups of people. It is also the manner of achieving multiple planes within a scene (e.g. in the wedding image).

Norwid provides information on scenography solutions in the side text, mostly at the beginning of acts and some scenes. However, they are not full and detailed. They usually mention in a general manner the location of action, positioning of the door, windows, furnishings (thrones, chairs, tables, benches, flowers in vases) and divide the space by means of the arrangements of people. Other details, often semantically and theatrically important, are delivered in the dialogues, which complete the space with items, divide it into planes, and finally, often using metaphorical constructs, its colour palette, architecture and sculpture, expressed in most cases in composing groups of people. Moreover, group scenes and ritual-ceremonial scenes play a huge role in shaping the space by monumentalizing it, drawing it in a visual manner, and saturating the scene with sacral seriousness.

Jeden z pałaców Kleopatry w okolicach Aleksandrii: dwoje drzwi wewnętrznych po dwóch stronach sceny i jedno wielkie naprzeciwko. Wewnętrzne są sfinksami ozdobione. (DW VI, 247)

[One of Cleopatra's palaces near Alexandria: two internal doors on both sides of the scene and one large door on the opposite side. The internal ones are decorated with sphinxes.]

It is the entire content of stage directions at the beginning of act I. Scarce information, but one that obviously shapes a closed space, a palace room surrounded by walls with symmetrically set side and central doors, which will play a role later on. What is strange is the emptiness of this closed space, serving as if an official room of the Queen. Only the throne and sphinxes “uśmiechające się w swoje własne usta” [smiling into their own mouths]. One of them will take part in the plot and provoke a bitter monologue of the Monarch. This emblematic element of Egyptian architecture will make her aware of the previously discovered truth about her subjects: “Między *Sfinksem a Mumią* naród wychowany!” [A nation brought up between a *Sphinx and a Mummy!*]. The soulless mummy will also appear on stage and will be played in an equally dramatic manner. It will be an excellent contrast to Cleopatra, who craves authentic life, and reveal the desires of a female heart with exceptional clarity. This closed, nearly empty space is a place in which Norwid makes her, the ruler of Egypt, wait until she meets Caesar. It is difficult to refrain from the conclusion that such a concept of space corresponds with the dramatic expression of this part of act I and reinforces its

semantics. The poet trapped Cleopatra “between a sphinx and a mummy” just as her existence is torn between the duties of a queen and personal life.

After breakfast, Cleopatra leaves the palace. She will return here soon, but her place will be taken by Caesar. The “airtight” space seems redundant now: the middle door opens and “w rozwartych podwojach widać od jednej naprzód, a potem od drugiej strony przebiegających dwóch żołnierzy rzymskich” (DW VI, 276) [in the opened doors, two Roman soldiers run first from one side and then from the other]. In this way, the scene becomes more spacious and a new accent is placed on the events in a theatrical manner. This palace room will now become the office of a Consul, not only because of his physical presence. The poet completes the stage with relevant props-emblems of Rome and Caesar’s genius (papyrus with his war chronicles, a travel chair, a lion’s skin, a crimson coat, war-time packages, a military insignia), using them later both within the drama and the theatrical plan of the piece.

Norwid also shapes the scenic space by expanding its dimensions. Next to the areas visible on the stage (“scenic space”) appears a space “only mentioned in the relations of other characters or signalled otherwise, yet not visible to the audience, although important and ‘active’ in the theatrical world of the drama”⁸ (“theatrical space”). The poet uses this technique consciously and also assigns it a dramatic function. And so, in act I, while describing in detail one of the chambers in the palace, Norwid places it as if within the palace, seeing the architecture of the entire building. He includes the adjacent areas in the theatrical plan. They are sometimes recalled in side text (“Cleopatra ... disappears in one of the precincts,” “yelling behind the scene is audible”), sometimes in the dialogues: either metaphorically or in parts directly tied to the plot (e.g., when Szechera informs that she left the peasant boys “u Sfinksów zewnętrznych” [at the Sphinxes external], while Eukast responds: “Gdy powołani będą, przejdą przez podziemia –” [When they are called upon, they will go through the undergrounds –], and the meaningful words of Szakal “Słońce u dziewiętnastej kolumny przysionku / Zajaśniało” [The sun shone at the nineteenth column of the precinct ...!]. Sometimes they appear when the characters report about events either currently unfolding behind

7 We are following the terminology developed by Étienne Souriau (*Les grands problèmes de l'esthétique théâtrale*, Paris: Centre de Documentation Universitaire, no year), adapted by Irena Sławińska to research the domestic drama (“Znaki przestrzeni teatralnej w *Krakusie* Norwida,” *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1971), pp. 135–145).

8 Sławińska, “Znaki przestrzeni teatralnej w *Krakusie* Norwida,” p. 136.

the scene or have happened there before – e.g., when the Second Centurion describes Cesar’s entrance to the palace in this manner:

Na pierwszy schód przysionka zesunął się z konia,

...

Liktor *Torax* szedł przed nim... on stopień po stopniu,

Między jednakie Sfinksów wstępował profile,

Krokiem równym przemierzył krużganek i salę,

I znów krużganek wnętrzny, aż gdzie wody szelest,

Spadającej do wanny z porfiru, dał wiedzieć,

Że się jest w łaźni; ...

(act I, scene 5; DW VII, 277)

[On the first step to the precinct he dismounted his horse

...

Lictor *Torax* walking before him... he, step by step

Ascended between the identical profiles of the Sphinxes

With a steady stride he crossed the gallery and the room

And another internal gallery, until the rustle of water

Running down to a tub of porphyry indicated

That one has entered the baths;...]

There is so much information in this text! The palace room indeed corresponds with the entire building via: internal and external galleries, arcades, columns, external sphinxes, precincts, undergrounds, corridors, steps, rooms, baths. Norwid highlights the grandeur and magnificence of the palace construction even more with the awe of the Romans, e.g.:

... – to twierdza,

Gdzie by się oprzeć mogło kilku ludzi wszystkim

Siłom załogi naszej. Takiego to stosu

Złożonych tak granitów się nie lekceważy!...

(act I, scene 5; DW VI, 276)

[... – it is a stronghold

where a few people could resist all

The force of our units. Such a pile

Of granite arranged like that cannot be underestimated!...]

Does such an expansion of space, which at the same time monumentalises and emphasizes the scenic image, express only the poet’s care about the colours of the background? Probably not. The grandeur of the palace is a testament of the

power of the dynasty, the refinement of Egyptian culture, one worthy of admiration – yes, but already becoming covered by the patina of museum dust and dead inside, “uncreative,” just as the people living inside the palace. It is noticed by the ironist Her:

... Wedle przypowieści
 Archi-egipskiej gmachów mieszkalnych tu nie ma,
 Lecz są gościnne dworce – grodami zaś *groby!*
 (act I, scene 5; DW VI, 279)

[...According to an Archi-Egyptian
 Legend, there are no residential buildings here
 But hospitable courts – and the cities are graves!]

The technique of expanding the scenic space in the relationship between Szechera and Cleopatra also includes the meadows and fields adjacent to the castle. While strolling, the Queen meets Melmeja and Ganimedion, who are in love, and Faleg-Mun. The function of recalling such remote areas is obvious: it is to clearly articulate the feelings of Cleopatra, who yearns for love. Additionally, the entrance of Caesar’s legions serves as a pretext to expand the space in act I (neighing of horses, call of the guards and yelling of soldiers are audible; in his report, a Centurion will say that Cleopatra “przeszła przez łono obozu” [walked through the heart of the camp] after leaving the boat in which she came ashore).

A different concept of space – although similarly shaped and equally functional – is presented by Norwid in act II. The main stage-building instruction states the following:

Portyk pałacu Kleopatry w Serapium, dający na wybrzeże i kanał portowy – niekiedy łodzie przepływają, widome przez arkadę naprzeciw sceny. Z dwóch stron dwa rzędy kolumn – marmurowe stoły, kwiaty we wazach. (DW VI, 298)

[The portico of Cleopatra’s palace in Serapeum, open towards the coast and the port channel – sometimes boats pass by, visible through the arcade opposite the scene. On both sides two rows of columns – marble tables, flowers in vases.]

The opposition to what act I offers is clear, although the architectural accent is still present in this space. Norwid locates the scene outside the Serapeum palace, in the colonnades that surround it and the arcades of the portico. The space here is open and it may be interpreted in two ways: the architecture of the building does not enclose it, but its end on the horizontal plane is marked by a quite far perspective. Norwid divides space perceived in this manner into four main planes: 1. far landscape perspective (with the port channel) designed from

a painter's viewpoint; 2. "depth," the farthest "depth" of the scene where the royal ship appears (coast); 3. middle stage, the portico and its arcades (with its own "depth"); 4. the "front" of the stage – the area between the two rows of columns, which will be further divided depending on the arrangement of people at the wedding tables. This part of the stage is reserved for "osoby dialogujące" [persons in dialogue], the direct participants of the drama. Its depth (the arcades of the portico) will be filled by crowds of people and choir processions. The side rows of columns will perform the function of "przeciw-otwartych" [opposite-open] internal doors.

It is possible that Norwid intended to decorate the platform rising towards the back of the stage since the action often takes place within the far plane. Undoubtedly, he thought about a large, monumental stage, expanded even more with the "theatre space." Again, dialogues and the course of scenic movement provide the information that, on one side of the colonnade, there is a palace, and on the other "a close palace," where "się dopala ... stos Pompejuszowy" [Pompey's pyre is burning out], voices of the gathered people and troops are audible from there. Also, "okręt nadpływa" [a ship approaches] from afar, one that the lovers will use to sail on in the river Nile. This space is also expanded by sound effects: sounds of trumpets that pace the wedding ceremony, "okrzyki uwyrażnione zza sceny" [calls from behind the scene made clear], "obwoływania" [proclamations], "wołanie spoza sceny" [calls from outside the scene]. Cleopatra hears "ludu okrzyki i stąpanie" [yells and steps of the people] when she approaches the palace; later on, the songs of her subjects returning home and, simultaneously, the sounds of legions marching away. Vertically, the space is expanded not only by means of the symbolism of frequently mentioned birds, but most importantly by introducing the night with star constellations and many metaphorical constructs inspired by the darkness. Furthermore, Norwid includes the city and the entire area of Alexandria into the "theatrical space." The Knight reports:

Uczta ludu po całym mieście, gdzie Królowa
Przechodziła dziś stopą swoją, ...
(act II, scene 2; DW VI, 311)

[A feast of the people all over the city, wherever the Queen
Set her foot today, ...]

Eukast will say that the overall "wesołość" [joyfulness] as a "piorunu iskra, po mieście już przeszła!" [thunderbolt spark rushed through the town!...], while

Karpon adds: “to przeszło / Jako piorun po calej Aleksandrii” [it rushed like a thunderbolt across entire Alexandria].⁹

Why did Norwid resort to the concept of an open scene here? The title of act II: “Wesele królewskie” [Royal Wedding] explains a lot in his context. Such celebrations require a proper setting, but most of all, the people taking part in this ritual, which is both a grand day for the dynasty and the entire nation, had to be put on the stage. In this manner, Norwid was able to naturally present all levels of Egyptian society at the same time and confront it internally (people with the court) and with the representatives of Rome. (It may be noted that the perspective, including the port channel view, makes the appearance of the ship somewhat real). Perhaps this open space is related to the situation of the Queen-prisoner, finding release in “miłość zupełna” [complete love]? It is difficult to overlook the ironic tones – so many preparations, such scenery and collective happiness because of Cleopatra’s wedding with her brother-child?

After Caesar’s death, the Queen lives on the memory of their love and the thought of the revenge of Rome – its tool will be Mark Antony. What Norwid offers as the background for reflecting the Monarch’s feelings and the message of the entire act III, is summarised in the formula: “Samotność i zgon” [Loneliness and Death]?

Here returns, from act I, the concept of an enclosed space, but this time with walls of tomb-like architecture:

Sala w stylu architektury grobowej. – Podobne do doryckich dwie kolumny w ostatniej głębi sceny, a po dwóch stronach bliżej dwa przeciwległe wejścia. – Na przodzie tej sceny jest tron i ławy, wszelako przestrzeń pomiędzy kolumnami i tron okryte są zasłonami ciemnej barwy. Niewielkie okna, i także przysłonięte, są w tej sali. – Kleopatra na jednym ze stopni własnego tronu, które są jak siedzenia niższe urobione, ... opiera stopy swoje o skórę lwa. (DW VI, 360)

[Room in the style of funeral architecture. – Two columns similar to Doric in the bottom of the scene, and on both sides closer two opposite entrances. – On the front of the scene, there is a throne and benches, but the space between the columns and the throne are covered with a dark material. Small windows, also covered, are in this room. – Cleopatra, on one of the steps of her own throne, made as if lower seats, ... rests her feet on the lion’s skin.]

9 Cleopatra will also say to Eukast: “Zrób mi, proszę, szczęśliwych sporo w Aleksandrii, / O co, gdy wrócę, spytam sama – czy rozumiesz?” (act 2, scene 2; DW VI, 312) [Make me many happy people in Alexandria / About which I will ask myself upon my return – do you understand?...].

Again, the stage space is a concrete, multi-plane, and the décor elements are parts of the plot taking part in the scenic image or becoming necessary for the drama. During the dialogue with Eroë, the Queen asks her to cover the windows better; since she has seen a comet, she cannot look at bright skies. The large throne remains in the centre of the scene focusing characters and in a way demonstrating Cleopatra's royal status. The lion's skin strengthens the love symbolism of the drama.

The dialogues of the main text also provide information about the location of the "sala grobowcowa" [tomb room]. It is in a separate part of the building (sometimes called "pawilon" [pavilion], sometimes "pałac grobów" [palace of tombs]) known from act I. We are back in "okolice Aleksandrii" [areas near Alexandria]. Is it Norwid's conscious manoeuvre? Yes. Cleopatra returns here after losing Caesar while following the memories of their love, which are tied strongest with this place. She constantly recalls his image when – e.g., she asks Eroë twice whether the skin beneath the throne "to jest / Taż sama skóra, z zamku?" [is the same skin, from the palace??...]. Even a small remark made by Psymach that the Roman deputies are delaying the audience because of visiting "właśnie twierdzę / Aleksandrii" [the Alexandrian stronghold] is not left by Cleopatra without a meaningful comment:

– Jeżeli czynią to Cezara ślady,
 Że Kleopatra dotąd nie widzi ich – jeżeli
 Tylko dlatego nie są u tronu królowej,
 To – przebaczam!... ...

(act III, scene 3; DW VI, 391)

[– If they are following Caesar's steps
 and Cleopatra does not see them – if
 It is the sole reason they are not at the throne of the Queen
 I forgive them!... ...]

Therefore, the return to the Alexandrian palace, the architecture of which Norwid again, although in a different manner, included in the theatrical space of the drama is fully justified from the drama-oriented perspective.¹⁰ The grim sculptures of the tomb she chose for her residence correspond with the emotional state of Cleopatra at the beginning of act III the most.¹¹ It expresses her

10 In this way, the poet could make the inner turmoil of the heroine even clearer.

11 Which is commented upon by her subjects in this manner: "Zdziwieni są wielce wyborem mieszkania, / Twierdząc, że to Królowej przesady egipskie / Doradziły opuścić główny dworski pałac. / Gościom – życie, lecz sobie, że Królowa-Pani / Pozostawiła

“samotność zupełną” [utter loneliness], which she now desires, and symbolizes the separation she wants to set between the public affairs and “domeną osobistych żałobnych wspominków”¹² [the domain of personal mournful memories] as well as what is her possession as a woman. The curtain that divides the scene seems to be a theatrical method of highlighting the decision of the Queen.¹³

The tomb is a place assigned in act III to Cleopatra-the-woman. However, Cleopatra-“the queen of the world,” because of her desire for revenge, is engaging in politics and cooperating with Antony, has to take part in court celebrations and receive deputies. Norwid builds a different background for those public events: the stage is more lit, props are added (tables, “various devices,” chalices, a golden chair for Mark), the curtain which “okazuje jakoby wnętrze amfiteatru” [shows as if the inside of an amphitheatre] is pushed back.¹⁴ By doing so, the poet expands the size of the scene and allows the audience to see the change of decorations, which naturally has its theatrical impact¹⁵ as well as semantic consequences. The building of the amphitheatre is not only a proper background for a group scene in act III. This masterpiece, erected because of the

groby...” (act III, scene I; DW VI, 363, 364). [They are very surprised by her choice of residence / Claiming that the Queen’s Egyptian superstitions / Led her to leaving the main court palace. / To the guests – life, but to herself Queen-Lady / Left the tombs.....].

- 12 Wanda Achremowiczowa, “Rola obrzędowości w *Kleopatrze* Norwida. Znaki i gesty jako współczynniki słowa,” *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1953), p. 221.
- 13 Cf. therein and words of the drama: “EROE / Wszelako / Zasłona-wielka w głębi tej sali pochodzi / Prosto z myśli Królowej?... / KLEOPATRA / (Powstaje, robi parę kroków ku zasłonie ... i powraca) / – – Zasłona! – zasłona! – / Zasłona – – – *wymyśliłam zasłonę – to wszystko, / Cokolwiek jeszcze własną stworzyć umiem siłą...*” (act III, scene 1; DW VI, 366). [EROE: Does / The grand-curtain deep in this room come / Straight from the queen’s thoughts?... / CLEOPATRA: – – Curtain! – curtain! – / Curtain – – – I thought out the curtain! – that is all / I am still able to create with my own strength...].
- 14 Further preserved scenes allow for a conclusion that this scenery was maintained until the end of scene 6 in act III. It is possible that, while planning Cleopatra’s death, Norwid thought about moving the action to the tomb again. In one of the drafts of further scenes in act II, he made a note “Rozkaz zamurowania drzwi amfiteatru” [Order of walling up the door of the amphitheatre], right after the passage: “Więści o porażce zupełnej Rzymian” [News on the complete defeat of the Romans] (Achremowiczowa, “Rola obrzędowości w *Kleopatrze* Norwida. Znaki i gesty jako współczynniki słowa,” p. 174).
- 15 The effect of presenting the amphitheatre is additionally highlighted by the poet since the very beginning of act III via dialogues, where the issue of ingenious solutions in this building is recurring.

Queen's wish and according to her idea, expands to become, most importantly, a symbol of greatness and the sovereignty of Cleopatra – “pani na Wszechświat nieograniczonej” [the ruler of the limitless Universe] and competing with Rome. It shows her ambition as the “królowa świata” [queen of the world] on her way to the Capitoline. This monumental building exceeds everything that she used to enchant Anthony and deputies of the Empire.¹⁶ “Machiny równej nie widziało miasto!” [An amphitheatre equal to this has not been seen in the city!], “Rzym jeszcze nic równego nie ma,” [Rome has nothing that equals to this] boast Psymach and Olymp, at the same time stating that:

Mądrości wszelkiej klucze, słuszna jest, by Egipt,
By Aleksandria bardziej dzierżyła niżli Rzym.

(act III, scene 2; DW VI, 375)

[The keys of wisdom, should belong to Egypt,
To Alexandria much more than to Rome.]

Therefore, the amphitheatre is one more, and probably the most colourful, symbol of the nationwide pride of Egypt, which Norwid set in opposition to the pride of Rome.¹⁷

Shaping the theatrical space functionally cooperates with this concept of the scenic space in act III. Norwid recalls the theatrical space mainly on a horizontal plane, gradually outlining larger areas. He starts with a tomb enclosed within walls (which “szeroki jest jak miasto” [is as wide as a city] (!) and has “przestronne lochy” [spacious dungeons]), uses Cleopatra's memories to reflect on the architecture of the royal palace (again, its columns, arcades, “międzysionki” [inter-precincts]); next, he shows “wnętrze amfiteatru” [the interior of the amphitheatre], presented on stage, and its external fronton (where people and

16 Psymach explains the genius of this construction in this manner: “– – A tego następstwem / Jest: iż wszelaki może gmach nekropolijny, Nie tracąc nic, raz – życie obejmować publiczne, / Drugi raz – w niedobytą twierdzę się zamieniać” (act III, scene 3; DW VI, 398). [The consequence / Is: any necropolis building may / Without losing anything, one: take part in public life / Two: turn into an unconquered stronghold...].

17 Caesar will say: “Duma jest długim trudem godności – i ona / Nie nabywa się wcale żadną chępliwością: / Lud twój nie ma jej, właśnie dlatego ma *pychę*” (act I, scene 6; DW VI, 293). [Pride is a long effort in dignity – and it / Is not earned with boastfulness: / Your people do not have it, which is why they have *conceit*.] The amphitheatre is also a symbol of reviving the great mummy of Egypt by Cleopatra, even though she knows very well that the Egypt of today is not creative (compare: Achremowiczowa, “Rola obrzędowości w *Kleopatrze* Norwida”).

caravans of various deputies stop to admire the building) familiarises the audience with the vicinity of the palace (where Cleopatra rides on horseback and fishes with Antony), the Alexandrian province and the entire Egypt, under martial law, and finally, the Empire (as a counterweight to the East), which Cleopatra wants to conquer.¹⁸ The situation is accurately reported by Knight:

– Wieści i doniesienia mniejszej były wagi,
Dopóki się prowincji całej nie zmieniło
Na biegaczy z listami ...
... atoli
Dziś otrzymać wiadomość z Cyklad, ergo z Rzymu,
Łacniej, niżli takową rozwikłać i sprawdzić ...
...
Obozy zaś przez całe pustynie ku morzu
Stoją, i starczy słowo w Serapium powiedzieć,
By, jeżeli jest ostre, utkwiło w *Italii*.
(act III, scene 1; DW VI, 368)

[News and reports were of lesser importance
Until the entire province was turned
Into couriers with letters...
... although
It is easier now to get a message from the Cyclades, *ergo* from Rome
Than to solve and confirm one...
...
Camps throughout the entire desert up to the sea
Are spread, and it is enough to say a word in Serapeum
To make it, if sharp, wound *Italy*.]

Never before, until this act, were the presence and closeness of the confronted Egyptian states and, especially, Rome so clear. It is, of course, tied to Cleopatra's political and personal plans, as she has just become aware of Rome's crimes. The essence of the city was previously "słonił" [obstructed] by Caesar and his "osoba lub słowem" [person or word].

The theatrical space shaped in this way is supplemented by sound effect. Again, the sound of trumpets paces the ceremony of receiving deputies, "echa okrzyków i granie" [echo of calls and playing] in the back of the stage accompanies the

18 This space is also expanded by recurring names of cities and countries (Philippi, Modena, Athens, Gaul, Italy) as well as names: Brutus, Octavian, Caesar, wife of Mark, Horner, Cato, Pythagoras, Bacchus, Pompey, Kaspis.

appearance of Cleopatra in all the richness of the court, those “głosy ogółu” [voices of the general public] loudly praise the Ptolemaic daughter. The sounds of marching troops, hoofbeats, or trumpet signal for reconnaissance also recur.

To briefly recapitulate, it must be stated that the concept of space in all three acts of *Cleopatra* is meticulously thought-out, dramatically and theatrically functional both as a whole and as individual elements of the stage. The clearly synthetic and monumental character of this space is achieved through the size of the stage (depth, multi-planes), introducing three-dimensional architectural forms (columns, arcades, porticos), and constantly expanding it. It is also shaped by other elements: colours, light, music, group scenes, props and other characters as elements of the scenic vividness.

2. COLOUR, LIGHT, SOUND

Norwid uses the colour palette in moderation when it comes to *Cleopatra*, but the applied hues of colour have their important role in the visual perception of the scene. It has to be stated at the very beginning that colour does not really pertain to decorations.¹⁹ Only the dark hue of the curtain in the tomb and the overall colour of granite and basalt in the palace, as well as the marble of the tables are noted in the script. The magnitude of the props on the scene, elements of costumes and poetic images are two-coloured: gold and red in various tones, with crimson being dominant.²⁰ Hues and reflexes of gold surely dominate and, what is significant, it is possible to say that they function only on the Egyptian side. There are various items on the stage: golden vases and half vases, bowls and half-bowls, golden vessels with spices, “złotem gęsto nabijane czary” [cups heavily encrusted with gold], golden goblets and chalices, golden instruments and chairs. Cleopatra “łańcuch złoty porzuca” [hangs a golden chain] on Knight, Cinna receives a lion with a golden collar, the queen often wears golden bandelettes and “przebłysk złotego koturna” [glimpses of golden wedges] she wears is always a sign of her presence; during the wedding ceremony, “infant brat cały jest pstry od złota i cacek” [the infant brother is covered in gold and trinkets]; while talking with Ganimedion and Faleg-Mun, Cleopatra has vases filled with gold coins within her reach and gives them to her interlocutors. This colour scheme is particularly intensified by, constantly present in the metaphors, golden sunshine (which after the night “przybliża się sandałem złotym” [approaches in golden sandals] and

19 Here, the poet pays more attention to the lights.

20 The interplay between these two colours is registered within the poetry of Norwid by Kazimierz Wyka, *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz* (Kraków: PAU, 1948), p. 120.

constantly “tli się pod ciężkim sklepieniem piramid” [glows under the heavy roof of the pyramids]) and the sand glimmering in the same colour (even the Nile has “żółte wody” [yellow waters]).

It appears that this “totalna złotość” [total goldenness] of Egypt in the poet’s vision is not accidental and is motivated by the drama (although it surely confirms the colours of the country upon the Nile). Norwid contrasts it with another colour – crimson, dominant on the Roman side. The first colour demonstrates the “theory” of Egypt, which is like a golden treasure in a museum where it shines; it draws attention but is also dead and non-creative. While crimson (like blood) is the symbol of “practical” Rome, its military activity, a symbol of life and action. Therefore, Kalligion, Fortunius, Cinna, Anthony, Roman deputies wear crimson togas. Centurion throws a crimson cape on the travel chair right before the moment in which Caesar officially enters the palace room. While entertaining the Egyptian deputies, Consul will put it over his shoulders. In fact, Julius does not appear without this cape, which deepens the theatrical value of the scene already during the first time he meets Cleopatra. Lovers joined by this crimson will go through the camp:

– Chłód ranny niech mi prawo da, bym twe ramiona
Purpurą odział...

(act I, scene 6; DW VI, 296)

[...Let the morning chill give me the right to cover your arms
With crimson...]

They will swim over the Nile in similar closeness:

Jedną przestąpmy deskę od progu na statek,
Który purpury nasze dwie zamieni w żagle,

(act II, scene 1; DW VI, 309)

[Let us step over the plank from the threshold to the ship,
Which will turn our two crimsons into sails.]

It is significant that Norwid defines the consular cape belonging to Caesar only by its colour. It is the colour that Cleopatra will remember forever. The crimson toga of Mark Antony will immediately move her heart with the memory of Julius, the scarlet anemone flower has a similar effect. In act III, Antony mentions the “purpurowa galera” [purple galley] sailing under the flag of the Egyptian queen.

It seems that Norwid captured the symptoms of the presented nations via colour (and light) vision. As a result, he incorporated gold and crimson into the

clash between the two cultures. Also, these two-colour dominants decide on the visual outlook of a scene and upgrade the spectacularism of an image.²¹ The scenographer needs to remember these important guidelines from the poet.

Light plays a unique role in Norwid's vision of the performance. Operating it and being aware of its theatrical functions, used in the drama in an excellent manner, it must evoke admiration due to the poet's ability to exploit the drama's staging potential.

Furthermore, light shapes the space by dividing it into planes, pinpoints characters, sculpts, and brings out from the background various groups of people, their gestures and movements, and makes images more vivid; finally, light dominates in metaphors; there are virtually no "obrazy gestyczne" [gesture-based images] in *Cleopatra* without a ray of light.²² Norwid places lights in many places across the scene – front, back, often far deep (just as in the wedding scene), sides. Light is even cast from behind the scene (Pompey's pyre). It is not a flat light, static, only illuminating the scene. Here, the poet distinguishes many hues and subtleties: "blask" [shine], "poblask" [glimmer], "światłość" [light], "mrok" [darkness], "mrok znaczny" [great darkness]. Sometimes the light flickers, in other instances, it "becomes noticeable" or "lightens" elements of the decorations, it may also cut the stage or shine "blaskiem do łuny podobnym" [with a shine similar to a glow], sometimes there is "niewo światła" [a bit of light] in the back of the stage, in other instances "scena zupełnie rozświeca się" [the stage is completely lit up] or "blade zorzy promienie zaczynają świecić wśród kolumnady portyku" [pale rays of the aurora start to shine among the columns in the portico].

How does light function on the stage? Let us list some examples. The gloomy atmosphere in the tomb is achieved theatrically by introducing the dark curtain and covering the windows. Cleopatra's leaving the place of seclusion is signalled not only by opening the curtain, showing the view of the amphitheatre, but also a change in lighting: "scena zupełnie rozświeca się" [the stage is completely lit up]. Norwid achieved a strong theatrical and dramatic effect via the lighting in the scene with Kornelia.²³ Also, the moment of Szechera's prophecy the poet

21 Surely, the group scene of the crowds and the harvest choirs in act II add a lot of colour to the scene.

22 Compare also: Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 127.

23 First, the information: "od jednej strony arkad blask podobny do łuny daje się na chwilę widzieć, a przy kolumnie kobieta w długiej całożałobnej szacie" [on one side of the arcade, it is possible to see for a moment a shine similar to a glow, and a woman in a long mourning dress]. Next, Kornelia slowly walks across the stage with her hand raised "biorąc uszanowanie rzymskich wojsk dla cieniów męża" [receiving salutations

composed by means of a play of light. The morning comes, “zorza, od głębi sceny, nieco rozjaśnia portyk” [aurora lights up the portico from the back of the stage] – it is where Cleopatra hides. The centre of the stage is taken up by the Prophetess conversing with Knight. The front “jest jeszcze mrokiem znacznym okryty” [is still covered in heavy darkness] intentionally. When Szechera pronounces the name of Caesar – “mrok, który trwał u przodu sceny, przecięty jest nagle ogonem komety, uwyrażniającym się na kolumnach portyku” [the darkness which lingered at the front of the stage is suddenly cut through by a comet’s tail, which becomes conspicuous on the columns in the portico]. The comet, in a reminder about the presence of fate, seals the personal tragedy of the lovers. Again, Norwid ties the theatrical effect with the expression of an event on the stage.

It is rather obvious that all the elements of the drama balance on the border of day and night, light and dark, sunshine and shadow. These oppositions are visible in the lighting of the scene and, most importantly, become the centre of the poetic image. The events on the scene take place during the day and during the night, but also on their border, at sunset – “przed słońca zaciemką” [before the sun darkens] – “o wniściciu księżyca” [as the moon rises] and at dawn. In act I, Cleopatra and Caesar admire the sunrise, Szechera’s prophecy is revealed in the morning. Norwid announces the time of each day using lighting, which becomes a kind of time determinant in the drama. For instance, when the Romans took over the pharaoh palace in the evening, it is signalled by lamps which Lictor sets around the scene. We may assume that they light up the night scene 6 in act I: Caesar continues the paragraph “O Egipskiej potrzebie” [On the Egyptian Need], Cleopatra enters and they talk for a long time, until the morning aurora. The night that is invited onto the stage in act II is shown by the appearance of the night guard and a change in lighting (“Noc widocznie zapada – w głębi nieco światłości” [The night visibly comes – a bit of light deep inside]). The light also announces the morning “blade zorzy promienie zaczynają świtać śród kolumnady portyku” [pale rays of the aurora start to wander among the colonnade of the portico]. The night will become a natural scenery for the farewell meeting of the lovers. The specific atmosphere it creates echoes constantly throughout the pages of the drama because “każda noc ma coś szczególnego” [each night has something unique]. According to Norwid: night is the world of scholars and wise people (it is the time when Szechera works and loses her sight “zyskując ciemności” [gaining darkness]), it is the strength of dreams

of Roman forces towards the shadows of her husband]. This device of Norwid’s has already been interpreted by Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 121.

often related to the events of the day (Knight, Kalligion, priests talk about their dreams); finally, the arrangement of stars is for the Egyptians a binding oracle and still an indisputable confirmation of the pharaoh tradition. They often stare into the sky; Caesar notices it:

Starcy egipscy patrzą w konstelacje niebios,
Ja – z Europą w dziejów głębokość poglądam.
(act II, scene I; DW VI, 309)

[Old men in Egypt gaze into the heavenly constellations,
I – look into the depths of history with Europe]

The poet had a highly original idea when it comes to using the oppositions: light-shadow (darkness), sun-shadow, as together they highlight the verbal and theatrical structure of the drama in the strongest way. The shadow, as a form of lighting the scene, appears on the stage as darkness, semi-darkness, and chiaroscuro,²⁴ which Norwid uses the most and always highly skilfully, both in the daylight and moonlight. The poet utilises his chiaroscuro manner in composing the scene with the night guard, the scene in which the lovers meet for the first time, Szechera's prophecy, the scenes in Cleopatra's tomb and the episode with Kornelia, who first appears in the shadow of a column and then in the light of a glare from behind the scene. The viewers also observe the silhouettes moving against the background of the moonlit night, such as Cleopatra's escapade in a boat to Caesar's camp, or her sneaking in the back to meet Julius. The second Priest reports that Szechera lost her sight and escaped "z wieży zodyjakowej" [from the zodiac tower], "raz zaledwo / Śród księżycy sylwetkę wyszczerzyła czarną / I zniknęła" [once she barely exposed her black silhouette against the moonlight and disappeared]. The motif of light and shadow is often given a metaphorical meaning, most often contrasting sun and shadow, filling in the dialogues and their metaphorical constructs present in the poetic word and present in the theatrical space. The images of particular significance speak about the path of the sun's ray or the shadow that determines the moment of a day, touching one by one the columns, steps, precincts,²⁵ or the shadow that always accompanies people and items in Egypt (e.g. Ganimedion's crime was that he did

24 The grandness and richness of chiaroscuro in Norwid's poetry is stated by Wyka (*Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz*, p. 124 f.).

25 For instance, Eukast reminds Cleopatra that they have to hurry by saying: "Kolumna / Dotyka cieniem schodów" (act I, scene 3; DW VI, 268) [...The Column / Touches the steps with its shadow...].

not notice the Queen's shadow on the sand). They also speak about the shadow because of the belief of shadows living after death (Cleopatra constantly sees Julius's shadow next to her and for this reason enjoys "półmroczne chwile ranku – godziny hermejskie / Światło-cieniu" [the semi-dark moments of dawn – hours of Hermes' light and shadow]).

Apart from the surprisingly strong presence of colour and light in the poet's vision, music together with numerous sounds and acoustic effects shape the theatrical vision of the drama. We may hear its weaker or stronger tones from the very beginning, whether in the main text or notes in stage directions. First, it should be noticed that there is an abundance of musical instruments present on the stage or merely mentioned in the text, such as a harp,²⁶ trumpets, a flute, a lyre, a bagpipe, and bellows. Acoustic effects are also numerous and diverse, either vocal: calls, announcements, Szechera's yells, voices from behind the scene,²⁷ joint recitations, the songs of the Harp Player and the choirs of harvest, and whispers of two tragedy choirs, or instrumental: trumpets playing, harp, reveille, or reconnaissance signals. There are also sounds of a different nature: "oklask rąk" [hands clapping], Cleopatra's "stąpanie lekkie, drobne, jako liści szelest" [light steps, tiny, resembling the leaves rustling], "wody szelest / Spadającej do wanny z porfiru" [water whispering when falling to a porphyry bath], or "odbrzmienia wojennego marszu" [echoing sounds of war-time marches].²⁸

Music and sound effects accompany many scenes (are their integral elements or just co-create them) and perform various functions. Most importantly, Norwid subjected music to the context of the drama's topic; confrontation of two cultures. The country of the pharaohs is constantly filled with music. It accompanies royal hunts, it is heard from Cleopatra's ship with its oars "są urobione na wzorce narzędzi muzycznych" [in the shapes similar to musical instruments]. The Egyptian "theoryje" [theories] became famous in the flood of music and incense smoke. Music accompanies virtually every scene with customs, rituals, and court ceremonies, such as the scene of Cleopatra's breakfast, receiving Roman deputies and the royal wedding. The sound of trumpets regulates the course of each event; the first one opens the feast; after the second signal, the crowds slowly leave the

26 Wyka (*Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz*, p. 67) claims that the harp is one of the instruments of Norwid's mature poetry.

27 Various "głosy ogółu" [voices of the public] or "wołania" [calls] are treated by the poet as equal to characters and are highlighted in the text by using capital letters.

28 "In *Cleopatra*, there are many – as Sławińska writes ("Metafora w dramacie," p. 83) – situations where characters present on the stage listen to the voices from backstage and try to decipher their origin and nature."

palace; the third blow announces general silence and the return to regular tasks. Such a strong (almost intrusive) presence of music in the pharaoh court will surprise the Romans (Cinna says that he sometimes gets drunk with music, sometimes with incense smoke) and will again become the symbol of “teoria” [theory] of Egypt. This clash, as we would say nowadays, on the field of music culture is accurately reflected by the whispers of two tragedy choirs:

GRUPA EGIPSKA

Zdałoby się, że ludu śpiew wracającego –
Zdałoby się, że słyhać już muzykę wiosel,
Zepsowaną odbrzmieniem wojennego marszu...

GRUPA RZYMIAN

Coś, jakoby grom kroku wracających Legii
Lub orłów tętno żeńską spowane muzyką
Zda się utrapiać uszy...

(act II, scene 2; DW VI, 326)

[EGYPTIAN GROUP:

It would seem to be the song of the people returning
It would seem to be the music of the oars
Destroyed by the echoing sounds of war-time marches...

ROMAN GROUP:

As if the thunder of the steps of the returning Legions
Or the pulse of eagles destroyed with female music
Seems to bother the ears...]

Singing and playing are introduced by Norwid in a different manner. They will barge open the stage with Egyptian crowds cheering for the Queen’s wedding. Throughout the stage, entire processions of villagers, maidens, and young men parade. It is possible to hear “brzęk sierpów” [rattle of sickles] and “pobrząk harfy” [clinks of harps], then the song of the Harp Player, two choirs and Epod, all the time accompanied by waves and calls of the crowds deeper in the portico, and finally the songs of people coming back to their homes. Obviously, such a composition confirms, first and foremost, the ritual-based tendency in *Cleopatra*; it also strengthens the theatrical effect of the large group scene on the one hand, and on the other hand, gains significant value in its meaning: the cheerful, singing crowd became an expressive contrast for the passive inhabitants of the palace who are enslaved by dead ceremonies.

Saturating the poet’s vision with music and sound effects expands the stage space, undoubtedly monumentalises it, and, including the play of colours and lights, enhances the spectacular image. Norwid yet again sets a difficult task

before the theatre (underlining it with clear guidelines), and it is challenging because light, colour, and music were given their own mission in transferring the issues of the drama.²⁹

3. GROUP SCENES, STAGE MOVEMENT

It has already been noticed that group scenes are numerous in *Cleopatra*, which is motivated by the customary and historic character of the drama.³⁰ The Queen is the only person who stays alone on the stage in the first part of act I. There are only a few two-person scenes. They are mainly devoted to Cleopatra and Caesar, but always just for a moment. Other two-person arrangements usually begin in subsequent scenes and expand into larger groups throughout their course (e.g. act I, scene 5). When Norwid composes a three-person scene, the movements are most often arranged in a triangular shape and certain symmetry, which is partially theatrically determined by setting the doors on the sides of the stage and one in the centre; for instance: “Eukast i Kondor uwidaczniają się po stronach drzwi – środkiem zbliża się Rycerz” [Eukast and Kondor become visible on the side door – Knight approaches in the middle], “Cezar z jednych drzwi arkady wewnętrznej, a Kleopatra z drugich przeciw otwartych, spólcześnie wychodząc, spotykają się. Zaczem Rycerz się cofa” [Caesar from one door of the inner arcade, Cleopatra from the other opposite door leave at the same time, they meet. As a result, the Knight backs away], “Kleopatra w wielkim stroju weselnym – z jednej strony Eukast, z drugiej Eroo – wchodzi” [Cleopatra in her grand wedding attire – on the one hand Eukast, on the other Eroo – they enter].

Multi-person scenes and especially group scenes were surely a more difficult problem for Norwid to solve. Does he view them theatrically? Is he aware of their stage values? Finally, does he subject them to some compositional laws regarding stage movement and arrangement within the stage space? Let us take a closer look, *exempli gratia*, at some of those scenes.

A multi-person scene, Cleopatra's breakfast. First, called by Eukast and Kondor, servants enter “jeden za drugim” [one after another] and “przyrządzenie czynią” [make preparations] on the table carried into the scene; it takes place in the middle of the stage. Eukast and Kondor are in the front, but they will also deliver their lines while moving since “w scenie tej osoby dialogujące od czasu do czasu biorą udział w zastawianiu stołu” [persons taking part in the dialogues

29 A musical instrument and music itself often become the subject of a metaphor.

30 See Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, pp. 22, 119 f.

from time to time take part in setting the table]. Therefore, they are “employed” by Norwid and the scene becomes more natural. When Eukast announces Cleopatra’s entrance, servants group “stosownym półkolem” [in a proper semi-circle], and Szechera sits at her feet, a few peasant boys stop near the throne a moment later, and finally the Monarch leaves the palace room via the main door. This is how Norwid solves the arrangement of this scene: “jedni spożywają resztę potraw – drudzy układaniem sprzętów w kosze i onychże odnoszeniem zajęci są, tak iż dwie rozmowy są prowadzone” [some eat the rest of the dishes – others are busy with putting the tools into baskets and carrying those out, so two conversations are conducted], then Eukast backs away “z ostatnimi koszami i służebnymi chłopcami” [with the last baskets and servant boys], next Kondor “uchodzi” [leaves] and Szakal “oddala się” [moves away], finally the last two boys “usuwiają się cicho i spiesznie” [remove themselves quietly and in haste] to leave Her sleeping at the table.

Here Norwid provides, as may be noticed, a ready-to-use situational solution, skillfully filling the stage space with groups of people. The overall arrangement is governed by the laws of court ceremonialism and the scene ends with “szereg świetnych wyjść” [a number of grand exits] of characters.³¹

Let us skip the royal wedding for a moment and take a look at the group scene in act III, where Cleopatra shows herself in the entire richness of the pharaoh dynasty.

First Eukast, the master of ceremony, “z pocztem służby niosącej różne przybory, wchodzi” [enters with a crowd of servants carrying various tools] and talks with Kondor and Olymp while preparing the room for a feast. After putting together two small tables, the boys “zaczynają się szykować” [start to prepare themselves] and on Eukast’s “oklask rąk” [clap of hands] take their proper places, probably on the side of the throne, perpendicularly to the audience, similarly to the Choir, Priests, Lector, and Herald introduced in a moment.³² Just as the curtain is pulled:

jednocześnie przez uszykowane rzędy dworskie u jednego z wewnętrznych wniść wchodzi Kleopatra i Antoniusz. Ona uprzedzona jest giermkim niosącym włócznię krótką, małą tarczę, misiurkę z koroną, ciężmy wojenne, a on uprzedzon swym liktorem, hełm z diademem na przyłbicy i miecz niosącym[?]. Scena zupełnie rozświeca się – w głębi słycać echa okrzyków i granie. Niejaki poczet książąt, ludu i dam postępuje za Monarchinią – przy Antoniuszu Delius w rzymskim świetnym ubraniu. (DW VI, 387)

31 Cf. Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 124.

32 Scene 2 in act III ends, unfortunately, with gaps in the manuscript (see: DW VI, 387).

[at the same time, via the prepared court rows at one of the inner entrances arrive Cleopatra and Anthony. She is preceded by a squire carrying a short spear, a small shield, a basinet with camail and a crown, war-time shoes, he is preceded by his lictor carrying a helmet with a diadem on the visor and a sword. The stage completely lights up – echoes of yells and playing can be heard from the background. A kind of an entourage of princes, peasants and ladies follows the Monarch – next to Antony walks Delius in a magnificent Roman attire.]

Next, the Priests give Cleopatra myrrh, which she throws into a three-legged censer; then the Roman deputies enter, but they “są mało uważani” [are respected little]. Only after Eukast announces them a second time does the Queen greet the deputies; upon her signal “granie trąb się odzywa i cały dwór staje u miejsc przeznaczonych” [the playing of the trumpets begins and the entire court stands at their assigned positions], then Cleopatra sits on the throne and begins the audience.

Norwid’s sensitivity to the spectacularism and theatricality of group compositions is evident. The poet provides clear guidelines when it comes to the arrangement and rhythm of the scene, which are subjected to the etiquette of the Egyptian court presenting itself to the Romans. This is why there are so many people and a certain symmetry of the arrangement as well as ceremonial stiffness (“uszykowane rzędy dworskie” [prepared rows of court members]).

The group scene in act II reveals an even more splendid stage potential and different laws govern its composition when it comes to the scenic arrangement and movement. Here, Norwid introduces entire crowds of people, warriors and “the curious,” processions of peasants, choirs of maidens and young men. They bring onto the stage music, singing, and the atmosphere of general joy. The stage directions for this moment are incredibly detailed. Even before leaving on a boat with Caesar, Cleopatra hears “ludu okrzyk i stąpanie” [calls and steps of the people] coming to the palace. Later on, “przez arkadę dającą na brzeg w głębi portyku widać wojsko rzymskie” [Roman army is visible via the arcade going towards the shore in the back of the portico]. Further, “głębię sceny ze wszech arkad nadbiegający lud zapełnia” [the back of the stage is filled with people running from all arcades]. Cleopatra and Caesar “przechodzą tłum ku okrętowi – okrzyki powtarzane towarzyszą im” [move through the crowd to the ship – repeated calls accompany them]. Then “w głębi sceny zostawa i rośnie tłum ciekawych, gdy na przodzie onejże od czasu do czasu, wybląkane z rzeszy, dialogują osoby” (DW VI, 310) [at the back of the stage, a curious crowd lingers and grows, while at the front from time to time some people engage in dialogues]. They are direct participants of the scene who, joining both groups of people, report on the situation taking place in the far part of the stage. It is how

Szechera – “tam i sam przechodząc, rzuca Eukastowi półgłosem” [walking here and there, tells Eukast in a hushed voice] about the harvest choirs approaching. At another moment, Karpon “przeciska się przez tłum i podchodzi do przodu sceny” [forces his way through the crowd and walks up to the front of the stage] to deliver his lines. The choir performance precedes the song of the Harp Player “u przodu sceny” [at the front of the stage], accompanied with “nucenie i wołania tłum w głębi sceny” [humming and yelling crowds at the back of the stage]. At the front of the stage, characters gather around tables set alongside columns (on one side a table for Centurions, who is at the other a table for “debating” Priests and Szechera). Norwid guides people from the back through the middle part of the stage so that the audience may hear their lines, then they move back or approach the tables. The rules for movement are specified by the poet in stage directions: “jak w całej tej scenie, usuwają się jedni w *głąb*, drudzy zaś na *przód* występują” [as in the entire scene, some remove themselves to the back, others go towards the front]. All of this pulsates with the changing rhythm of music, singing and dancing as well as an asymmetrical, wave-like movement of groups of people which gives the scene a unique visual appeal because of the large number of characters.³³ Norwid resolves the issues of this scene in the following way. On the first trumpet, “znaczna liczba składających tłum rozchodzi się różnymi arkadami portyku w głębi sceny” [the majority of the crowd dispersed via various arcades of the portico at the back of the stage]. Next, “coraz znakomitsza część tłum ustepuje” [a bigger and bigger part of the crowd leaves], Kornelia passing by focuses the attention at the front of the stage. During the third blow, “przodek sceny zajęty przez dwie małe grupy” [the front of the scene is taken up by two small groups] of Egyptians and Romans, creating the two tragedy choirs; “dno sceny zupełnie opróżnia się” [the back of the scene becomes completely empty]. After a moment, “też same grupy dwie się *rozwijają* [podkreślenie moje – A.M.K] w dwa równoległe szranki” [the same two groups *expand* [highlight mine – A.M.K.] into two parallel rows], between which Cleopatra and Caesar will go after returning from their trip at the sea. “Osoby przybyłe zajmują przodek sceny – grupy rozwinięte w szranki cofają się zupełnie” [people arriving take up the front of the stage – groups in rows back away completely], leaving on the stage the ensemble of the Queen and Consul.

The quoted (and purposefully longer) fragments of the poet’s stage directions are an obvious proof of his constant care towards composing scenes with groups

33 Associations with stage movement in Wyspiański’s *Wesele* [The Wedding] are difficult to ignore.

and directing groups of people. The interpretation-related conclusions that come to mind may be expanded and concern the entire drama. Let us note them briefly.

All group scenes are directed by Norwid from a theatrical point of view with ready-made situational solutions. Their composition employs the whole range of space (its “back” and “front” exist here all the time) and the arrangement of groups of people is closely related to the stage set (columns, portico, tables, throne, etc.). The main rule here is based on calling to the fore the persons “in the dialogue;” when it comes to handling crowds or groups – irregular traffic, there are virtually no stiff arrangements known from the poet’s early works.³⁴ The groups of people in *Cleopatra* are diverse,³⁵ internally complex, but always “Norwid tries to tie them with proper – and justified – stage situation.”³⁶

The carefully directed situational group scenes of the drama, reinforced by music, sometimes dancing and singing, intensified with the interplay between the light and darkness, folds in the costume, a prop, related to series of various gestures of characters and monumentalising the space give a magnificent spectacular value. It should also be noted that the poet shapes those scenes theatrically by their verbal structure.³⁷ More importantly, group scenes are a carrier of the stigma of the culture of confronted civilisations. Therefore, anybody who wants to adapt *Cleopatra* to the modern stage has to be cautious, as eliminating culture-bound scenes from the drama may weaken the impact of the issues discussed therein as well as their theatrical value.

4. ELEMENTS OF SHAPING CHARACTERS

Obviously, we are only interested in the stage life of *Cleopatra*’s characters and their theatrical presence in the stage vision of the poet. It is possible to notice at once that Norwid approaches this issue from many perspectives: characters are

34 See Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 119.

35 The poet determines them as: servants, general public, soldiers, camp guards, Roman army, peasants, curious crowd, persons, choir, debating people, two small groups, entourage.

36 See Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 119.

37 In the wedding scene in act II, e.g. individual statements are intertwined with the Harp Player’s song, “głosami tłumnymi” [crowd voices], a common statement “u stołu Centurionów” [at the Centurion’s table], “głosami w głębi sceny” [voices from behind the scene], the songs of the choir of young men and that of maidens (in turns and during the joint performance), calls “stamtąd i zowąd” [from here and there], general “obwołaniem” [announcements] and whispers of both tragedy choirs, which end with a joint declamation.

related to the concept of space, they create sculpted groups and images in its background; they are showcased through lighting and colour reflexes (as discussed above); further, he sees them in consumes; their hands are busy handling props, the reflection encompasses many elements of on-stage acting: gestures, facial expressions, stage movement, manner of entering and exiting, way of speaking, and intonation; Norwid entrusts his characters with “bezmowne chwile dramy” [silent moments of drama], and equips them with a wide scale of emotions and feelings that have to be played out on the stage; finally, the characters are given important semantic functions, which shapes them into attractive, rich theatre roles. It seems that characters are the elements of the theatrical vision of *Cleopatra* that Norwid hears and sees on stage most clearly.

Each of the problems registered above may surely be the subject of a separate dissertation, but this paper has to select some and limit itself to a synthetic and functional exemplification.

First of all, Norwid exceptionally used an important element of theatrical concretisation of characters, costume. It is always noted in stage directions and is often further specified in various ways in the dialogues. *Cleopatra* entails the true richness of costumes.³⁸ The queen of Egypt is changing them the most. She is first wearing a ceremonial outfit – for audiences (the breakfast scene), to change a moment later into another ceremonial outfit for travelling. “Starannie owita” [meticulously covered], she sneaks through the Roman camp, although the guards notice “przebłysk jej złotego koturna” [a glimpse of her golden wedge shoe]. She appears before Caesar wearing “kolce” [spikes] with two famous pearls. During the wedding, Cleopatra wears “wielki strój weselny” [a grand wedding attire]; later on, she sneaks incognito through the stage “w długiej oponie” [in a long coat]. Finally, in act III, she puts on the magnificent and seductive outfit of the goddess Isis, but parts with “nierozłączne perły” [inseparable pearls].³⁹

38 Cf. Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 122 f.

39 Eroë reports in detail on this outfit: “...Królowa weźnie złoty i podłużny / Koturn egipski, z wierzchu odkryty zupełnie, / Lecz długie szaty zwierzchniej strzępy nań upadną, / A z tych każdy jest sznurkiem drobniuchnych perełek, / Jak krople wiatrem z fali nagarnięte morskiej, / Tak iż się palce w pianie z pereł ciągle kąpią...” (act III, scene I; DW VI, 372). [...the Queen will take golden and elongated / Egyptian wedge shoes, completely uncovered in the front / But the long fringes of her outer dress will fall onto them, / And each is a thread of fine pearls / Like drops of a sea wave carried by the wind / So that fingers constantly bathe in the foam of pearls...] The outfit is completed by a gauze on her arms, pinned in some places by the belt of Isis. We learn from Szechera

Caesar appears “w stroju powszechnym” [in a common outfit], a consular toga with folds; later on, he throws on a crimson cape which he changes into a travel coat before departing from Egypt. How about Antony? During his first entrée on the stage, he wears “strój rzymski wykwintny i różę ma w rękę” [!] [a splendid Roman attire and carries a rose in his hands]. We already know that soldiers accompanying Caesar, also Roman deputies, wear togas and capes.⁴⁰ Kornelia appears in “długiej całożałobnej szacie” [a long mourning dress], Szechera wears a black outfit and shawls. The group scene in act III becomes a fashion show for costumes: next to Cleopatra, Mark, and the Roman deputies, appears Eukast “w wielkim stroju” [in a grand outfit], Psymach “w dworskim ubiorze” [in a court attire], Knight “w świetnej zbroi” [in an excellent armour] and Delius “w rzymskim świetnym stroju” [in splendid Roman clothes].

Surely, the number of costumes makes the characters and scenes conspicuous. Norwid further accentuates this value by his unique “playing” of the costume on stage, tying it with numerous effective images, situations, and “standing figures.” For instance, by changing or completing the costume on stage, Cleopatra being dressed in her travel outfit by the servants, or lacing up the sandal, or putting on the helmet and securing the sword by Caesar. The “fałd szaty” [fold of the cape]⁴¹ often plays a role, similarly to the repeated, generating the effect close to that in the drapes of antique sculptures, gesture of throwing on the cape.⁴² For instance, Caesar “podejmuje róg płaszcza purpurowego i zarzuca go na jedno ramię, nie kończąc ubrania, nie biorąc miejsca, tak iż połowa purpury spoczywa na siedzeniu” (DW VI, 283) [takes the hem of his crimson cape, throws it over

that Cleopatra wears “strój mieszczkańskiej kasty” [an outfit of the townspeople] to avoid recognition when she is walking near the palace (act I, scene 3; DW VI, 265).

40 Also armour, swords and helmets.

41 Caesar reacts to Cleopatra’s tears in the following manner: “Inne wszystkie, o! księżno, lzy, we fałdach togi / Konsularnej, na piersi pochować rad jestem” (act I, scene 6; DW VI, 291) [All other, oh! princess, tears in the folds of the cape / Of a Consul on my chest I am happy to hide]. The folds of the crimson cape and the gesture of throwing it on by Caesar return also in Szechera’s prophecy: “... – cały mąż, jak filar – / Od zawieruchy krótkich pugińców wzięty / Zdradą – dwadzieścia i trzy pchnięć, a wszystkie w piersi, / Zgarnie rękoma, jakby purpurę zarzucał / Pluskiem krwi, jak fałdami płaszcza...” [– the whole man, like a pillar – / By the storm of short daggers / Betrayed – twenty and three stabs, and all in the chest, / He will gather them with his arms as if throwing on the crimson / The splash of blood, like the folds of his cape...].

42 Wyka (*Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz*, p. 23) already paid attention to this gesture, also Achremowiczowa (“Rola obrzędowości w *Kleopatrze* Norwida,” p. 227) and Sławińska (*Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 122 n).

one shoulder, without finishing, without changing place, so half of the crimson lies on the seat], for a moment creating a standing, immovable statue. In scene 5 of act I, Fortunius “zarzuca płaszcz” [throws on his cape] before exiting the stage. Prior to Caesar saying his last line in the drama, Kalligion “obrzuca [go] płaszczem podróżnym” [throws <over him> the travel cape]. We might also mention the scene where elements of Cleopatra’s wedding attire are taken off and her arms are covered with crimson (and she walks like that across the stage with Caesar), along with the scenes where she refuses the veil, Antony throws down his crimson and armour and puts them on again.

This theatrical “playing” of the costume is obviously related to its other functions in the drama. Costumes show the nature of characters; they reveal their characteristics and actual feelings, e.g. Kornelia’s or Szechera’s robes, Mark’s exquisite attire, Cleopatra’s cape and her outfit in act III. It further strengthens the contrast between Egyptian and Roman cultures: the ceremonial clothes of priests and – let us remind ourselves – the Roman crimson and armour. Cleopatra’s “wielki strój weselny” [grand wedding attire] is very heavy and the scene in which Eroë rejects its ornaments is symbolic. Another meaningful gesture may be noted when Antony takes off the toga once he decides he cannot compare himself to the greatness of Caesar. An ironic connotation is surely evoked by Her appearing “w zupełnym pancerzu” [in full armour] in the wedding scene. At another time, during Delius’ audience, the discussion about the outfit the Queen will put on becomes an opportunity to talk about important political issues in a veiled manner. It is also an example of using the so-called “white flowers,” colourless words, “neutral,” but covering a wide array of tragic consequences.⁴³ Finally, a costume serves as a prop, additionally semantised in a symbolic manner and tied to the tragic situation. This pertains to the last preserved scene in act III (DW VI, 405), where Antony “zdejmuje pancerz jak rzecz ciężką” [takes off the armour as it is a heavy thing] and then says to Her:

Probuji, azali w łuszczkę – tam, u lewej piersi –
Pomiędzy nity wrażisz bez chybień ostrze?

...

... po *dwakroć* skoro tego dopniesz,
List ci dam i potrączę w ramię...

[Try, into the plating – there, on the left breast
Will you not miss and stab your blade between the rivets?

...

43 Achremowiczowa, “Rola obrzędowości w *Kleopatrze* Norwida,” p. 220.

If you do it twice
I will give you a letter and pat your arm...]

“Her dobywa miecza i utrafia” [Her takes out his sword and hits well] for the first time; he hits the same place for the second time, but it is a deadly blow as Mark has already put on his armour again.

Norwid’s remarks on the external appearance of characters (e.g. Cleopatra’s physical attractiveness) should also be mentioned. Therefore, it becomes visible that by giving a costume specific functions in the dramatic shape of *Cleopatra*, Norwid is aware of its theatrical, scenic value. Surely this manner of “playing” the costume and sculptor-like perception of characters are a consequence of the poet’s archaeological studies.⁴⁴

The process of “playing” props is even more theatrically profound. Their multitude and diversity are not accidental, but the fact that they perform various functions is crucial.

In general, props may be divided into groups because of their relation to 1. restoring the cultural background of the presented nations, 2. stage and space layout, 3. other characters. Different props accompany ritual scenes, different ones are assigned to love scenes. On the Egyptian side, props (more frequently) are related to the dead rituals, on the Roman side – with military deeds of the Empire.

Norwid diligently lists the props in the side text, although they often, similar to elements of decorations, result from the dialogues (which again proves the constant theatricality of the text). For instance, Cleopatra states in the breakfast scene:

Szechero! przystąp bliżej, podsuń sobie dywan,
U nogi królewskiego stołu misę postaw,
(DW VI, 265)

[Szechera, come closer, move the carpet closer,
Put a bowl at the leg of the royal table,]

The poet always comments on the use of props and the manner of handling them while on stage. It is mostly visible in *à vue*, saturating the stage space with props that often gives rise to a new situation, e.g. the breakfast scene, the moment before Caesar enters or preparations for the feast in act III. Many will gain

44 Realising Norwid’s costume concepts is a highly interesting task for a scenographer. Poe’s drawings may help in this instance.

strong dramatic and metaphorical meaning, e.g. the mummy brought on stage (a symbol of death, deceased and soulless traditions of Egypt, its bigotry) contrasted with Cleopatra yearning for an authentic life. Norwid masterfully “plays” the elements of decorations, e.g. flowers in vases in act II. When Caesar dictates the edict on marriages of his soldiers, “Kleopatra opodal ... obchodzi się kwiatami bliskiego wazonu” [Cleopatra nearby ... arranges the flowers in a vase]. Later on, the Queen “rzuca precz” [throws away] her edict, but it falls on one of the vases full of flowers, which is immediately commented with a beautiful metaphor:

Gdyby te kwiaty z Galii były lub znad Renu,
Pomyśliłyby teraz, że upadł śnieg na nie!
Ale egipskie ufają słońcu...

(DW VI, 304)

[If those flowers were from Gaul or the Rhine,
They would think that snow has fallen upon them!
But Egyptian flowers trust the sun...]

Props related to specific characters often determine their features. The short spear the queen of Egypt uses to hit the shield is a symbol of Cleopatra as a queen, a sign of her leadership over the Egyptian army;⁴⁵ the sceptre and the bandelettes – Cleopatra-priestess, keeper of the pharaoh tradition; the travel chair, pieces of paper, lion’s skin, and crimson – props characterising Caesar’s genius. The pharaoh ring denotes Knight’s nobility; the cane, Szechera’s blindness, a rose held by Antony clearly points to the “school of Roman ladies” he represents.

Another function of the props entails managing the gestures of characters; they employ their hands, attract attention, and determine stage movement.⁴⁶ The anemone flower and, especially, the lion’s skin (“played” and recalled numerous times) reinforce the love-related symbolism of the drama. In *Cleopatra*, props are swelling, as I. Sławińska put it, with meaning that is “not only sacral, but also emotional: a testament that Caesar touched, parchments with drafts of new acts for the provinces,⁴⁷ flowers... At another point they participate in a comedic scene with a clearly ironic tone when priests steal the precious elements of Queen’s tableware in the folds of their robes.

45 When the pharaoh court is presented to the Roman deputies, Cleopatra is preceded by a squire who, apart from the shield and the spear, carries a basinet with a camail and war-time shoes.

46 Cf. Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 124.

47 Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 124.

Props in a drama definitely enhance its spectacularism, especially in group scenes, and confirm the truth of the epoch with its archaeological precision. The majority of the props perform this function, but they are not only of antiquarian value or simply brought on stage. They take part in the action, are often theatrically used, always essential in a situation in which they appear, and are often symbolic and representative. It is obvious that Norwid is exceptionally diligent in restoring the social background of Rome and, particularly, Egypt, closely following the stylistics of both nations. He does not get lost in the details by keeping a proper balance, always using the props for a purpose and with a skill that reinforces the artistic impressions.

The issue of gestures in *Cleopatra* has already been researched. This notion was brought to attention by – already quoted – two works: *Role obrzędowości w Kleopatrze Norwida* by W. Achremowiczowa and “Ciąg scenicznych gestów” by I. Sławińska.⁴⁸ Both works – although their starting points are different – arrive at similar conclusions: first, there are many and various gestures in *Cleopatra*; second, a gesture and movement associated with it is assigned within the drama not only to characters (as means of physical expression), but most of all to the given culture presented through the environment. Norwid also ties elements of theatrical messages with the clash between two civilisations, and this antagonism, so it seems, is executed mainly in the characters’ behaviour and only then in the meaning of their words.⁴⁹ It is probably the most important piece of information for the director and actors who need to remember that the gestures and movements of *dramatis personae* are subject to the main issue of the drama and bear the weight of the stigma of culture most of all.

Let us now pose a question on the formal aspects of those series of gestures in *Cleopatra*, categorised after I. Sławińska, gestures realising the clash of two cultures, gestures presenting characters and their features, series of gestures of love and those related to “playing” the costume and prop. The precise record of each gesture in the stage directions draws attention. Let us start with the examples of “cultural” gestures.

At the beginning of act I, Cleopatra enters the stage “powolnym krokiem” [in slow pace], for she will reveal herself to her subjects in a moment. In the first part of his act, the Queen “powoli wstępuje na siedzenie” [slowly ascends to her seat], “podejmuje berło” [accepts the sceptre] to complete the ceremony of appointing

48 Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*.

49 Cf. Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 120; Achremowiczowa, “*Role obrzędowości w Kleopatrze Norwida*,” p. 220.

Knight as one of the priests and she “porzuca” [throws on] his shoulders a golden chain; right after that, “powolnym krokiem ... ginie w jednym z przysionków” [pacing slowly ... she disappears in one of the precincts]. In the breakfast preparation scene, servant boys called upon by Eukast enter “jeden za drugim krokiem ceremonialnym” [one after the other with a ceremonial step]. After Caesar touched the testament, “pierwszy z Kapłanów poczyna ceremonialnie zwijać papirus” [the first Priest starts to ceremonially scroll the papyrus]. “Postępując ceremonialnie kilka kroków” [making a few steps in a ceremonial manner], Knight approaches Cleopatra, running to meet Julius, to express his “znak czujności” [sign of vigilance]. In act III, Eukast “odejmię” [removes] the cover from the ruler’s throne “z patetycznością gestu” [in a pompous gesture]. At each step, the priests (and subjects) “dopełniają” [complete] or “wypełniają” [perform] “wielkie” [grand] and “głębokie” [deep] bows; frequently, they back away “stopniowo” [gradually], “dawając zlecenia gestem” [transmitting their orders via gestures] or “oklaskiem rąk” [by clapping their hands].⁵⁰

This short register of examples as well as earlier remarks on the character of movement in group scenes presenting rituals and customs allow for the identification of the poet’s intentions. The Egyptian gestures are slow, hieratic, in a word, ceremonial. On this plane, the opposition towards the Romans is clearly marked, which corresponds with the intent of the drama. None of them walks on stage “krokiem ceremonialnym” [in a ceremonial manner] and they greet each other with a word. When the Romans enter for the first time, the audience sees “od jednej naprzód, a potem od drugiej strony przebiegających dwóch żołnierzy” [two soldiers running first from one side, then from the other]. The legion of soldiers often “rozstępują się na boki” [spread to the sides], which gives their movement a military feel. “Stopniowo” [gradually], “powoli” [slowly] are words rarely used by Norwid with reference to the Romans who use a live, dynamic, more natural language.

What is the nature of the gestures of love as determined by Norwid? Most of all, they are restrained, discreet, subtle and “daleka od naturalistycznej brutalności” [far from naturalist brutality]. “This feeling is expressed mainly in the touch of the hand, leaning on the arm, staying silent together,”⁵¹ a meaningful glance, often also in semi-gestures “because the love between rulers cannot be revealed even before themselves.”⁵² This symphony of gestures, movements,

50 A rather stiff mannequin in the drama is Eukast – Marshall of the court and master of ceremony.

51 Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 124.

52 Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 125.

words characterise the often quoted and interpreted scene of the official farewell between Cleopatra and Caesar.⁵³

This expressive, emotional character within the drama is given not only to gestures of love. It also pertains to other series of gestures, for instance, also those that characterise a persona in the drama or show emotions of the moment, e.g. the gesture of Caesar turning away and covering his eyes upon seeing the head of Pompey, “dziwne poruszenie” [unusual movement] of Cleopatra while hearing about a crimson anemone, her pose at the beginning of act III: “niedbale rzucona i wyciągnięta” [carelessly thrown and stretched] on the steps of the throne, or the provocative and trivial gesture of Mark throwing the rose at Eroë’s feet. In those instances, gestures are strongly expressive in the dramatic and symbolic sense, and the gesture shaped by the poet is excellent commentary on the emotional state of a character; let us now refer to the scene of Kornelia’s passing by, Knight breaking his sword, and the gesture of Cleopatra fainting during Szechera’s prophecy, the Queen’s stepping on seven sand hills – a symbol of Rome, the gesture of Antony who appoints his killer Her to become “rzymskiego kawalera” [a Roman chevalier]. Norwid presents some gestures in an ironic manner, e.g. in the scene where the priests carry out precious tableware “śpiesznie” [in a rush] and “cicho” [quietly].

Gestures are also an integral element of the image, e.g. in the scene of Szechera’s prophecy, which actually plays out between the gesture, movement and glance of Knight, Prophetess, and Cleopatra: “Królowa, słysząc prorokowanie, zbliża się. – Rycerz, ręką na oczy pokazując, uprzedza Kleopatę o nieszczęściu Szechery. – Królowa wstrzymuje się, niema i uważna.” [Hearing the prophecy, the Queen approaches. – Knight, pointing to his eyes with his hand, cautions Cleopatra about Szechera’s misfortune. – the Queen stops, silent and attentive]. A moment later, Szechera “przerywa prorokowanie – i obracając głos wyłącznie do Rycerza, mówi” [stops her prophecies – and turning her voice to the Knight only, says]:

– mów! Rycerzu,
Czy tu nikogo oprócz ciebie nie ma?
(Królowa daje znak Rycerzowi, aby skłamał)

RYCERZ

Nie ma!...

[– tell me! Knight,
Is there anyone here beside you?

53 See Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, pp. 122, 126; also: Achremowiczowa, “Rola obrzędowości w *Kleopatrze* Norwida,” p. 223.

(The Queen gives the Knight a sign to lie)

KNIGHT:

No one!...]

Later on, Szechera once again “zwraca się” [turns] to Knight “z rękoma omacnie podanymi” [with her hands blindly stretched out]:

...Synu mój! odrzecz mnie *rycerskim-słowem!*

– Czy tu Królowej nie ma?

RYCERZ

(pogląda na Kleopatrę, milcząc)

.....

KLEOPATRA

(dale Rycerzowi znak ręką, aby kłamał)

.....

RYCERZ

(do Szechery)

– Raz odpowiedziałem...

SZECHERA

– Rycerskie słowo?...

RYCERZ

(pogląda ku Królowej, która jemu niecierpliwym znakem porzuca gestem, aby skłamał. Rycerz dobywa nagle miecza z pochew, łamie go oburącz, składa u stóp Królowej i woła)

... Słowo rycerskie!!

(DW VI, 358–359)

[...my son! Tell me on your knightly honour!

Is the queen not here?

KNIGHT:

(looks at Cleopatra, silent)

CLEOPATRA:

(gives the Knight a sign with her hand to lie)

KNIGHT:

(to Szechera) I said it once...

SZECHERA:

On your knightly honour?

KNIGHT:

(looks at the Queen, who gives him an impatient sign to lie with her gesture. Knight suddenly takes out his sword, breaks it with both of his hands, puts at the Queen's feet and calls out):

... on my knightly honour!!]

Acting out the gestures that Norwid introduces into the drama is undoubtedly a difficult task for an actor, as a lot of subtleties have to be expressed while performed; e.g., such terms are used by the poet: “kwapiąc się ku odejściu” [eager to leave] or “mając się ku odejściu” [about to leave], “znaki uciszenia” [silencing signs], “igrając kośćmi” [playing with dice], “ostrzegając znakiem milczenia” [warning with a silencing gesture], various “skinienia” [nods], “znaki gestem dawane” [signs given via gestures], “lekkim pozdrawiają gestem” [greeting with a light gesture], “daje znak uprzejmy pożegnania” [gives a polite sign of farewell], “z-lekka, ale wybitnie rzuca precz” [lightly yet decisively throws away], “Kleopatra porusza nieco ramieniem” [Cleopatra moves her shoulder slightly], “zakrywa oczy załamanyimi rękoma” [covers her eyes with wrung out hands].

Gestures introduced on the stage often gain clear theatrical values, e.g. when “playing” a prop, especially a costume (throwing the cape over, fastening Cleopatra’s sandal, securing Anthony’s spurs) or exposing a character’s profile.⁵⁴ Strong theatrical and dramatic expression is also hidden in the gesture of suddenly raising up and standing positions.⁵⁵ In act I, Caesar stands up upon hearing the news of Cleopatra approaching and greets her in this position while she kneels on the lion’s skin; a Centurion “nagle powstanie” [suddenly rises] when noticing Kornelia at the portico column, then rises the remaining Centurions; Caesar rises and calls at Cleopatra walking away “nie za mnie szlub ten” [it is not me you are marrying]; when the Consul is mentioned, the Queen rashly rises from a chair upon which she rested, internally devastated and tired of the wedding ceremony.

Numerous “gestural images” should also be mentioned here as well as the unique participation of metaphors in shaping the gestures.⁵⁶ Sławińska pointed out the excellent use of entrances (often announced with entire series of gestures, e.g. when Cleopatra and Caesar enter the stage for the first time) and exits of characters preceded sometimes with a conventional *fausse sortie*.⁵⁷

Furthermore, it is impossible to omit the various manners of walking on stage that Norwid defines. Several expressions are noted: “wchodzą krokiem

54 For instance, when Caesar turns away upon seeing Pompey’s head after which the Consul remains on the stage for a moment “nie obracając profilu do posłów” [not turning his profile towards the deputies], to finally: “nie odwraca jeszcze spojrzenia i usuwa się z wolna we drzwi wewnętrzne” [does not turn his gaze away just yet and slowly leaves via the internal door] (act I, scene 5).

55 These gestures were noted already by Sławińska (*Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 122).

56 See Sławińska, “Metafora w dramacie,” pp. 78–81.

57 Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 121.

ceremonialnym”[they enter in a ceremonial manner] and “krzątają się” [moving about] (servants), a Centurion “obraca kroki na sposób wojskowy i odchodzi” [reverts his steps in a military manner and walks away], the lovers “tam i sam przechadzają się z wolna” [wander slowly here and there], “krokiem przechadzającego się po gmachu wchodzi Cezar – przemierza całą salę” [as if strolling around the building Caesar enters – walks across the entire room], “Kornelia przechodzi bardzo powoli przez scenę” [Kornelia walks very slowly across the scene], after the Queen’s breakfast “chłopcy usuwają się cicho i śpiesznie” [the boys leave quietly and quickly], “idąc omackiem” [walking blindly] (Szechera), Karpon “przeciska się przez tłum” [makes his way through the crowd], in the farewell scene, Cleopatra leaves “opóźniając kroki umyślnie” [consciously delaying her steps], characters often walk across the scene while talking, back away, rush out, disappear, walk out, leave. This tool of theatrical expression gains many shades under Norwid’s producing hand, and its shape always corresponds with the situation on the stage, showing features of some characters in some instances.

The richness of the gestures in *Cleopatra* is further strengthened by facial expressions, the participation of which in the theatrical execution of the drama was exemplified by the quoted fragment of the scene with Szechera’s prophecy. Facial expressions are reserved, discreet, very subtle in love scenes, and often becoming a conversation conducted in glances. Norwid is excellent in theatrical realisation of how characters look at things and people, which is always recorded in detail, sometimes even with differentiation between tones of glances.⁵⁸ They also have a dramatic meaning – they relieve words, specify a gesture or replace it, characterise protagonists, expose their thoughts and experiences. For instance, Szechera is always “milczkiem uśmiechliwa, / Baczna, choć słów nieskapa” [a smiling clam, vigilant, though she does not economize on words]. When Caesar dictates the edict on the marriage of his soldiers, Cleopatra reacts all the time only with her eyes by “spoglądając znacząco” [looking in a meaningful way]. Compassion for Kornelia is shown by the Centurions in their looks of “patrzac wrycie” [staring unable to move] in her direction. Cleopatra also “wrycie spoziera” [glances unable to move] at the curtain, all that she was able to create with her own strength. Her look also reveals her jealousy when it comes to her subject knowing normal human happiness (“wpatrując się w twarz Ganimediona”

58 Norwid even notes the fact of “domykania oczu” [closing eyes] and their “zamknięcie” [shutting]. It refers to the reactions of the Queen who felt tired by the wedding ceremony.

[staring into Ganymedion's face]). In another instance, Eroë relieves Cleopatra in a conversation, "reading in the Queen's eye what to say" earlier. Therefore, we may notice that, similarly to stage movement in group scenes, Norwid also designed with detail and precision the gestures of all characters, giving them various functions and bringing out various hues of meaning.

The poet's semantic sensitivity and precision of his theatrical vision underpin the great richness and diversification of the words.⁵⁹ Norwid colours each word depending on the stage situation, mostly because of the stigma of the character belonging to a specific civilisation and role in the love-related current of the drama. Intonation and intensity of voice plays the most important role in transmitting various relations between words. It is evidenced by, first of all, graphically highlighting particularly important words and expressions. Norwid uses spaces (most often), italics, inverted commas, brackets, colons ("Wielkiego męża imię jest: *Cezar!*") [The great man's name is: *Cezar!*]), ellipsis, question marks, as well as ellipses (often double or triple); he puts one important word at the end of the line, a question mark in the middle of the sentence, just as capital letters and uppercase (e.g. Pompey WAS), he also joins words with a hyphen to form a semantic whole ("Fortunie-mścicielce" [Fortune-avenger]).

Second, the stage directions precisely note and reveal various intonation hues of expressions and the power of voice which are always subjected to the semantic meaning of a situation. The register of those hues would be long, as in the following examples: "ciągną rozmowę" [continue the conversation], "z uśmiechem" [with a smile], "woła głosem znacznym" [calls with a strong voice], "z wybuchem" [like an explosion], "rzuca Eukastowi półgłosem" [says to Eukast in a hushed tone], "ciągnie mówienie z ironią" [continues to talk ironically], "z westchnieniem" [with a sigh], "patetycznie" [pompously], "famiłarnie" [in a familiar tone], "tajemniczo" [mysteriously], "zimno" [coldly], "krotochwilnie" [joyfully], "serio" [seriously], "w monologu" [in a monologue], "z melancholia" [with melancholy], "z przyciskiem" [accentuating], "z pogardą" [with contempt], "podszept dwu chorów tragicznych" [whisper of two tragedy choirs], "mniej głośno i z westchnieniem" [less loudly and with a sigh]. Szechera states the deepest truths "zagadkowo i poważnie" [mysteriously and seriously] (act II,

59 It is only remarked here that dialogues in the drama stand next to monologues, group recitations with singing, contemporary reports with retrospective. The very Introduction to *Cleopatra* (DW VI, 245) confirms the poet's attention towards "czytania głośnego" [reading aloud] and "wygłaszania rymu" [pronouncing the rhyme], as he discusses the act of reading the so-called krementy.

scene 2); and “ciągnąc prorokowanie” [continuing her prophecies] at the end of this act, she stops them “zmieniając głos – i osobiście do Rycerza” [changing her voice – and personally talking to the Knight] addresses a question on whether Cleopatra is on stage. Additionally, Norwid always notes the addressees of specific statements.

Attention to intonation is also revealed by a unique manner of shaping syntax, a disharmony of its flow with the end of a verse, sudden cuts in the lines or adding pauses to the metre, moments of silence, inversion and specific punctuation-based graphics (frequent use of hyphen and ellipsis), broken sentences, repetitions, interjections, and brackets.

The constant presence of silence and staying silent in the drama (which performs dramatic as well as theatrical functions), both in stage directions and dialogues need to be mentioned here – through special graphic arrangement of the text, cutting monologues into parts, e.g., with expressions “po chwili” [after a moment], “po przestanku” [after a stop], understatements and pauses in conversations, mute scenes, delivered in hushed tones, characters staying silent and scenes using gestures only.⁶⁰

It seems that the deliberations above, although consciously brief, confirm the earlier opinion that Norwid actually sees and hears his characters on stage. While shaping them, the poet referred to many tools of stage expression and used them with an acute awareness of the specificity of theatre. Furthermore, he equips his characters with a wide array of features, possibilities of interpretation and emotions which they experience on stage. It all contributes to the rich and attractive theatre roles in *Cleopatra*. Let us stay for a moment with the character of the Queen – undoubtedly, the most interesting role in the drama.⁶¹

60 For instance, the already quoted scene of Szechera’s prophecy or Cinna’s leaving and Kalligio exiting after the edict is rejected by Cleopatra: “Cezar odprowadza Cinnę parę kroków, a potem niesłyszalnie coś Kalligionowi mówi, który wraz cofa się” (act II, scene 1; DW VI, 305) [Caesar walks Cinna for a few steps, then says something inaudible to Kalligio, who immediately backs away]; the lovers stay alone and the Queen explains her behaviour without witnesses. Norwid notes in the stage directions expressions such as “Szechera milczy” [Szechera is silent], “widząc Cezara milczącym” [seeing that Caesar is silent].

61 Interpreting characters of Norwid’s dramas as acting opportunities was taken up by Sławińska (*Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, pp. 28–35), dealing mainly with his female characters, especially Cleopatra. Also Achremowiczowa (“Rola obrzędowości w *Kleopatrze* Norwida”) analyses the hues and richness of her experiences while analysing gestures.

The first pages of the play unveil the duality of her nature, closed in the opposition: queen and woman, which has significant dramatic and theatrical consequences. She knows that her life flows in two separate currents as she says to Caesar at their farewell:

Podaj chustkę... kobiecie... Cezarze!

...

Królowa

Egiptu wyjdzie nieco na ganek – lud czuwa,

By orzeczono *szlub jej z młodszym bratem, królem*

(act II, scene 3; DW VI, 328)

[Give a handkerchief... to a woman... Caesar:

...

The Queen

Of Egypt will step a bit onto the balcony – the people wait

For the announcement of *her marriage to her younger brother, the king*]

This duality of her nature corresponds with two types of her gestures, movements, and behaviour. Some are related to fulfilling her duties as the monarch and priestess of Egypt, others are individual experiences of a woman subjecting herself to the power of love, yearning for a true feeling. What is striking is the diversity of the experiences of Cleopatra-woman on stage: here her love towards Caesar is born, on stage she experiences parting with him, then the heart-breaking news of his death, the game with Antony, growing disdain towards the mummy, the entire court ceremony, and finally her hatred towards Rome.⁶²

Cleopatra's joy of meeting "istotnego męża" [an important man] is as great as her suffering after they parted, especially after his death. Love towards Caesar and hatred towards Rome reach the same peak in strength. For this reason, this character first moves and then worries deeply. Her female nature shows subtlety, softness, and pompous charm when she loves, and cunning, resourcefulness, predation, and coyness while pretending to love while plotting revenge for the death of her lover. In general, the scope of her tragic experiences as a woman and a queen spans from attentive longing, joy, and utter happiness, to bitterness, uneasiness, separation, despair, pain, anger, a feeling of a wasted life, false love, and tragic fate. The concept of her character is obviously tied with the "historical disaster" which meddles with the fate of individuals and the world. All of those features and experiences, along with diversified gestures and manner of

62 Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 31.

walking, the richness of voice subtleties, changes in costumes, physical charm, and the ability to fascinate, make Cleopatra not washed-out, static, and fleeting, but dynamic, theatrically malleable, “a living woman” in the Norwidian sense.

*

Among many the problems related to the theatrical vision of *Cleopatra*, we mainly analysed those that clearly reflect the staging idea in Norwid’s mind.⁶³ We especially asked about the extent and manner in which the poet introduces the means of scenic expression, whether he operated them consciously and how they gain various theatrical and dramatical functions. Subsequent parts of the analysis ended with conclusions. At this point, an attempt to generalise them will be made.

The discussed devices used by Norwid prove that *Cleopatra* is a text definitely created with theatre in mind and written for the stage with an exceptional familiarity beyond its technical conditions. Purposefulness, sense in using these artistic means, as well as the logic of the reality of the drama are irresistible, unveiling its theatrical richness and making the drama an attractive on-stage material.

The vast number of elements of theatrical expression that the poet includes in his vision as well as their functionality initially draw attention. They are always “played” several times, dramatically and on stage, whether as direct participants of the plot, or returning in metaphorical constructs, expanding the perspectives of the drama’s meaning.

We showed how, with great theatrical awareness, the poet uses props, costumes, gestures, and builds group scenes, while also providing the future director with ready-to-use situational solutions. how skilfully he saturates the drama with light, colour, and music; how rich the structure is in which the characters of the drama are enclosed; how attractive the roles for the actors are. Norwid never uses theatrical effects for their own sake, but is able to accurately merge them and combine with the message of the stage situation.

The important role of words in the visual shape of the drama also needs to be noted. They perfectly cooperate (very often via “scenic-friendly” metaphors) with other means of stage expression, gestures, stage composition, costumes, props, and vivid concretisation of characters. Words also carry a wide range of feelings and experiences. Of importance is the poet’s constant care to stress semantically significant words and to make them recitable. This is achieved by a precise record

63 Issues that were skipped include, e.g. the concept of time in *Cleopatra*, surely important for the theatrical condensation of the text and its general expression.

of intonation and voice strength, specific punctuation and graphical layout of the text, the rhythmic pattern of each verse, as well as the use of pauses, ellipses, and dramatic silence. Surely, the sculpture-like view of the characters and the large number of “gestural images” make *Cleopatra*’s text theatrical.

Undoubtedly, Norwid shows himself here as a director who thought out and sculpted the entire drama on stage. At the same time, he wanted to evoke a vision in the reader close to his own since, as we already know, he also anticipated the reader’s reception. Hence strong theatricalisation of the text, expressed in, e.g., blurred lines between stage directions and dialogues. The scenic shape of the drama also serves its main concepts. It is a bidirectional relation: the content of the drama is accurately expressed in the stage idea of *Cleopatra*.

The poet’s scenic vision also allows the concept of the tragedy to be deciphered. Based on the analysis of the guidelines and postulates stated by Norwid, we believe that his staging ideas lean towards monumental, grand theatre. Such theatre is required by the concept of space, its constant expansion, operation on a multi-plane stage, multitude of characters, their planning, stage movement, presence of choirs, crowds and army, group scenes, acoustic effects and, especially, the sphere of meanings: grand historiosophic issues exceeding the presented epoch with its generalisation, the concept of cultures that are alive and dead, the end of civilisation and birth of a new epoch, historic disaster and tragic fate of an individual, utter love and revenge. Norwid ties these generalised and grand issues with a theatrical vision which clearly calls for a monumental stage. Only such a stage is able to lift and encompass all dramatic means that the poet employs to transmit those wide circles of meaning. At the same time, the mysterious, ritual-based character of the drama and the fact that it combines the visionary quality with the uniquely Norwidian realism make *Cleopatra* a theatre of grand synthesis.

Let us attempt to refer to Norwid’s staging ideas in the context of contemporary stage practices, since this often has a greater capacity of capturing the imagination of playwrights than we suspect. Obviously, we will not solve the problem of the genesis of *Cleopatra*’s stage concept, but we may show what in Norwid’s ideas and imaginations were original and creative if contrasted with conventions, and what belongs to the common practices of the European theatre of around 1850–1870 (chiefly in France).⁶⁴

64 An attempt to look at Norwid’s *Cleopatra* – especially in the aspect of “series of stage gestures” – in the context of modern European theatre and its main tendencies was taken up by Sławińska (*Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, pp. 32–35, 138–141).

Exotism, oriental and antique themes, were fashionable and attractive motifs in the dramatic literature of that time. Dozens of works written in that period were written in relation to these themes, probably as a result of multiplying works of archaeologists and historians in the second half of nineteenth century. “The inauguration date when it comes to tragedies *à l’antique* is believed to be – as Sławińska writes – is the year 1843, the birth of Ponsard’s *Lucretia*, after which comes *Ulysses*, a tragedy with choirs (1852).”⁶⁵ Did Norwid follow the literary tendency while writing *Cleopatra*? Let us recall other facts. The genesis of the works exploiting antique motifs did not usually involve the true interest of their authors in the ancient epoch or any deeper artistic goals. They were often written occasionally, (e.g. Verdi’s *Aida*) but mostly were treated as erudite performances that were to reconstruct and present the past in an archaeological manner. Antiquarian costumes, props, stage design (prepared according to the rule of *illusion, verité* or, later, *realisme historique*) were to act as witnesses of the authenticity of the epoch. It also fell in line with the Romantic tendency towards spectacularism. By 1822, Cicero had already reconstructed an antique forum in the drama by E. de Jouy entitled *Sylla*.⁶⁶ When A. Dumas wanted to repeat his success, he did it through antique drama. He writes *Caligula* (1837) and “to reflect the atmosphere of the piece ... he became interested in archaeology, fiercely gathered information, collected notes.” The “local colour” in costumes and decorations probably never received so much attention.⁶⁷ Between 1840–1850, stage reconstruction of antique archaeology, in the name of truth and historical realism, takes a form that is almost scientific. Ponsard’s *Lucretia* was a great triumph in the Paris theatre Odeon, with its stage design being “an accurate copy of antique interiors and all those details that ‘shed the light on the epoch,’ [recreated] with nearly archaeological accuracy.”⁶⁸ In 1844, the archaeological staging of *Antigone* is recorded and “everything was done to revive the appearance of a Greek stage.”⁶⁹ After seeing the oriental images of *La Peri* (1843), where Cairo is shown from a bird’s eye view, Théophile Gautier writes, “I do not

65 Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 138.

66 See Marie-Antoinette Allevy-Viala, *Inscenizacja romantyczna we Francji*, transl. by Wojciech Natanson (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1958), p. 99.

67 It was about “restoring the Roman life, fill of forums, temples, shops, its ‘lupanar,’ the smallest ‘curiosities’ of an antique city and its most splendid spectacles.” Allevy-Viala, *Inscenizacja romantyczna we Francji*, p. 145.

68 Allevy-Viala, *Inscenizacja romantyczna we Francji*, p. 173.

69 Allevy-Viala, *Inscenizacja romantyczna we Francji*, p. 173.

really know what else I would see while going there myself.⁷⁰ This convention of historical realism and the manner of presenting antique themes remained in theatre practice for a long time.⁷¹ We may note the activities of Meiningers and the preview of Verdi's *Aida* (1871), written to commemorate the conclusion of building the Suez Canal and erecting an Italian opera building in Cairo, and Norwid surely heard about its theatrical success.

Norwid's staging concept is rather clearly different from common practices. It is true that writing *Cleopatra* was preceded by voluminous and diligent studies on the culture of Egypt and Rome. However, they did not stem only from the poet's erudite ambitions but his authentic fascination with the past; they were processed into grand historiosophic and poetic parables in many of his works. Undoubtedly, Norwid used his thorough knowledge of Egypt and Rome while writing *Cleopatra* but introduced it discreetly and in a manner maintaining an artistic balance, which results in a suggestive image that is not overtly erudite. It is known that the poet cared about restoring the social background of contrasted cultures; we see some historical precision in the composition of scenes with ceremonies and rituals, using props and costumes. Archaeological attention to detail does not apply here, but the *couleur locale*, different from the binding convention, is simply functional! These details of the social background are not only a decoration but are also essential from the dramatic and theatrical standpoint, subjected not to reconstruction, but to the power of the concept of paramount importance in the poet's mind. Faithfulness and historical precision in *Cleopatra* achieve a level motivated by the intellectual value of the piece. Therefore, it is difficult to categorise Norwid's drama within the strict frames of *tragedie scientifique* or *tragedie archeologique*, terms which only entail the piety and historical realism in restoring the past that were common in the period discussed.⁷²

70 Alley-Viala, *Inscenizacja romantyczna we Francji*, p. 117.

71 Cf. Denis Bablet, *Esthétique générale du décor du Théâtre: de 1870 à 1914* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1965), p. 18: "Il doit [le décor] donner au drame sa couleur locale et historique. ... En un siècle où l'ethnographie et l'archéologie prennent une importance croissante, le décorateur, disciple de Viollet-le-Duc, travaille comme un restaurateur de monuments historiques, il reconstitue les temps passés en s'appuyant sur l'histoire-date, sur le fait, l'anecdote et le détail. Il ne décèle pas les grands courants de la civilisation, il ne suggère pas l'atmosphère d'un paysage. Sa traduction est littérale. Il n'adapte pas, il ne choisit pas, il ne stylise pas. D'un style architectural, il ne perçoit ni le principe de base, ni la structure nécessaire, mais le détail ornemental;" see also: Howard Lee Nostrand, *Le théâtre antique et l'antique en France de 1840 à 1900* (Paris: E. Droz, 1934).

72 Compare with remarks by Sławińska (*Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 139).

This theatrical practice, as previously mentioned, also affected the staging of Shakespeare's dramas in England in the 1850s. The poet could then see the performances by Charles Kean at the Princes Theatre or Samuel Phelps at Drury Lane.⁷³ Norwid also surely heard about the historical performances of prince Georg of Meiningen that gained fame throughout Europe. It should be noted that the works on *Juliusz Cezar* [Julius Caesar] (1870) – taking place simultaneously with reliable investigations into the epoch – lasted there for two years!⁷⁴

In this manner, Norwid's opposition towards the contemporary tendencies of Parnassianism is clearly marked. M. Żurowski accurately summarises this juxtaposition:

Despite the typical for the entire trend attention to precision and vividness of descriptions, archaeological documentation and local colour, he refrains from overloading [his drama] with historical detail and strong colours. It is, in a manner typical to this poet, monumental and spiritual.⁷⁵

Norwid's creative attitude towards the common convention is visible also regarding other elements. Let us return to *Aida* for a moment:

A condition of the contract [‘for the screenplay of this Egyptian cliché of the epoch’] was a libretto based on themes related to Egyptian history, which would provide various possibilities of spectacular staging, decorations, music, ballet – just like for the Grand Opera in Paris.⁷⁶

And that wish became a reality. The relations in the country of the pharaohs, wars and a love story are just excuses to show Egyptian landscapes, dresses, customs, rituals and the elegance of the pharaoh court. At every corner, there are huge scenes running, not only crowds, but masses of people. Every now and then, the pharaoh shows himself in all the splendour of his court, incense smoke, while performing ritual prayers and dances, surrounded by armies and subjects. All of that was set on the background of numerous temples, palaces, and pyramids. Excellent decorations and costumes according to an Egyptologist

73 Cf. Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 138 and Allardyce Nicoll, *Dzieje teatru* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1959), pp. 175–180; see: Albert Dubeux, *Les traductions françaises de Shakespeare* (Paris “Les Belles Lettres,” 1928), p. 37.

74 See Wiktor Brumer, “Meinigeńczycy,” *Scena Polska*, Vol. 14, No. 1/4 (1937), p. 158.

75 Maciej Żurowski, “Lepszy od Szekspira?,” in: Program Teatru Narodowego w Warszawie do *Kleopatry* C. K. Norwida, Warszawa 1967, p. 14.

76 Stanisław Prószyński, *Aida J. Verdigo* (Kraków: Mała Biblioteka Operowa, Vol. 13, 1958), p. 31.

Mariette were made in the Grand Opera in Paris.⁷⁷ The staging splendour in *Aida* performances became a mandatory practice of theatres until the end of nineteenth century.⁷⁸ It accompanied the oriental theme in theatres since the beginning of Romanticism. Already in 1825, the staging of Pichat's *Leonidas* received such a review: "never before has the French Theatre seen such decorations, costumes and performances. After the curtain was raised before another act, the public yelled and stumped their feet in delight."⁷⁹ During the staging of *Dick-Rajah* in 1832, "all of the oriental scenes of the *One Thousand and One Nights*" were shown to the audience, even elephants were brought onto the stage.⁸⁰

Let us see how *Antony and Cleopatra* by Shakespeare were staged then. It should be stated at the very beginning that in the *Foreword* to *Cromwell* V. Hugo "criticised Shakespeare's works ... for the staging splendour they required."⁸¹ R. Dybowski mentions the exceedingly pompous decorations for Shakespeare's dramas already on Reinhardt's stage in Berlin.⁸²

Antony and Cleopatra is both a drama and a screenplay. It is possible to choose either. As Jan Kott writes, "nineteenth-century theatre chose the screenplay with living images. Cleopatra fanned by slaves swam in a boat in Antony's arms."⁸³ This is how Henryk Sienkiewicz reported on the staging:

The staging of *Antony and Cleopatra* in England and America are one of the most impressive when it comes to decorations. After the curtain is raised between act one and two, a sumptuous image of Antony and Cleopatra in a golden boat with crimson sails is shown. Nubian sailors hold silver oars, groups of maidens dressed in white play the harps, tetrachords and pan flutes. Cleopatra, half-laying, lies her dreamy head on the folds on Antony's crimson toga folds. The lovers are surrounded by black-skin maidens

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- 77 Henryk Swolkień, *Verdi* (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1963), p. 236. Verdi sent letters to the author of the libretto and Egyptologist Mariette regarding historical and geographical data as well as rituals of ancient Egypt: he was interested in weapons, musical instruments (Swolkień, *Verdi*, p. 240).
- 78 Stanisław Peplowski (*Teatr polski we Lwowie 1780–1881*, Lwów: Gubrynowicz i Schmidt, 1889, p. 380 f.) notes such a description of staging *Aida* in the Polish theatre in 1876: "The staging of the opera exceeded everything that Lviv has seen to date. Decorations and costumes were strikingly accurate historically rich and picturesque."
- 79 Alley-Viala, *Inscenizacja romantyczna we Francji*, p. 100 f.
- 80 Alley-Viala, *Inscenizacja romantyczna we Francji*, p. 142.
- 81 Alley-Viala, *Inscenizacja romantyczna we Francji*, p. 106.
- 82 Roman Dybowski, *William Shakespeare* (Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1927), p. 333.
- 83 Jan Kott, *Szkice o Szekspirze* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1961), p. 307.

fanning them with long fans made of ostrich feathers. Blooming lotus flowers, at the back some palms, pyramids and sphynxes complete the image.⁸⁴

We believe that those images prove that dramas with Egyptian, oriental, and antique motifs were mostly excuses to show stage effects achieved thanks to the technical capabilities of the Romantic stage as well as reacting to the needs and tastes of the audience. Therefore, the overwhelming spectacle of decorations, costumes and theatrical effects pushed the text to the back. Norwid does not aim to make the Egyptian theme more attractive as, what he admits himself, he took it up after Shakespeare. The poet's staging vision is far from the commonplace theatre practice. We proved that group scenes in *Cleopatra* are spectacularly visual, but they do not hide the text from sight; on the contrary, their presence is motivated by the concept-related needs of the drama. As a result, Norwid clearly opposes the pompousness and excessiveness of Romantic performances and the period-specific spectacularism entailing numerous stage effects and machinery tricks that, often without any connection with the message of the drama, existed for their own sake, pleasing mostly the eyes of the audience.⁸⁵ It was difficult for the theatre to break this spectacularism tendency until nearly the end of nineteenth century. Even in 1882, É. Perrin gave the staging of *Le roi s'amuse* in the French Theatre a form richer than what this drama had during the preview.⁸⁶ At the same time, Norwid joined the harsh criticism of performances *à spectacle* which, initiated by Charles Maurice, Jules Janin and Theodore Banville, occurred in France nearly until the end of the nineteenth century.

Let us now briefly mark the uniqueness or convergence of Norwid's ideas with theatre practice concerning some details of his vision.

For instance, Norwid opposes the Romantic concept of a character (he created attractive theatre roles but breaks with the theatre of stars; all characters are important for the main idea of the drama);⁸⁷ in shaping the love gestures

84 Henryk Sienkiewicz, *Dzieła*. Collection of works edited by Julian Krzyżanowski, Vol. 51 (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1951), p. 11 f.

85 Cf. Bablet, *Esthétique générale du décor du Théâtre*, pp. 5–45, *Encyclopédie du théâtre contemporain*, Vol. 1: 1850–1914 (Paris: Publications de France, 1957); Nicoll, *Dzieje teatru*.

86 Alley-Viala, *Inszenizacja romantyczna we Francji*, p. 195.

87 There are over 30 characters in *Cleopatra*, none of them are extras. They are also highlighted by Norwid using spaces, both in dialogues and stage directions. Even the supporting characters have their own and rich stage life and "turn out to be – as I. Sławińska says – essential for saturating the drama with historical pulp, oriental colour, creating the malleable background, most of all – cultural background for *Cleopatra and Caesar*" (Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 27).

(restraint, no melodramatic hues);⁸⁸ in playing the props (they are always functional, representative and hold a theatrical value in every instance). The stage space and build-up concepts are not only, as in the discussed time period, a description or illustration of the place of the action without references to the dramatic organisation of the drama,⁸⁹ but they reveal the internal world of the characters and what they live by and what they think about.

However, the common theatrical practice prevailed, as it seems, to a certain, though scarce, degree in the poet's imagination. Numerous group scenes undoubtedly relate to the Romantic opera convention, but it is motivated by the concept of the drama; there is no arbitrary stiffness or symmetry in their organisation. Architecturally, the stage composition was probably designed for painting the backstage, which was still a common practice in the period of interest.⁹⁰ Another reference to this mode is the presence of phenomena such as comets, glows, or auroras. It is widely known that the nineteenth century was a period of various experiments when it comes to lighting and the discovery of, for instance, the diorama by Daguerre and the use of gas. These opened new, previously unavailable opportunities of providing naturalist illumination and kinetic effects. Virtually all natural phenomena were copied through the use of light.⁹¹ Silence and managing dramatic silence connect Norwid with the Romantic convention, but it would be difficult to find another author who would, in that time, transport silence on stage and present it using such means of expression as Norwid did. His attitude towards convention is revealed in, for instance, expressions *à parte* (appearing only several times and to prove highly important points)⁹² or absence of *changement à vue* of the décor. For each act, the poet

88 I. Sławińska poses an interesting thesis on the convergence of Norwidian care on the recitation-like sound of words and his intonation as well as the concept of characters – especially regarding the sculpture-like vision, restraint in gestures, and movements – with playing Rachel (Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, p. 141).

89 Cf. Bablet, *Esthétique générale du décor du Théâtre*, p. 19: “Si le décor reproduit le lieu du drame, il n'en jaillit pas et influe pas sur son déroulement. Le lieu est un témoin. Le décor est une description et une illustration. Il y a rupture.”

90 Cf. Nicoll, *Dzieje teatru*; Alley-Viala, *Inscenizacja romantyczna we Francji*; Philippe van Tieghem, *Technique du théâtre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), 1969.

91 Cf. Nicoll, *Dzieje teatru*; Alley-Viala, *Inscenizacja romantyczna we Francji*; *Enciclopedia delio spettacolo*, Vol. 8 (Roma: Le Maschere, 1961), col. 1590.

92 For instance: “EUKAST / (n[a] s[tronie] i z głębi sceny) / Nasz cały Egipt jedną teorią jest zawsze! / CINNA / (na stronie) / *Praktykę* – Rzym...” (act II, scene 1; DW VI, 300). [EUKAST: / (on the side and at the back of the stage) / Our whole Egypt is always a single theory! / CINNA: / (on the side) / *Practice* – Rome...]. It should be

gives one suggestion for the stage arrangement, completing it with proper props during the progression of the play or revealing to the audience the previously hidden elements of the spatial composition (the amphitheatre).

To conclude, we would like to highlight two issues: Norwid's original approach to treating the circulating theme of *à l'antique*, which consists in his saturation of the work with historiosophic depth and its generalisation,⁹³ as well as the fact that all elements of theatrical expression introduced by him into the drama, multifunctional and "played" in many ways, serve these historiosophic concepts and Norwidian concept of the tragedy. These are, to our mind, the greatest achievements of the poet.

For this reason, Norwid's *Cleopatra* is an undoubtedly difficult text that requires significant effort and authentic engagement of the people on stage. Surely, this drama may become a tragedy of our times, engaging the viewers with its theatrical and intellectual content. However, theatres should express their opinion in this matter.

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noted that, in a certain way Norwid felt the aesthetic phenomena of his epoch. For instance, constant light and colour reflexes in seeing the characters, as well as metaphorical and gestural images, and the operating chiaroscuro remind the viewers of the correspondance des arts by Delacroix (see: George Sand, *Impressions et souvenirs*, Paris: M. Lévy, 1873, pp. 79–90; Juliusz Starzyński, *O romantycznej syntezie sztuk. Delacroix, Chopin, Baudelaire*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1965), and the permanent overlapping of auditory and visual stimuli in dialogues remind of – Wagner's theory of total art.

93 Norwid states that in his epoch "serio uważając pełnej dramy nie ma" [heeding the seriousness there are no fully fledged dramas] writing *Cleopatra* was probably his attempt to fill this void in literature and theatre (see: *Introduction to Cleopatra and Caesar*, DW VI, 245).

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Zdzisław Łapiński

Quidam: When “Thought Connects to Space”

Abstract: The paper indicates that visuality and spatial dimension lead directly to the main idea in Norwid’s narrative poem *Quidam*. They express the conviction that the presented epoch was a breakthrough period and at the same time, from the perspective of the opinions of the time, stagnant. The poet views history and cultural differentiation through artefacts, objects of the visible world. The spatial shape of the poem becomes the constructive principle for presenting a specific period in history, the time of the rule of Roman emperor Hadrian. In the opinion of the author of the study, everything in the poem’s world happens through inertia; there, formalism rules along with the anomia of individuals which leads to the decay of common values. In that dying world, Christians, who do not actively oppose the authorities and the existing order, add a destructive factor through their mere refusal of acceptance.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, narrative poem, emperor Hadrian, Rome, Christianity, space in literature

Człowiek tak z miejscem bywa solidarny,
Czy myśl tak często łączy się z przestrzenią,
Że jakaś licha rzecz i przedmiot marny
Przez porównanie świecą jej, lub cienia?

(DW III, 145)

[The man is often so loyal to the place,
And thought connects so often to space,
That some meagre thing and a poor object
Give it light or shadow through comparison?]

The issue of space in Norwid’s work has been researched by one scholar, though the papers by Irena Sławińska dedicated to the topic mainly focused on the generic features of drama.¹ Yet, they also shed a lot of light on those features

1 Cf. mainly “Znaki przestrzeni teatralnej w *Krakusie*,” in: Irena Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1971), pp. 210–227; Irena Sławińska, “Jeden motyw antyczny w poezji Norwida: bruk rzymski,” *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1956–1957). The same topics were discussed also on the basis of further romantic material, in the study “Przywołanie przestrzeni w dramacie Słowackiego *Zawisza Czarny*,” in: Irena Sławińska, *Sceniczny gest poety* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1960), pp. 129–154 (first printed in the collective work *Juliusz Słowacki. W*

of Norwid's space, shaping which can be found in the writer's other works, for instance in *Quidam*.

The perspective from which the world of the work is viewed shifts and floats. In the introduction, you accompany the eye-witness, "son of Aleksander" from afar, but still reachable when he comes to the capital of the Empire. The actual plot starts precisely a year later. Several songs from the beginning cover only a few days' time. Those are filled with a journey led by the narrator, the route of which runs through the dwellings of the then elite and sometimes stops in the streets of Rome. In the city square you participate in a trial over insubordinate citizens, Christians. Your field of visions mostly includes people with whom the protagonist, the "son of Aleksander" (*Quidam* I), is currently meeting; yet, sometimes you leave him to follow other characters he stays in contact with. Through the eyes of the narrator, you sometimes limit your "modern" (actually: nineteenth-century) knowledge in order to enter the cognitive horizon of said characters. It may also be that you must invoke that knowledge. But usually, you face a scene which is directly given to you and not related in a summarised version.

Such is your contact with the world presented in the work until the last lines of the poem. Yet the further you go, the more often you notice a metaphorically phrased comment to the events; poetic philosophy finds its way into branches of extensive digressions. The perspective lengthens and the point openly appears in which you process your view, more in terms of thought than senses. You move more and more often into the nineteenth century. Still, the perspective fluctuates; it withdraws and then returns to the course of action, and you keep participating in the events as an eye-witness of the death and funeral of most of the protagonists, of banishing one of them, and of the last one betraying his friends.

One of the paradoxes of *Quidam* is the fact that a narrative poem dedicated to the course of historical time and to a breakthrough period disregards the layer of events and gladly substitutes narration with description.² In a less striking shape,

stopięćdziesięciolecie urodzin. Materiały i szkice, eds. Marian Bizan, Zofia Lewinówna (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1959), pp. 283–299).

2 That view is signalled already in the introductory "excerpt from the letter" to Z. K., in the imaging contained therein: "– Cywilizacja, według wszelkiego podobieństwa, do dziś jeszcze podobna jest do tego kościoła, który za Kapitołem tyle razy przy księżycu świetle oglądałeś – do tego kościoła, co w kwadracie kolumn świątyni starożytnej jako gołąb w rozłamanej klacie przestawa, tak iż, mszy świętej idąc słuchać, przechodzi się owdzie przez Jowiszowy przysionek" (DW III, 119) [Civilisation, in all likelihood, is still today alike that church which you have seen so many time behind the Capitol in

the tendency is actually typical of all Norwid’s works and is connected with his philosophy of culture as an organic phenomenon governed with internal laws. Those laws and directions of changes may be read over even short periods of time and in actions which may seem marginal. Borderline cases of the understood historic narrativeness are a single gesture, a passing facial expression, or speech intonation. The tendency is enhanced by the conviction that history happens through historically moulded personalities and certain cultural types. Recognising individual mechanisms, one may derive general social regularities from them; and those individual principles can be caught on the smallest of scales.³

Considering the events in *Quidam* from the view of empirical dependencies, you see only loosely linked elements. In other words, the causative factor is mainly a coincidence. But from the perspective of historiosophy, a coincidence happens no more by chance. What is not the action of particular individuals, becomes the action of a collective subject, personified in History. On a closer look, there are sequences of behaviours linked to each other more or less closely. A look from further away gives a uniform pattern of historical processes.

Space is treated in a similar manner. From up close, you see only isolated scenes presented very distinctly. From afar, the spatial composition of the city gains double meaning: one in the protagonist’s internal world and the other – also mainly (though not exclusively) through the protagonist – in the world of allegorical senses seen by the author. Using psychological categories, one might call that closer look a direct spatial perception, and the look from afar a “cognitive map.”

The concept of a “cognitive map” is used here as an auxiliary construct to help show the transition from perception data to a symbolic composition. The cognitive map is an outline filled with quasi-sensory data. It allows parameters to be set in the space you are moving. In *Quidam*, that outline is usually immediately subjected to a symbolic interpretation. Also, to the protagonist himself, as stated

moonlight – that church which stands within the square of ancient temple columns like a dove in a broken cage, so that when you go to hear the Holy Mass, you walk there through Jupiter’s vestibule].

3 Cf. Irena Sławińska, “O prozie epickiej Norwida. Z zagadnień warsztatu poety-dramaturga,” in: Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, pp. 277–320 (first printed in: *Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (1957), pp. 467–498); “Ciąg scenicznych gestów,” in: Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, pp. 90–145 (first printed in: Sławińska, *Sceniczny gest poety*, pp. 85–90).

explicitly in his poetic journal, it appears to be not as much an (isolated) equivalent of reality perceived by the senses as a symbolic representation thereof:

Czy człowiek, widząc tak szeroko
 Na każdą chwilę swojego żywota,
 Ile zakreśla mu dokoła oko,
 Doszedłby, gdzie są wszech-mądrości wrota?–
 I wielkich świata spotkał luminarzy
 Tam, gdzie powinien, nie tam, gdzie się zdarzy?
 Czy raczej zwiedzić winien obszar cały,
 Nie okiem jego, lecz okiem ludzkości
 Skreślony jemu, gdy był jeszcze mały

(DW III, 138)

[Would a man, seeing just as broadly
 In every moment of his life
 As his eye catches around in a glance,
 Arrive where the gate of omniscience stands?–
 And meet great luminaries of the world
 Where he should go, and not just come perchance?
 Or should he rather tour the land as whole,
 [Seen] not with his own eye, but with the eye of humanity
 Described to him when he was small]

Between perception and the “map” there is a genetic continuity because those are subsequent phases of the cognitive process. *Quidam* also presents another different relationship between the two phenomena: analogous construction.

In the house of Jazon, Artemidor is waiting for the host:

Drzwi do tej sali, będąc otworzone,
 Przysionku wewnątrz odsłaniały oku;
 Drzwi od przysionka niemniej inną stronę
 Podwórza w ramy swe, na kształt obłoku,
 Obejmowały – a światło, złamane
 Po dwakroć, biło prosto na fontannę.

(DW III, 170)

[The door to the room, standing open,
 Revealed the hall's interior to the eye;
 And the hall's door had a different side
 Of the yard in their frame, like a cloud,
 Visible – and the light, broken
 Twice, shone straight on the fountain.]

Such a composition is very typical of Norwid, a view of an interior which opens into the next room, and that next room opens a view to another space not limited anymore. That construct of a close view finds its counterpart in a similar structure of the distant view; particular scenes partially overlap, leave great expanses of the presented reality beyond direct reach, and arrange themselves in a perspective reaching deep into historical space. The centre of that space is taken by the City, but it also includes in the peripheries of vision in digressions and the borders of the then world: Britain, Gaul...⁴

In *Quidam*, two time dimensions unfold. One of them, the subject of the poet’s analytical interest, is the historical dimension. The other, a recurring background chorus in the composition summarising its suggestions at a higher interpretational plane, is the moral and metaphysical dimension. For instance, conflicts in the first dimension occur in individual temporal and spatial circumstances (although mentions of certain repetitiveness in history of certain situational patterns appear). In the metaphysical imagery, the same conflicts are sublimated into an eternal drama patronised by powers beyond the human.

In accordance with the tendency mentioned above, both dimensions strive to assume a substantial three-dimensional shape. Historical time is located in the products of human entrepreneurship and in the artefacts of civilisation. Metaphysical time finds its visible location in natural phenomena:

Na dwóch kończynach wielkiej czasów strugi,
Co jest jak Tyber –

(DW III, 179)

[On the two limbs of the great stream of times
Which is like the Tiber –]

4 To quote Norwid’s note: “Lubo państwo rzymskie obejmowało nieledwie świat, linia jednak od dzisiejszego Krymu do Marsylii przez posadę Europy wyciągnięta dałaby *niżej* właściwą ojczyznę Rzymianina, *wyżej* zaś kraje do robienia karier wojskowych i miejsce wygnań. – I jako na przykład Ameryka względem Europy była i jest krajem ucieczki z różnych przyczyn, tak był na on czas ów obszar środkowej Europy.” (DW III, 281) [Although the Roman state covered nearly the entire world, yet a line drawn from today’s Crimea to Marseilles through the base of Europe would have placed the actual homeland to the Roman *below* it, with countries for making military careers and for exile *above* it. – And as, for instance, America has for Europe been a country to escape to for various reasons, such was that area of central Europe at that time].

The author externalises the internal states of his protagonists; they are materialised in the appearance of their robes, furniture, and houses. He gives their mental processes an almost unchangeable shape, predictable and definable. Defined by history, they petrify in their surroundings. Like Pulcher in the transparent robe “podobny / Do rzeczy w szklanną pochowanej skrzynię / Ogółem-kształtu” (DW III, 203) [similar / To a thing hidden in a glass box / In the shape of the Entirety]. Yet, the descriptions of the particular interiors also give other information; and so e.g. the very vivid, if fragmentary, image of the house of Artemidor allows for the presentation of the climate of other houses of Greek and Roman intellectuals per extension. On the other hand, the enigmatically sketched dwelling of Jazon, the yards and the fences reflect the unspecified features of the character himself and his very non-definability; and, at the most material plane, they enhance the atmosphere hinting at a conspiracy motif. Neither is it a coincidence that it is within the presence of Jazon that historical time settles in human creations in a unique manner. In this case, it is not time in a modern view, but time in its gradual course. It fossilises impatiently and unwillingly. The symbolism of stone slabs in Jazon’s yard indicates that the Judaic element in the Empire has not yet yielded to the inclination of general inertia:

– Noc była

Widna; podwórzec usłany z kamieni
 Bielał, lecz w każdym pierwsza myśl ożyła,
 Skąd był? do czego złamkiem swym należał?
 I każdy z głązów tych, zdało się oku,
 Że przypominał się znajdować w tłoku
 Wstrzymany, ale nie ówdzie, gdzie bieżał –
 Stąd niemy lament między tymi bruki
 Czułość i różnych wyteżeń splątanie:

(DW III, 187)

[– The night was

Bright; the stone-laid yard
 Shone white, but in every stone the first thought awakened,
 Whence they came? To what each piece belonged?
 And each of those stones, it seemed to the eye,
 Resembled one who in the crowd
 Was stopped, but not where one had headed –
 Hence a mute lament among the stones
 Was felt, with various strains entangled:]

Human attitudes have their own topographic background in the work. Closed space where conspirators hide, the inn left unconcerned by the pilgrim, the open market where people act openly to bear witness to the truth... And the dialectics of leaving (physically) and returning (in spirit) from home to the Centre of civilisation and material power. The pilgrimage of thought to the truth becomes a journey through the world’s capital. Yet, in fact, it is a journey “Przez labirynty te, niebudowane / Głazami, z ludzkich uwiane żywotów, / Hieroglifami pozapisywane –” (DW III, 258) [Through the labyrinths, built not / With stone, woven of human lives, / Written in hieroglyphics –]. Subsequent meetings of the protagonist with the main cultural centres reflect the stages of his maturation. In the eyes of the “son of Aleksander,” and in the narrator’s and therefore the reader’s eyes, the city plan is a spiritual, symbolic plan. The city space is a sign of internal space.

The historical situation is distilled into a metaphysical one at various levels of poetic generalisation. Regardless that there are also various levels of landscape definiteness. In the fragment starting with “A po północy było już na niebie” (DW III, 220) [And the sky was already after midnight], the image of a windy night is deprived of direct linguistic indicators referring to metaphorical senses. Yet, the context clearly indicates the feeling that “Oto teraz / Uderzy piorun” (DW III, 221) [Now / It shall thunder] should not be taken for a weather forecast. The other end of the scale holds a measure which treats natural elements not as objects for description, but as a collection of motifs secondary to imaging focused on internal experience:

W powietrzu zwianym z przedświtem Epoki
 Nowej, z mętami starej – z siarką, z solą,
 Z szeptaniem kształtów nikłych jak obłoki,
 (DW III, 193)

[In the air blown away with new Epoch’s dawn
 With dregs of the old one – with sulphur, with salt,
 With whispers of shapes as faint as clouds,]

Through further segments of the similes, the intermediate area is taken by images which develop a description of nature parallel to metaphysical symbols. The most distinct example of that procedure is the following description found twice in the text:

Pomiędzy świtem a nocy zniknięciem
 Płomienne blaski różowe z mrokami

Walczą, jak cnota z *świata-tego* księciem,
Mdlawe, lecz ufne, choć wciąż je coś mami.

(DW III, 131)⁵

[Between the dawn and the dispersion of night
Pink-flaming light wrestles with darkness
Like virtue with *this-world's* Evil Prince –
Dim, yet sanguine, though ever beguiled.⁶]

Sometimes, the two orders discussed here (the historical one, located in works of culture, and the metaphysical one, embodied in natural phenomena) are linked directly, if contrastively, like it is done e.g. in the description of the room of the “son of Aleksander:”

Kwiatów woń izbę nappełniła całą –
Słońce plamami w tę i ową stronę
Na ściany biło nimfom w modre oczy,
Do złotych promień niosło im warkoczy
Lub malowane, nieme usta grzało. –

(DW III, 228)

[The smell of flowers filled the whole room –
The sun threw its patches this and that way
On the walls, shining into the nymphs' eyes of blue,
Added a ray to their golden braids
Or warmed the painted, silent lips. –]

The illusive play of light in the image given above becomes the game of life and eternity. The culture, which has lost its creative potential, is represented by the frescoes, gaining an appearance of life. Yet, it is no more than appearance because the life-giving mystical spring (traditional symbolism of the sun) cannot breathe life into the human order which has lost its own resources. Such is the most general possible sense of the image, whose elementary senses are only to invoke a vision which is a sensitive and optically faithful record of a common experience. Finally, the background holds an emotively tinged reflection on the

5 Cf. the comment on this fragment and the notes on the role played by the image of night turning into day in Norwid's work: Irena Sławińska, “Podróż do kresu nocy,” in: Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, pp. 228–247.

6 Trans. Danuta Borchardt in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), p. 101.

passing of time and on the helplessness of art, which is unable to prolong human existence, etc.

* * *

To summarise the notes above, it is easy to state that visuality and spatial dimension are not a side component in *Quidam*, but they lead directly to the principal idea of the work. They express the conviction that the presented epoch was indeed a breakthrough period, but at the same time, considering the conceptions at the time, also a stagnated one. Norwid translates human activity into the products thereof. He presents history and cultural diversity through artefacts and objects in the visible world. Internal dynamics (visible only from afar) is either hidden by statics or moved into the sphere of natural symbols. The writer’s general creative tendencies, known well from his other works, gain particular justification here.

Quidam’s spatial shape thus becomes for the author a structural principle specific for the presentation of that particular episode in history. The time of Hadrian’s rule is shown in the poem as a time of moderate despotism, to some extent abiding by the law. The paradox of that law and order consists in the fact that it has no other guarantee than the emperor’s will. Under the rule of a dotard’s despotism, a general sense of inability spreads. Everything turns with the momentum of inertia. “Formalism” raises its head in the sense that the technical means developed (in many areas of life) serve a power lacking a historical purpose. Anomy appears, as well as the state of isolation for individuals due to the decay of a common set of values. Political trials are prosified to the role of criminal trials. At critical moments, intellectuals are not beheaded anymore but simply exiled. To add to that, national movements are gaining strength at the borders of the Empire. It is thus no surprise that the yearning for social dynamics is embodied in the image of bare strength, the legions and their symbol: *fascēs*.

Such is the world which sees the lives of the protagonists, characters from a dying world, and the lives of those (in accordance with the then views) dissidents who are mentioned only incidentally, Christians. The Christians may not actively oppose the existing order, but their refusal of acceptance alone becomes a destructive factor.

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Władysław Stróżewski

Perfect – Fulfilment: Cyprian Norwid's “Chopin's Grand Piano”

Abstract: The article attempts to interpret Norwid's poem entitled “Fortepian Szopena” [“Chopin's Grand Piano”]. It points out that the main subject of the poem is Chopin's music. But starting from this point, Norwid's reflection forms a huge circle, encompassing the whole problem of art – from its genesis to its most perfect form. The patron of the archaic beginning of art, also of its mythical greatness, is Orpheus, while the symbol of its ultimate fulfilment is Chopin. Art involves both the process of transformation and the process of the synthesis of values. The presented interpretation brings out the aesthetic reflection and follows the creative process inscribed in the structure of the poem, and above all performs its axiological analysis (not devoid of its historical motifs). The ending of the work allows for at least two readings. In the first reading, the falling and smashing of the piano symbolises the destruction of the ideal before our eyes, and the late grandson, in fact, has nothing to be happy about. According to the second reading, the call, “Rejoice, late grandson!” contains an element of hope. The smashing of the piano becomes a sacrifice and, at the same time, a testimony – it is the image of an ideal reaching the pavement and announcing a rebirth, a process of synthesising the shreds of the shattered whole and rising towards perfection, towards fulfilment. The second reading is closer to the author of this article. It sacrifices the irony of the first reading and at the same time raising Norwid's paradox: perishing and rising again, death and resurrection.

Keywords: CyprianNorwid, “Fortepian Szopena,” Fryderyk Chopin, ancient tradition, axiological analysis, aesthetic interpretation, Orpheus

Ale ja odpowiem, że czytanie autora zależy *na wyczytaniu zeń tego, co on tworzył, więcej tym, co pracą wieków na tym urosło*. Jest to cień, który z łona najnieskończonej wyższej prawdy upada na literatury papier, i świadczy albowiem, że poza słowami naszymi jest jeszcze *żywot Słowa!* ... Słowa autorów mają nie tylko ten urok, tę moc i tę dzielność, którą my im dać usiłujemy lub umiemy, ale mają one jeszcze urok i moc żywotu słowa; czytać więc nie każdy umie, bo czytelnik powinien współpracować, a czytanie, im wyższych rzeczy, tym indywidualniejsze jest. (*O Juliuszu Słowackim [On Juliusz Słowacki]*, PWSz VI, 428)

[However, I will answer by saying that the reading of an author depends *on reading what he created, and furthermore, on reading the work of the centuries that has grown on it*. It is a shadow that falls from the womb of the infinitely higher truth on paper, and it testifies to the fact that beyond our words there is a life of *the Word!* ... The words of authors not only have this charm, this power and this bravery which we try or know to give them, but they still have the charm and power of the life of the word; thus not everyone knows

how to read, because the reader should cooperate. As for the reading – the more profound things read, the more individual it is.]

It is not common for a brilliant artist to devote his pen to the work of another contemporary artist – and for what has been created in such a way that it matches the greatness of the described work; Plato about Socrates, Rilke about Rodin, and Norwid about Chopin... it is not easy to provide a long list of such examples.

Norwid came into contact with Chopin's music early, perhaps still during his youth in Warsaw. But we know for sure that he took a deep interest in it when, at the age of 24, in Rome and in love with Maria Kalergis, he listened to Chopin's works performed by her. Norwid met the composer in person in Paris in the year of the musician's death.¹ Gradually, Chopin's music revealed ever deeper values in Norwid; he was one of those who understood it truly from the beginning. In his thoughts, Chopin grew into an artist embodying the ideal of art in general and the ideal of Polish art in particular. The strophes of *Promethidion* begin with a conversation about Chopin, while the *Epilogue* of this poem contains the memorable words:

W Polsce od grobu Fryderyka Chopina rozwinie się sztuka, jako powoju wieniec, przez pojęcia nieco sumienniejsze o formie życia, to jest o kierunku pięknego, i o treści życia, to jest o kierunku dobra i prawdy.

– *Wtedy artyzm się złoży w całość narodowej sztuki.* (DW IV, 133)

[In *Poland*, art will develop from the grave of Fryderyk Chopin as a wreath of bindweed, through somewhat more conscientious concepts about the *form of life*, that is, about the direction of beauty, and about the *content of life*, that is, about the direction of good and truth.

– *Then artistry will be put together into the whole of national art.*]

1 See Tadeusz Makowiecki, "Fortepian Szopena," in: *O Norwidzie pięć studiów*, ed. Konrad Górski, Tadeusz Makowiecki and Irena Sławińska (Toruń: Księgarnia Naukowa T. Szczęsny i S-ka, 1949), pp. 113–117; Juliusz W. Gomulicki, commentary in: Cyprian Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane [Collected Works]*, Vol. 2 (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1966), pp. 670–672 – the reader will find there a detailed discussion on the circumstances of the creation of "Fortepian Szopena," as well as invaluable comments on the work as a whole (pp. 670–690 and 856–857). With regard to comprehensive studies on "Fortepian Szopena," a recommended book is Tadeusz Filip's *Cypriana Norwida "Fortepian Szopena" ze stanowiska twórczości poety odczytany* (Kraków: M. Kot, 1949), containing an abundant comparative material; unfortunately, both its excess and the lack of clearly defined criteria for its selection make the book difficult to read and interpret.

Every analysis and every interpretation of the work of art is inevitably connected with an act of violence against it. This claim is all the more true the more valuable the work. An analysis is an act of violence because it breaks the organic unity of the work – the unity which determines its identity – down into some elements which are isolated and torn out of context. Interpretation is a violent act because, in an attempt to penetrate the sense of a work of art, one can never reach the same depth, or even if only to penetrate evenly all its layers, and necessarily disrupts this balance and hierarchy of meanings which the work actually contains and which co-create its superior and unique expression.

On the other hand, without these efforts it would be impossible to satisfy our longing for full knowledge and comprehensive experience of the work. Moreover, it is owing to this analysis that we are able to discover the essence of its structure and, owing to its interpretation, to become more and more aware of everything it contains. The point is that this should be done in an attitude of total submission to the subject of study, so as not to treat it as a means to an end; and finally, when the analysis and interpretation come to an end at a given stage, to reject it without regret and give in again to the work itself in a deep but pure undistorted contemplation of it.

"Fortepian Szopena" ["Chopin's Grand Piano"] is one of the works whose content can be penetrated endlessly. This particular experience is only associated with masterpieces: having made their hermeneutic interpretation, even the most insightful at a given stage, we can see that we could start it anew, making as if a circle over the achievements already made, and – without rejecting them – delving into the work a second time, then once again, and so on, perhaps infinitely.

Therefore, what will be said here cannot make any claims, not even the slightest, as to the depletion of everything that is contained in Norwid's poem. The richness and depth of thought cannot be grasped through the completion of a single hermeneutic circle. The mystery of the poem, its unique emotional aura, and its greatness will always remain impenetrable...

There are many ways in which we can analyse, and thus dissect, stratify, and extract the levels in "Fortepian Szopena." Norwid himself divided the poem into 10 strophes (it would be more accurate to call them strophoids), but the last one is divided into two, separated not by a number but an asterisk. Some researchers, e.g. Tadeusz Makowiecki, propose a three-partite division of the poem: the first part would include strophes 1–3, the second – strophes 4–7, and the third – from strophe 8 to the end. The first part is characterized by the greatest intimacy, the second is the most intellectual, the third is the most dramatic but ends, according to Makowiecki's interpretation, with a "coda" full of bitterness and

irony.² Without denying the fundamental validity of such a tripartite division, I would like to propose yet another stratification of the work. The point is that some of its essential threads are present in the poem from the beginning to the end, with some segments being to some extent polyphonic, others rather homophonic or even monodic, dominating the parts distinguished by Makowiecki.

Therefore, I see three levels in “Fortepian Szopena:” a level of recollective clarity, more or less distinct in strophes 1–3 and 6; a level of reflection accompanying the first level in all its strophes, but dominating in strophes 4, 5, 7 and 10; and a level of vision, most apparent in strophes 6, 8 and 9, but also present, albeit in a different form, in strophe 4 (in the words uttered by “starożytna Cnota” [the ancient Virtue] – marked in the poem with inverted commas). It should be added that the reflection of the second level changes its character in the course of the poem from a very personal one, connected with the direct memory expressed in strophes 1–3, to a more abstract and simultaneously deeply metaphysical one in strophes 4–7, to finally transform into what is probably the most difficult to interpret, which it takes in the “coda” of the last strophe.

Although in this text I wish to focus on the second level, it is impossible, at least at the beginning, to separate it from the other two, especially the first.

1 The main subject of the poem is Chopin’s music. But starting from this peak, Norwid’s reflection makes a huge circle, encompassing the whole scope of problems of art – from its origins to its most perfect shape.

The problems related to the most elementary, primitive, and archaic elements in art are addressed already in strophe 2. There appears the figure of Orpheus, who is a patron of the dialectic of the “force-of-thrust” and “song,” as well as the matter of elementary sounds that come here to the fore:

I rozmawiają z sobą struny cztery,
 Trącając się,
 Po dwie – po dwie –
 I szemrząc z cicha:
 “Zaczęłże on
 Uderzać w ton?...
 Czy taki Mistrz!..., że gra... choć – odpycha?”³

[And four strings converse,
 Nudging each other,

2 Makowiecki, “Fortepian Szopena,” pp. 117–118.

3 PWsz II, 143. “Fortepian Szopena” [“Chopin’s Grand Piano”] is cited in accordance with the version which was included in Norwid’s *Vade-mecum* (henceforth abbreviated as VM), PWsz II, 143–147.

Two – by two –
 And in soft strains:
*“Has he begun
 To strike the tone?...
 Is this the Master!... who plays... yet, disdains?”*⁴

A similar image returns at the end of the performance; and there the strings of the piano alone will come to the fore, but shaken by the great music that has rolled between the beginning and the end, they will come together in a richer, though equally muted, harmonic system:

... jedno – słyszę:
 Coś?... jakby spór dziecięcy – –
 – A to jeszcze klóćcą się klawisze
 O nie dośpiewaną chęć:
 I trącając się z cicha,
 Po ośm – po pięć –
 Szemrzą: *“Począłże grać? czy nas odpycha?”*

[... merely – I hear:
 Something?... like children quarrelling –
 – These are the keys of the piano wrangling
 For their not-fully-sung wish:
 And nudging each other in soft strains
 By eight – by five –
 They whisper: *“has he begun to play? or does he disdain us?”*]

Thus, art begins at the most elementary level of sound; two strings and two sounds are enough. But immediately, the sphere of mystery also begins to spread, and the dialectic of impact and repulsion, the dialectic of *trial*, is already a successful beginning. Here, once again the definition of music proposed by Hoene-Wroński finds its application, extracting the intelligence contained in a sound.⁵ It is the sound itself, its very matter that wants to be extracted and transformed – it will express regret when it is not completed in the entirety of its possibilities, when – in the repelled, silenced elements, there still remains a “not-fully-sung wish.” However, one condition must be met from the beginning, the condition of mastery. Orpheus is the patron of not only the archaic beginning of art, but

4 Trans. Danuta Borhardt in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2012), p. 69. All quotations of “Chopin’s Grand Piano” come from Borhardt’s translation, pp. 69–77.

5 See Edgar Varèse, “Wspomnienie i myśli,” trans. Zofia Jaremko-Pytowska, *Res Facta*, No. 1 (1967), p. 5.

also its mythical greatness. Chopin will become a symbol of its ultimate completion. The beginning remains only the beginning – just as the end is only the end, but capable of transferring, albeit in a different way, the value of what has been completed in it:

A w tym, coś grał – i co? zmówił ton – i co? powie,
 Choć inaczej się echa ustrojają,
 Niż gdy błogosławiłeś sam ręką Swoją
 Wszelkiemu akordowi –

[In what you played – and what? asked the tones, what?
 Though echoes will strum differently,
 Than when You blessed with Your Own hand
 Every chord –]

The most important thing is played out in the middle. There exists a figure of art in which it is possible to achieve perfection – perfection in the most appropriate sense of the word, synthesising in itself and, at the same time, bringing all the values that can be revealed in the world in general to the top. They are synthesised through their successive transformations, raising them to an ever higher level until they melt into a single, superior value. It turns out that it can be called Beauty, although the name of this value does not appear directly in the poem. It is also important that both this process of transformation and the process of synthesising values are carried out in art “by itself,” but also in art *in actu*, which is just taking place and being performed.

Finally, it must be said what these values are. They can be divided into two groups: the form and the content, but in art, at its height, they are one, simply described as a “Love’s profile.”

Let us start with the idea of transformation. From the very beginning, it concerns values. The process of transformation does not start with something that is axiologically negative or devoid of value. Value is the beginning, *arche*:

A w tym, coś grał: taka była prostota
 Doskonałości Peryklejskiej,
 Jakby starożytna która Cnota,
 W dom modrzewiowy wiejski
 W chodząc, rzekła do siebie:
 “Odrodziłam się w Niebie
 I stały mi się arfy – wrota,
 Wstęga – ścieżka...
 Hostię – przez blade widzę zboże...
 Emanuel już mieszka
 Na Taborze!”

[In what you played, was the simplicity
Of Periclean perfection,
As if some Virtue of antiquity,
Entering a larch-wood country manor –
Said to herself:

*"I was reborn in Heaven
Its gates became – my Harp,
Its path – my ribbon...
The Host – through the pale wheat I see...
And Emanuel already dwells
On Mount Tabor!"*

The beginning is then the value of simplicity, closely related to perfection itself. It found its historical form in ancient art, in the "Periclean perfection," where it was not only an aesthetic but also a moral value. Hence the concept of Virtue. However, this does not stop at what constituted it in antiquity. It requires a rebirth and therefore a transformation, through the simplicity of yet another kind, the simplicity of a particular "naivety," straightforwardness, purity, sincerity, and even poverty – everything that is symbolised by the "larch-wood country manor."

The great, universal human ideals of ancient art and thought, brought to the highest perfection and, at the same time, universality, descend as if to the level of an ordinary human being into the interior of the house and acquire intimacy and warmth. What has already obtained its most wonderful shape is now being internalised and combined with individual values, developed under a different sky, but experienced in the deepest and most authentic simplicity of heart. It turns out that this is a necessary "mediation," allowing the ancient perfection to "be reborn in Heaven." For here, thanks to the combination of these two sets of values, general human and particular, the simplicity of perfection and the simplicity of heart, another stage of development is achieved, leading to the sacred. It is owing to the sacred, which is thus being revealed, that the gates are raised to the dignity of "arfa" [a harp], the path – to the dignity of a ribbon capable of binding the existing ideals to something even higher – and the sphere of religious and Christian values. Let us note the last three verses of strophe 4: one can see the Host through the pale wheat. This again shows the idea of transformation – the grain becomes bread, and the bread becomes the host. There is a new highest peak, closing everything that has happened before; after all, the Host is the body of God –

*Emanuel już mieszka
Na Taborze!*

[*And Emanuel already dwells
On Mount Tabor!*]

This statement is the final point of access and, at the same time, confirmation of the whole path of transformation revealed here. After all, Mount Tabor is the place where Christ was transfigured in front of his disciples, appearing to them in his divine form:

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.⁶

Let us note one more thing; of the names attributed to Christ, Norwid chooses “Emanuel” [Immanuel], which means “God with us.”⁷ This is not accidental either; the divinity, the sacred becomes our share, and it becomes present in the world, thus showing the final destination and completion of “praca dziejów”⁸ [the work of history].

Norwid’s dialectic of history is a movement towards the highest, Divine ideals; however, it is a movement that does not overturn anything that is valuable, but it rather absorbs every value and every authentic achievement. The continuity of history consists, or in any case should consist, of constantly enriching its positive content, synthesising and transforming it in order to achieve the absolute optimum. This is a task for all of mankind, but it is also a task that every nation has to fulfil in its own way and in accordance with its vocation. This duty is also fulfilled through art:

Każdy naród przychodzi *inną drogą* do uczestnictwa w sztuce ...

Pers – przez pojęcie światła ...

Grek – przez półboską (tj. bohatyrską) heroiczność.

Rzymianin – przez pojęcie ogromu i ogarnięcia (Koloseum).

Chryścianizm – przez przecięcie linii *ziemskiej* horyzontalnej i linii *nadziemskiej*, *prostopadłej* – z *nieba* *padłej*, czyli przez znalezienie *środk*a +, to jest przez tajemnicę krzyża ... (DW IV, 130, 133)

[Each nation has come a *different way* to participate in art ...

A Persian – through the concept of light ...

A Greek – through semi-godly (i.e. valiant) heroism.

A Roman – through the concept of immensity and embracing (Colosseum).

6 Mark 9: 2–3 (New International Version).

7 See Isaiah 7: 14; Matthew 1: 23.

8 Cf. “Socjalizm” [“Socialism”], PWSz II, 19.

Christianity – through the intersection of the horizontal *earthly* line and the above-earthly, *perpendicular line* – *fallen from the sky*, that is, through finding the *centre* +, that is, through the mystery of the cross ...]

Strophe 5 brings us to a point which, after what has been said so far, should not come as a surprise since it is still about revealing the mystery of art embodied in Chopin’s music; for the place where the transformation of the aforementioned values comes to its fullness is Poland. Of course, it has already been signalled by the “larch-wood country manor,” but now the thing is called by its name. There is a form of art in which and through which Poland can reveal itself in its fullest form, synthesising in itself general human and particular humanistic and religious values. For this to happen, however, Polishness must also be transformed. Otherwise, national values will not melt into one with the highest human ideals. And yet, the vocation of every great art is to raise people’s inspirations to the dignity of humanity (DW IV, 133). It should be remembered how much Norwid suffered from this lack of unity, not only in national art, but also in Polish moral and political life above all.⁹ Now, he is saying clearly: this is not about “byle jaka” [mere] Poland, but about a Poland of “przemienionych kołodziejów” [wheelwrights transfigured into kings], a Poland educated according to the idea prepared for it in eternity:

I była w tym Polska, od zenitu
 Wszchedoskonałości dziejów
 Wzięta, tęczę zachwytu – –
 Polska – *przemienionych kołodziejów!*

[And in this was Poland – from its zenith
 Through Age’s all-perfection
 Captured in songs of rapture –
 – That Poland – *of wheelwrights transfigured into kings!*]

9 See “Listy o Emigracji” [“Letters on Emigration”] and “Odpowiedź krytykom ‘Listów o emigracji’” [“Reply to the Critics of ‘Letters on Emigration’”] (PWsz VII, 17–39), as well as the bitter words from a letter to Michalina Zaleska née Dziekońska written in Paris on 14 November 1862 (DW XI, 127, 128): “Oto jest *społeczność polska!* – społeczność narodu, który, nie zaprzeczam, iż o tyle *jako patriotyzm* wielki jest, o ile *jako społeczeństwo* jest żaden. ... Ale tak, jak dziś jest, to *Polak jest olbrzym, aczkolwiek w Polaku jest karzeł* – i jesteśmy karykatury, i jesteśmy tragiczna nicość i śmiech olbrzymi... Słońce nad *Polakiem* wstawa, ale zasłania swe oczy nad *człowiekiem*.” [Here is the *Polish community!* – a community of a nation which, I do not deny, is great in terms of *patriotism*, but not as a *society*. ... But as it is today, a *Pole is a giant, but the man in a Pole is a dwarf* – and we are caricatures, and we are tragic nothingness and giant laughter... The sun rises above a *Pole*, but it covers its eyes above a *man*.]

The “zenith through Age’s all-perfection” is nothing more than the ideal of Poland and Polishness, cleansed from any deficiency and, at the same time, true to itself, preserving everything that is most specific and important to it:

Taż sama, zgoła,
Złoto-pszczoła!...
(Poznał-ci-że bym ją – na krańcach bytu!...)

[The very same – indeed
A golden-bee...
(Recognise it I would, at the limits of existence!...)]

At this point, in strophe 5 of the poem, ends the description of Chopin’s art itself. “I – oto – pieśń skończyłeś” [And – thus – you’ve ended your song ...]. This is what the first verse of the next strophe clearly says. The perfection available in this world has been realised to the fullest, and what is now melted into one – the current performance, which has just been brought to an end, and simultaneously fulfilment of music, and *what should be* according to the intended idea. Let us repeat once again, this idea offers the fullest synthesis of human, Christian, and national values.

What has been said about Chopin’s art was prepared earlier using words that characterise him – a man and an artist. This encapsulates the assumption about the unity of art and its creator, his personality, and the whole of his life. Chopin himself realised the ideal that was called to life by “wieczny Pigmalion” [eternal Pygmalion]:

I byłeś jako owa postać, którą
Z marmurów łona,
Niżli je kuto,
Odejma dżuto
Geniuszu – wiecznego Pigmaliona!

[And you were that form, which
From marble’s bosom,
Still uncarved,
With chisel withdrawn,
By the genius – eternal Pygmalion!]

This passage was understood differently by the interpreters, but in general, influenced by the text of *Czarne kwiaty* [Black Flowers], they probably attributed a too literal meaning to it, referring it only to Chopin’s external appearance. Let us also recall here this fragment of Norwid’s prose:

On, w cieniu głębokiego łóżka z firankami, na poduszkach oparty i okręcony szalem, piękny był bardzo, tak jak zawsze, w najpowszedniejszego życia poruszeniach mając coś

skończonego, coś monumentalnie zarysowanego... coś, co albo arystokracja ateńska za religię sobie uważać mogła była w najpiękniejszej epoce cywilizacji greckiej – albo to, co genialny artysta dramatyczny wygrywa np. na klasycznych tragediach francuskich ... Taką to naturalnie apoteotyczną skończoność gestów miał Chopin, jakkolwiek i kiedykolwiek go zastałem... (DW VII, 47)

[He, in the shadow of deep bed with curtains, propped up on pillows, and wrapped in a shawl, looked very beautiful, as always, displaying in the most mundane movements something of perfection, something of a monumental outline... something which either Athenian aristocracy could have adopted as a cult during the most beautiful epoch of Greek civilisation – or that which an artist of dramatic genius portrays, for instance, in classical French tragedies. ... Chopin possessed such naturally idealized perfection of gestures, whenever and how ever I saw him...]¹⁰

There is also a second text, often quoted in explanations, this time from a letter to Bohdan Zaleski from 1867:

Michał-Anioł Buonarroti znalazł był w ogrodzie Medyceuszów blok starożytnego marmuru *poświdrowany zaledwo w głównych proporcjach*. I poszedł do Medyceusza i rzekł: "Oto – w marmurze tym jest Dawid młodzieniec z procą w ręku –" Tak, wierzę, iż z umarłymi, bo nieśmiertelnym i, godzi się trzymać i postępować – (PWsz IX, 291–292)

[Michelangelo Buonarroti found a block of ancient marble in the garden of the Medici family, *which was chiselled in the main proportions only*. And he went to Medici and said: "Behold – in this marble there is David, the young man with a sling in his hand –" Yes, I believe that it befits one to keep together and interact with the dead, and thus immortal –]

It seems that the last words quoted here bring us closer to Norwid's intentions. It is not, or at least not exclusively, about the external beauty of Chopin's face, figure, or gesture. What is important, what was conceived by the genius, the "eternal Pygmalion," that lies deep inside. It is not possible to present the motif of Pygmalion here, which persistently recurs in many texts by Norwid as an idea motif particularly important to him.¹¹ However, I would like to draw attention to one thing, since in "Fortepian Szopena" Norwid speaks of the *eternal* Pygmalion, it must refer to God, the Creator who calls his works to life according to a pre-determined and specific idea for each of them. Chopin's genius is therefore a "sign" of God (this issue will appear again in strophe 7), a sign that has been fulfilled in him from the beginning before he himself came to maturity as a man

10 Trans. Adam Czerniawski, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Selected Poems* (Lodnon: Anvil Press, 2004), p. 52.

11 See Marian Piechal, *Mit Pigmaliona. Rzecz o Norwidzie* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1974), Chap. 3.

and an artist. The essence of the matter lies in the fact that this “sign” was not wasted by him, but “completed,” brought to its optimum in his art. For when Chopin’s life came to an end, although, on the one hand, his “wątek” [thread] was “nie docieczony” [inscrutable, lit. not fully discovered, un-completed], and thus not brought to an end, on the other hand, the same thing that was also expressed in his art appeared in the life of the artist: maturity, fullness, *completion*, growing throughout the entire time given to him, right up to his last days¹² –

Byłem u Ciebie w te dni przedostatnie
 Nie dociezonego wątku – –
 – Pełne, jak Mit,
 Blade, jak świt...
 – Gdy życia koniec szepce do początku:
 “*Nie stargam Cię ja – nie! – Ja, u-wydatnię!*”

[I visited you in those days but last
 Of life’s inscrutable thread –
 Full – like Myth,
 Pale – like dawn...
 – When life’s end whispers to its beginning:
 “*I won’t destroy you – no! – You I’ll enhance!*”]

We need to make a digression here, which is important for understanding the essential meaning of this text. One of the peculiarities of Norwid’s writing is the use of near-synonymous terms to which he assigns the opposite meaning. This will be shown later on in the example of the opposition “man-people.” Now I would like to draw attention to the ambiguity associated with “the end of life.” In the poem entitled “Na zgon śp. Józefa Z.” [“On the Death of the Late Józef Z.”], an officer of the Grand Army, wounded near Paris, one of the leaders of the Polish Uprising, a poem which in the *Vade-mecum* cycle directly follows “Fortepian Szopena” and which, at the same time, ends the cycle and adds point to the most important threads, which were left uncompleted, we can read, among other things:

12 See *Promethidion, Epilog* (DW IV, 133): “podnoszenie ludowego do Ludzkości nie przez stosowania zewnętrzne i koncesje formalne, ale przez wewnętrzny rozwój dojrzałości... oto jest, co wysłuchać daje się z Muzy Fryderyka jako zaśpiew na sztukę narodową” [raising people’s thing to Mankind not through external applications and formal concessions, but through internal development of maturity... This is what can be heard from the muse of Fryderyk as a song of national art].

– Dlatego to w Epoce, w której jest więcej
Rozłamań – niżli *Dokończeń*...
 Dlatego to w czasie tym, gdy więcej
 Jest *Roztrzaskań* – niżeli *Zamknięć*;
 Dlatego to na teraz, gdy więcej jest daleko
Śmierci – niżeli *Zgonów*:
 Twoja śmierć, Szanowny Mężu Józefie,
 Doprawdy, że ma podobieństwo
 Błogosławionego jakby *uczynku!*
 –Może byśmy już na śmierć zapomnieli
 O chrześcijańskim skonu pogodnego tonie
 I o całości żywota dojrzałego...
 Może byśmy już zapomnieli, doprawdy!...
 Widząc – jak wszystko nagle rozbiega się
 I jak zatrząskuje drzwiami przeraźliwie –
 Lecz mało kto je zamknął z tym królewskim wczasem i pogodą,
 Z jakim kapłan zamyka Hostię w ołtarzu.

(PWsz II, 148–149)

[– That is why in an age in which there are more
Breaches – than *Completions*...
 That is why at this time, when there are more
Shatterings – than *Closures*;
 That is why now, when there are far many more
Deaths – than timely *Departures*,
 Your death, Dear Sir. Józef,
 Truly bears similarity to
 A blessed *deed!*
 – Perhaps we would have completely forgotten
 About the serene tone of the Christian death
 And of the entire mature life...
 Perhaps we would have forgotten, truly!...
 Seeing – how everything was suddenly dispersing
 And how it was slamming the door with terror –
 But few have closed it with the same royal peace and cheerfulness
 With which the priest also closes the Host in the altar.]

Let us go back to the text of "Fortepian Szopena:"

– Gdy życia koniec szepce do początku:
 "Nie stargam Cię ja – nie! – Ja, u-wydatnię!"

[– – When life's end whispers to its beginning:
 "I won't destroy you – no! – You I'll enhance!"]

We must have no doubt that here we deal with the mystery, not of death, but of timely departure, i.e. with completion and closure. However, the end, understood in this way, may also be the beginning.

In the next strophe, where Chopin is, in turn, compared

Do upuszczonej przez Orfeja liry,
W której się rzutu-moc z pieśnią przesila,

[Likened to the lyre Orpheus let fall,
Where force-of-thrust struggles with song,]

Is it not possible to interpret the fall here, the thrust as an indispensable beginning of something new, of *a song* which begins in a dialectic union, at the same time as the thrust, the end? After all, it is a throw of a lyre symbolising the genius of Chopin himself and through him the highest ideal of art in general.

Let us in any case consider this interpretation. It will turn out to be important for understanding the last chords of the poem, preceded by a strophe, in which the lyre is replaced by a piano thrown on the street.

The transfer of truths about art to the creator makes it possible to take one more step: to transfer them also, by comparison or metaphor, to the tool of art. Therefore, it was possible to compare Chopin to “the lyre dropped by Orpheus,” thus also the piano can be perceived as an ideal.

... Chopin miał mieszkanie ..., którego to mieszkania główną częścią był salon wielki o dwóch oknach, gdzie nieśmiertelny fortepian jego stał, a fortepian bynajmniej wykwinąłny – ... – ale owszem trójkątny, długi, na nogach trzech, jakiego, zdaje mi się, już mało kto w ozdobnym używa mieszkaniu. (DW VII, 46)

[...And such was the apartment that Chopin had ... main part consisted of a huge drawing-room with two windows, where his immortal piano stood, a piano you wouldn't describe as exquisite ... – but rather quite triangular, long, three-legged, which now, I believe, is hardly ever found in elegant apartments.]¹³

This is what Norwid wrote in *Czarne kwiaty* [*Black Flowers*], and the vision of such a piano will be recalled in the penultimate strophe of the poem. It is not the first time that *the* essence of art has been transferred onto its tool. A similar thought can be found in the poem “Liryka i druk” [Poetry and Print]:

Liry – nie zwij rzeczą w pieśni wtórą,
Do przygawek!... nie – ona
Dlań jako żywemu orłu pióro:
Aż z krwią, nierozłączona!

(PWsz II, 24)

13 Trans. Czerniawski, p. 51.

[Do not call the lyre a second thing in a song,
It is not – for accompaniment!...
It is like a feather to a living eagle:
Inseparable with blood!]

Finally, the same applies to the feather/quill and its connection with the poet's work:

O, pióro! tyś mi żagłem anielskiego skrzydła
I czarodziejską zdrojów Mojżeszowych laską,
(PWsz I, 49)

[O, quill! You are my sail of an angel's wing
And the magic staff of Moses's springs,]

This is followed by the strophe in which Norwid's ideal of art and its highest value in general finds its most complete expression. Chopin provides patronage to this value – the strophe retains the second person singular, previously used in the memories of his meetings with Chopin, and now referred directly to Beauty, there remains the motif of a figure previously extracted from "marmurów łona" [marble's bosom] and now appearing as "profil miłości" [Love's profile], there finally appears Chopin's surname in juxtaposition with the names of the greatest geniuses of art of all times. Every verse and every word demands the highest level of attention. And the strophe is built in such a way that, after going through a whole series of complements to the highest values, a tragic statement resounds – again unexpectedly, but now violently, sharply, stunning the receiver: "Zawsze – zemści się na tobie: BRAK!" [Always – you'll be revenged by: *NOT ENOUGH*...!]

This statement is all the more tragic because, in view of what had been said about the ideal of art previously which elevated it to the heights unattainable for any negativity, weakness, deficiency, it seemed almost unthinkable. And yet, it is precisely this which prepares, through the vision of the fire of the Warsaw palace, for the final image of the fall of the piano...

But first, let us try to examine the ideal of the highest value outlined in the first part of the strophe:

O Ty! – co jesteś Miłości-profilem,
Któremu na imię *Dopełnienie*;
Te – co w Sztuce mianują Stylem,
Iż przenika pieśń, kształci kamienie...
O! Ty – co się w Dziejach zowiesz *Erą*,
Gdzie zaś ani historii zenit jest,
Zwiesz się razem: *Duchem* i *Literą*,

I “*consummatum est.*”

O! Ty – *Doskonale-wypełnienie*,
 Jakikolwiek jest Twój, i gdzie?... znak...
 Czy w *Fidiasu? Dawidzie? czy w Szopenie?*
 Czy w *Eschylesowej* scenie?...

[O You! – who are Love’s profile,
 Whose name is *Fulfillment*;
 The one – that in Art they call Style,
 For it infuses song, chisels stone...
 O! You – who through the ages bear the name: *Era*,
 Even in times that aren’t history’s zenith,
 You are named both: *Spiritus et Littera*,
 And *consummatum est.*...
 O! You – *Consummate-completion*,
 Whatever is Your sign... and where?
 Be it in *Phidias? David? or Chopin?*
 Or in an *Aeschylus* scene?...]

What is “profil miłości” [Love’s profile]? When a question is asked in *Promethidion*, addressed to “wieczny człowiek” [the eternal man]: “cóż wiesz o pięknem?” [what do you know about beauty?] – the immediate answer is: “kształtem jest miłości” [it is the shape of love].

Kształtem miłości piękno jest; i tyle,
Ile ją człowiek oglądał na świecie,
W ogromnym Bogu albo w sobie – pyle,
Na tego Boga wystrojonym dziecie,
Tyle o pięknem człowiek wie i głosi –
*Choć każdy w sobie cień *pięknego* nosi*
*I każdy – każdy z nas – tym *piękna* pyłem.*

(DW IV, 106)

[The shape of love is beauty, and that
 Is all that man has seen of it in the world,
 In the enormous God or in his own
 Self-dust, that child decked out as God;
 That’s all man knows of beauty and makes known
 Though each man bears the shade of beauty within
 And each – each one of us – is beauty’s dust.]¹⁴

14 Trans. Jerzy Laskowski, in: *Polish Poetry Supplement*, No. 7, (London: Oficyna Poetów, 1973), p. 13.

In other places in *Promethidion*, beauty is also described as “profil Boży” [God’s profile], “kształt prawdy i miłości” [the shape of truth and love], “profil prawdy i miłości” [the profile of truth and love].

There is no doubt that this metaphor contains the idea of beauty as a connection between the inner and the external elements, the “content” and the “form,” something spiritual, inner, expressed in the external shape, form, and “profile.” Such a concept was proclaimed, in the times closest to Norwid, by the great idealistic German philosophers – Schelling and, above all, Hegel – but its roots go back to antiquity, namely to the philosophy of Plotinus.

And on what has thus been compacted to unity, Beauty enthrones itself, giving itself to the parts as to the sum: when it lights on some natural unity, a thing of like parts, then it gives itself to that whole.

On what principle does the architect, when he finds the house standing before him correspondent with his inner ideal of a house, pronounce it beautiful? Is it not that the house before him, the stones apart, is the inner idea stamped upon the mass of exterior matter, the indivisible exhibited in diversity?¹⁵

Let us also recall the relevant passage from Hegel:

the Idea qua the beautiful in art is not the Idea as such, . . . , but the Idea as developed into concrete form fit for reality, and as having entered into immediate and adequate unity with reality. For the Idea as such, although it is the essentially and actually true, is yet the truth only in its generality which has not yet taken objective shape; but the Idea as the beautiful in art is at once the Idea when specially determined as in its essence individual reality, and also an individual shape of reality essentially destined to embody and reveal the Idea. This amounts to enunciating the requirement that the Idea, and its -plastic mould as concrete reality, are to be made completely adequate to one another. When reduced to such form the Idea, as a reality moulded in conformity with the conception of the Idea, is the Ideal.¹⁶

The juxtapositions internal – external, ideas – external shape, and at the same time the postulate for their mutual compatibility and even unity, are visible in both cited philosophical texts and in Norwid’s statements. But, as it can be easily seen, this inner content in Norwid is not an idea, but love. A word that means

15 Plotinus, *Enneads*, I 6, 2; I 6, 3, trans. Stephen Mackenna and B. S. Page (<http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.mb.txt>).

16 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on aesthetics*, in: *Selections from Hegel’s Lectures on Aesthetics*, by Bernard Bosanquet & W.M. Bryant, “The Journal of Speculative Philosophy,” 1886, (<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/ae/index.htm>).

something more than an idea. Above all, love cannot be anything abstract, as it is in the case of Hegel, despite all the reservations he makes himself here.¹⁷ The notion of love can encompass *the whole of* spiritual life, not only that which manifests itself in the power of the intellect, understanding, or even contemplation; as well as *the whole of the* values which are associated with such a life. When Norwid uses the terms “kształt miłości” [the shape of love] and “profil Boży” [God’s profile] interchangeably in *Promethidion*, he clearly reaches back to the Christian tradition, as formulated most emphatically in the words of the First Epistle of St. John: “*Deus caritas est*” – “God is love.” Beauty is therefore, in its essence, a “shape of the divine,” and thus an expression of the supreme, an expression of the sacred. When embodied in art, it elevates it to the optimum and unattainable in any other way.

Immediately after the apostrophe to the Love’s profile, there follows the concept of *complement*. However, one may interpret it either as a unity of content and form, or as a purely formal factor; what is important is the moment of *fullness* contained in this concept, which opposes any deficiency. In the history of aesthetics, the postulate of fullness has been raised many times, and we can come across it, among others, in Thomas Aquinas, who mentioned *integritas* as one of the important factors of beauty.¹⁸ After all, “completion” means something that before it reached its fullness required to undergo a process of *becoming*, and it needed to be brought to an end. It then refers either to a process, or to what is subject to a process, what constitutes it. In a word, it means achieving ultimate harmony, i.e. a particular unity determined by the multiplicity of what is being harmonised.

In this way, in Norwid’s concept of beauty he combines two aesthetic traditions: the one which saw beauty primarily in an expression, in a manifestation of the spiritual in a material form, and the one which sought it in harmony, unity, and fullness. Beauty understood in this way is a force that shapes art as if from within: “*przenika pieśń, kształci kamienie*” [it *infuses* song, *chisels* stone] (emphasis added by W. S.). And as such, beauty determines Style, which is probably understood, not as a formal quality resulting from one thing or another, but as a value, determining that art is really art, and as an internal content, manifesting itself in various ways. However, the ultimate point of reference for

17 For example, when he refers to Plato’s views as his starting point.

18 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I 39, 8: “*Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur: primo quidem integritas, sive perfectio ... Et debita proportio, sive consonantia. Et iterum claritas*”

art lies always in the beauty itself, complementing itself in art, but never reaching *perfect* completion in it.

While analysing a subject, it is sometimes good to ask why something is excluded in it that could or even should be there. We should then ask why the word "beauty" itself, so important to Norwid, does not appear in "Fortepian Szopena?" Why is beauty defined as if indirectly and remains speculative is clear and easy to decipher – but only as speculation?

I believe that this is not incidental. I suspect Norwid wanted to avoid certain stereotypical associations that are linked to the concept of beauty in particular to avoid reducing it, and, along with it his whole concept, to the plane of *aesthetics*. The essence of art does not entirely fit within this field, and the task of art exceeds the realisation of beauty, commonly understood as "what one likes."¹⁹ The deeper layers of the very idea of art are hinted at by further definitions which appear in the successive verses of strophe 7: Era, zenith of history, Spirit – Letter, "*consummatum est*." Each of these terms requires separate analysis. It will not be easy to bring it to an end, but we should at least pay attention to the most important things, again referring to Norwid's own texts for help.

The following two lines are the most difficult to interpret correctly:

O! Ty – co się w Dziejach zowiesz: Erą,
Gdzie zaś ani historii zenit jest,

[O! You – who through the ages bear the name: *Era*,
Even in times that aren't history's zenith,]

It seems that this fragment contains a particular and certainly intended contradiction. Completion is realised in history, but when it refers, as in this case, to art; it goes beyond it, fulfilling itself in a sphere to which history no longer reaches, that is to say to eternity. In the first case, it is about an era. It synthesizes the content developed at a certain stage of the development, it closes it and completes it. The era is a special formal quality, it is a frozen course, but marked by characteristic features that allow it to be distinguished from the others. However,

19 See *Promethidion* (Bogumił) (DW IV, 108): "A teraz – wróćcie do waszej rozmowy / O sztukach pięknych i pieśni ludowej, / A teraz wróćcie do wyobrażenia, / [.....] / *Że piękno* to jest, co się wam podoba / Przez samolubstwo czasu lub koterii; / *Aż* zobaczycie, że druga osoba / Pięknego – *dobro* – też zsamolubnieje / I na *wygodno* koniecznie zdrobnieje" [And now – get back to your conversation / About fine arts and folk song / And now get back to your imagination, / ... / That *beauty* is what you like / By the selfishness of time or coterie; / Until you see that the other person / Beautiful – *good* – will also become selfish / And it will *conveniently* diminish].

when all the possibilities for their development are exhausted, when the characteristic features of an era are brought to their fullness, their perfection breaks the constraints of time, it rises above “the zenith of history,” and comes close to its unattainable idea.²⁰

The juxtaposition of the Spirit and the Letter brings to mind, first and foremost, the words of St. Paul about Christ:

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.²¹

Norwid also refers to this juxtaposition when he writes in *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*]:

Dwa kierunki! pozornie różne i czasowo
Sprzeczne, jako *litera-praw* i duch jej: Słowo.
(DW IV, 249)

[Two directions! Seemingly different and temporally
Contradictory, as the *letter-of-laws* and its spirit: the Word.]

But in the same poetic treatise, there appears another thought – the thought of the need to overcome this contradiction and bring them together in the Word. The spirit is an inner word, the letter is its indispensable shape:

I od początku była część *zewnątrzna* słowa
I *wewnętrzna* – jak wszelka świątyni budowa.
– Duch, miał czym się na *zewnątrz* wyrażać lub *w górę*
Monologiem podnosić – miał architekturę!
(DW IV, 237)²²

20 Professor Stefan Sawicki pointed out to me that the following verses: “Gdzie zaś ani historii zenit jest, / Zwiesz się razem: D u c h e m i L i t e r ą , / I “*consummatum est...*” [Even in times that aren’t history’s zenith, / You are named both: *Spiritus et Littera*, / And *consummatum est...*] should be read together. In this case, the “zenith of history” no longer belongs to the history itself, to its eras, but is transferred to another sphere, where it only becomes possible to complete the times. In such an interpretation, the contradiction mentioned above obviously disappears. See also: Jacek Trznadel, “Brak i dopełnienie. ‘Fortepian Szopena’ i ‘Ad leones!’ w świetle problematyki dobra i zła u Norwida,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 4 (1975), p. 40.

21 2 Corinthians 3: 6 (New International Version).

22 See also strophe 5 (DW IV, 232).

[And from the beginning there was an *external* part of the word
 And the *internal* – like the structure of any temple.
 – The spirit had something to express itself *externally* or *upwardly*
 Lift itself through a monologue; it had – an architecture!]

We find here an opposition analogous to the one discussed on the occasion of the "Love's profile" – an opposition between the form and the content, and simultaneously an analogous demand to overcome it.²³ It should also be noted that according to Norwid, the weakness of national culture in Poland results from underestimating the letter:

Polskiemu językowi na czym z rodu zbywa?...
 Na *literze!* – to jego strona jest wątpliwa –
 Nie na słowie, ni słowa duchowym bogactwie,
 Ni jego włóknach srebrnych; raczej – na ich tkactwie.
 (DW IV, 259)²⁴

[What is the Polish language lacking?...
 The *letter!* – this is its weak spot –
 Not the word, or the spiritual wealth of the word,
 Not its silver fibres; but rather – their weaving.]

This statement is all the more important for Norwid because, when considering the vocation of Poles in art, he comes to the conclusion that it will consist of bringing about the unity of the content and the form, i.e. the spirit and the letter. One of the footnotes to *Promethidion* reads:

Długo, długo myślałem i szukałem, gdzie jest przystań dla sztuki polskiej, tego dziecka *natchnień*, a matki *prac*, tego momentu *wytchnień*. – Przekonałem się, że uczucie harmonii między treścią a formą życia będzie u nas posadą sztuki. Przekonałem się, że *sztuka* wyłącznie harmonią *treści i formy* zatrudniona inaczej rozwijać się nie może...
 ... (DW IV, 133)

[For a very long time I was thinking and searching where the haven for Polish art is, this child of *inspiration*, and the mother of *works*, this moment of *respite*. – I found out that the feeling of harmony between the content and the form of life will be for us a fundament of art. I found out that *art*, concerned only with the *harmony of the content and the form*, cannot develop differently... ...]

23 *Słowo i litera* [*The Word and the Letter*], PWSz VI, 324: "Że litera jest formą, więc w człowieku litera formą jego" [Since the letter is the form, the letter in man is his form].

24 See also DW IV, 261.

By the content of life Norwid means the direction of good and truth, and by the form of life – the direction of beauty. This completes the triad of the highest values, which, although not named, are, after all, the proper object of all the invocations contained in the analysed strophe of the poem. It should be added here that it was in Chopin's art that Norwid saw as the fulfilment of the postulate of the unity of the content and the form, hoping that this would become the beginning of further development of Polish art in general.

But there is yet another aspect of Norwid's theory of the letter. He develops it, in a manner reminiscent of Hegelian speculation, in his treatise *Słowo i litera* [*The Word and the Letter*], especially in the short supplement entitled "O prawdzie" ["On the Truth"]. According to the text, the letter considered by itself is "zatrzymane-pośrednictwo" [a halted mediation].

1. ... Ale litera odniesiona do słowa jest już nie tylko pośrednictwem-zatrzymanym, lecz jest pośredniczeniem, z którego się ona sama nie posiada – jest już linią, nie punktem = i ginie w czynności swojej, a odnajduje się dopiero w onejże czynności zatrzymaniu.
2. *Idea* jest literą potęgi wyższej, jest *istotną-literą* – jest litery-istotą – i jest literą-stworzenia! Ona do siebie samej odniesiona nie jest już zatrzymaniem-pośrednictwem (jak litera), ale jest *zawarciem*, jest *okresem*.

(PWsz VI, 327)²⁵

- [1. ... But the letter referred to the word is no longer only a halted mediation, but is mediating which it cannot control itself – it is already a line, not a point = and it gets lost in its own action, and finds itself only in that action of halting.
2. *An idea* is a letter of a higher power, it is a *letter-of-importance* – it is a letter-essence – and it is a letter-of-creation! When referred to itself it is no longer a halted mediation (like the letter), but a *conclusion*, a *period*.]

This text sheds new light both on what has been said about the concept of era, which is, after all, related to the concepts of conclusion and period, and on what will emerge in a moment, in relation to the concept of perfect completion. For the next stage of the movement of the letter-idea is the truth, which "jest idea nieustannie powodującą – równe sobie świadectwo" [is an idea that constantly causes – a testimony equal to itself], and also power. "Że zaś *Ideą i mocą* (a mocą mającą *miejsce swoje*) jest, więc koniecznie i *władzą* stawa się." (PWsz VI, 327) [Since it is an *Idea* and *power* (and the power that *has its place*), it necessarily becomes *authority*.]

25 See also PWsz VI, 311 f.

Viewed in this way, this idea-power transcends material reality, even though it acts in it. After all, it has "miejsce swoje" [its own place]. This concept combines the themes of Hegelian, Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophies. According to Plotinus, an idea is simultaneously a transcendent model and a creative force; owing to this interpretation of idea, Norwid could speak of Beauty as Style that "przenika pieśń, kształci kamienie" [it infuses song, chisels stone]. Owing to the emphasis on the transcendence of an idea, on the other hand, he can call it perfect fulfilment, which is revealed dialectically at the end of the road and marked by the previous expressions of beauty. It rises higher and higher, just like the previously described path of transformation from Periclean perfection to "Polska przemienionych kołodziejów" [a Poland of wheelwrights transfigured into kings], and like the Platonic path of love, at the end of which the idea of beauty appears in its purest fullness.

The unity of the spirit and the letter, which evokes the words uttered by St. Paul, finds its final complement in the words of Christ himself: "*Consummatum est*." Once again the element of the sacred is recalled, and along with the new content of the complement, its religious and mystical aspect. This is linked to the idea of the fullness of time, i.e. the "zenith of history," or, according to the teachings of the Church Fathers, the culmination of a breakthrough moment in the human salvific history. However, the words of Christ are not only an expression of fulfilment but also of sacrifice that perfection makes of itself so that it can begin to be reborn. It is also necessary to address this meaning of "*consummatum est*" in order to understand the deepest sense of the last words in "Fortepian Szopena." And one more thing, the sacrifice of Christ is not only important for the world and for the history of mankind; it is, if one may say so, also an event in eternity engaging the entire reality and transferring the earthly things into the realm of heaven and into the sphere of absolute perfection.

This is why the last invocation follows, addressed to the absolute value, saturated with both human and divine elements, lifting to the highest unity, and yet exceeding all the elements mentioned above, which in its transcendence constitutes the greatest thing imaginable: "*O! Ty – Doskonale – wypełnienie*" [*O! You – Consummate-completion*].

It cannot be realised completely within the borders of the world. When it comes down to it as an idea, as inner content: spirit, love, and style, manifesting itself only as a self-indicating sign. This very sign, the sign of perfection, and the final completion are the masterpieces of art, the works by Phidias, David, Aeschylus, Chopin...

Each of these names symbolises something different but each is synonymous with greatness. Phidias and Aeschylus are associated with the peaks of ancient

art, expressing the highest humanistic ideals. David was invoked as an exponent of the divine element, the sacred, the deepest mysteries, and Revelation. Chopin and his art is, as we already know, a synthesis of all these moments complemented with the national element and also realised in it. Here, Chopin is also the only representative of modern art, but all of them are signs of this “perfect fulfilment” within the framework of the arts they represent: sculpture, drama, religious poetry, and music.

The “sign” referred to here can be understood in two ways. First, as something that realistically embodies the works of those artists (consider the previously noticed unity of the creator and his art), which marks them with its stigma (and, of course, we should disregard negative associations connected with the notion of stigmatisation!). Second, as *just a sign*, which means that even these works do not realise in themselves a perfect fulfilment but are like a reflection or trace of it. For every situation in which perfection is to manifest itself in the reality of the world, this terrifying truth, which is shouted out in the next verse, remains in force: “Zawsze – zemści się na tobie: BRAK!” [Always – you’ll be revenged by: *NOT ENOUGH*...!].

“Brak” [privation/deficiency/lack] is the only word of the poem that has been written using capital letters. And it sounds like a terrible, dissonant chord, later resolved in an explanation that reveals the deepest, metaphysical structure of reality:

– Piętnem globu tego – niedostatek:
Dopełnienie?... go boli!...
 On – *rozpocząć* woli
 I woli wyrzucać wciąż przed się – zadatek!
 – Kłos?... gdy dojrzał jak złoty kometa,
 Ledwo że go wiew ruszy,
 Deszcz pszenicznych ziarn prószy,
 Sama go doskonałość rozmieta...
 [– Privation is this globe’s stigma:
Fulfillment?... pains it!
 It – prefers *ever to begin*
 Prefers always to pay – a deposit!
 – An ear of wheat?... when ripe – a golden comet –
 When barely moved by the breeze,
 It sprays the rain of its wheaten seeds,
 Its own perfection scatters it...]

It is thus impossible to achieve perfect completion in the real world. A gust of wind is enough to destroy it. Perfection is a state that cannot be sustained, it

must, as Hegel would say, be “abolished.” Does it mean that perfection itself contains a moment of contradiction, of self-destruction? That it is the tension of opposing forces – or that it inevitably enters into this tension, provoking it when it tries to realise itself in the world?

The world does not only fail to complete its work and does not only passively resist perfection; sometimes it *violates* it. This is what happens with a *sign*, or rather a symbolic extension of perfection, which was a real, material object – an instrument of Chopin’s art, his piano.²⁶

We will skip the vision of Warsaw and the descriptions of events preceding the moment of throwing the piano out onto the street; instead, we will focus our attention on the piano itself:

Ten!... co Polskę głosił, od zenitu
Wszchedoskonałości Dziejów
Wziętą, hymnem zachwytu –
Polskę – przemienionych kołodziejów;

[The very one!... that proclaimed Poland
– From the zenith of Age’s all-perfection
Captured – in hymns of Rapture –
That Poland – of transfigured wheelwrights –]

It is thus a tool proclaiming the ideal of Poland, elevating national art to its optimum, a piano which implements “Podnoszenie ludowych natchnień do potęgi przenikającej i ogarniającej Ludzkość całą – podnoszenie *ludowego* do *Ludzkości*” (DW IV, 133) [Elevating people’s inspirations to the power that permeates and embraces the entire Mankind – elevating *people* to *Mankind* ...] and synthesises in it all the highest values: “Ten sam – runął – na bruki z granitu!” [That same piano – cast – on a street of granite!].

And now, the ideal that has been embodied and reflected in it

... jak zacna myśl człowieka,
Poterały jest gniewami ludzi,
Lub *jak – od wieka*
Wieków – wszystko, co zbudzi!

[... like man’s noble thought,
Besullied by men’s wrath,
Or, *so it is – ever and evermore –*
With all that will awaken!]

26 A comprehensive analysis of Norwid’s understanding of “brak” [privation/deficiency/lack] was conducted by Trznadel, “Brak i dopełnienie”.

“Zacna myśl człowieka” [man’s noble thought] once again evokes the motif of *truth*, the nobleness of which – I think it can be added here – also has moral, liberating overtones, aimed at awakening and building new values. And it is precisely these values that are left to the mercy of thoughtless anger of people who are unaware of their actions – a blind power in which we may find the manifestation of “BRAK” [privation/deficiency/lack] that stigmatises our world. This blind anger is symbolised by Passions that are tearing Orpheus’s body; Passions that – by doing evil – are not even able to accept it as their own responsibility, burdening others with it, and pushing it onto the anonymous “nie ja” [not I]...

And suddenly, there appears a new thought, as if coming from another dimension – the dimension of conscious reflection, individual responsibility, from a dimension of authentic humanity, capable of incarnating only in the concrete personality of a concrete person. This is the great personalistic motif of Norwid’s thought which also comes to the fore here. “Lecz Ty? – lecz ja?” [But You? – But I?]. This is an opposition to both the irresponsible “not I” of the Passions and the anonymous crowd of people connected only through their anger.²⁷

Only “*You*” and only “*I*” are able to have a reflection, which often appears in Norwid’s work to express hope for the future.²⁸ But how to interpret this reflection? Does it really express hope? Are the final words of the poem:

... – uderzmy w sądne pienie,
Nawołując: “*Ciesz się, późny wnuku!*...”
Jękły – głuche kamienie:
Ideal – sięgnął bruku – –”

[... – let’s break into judgement chant,
And exhort: “*Rejoice, our grandson yet to come!*...”
The dull stones groaned:
The Ideal – has reached the street – –”]

27 The opposition of man–people appears many times in Norwid’s texts, whereby “people,” understood as an anonymous crowd, are generally evaluated negatively; see, for instance, the following poems from *Vade-mecum*: “Harmonia” [“Harmony”], “W Weronie” [“In Verona”], “Bliscy” [“Loved Ones”], and especially “Szlachcic” [“The Nobleman”], where we can read in the ending: “Gdy czar słów jego i wzięcia urzeka, / Nie znawstwem ludzi, jakby ziarna w plewie, / Lecz znajomością siebie... i Człowieka! (PWsz II, 103)” [When the charm of his words and behaviour is enchanting, / Not due to knowing people as if they were grains in the chaff, / But knowing oneself... and Man!].

28 Cf. the famous words from the work “Klaskaniem mając obrzękle prawice” [“Their Hands Swollen from Clapping”] (VM): “Syn minie pismo, lecz ty spomniesz, wnuku” [My son – will skirt this work, but you, grandson, will note] (Trans. Borchardt, p. 19).

words full of sincere hope – or, on the contrary, are they an expression of biting irony? It is well known that the answers to this very question polarised previous interpreters of the poem.²⁹ I will therefore consider both possibilities.

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- 29 Let us recall the most important interpretations of the ending of "Fortepian Szopena": Waclaw Borowy, "Norwid poeta," in: *Pamięci Cypriana Norwida* (Warszawa: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 1946), p. 43: "One may be surprised that there is so much irony in the works of the poet who sometimes speaks with great and pure pathos ... But also, his pathos is sometimes intertwined with irony. It is enough to recall just the ending of 'Fortepian Szopena' – Tadeusz Makowiecki, "Norwid myśliciel," in: *Pamięci Cypriana Norwida*, p. 123: "There is a terrible, even painful clash in this appeal to delight. And in this tone of terrifying irony and mockery, the poet formulates two theses, with which he eventually closes the whole thing. Rejoice – because even deaf stones moaned, rejoice – because even dead objects have spoken, but at what cost, you, the 'late grandson,' will not know. This sudden change of point of view, this 'Froschperspective,' the view from the perspective of the stones and their benefit – entails a second thesis, giggling like a fiend. 'The ideal has reached the street,' the main slogan of various theorists has come true in our eyes as a tragic caricature – perfection has thus descended to the level of the ground, to the level of the ordinary, has reached the street. Well, it died in the process – but the programme came true – so rejoice! ... Thus resorting to mockery has here a double artistic meaning – it creates a bitter distance between the author and the events just described and, at the same time, through a sudden emotional leap and ironic dissonance, it impressionistically closes the image of the shattered piano. The poet could not close the dynamic, rushing melody of the last passage with a serious, majestic chord; he had to break it off – with a rasp." – Zofia Szymdowa, *Liryka romantyczna*, Part 1. (Warszawa: Trzaska, Evert i Michalski, 1947), p. 41: "The final sense of dissonance is difficult to capture." – Filip, *Cypriana Norwida "Fortepian Szopena" ze stanowiska twórczości poety odczytany*, p. 220: "Nonetheless, even in the face of such a tragic crisis, such a gloomy reality, Norwid – as a result of his own idea of tragedy and his own ironic contradiction – sees in the parable of the disaster of Chopin's piano the pledge to realise moral truths, and therefore triumphantly expresses his faith" — Janina Garbaczowska, *Cyprian Norwid* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1948), p. 16: "Chopin's piano thrown out onto the street is admittedly a symbol of the misery of every ideal that came into contact with the earth, but at the same time, perhaps, a prophetic symbol – it means that art will descend and permeate the people." – Gomulicki, a commentary in: Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane [Collected Works]*, Vol. 2, pp. 688–689: "Well, this 'breaking' of the ties between the Reality and the Ideal has now been symbolically repaired, for Norwid reads the Warsaw piano disaster as a parable ... Hence the poet's joy, believing that the parable read by him as if foreshadows the future victory of the ideal ..., which is only seemingly smashed and humiliated in its fall, for in reality it 'reached' the indifferent and dead Reality, as if ennobling it and raising it to a higher level. The ideal can never die down, on the street ...: "Bo w górze – grób jest Ideom człowieka, / W

In Norwid's work there appears both the concept of idea and the concept of the ideal. It is not easy to state whether he considered them to be synonyms or

dole – grób ciału” [For upon those height – lies the grave of man's *Ideas*, / Down in these depths – his body's tomb;] (Trans. Borchardt, p. 47) – not to mention the fact that every ‘upadek, który pozostawia po sobie następstwa – żywotne, jest zwycięstwem’ [fall that leaves behind vital consequences, is a victory] (“O tzninie i czynie” [“On the Tchin and the Deed”], 1861).” – Artur Sandauer, “Pasja św. Fortepianu,” in: Artur Sandauer, *Matecznik literacki* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972), p. 26: “Piętnem globu tego – niedostatek [Privation is this globe stigma]. Does it not mean that Chopin's art – too harmonious and ‘finished’ – demanded an intrusion into reality – even if by slamming the instrument against the cobblestones, that the annihilation was inherent in it, that Chopin's artistic triumphs demanded to be completed by – for example, posthumous – martyrdom, harmony – through the clatter of bursting strings? ... ‘Defenestration’ becomes a symbol – not so much of the defiance of holiness, but of Passion, which is a necessary condition for the resurrection. For music to gain immortality, Orpheus must be torn apart: Caucasian maenads find their sacred role in this rite. The final dissonance is not so much ‘trudno uchwytny’ [difficult to capture] as it simply does not exist. ‘Ciesz się, późny wnuku’ [Rejoice, our grandson yet to come] – it is not a bitter irony; it is a serious prophecy.” – Trznadel, “Brak i dopełnienie,” pp. 48–49: “Although the last sentence of the poem: ‘Ideal sięgnął bruku’ [The ideal has reached the street] through the word ‘reached’ emphasised an element of intent in relation to the earlier reporting formula ‘runął na bruki’ [it has fallen onto the cobblestones] (about the piano), this also includes a warning. The tragedy means here the price for realising an ideal. If not something more: a pure idea without the mediation of effective practice-work is ‘rzeź niewinnych’ [the slaughter of innocents]. And additionally: the progress of good is brought about not by what is forced by a bloody struggle, but what is an innocent victim in the face of the consequences of the struggle. ... This is a fatal sacrifice, but a fertile one, bringing ‘następstwa żywotne’ [vital consequences] – reaching for the reality of deaf stones. They play in the poem the same function as Russia as ‘bryła lodu’ [a lump of ice] in the poem ‘Do wroga’ [“To the Enemy”]. The good changes, ‘rozpuszcza’ [dissolves] the evil. The following sentence contained in Norwid's loose notes can be considered a commentary to the poem ‘Do wroga’: ‘Barbarzyńcy, jak lodu bryła tocząca się na dół, ku fiołkom – rozplakali się w nic!’ [The barbarians, like a lump of ice rolling down to the violets – burst into tears into nothingness!] (PWsz VII, 381). Due to all these considerations that the last strophe of ‘Fortepian Szopena’ is both prophetic and bitter-ironic. It is Norwid's tragic irony, well known to us.” See also Jacek Trznadel, *Czytanie Norwida: próby* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1978), p. 157. Henryk Markiewicz, *Pozytywizm* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1978), p. 267: “The final meaning of the poem is ambiguous – in the words ‘ideal sięgnął bruku’ [the ideal has reached the street] one can read both the painful irony in the face of violating and destroying spiritual values, and the paradoxical interpretation of the described catastrophe as a symbolic announcement of the fusion of these values with everyday reality.”

associated them with different contents. If one were to assume that his thought was in line with the distinctions made by Hegel, the idea would have to be interpreted as a special entity that is transcendent in relation to the world, as a true equivalent to itself (this would be indicated by the considerations from *Supplement* to “Słowo i litera” [The Word and the Letter] as cited above), while the ideal as an embodiment of an idea in a work of art. In any case, the fact is that an idea, according to Norwid, demands “completion” through its realisation in the world, especially in human reality. If it is not embodied, it is condemned to death, and the time of its possible revelation may pass forever. This certainly does not apply to every idea; it is hard to think that Norwid did not see those that are truly eternal and always relevant. Nevertheless, there remains the possibility, or even necessity, for many of them not being fulfilled, as the poem “Idee i prawda” [“Ideas and Truth”] proclaims:

Bo w górze – grób jest *Ideom* człowieka,
 W dole – grób *ciału*;
 I nieraz *szczytne* wczorajszego wieka
 Dziś – tyczy kału...

Prawda się *razem* dochodzi i czeka!

(PWsz II, 66)

[For upon those height – lies the grave of man’s *Ideas*,
 Down in these depths – his body’s tomb;
 And often what’s *lofty* in yesteryear
 Today – it touches excreta...

Truth, one *both* reaches it and awaits!]³⁰

Let us consider the last verse of this work. The truth needs to be specifically sought for by combining the ideal with what is transient through the efforts of those who should embody it. One would like to repeat after Scheler that an idea, similar to a value, contains a moment of a specific *claim*. However, its implementation requires preparation and maturity on the part of those who are to do so. The same truth also applies to art. A nation which has not matured to practise it autonomously will, out of necessity, regard it as something foreign and even inconvenient to itself. Therefore, it will never achieve the ideal that could be revealed to it through art. This thought is contained in the *Epilogue* in

30 Trans. Borchardt, p. 47.

Promethidion, but it is probably most clearly expressed in the poem “W pracowni Guyskiego” [“In Guyski’s Studio”]:

Tak dalece społeczność, choć odpechniesz dżutem,
Wróci zawsze, i wróci koturnem rozzutym,
Panująca czasowi, przestrzeni i ciała,
I tylko jednej rzeczy trwożna... Ideału!

Lecz Ideał (o! Guyski) nie zstąpi do ludów,
Które doń rąk wyciągnąć nie chcą, czy nie mogą.
Patrz, gdzie doszła Florencja Ideału drogą,
I czy byłaby doszła bez szkoły swej cudów?...
A dziś nosi słoneczny dyjadem na głowie,
Który jej zwiastowali Michał-Aniołowie.

Bo zaprawdę ci powiem: że narodów losy,
I koleje ludzkości, i świat, i niebiosy,
I słońce, i gwiazd chóry, i rdzeń minerału,
I duch!...

... i wszystko – bierze żywot z Ideału.

(PWsz II, 194)

[So far will the community, although shoved off with a chisel,
Always come back, and it will come back with a split-wedge,
Having reign over time, space and body,
And there is only one thing that it fears... the Ideal!

But the Ideal (o! Guyski) will not descend to the peoples
That do not want or cannot reach out their hands to it.
Look where Florence has got on the path of the Ideal,
And would it have come there without the school of its wonders?...
And today it wears a sunny diadem on its head,
Which was heralded to it by Michelangelos.

Because I truly tell you: the fates of nations,
And the fate of humanity, and the world, and the heavens,
And the sun, and the choirs of stars, and the mineral core,
And the spirit!...

...and everything – takes its life from the Ideal.]

Meanwhile, the piano, the symbol of the ideal, is violently thrown out from a burning building here. The ideal is undoubtedly profaned, broken, and, as a consequence, divided into parts. These will be pulled apart by Passions. Another image, a man’s noble thought ruined by men’s wrath – it means it was not only misunderstood, but also rejected, both “in itself” and in its consequences: “jak

od wieka wieków – wszystko co zbudzi” [– *ever and evermore* – *With all that will awaken*]. The profanation refers to the ideal of Poland, the zenith of its perfection (this sentence must be read as a whole: Poland taken from the zenith of the all-perfection of history, a Poland of transfigured wheelwrights – he proclaimed with an anthem of admiration), an ideal which has not yet been achieved because it will only become a reality when Poland, having returned to the essence of its origins and enriched with general humanistic ideals, becomes the Poland of “wheelwrights transfigured into kings.”

The profanation of the ideal is a fact, just as “men’s wrath” is a fact; this time it is not the anger of marauding soldiers throwing away a lofty symbol of art, but, unfortunately, of the compatriots who are unable to accept and appreciate the “man’s noble thought,” the thought of the idea of Poland, an idea prepared for it in eternity. Indeed “– *ever and evermore* – *With all that will awaken*” because of this thought is thoughtlessly manhandled and destroyed. Once again Norwid voices the bitter truth about a nation that is immature and insensitive to the values descending upon it, a nation as deaf as the cobblestones.

Hence now, at the end of “Fortepian Szopena,” when we hear the tragic words: “Ideał sięgnął bruku” [The ideal has reached the street], we cannot refrain from thinking about the cruel irony of this situation. We are a society that was not ready to accept the ideal revealed in Chopin’s art. The ideal has fallen apart before our very eyes. It does not matter what power caused it. In fact, the “late grandson” has no reason to rejoice. For us, everything has ended regardless of whether it was our fault or not.

However, this is not the only way to interpret the final verse of “Fortepian Szopena.” I have already drawn attention to the role of the words: “Lecz Ty? – lecz ja?” [But You? – but I?]. Is our “sądne pieńie” [judgement chant] supposed to be a chant heralding the end? Let us once again recall the distinction between “śmierć” [death] and “zgon” [untimely departure] from the last poem of the *Vade-mecum* cycle – “Na zgon śp. Józefa Z.” [“On the Death of the Late Józef Z.”]. It now seems that everything depends on whether the fall and breaking of the piano, the symbol, or more than a symbol, the embodiment of the ideal of Chopin’s art, should be understood as death or untimely departure. In the first case, the former interpretation applies. In the second case, the call: “Ciesz się, późny wnuku!” [Rejoice, our grandson yet to come!] takes on the tone of real hope. The untimely departure is a testimony – a testimony for us. This is how the essential meaning of the poem dedicated to Józef Z. is presented. The smashing of the piano is undoubtedly a sacrifice. But as a result of it, the ideal does not have to perish forever. Was the image of “upuszczonej przez Orfeja liry” [the lyre dropped by Orpheus] not been complemented by the reflection that “się

rzutu-moc z pieśnią przesila” [force-of-thrust struggles with song]? Do we not have the right to expect a further continuation here too: in the song?

In the normal course of things, the ideal descends to people by its gradual elaboration through art. Here it came down by violence, but it came down, revealed itself, and touched the lowest level. And, most importantly, it found a response, although a specific one. Stones have a dual nature. It is true that the piano is smashed against them, but they are also capable of moaning. This is their deepest response. A colon before the sentence: “Ideał sięgnął bruku” [The ideal – has reached the street – –], allows us to assume that these are the words uttered by the stones! Therefore, smashing does not mean annihilation; it is a necessary sacrifice made to reach out to the lowest regions of reality which should also be permeated by the ideal; they can respond to it and, by default, they can appreciate it. Such an interpretation of the breakdown and preservation, of reconstructing the broken one and raising it to a new, higher level, which also means returning to the “consummate completion,” is confirmed in an earlier poem from the *Vade-mecum* cycle, entitled “Moralności” [“Moralities”]. It is about Moses’ two tablets, of which: “Druga – całym pękła kamieniem / O twardość ludu.” (PWsz II, 78) [The second – the whole stone split / Against the hardness of the people.]. It is essential to recall here the end of this poem:

Aż przyjdzie dzień... gdy gniew, co zbił tablice,
Stanie się zapalem, który tworzy:
Rozniepodziane złoży
I pogodne odkryje lice.

(PWsz II, 79)

[Until the day comes... when the *wrath that has broken the tablets*,
becomes *the zeal that creates*:
It will gather the dispersed
And reveal bright faces.]

Going back to “Fortepian Szopena” – the words “Ideał sięgnął bruku” [The ideal has reached the street] are followed by two hyphens. The poem has ended, but the thought has been left unfinished. It should be completed – a demand postulated by Norwid many times. What are the consequences of this event? Is it not a necessary condition for the transformation of a “Poland of wheelwrights?” After all, as the *Epilogue* in *Promethidion* states: “W Polsce – od grobu Fryderyka Chopina rozwinie się sztuka, jako powoju wieniec” (DW IV, 133; secondary emphasis added by W. S.) [*In Poland*, art will develop *from the grave* of Fryderyk Chopin as a wreath of bindweed ...].

The image of reaching the street by the ideal had been anticipated before. The dialectic character of perfection-imperfection was signalled in the image of "kłócenie się klawiszy" [keys wrangling with one another], in the fall of Orpheus's lyre, and brought to a climax in the image of scattering of an ear of wheat, the destruction of perfection, and the impossibility of maintaining the balance.³¹ All these situations are connected with the essence of "our" reality, with the essence of "this globe," and only that in each of them the privation/lack/deficiency manifests itself differently – from the master's control (the argument of the keys), through the *accidental* dropping of the lyre, the inability to maintain a state of special tension, the necessary condition of perfect maturity, which, therefore, itself bears the seed of doom – to the *violent act*, is inflicted on this perfection as if from outside, by the evil inherent in people. But *every* such situation, absolutely every situation, also includes the seed of revival. The clash of positivity and negativity leads to "abolition," which starts the new process of synthesising the shreds of the broken whole and ascending to the ideal.

This was the second interpretation of the ending of "Fortepian Szopena." But which interpretation is the right one? Seemingly, it would seem both. For both can be confirmed in Norwid's texts and in his thoughts. One would have to agree that the ending of the poem is ambiguous and even that this ambiguity was intended by the author. Some things remained unsaid – and this should remain so. The two interpretive possibilities could therefore be complementary. Unfortunately, however, this solution is not free of certain difficulties or even contradictions. If we adopt the first interpretation, which highlights irony, we will be concerned about its incompatibility with the deepest sense of the poem. If we adopt the second, there will be a shadow of uncertainty as to whether we have not sacrificed something that is so characteristic and important to Norwid's thought – irony.³²

And yet, despite everything, there is a solution. The ending of the poem is not ambiguous, and the two suggested interpretations are not equivalent. We just have to distinguish between the superficial and the deep, and between the truth "for now" and the truth for the future. The fall of the piano does not herald the end of the ideal revealed in the poem. This would seem to be the case if one took into account the time when it happened, the situation in which it was not yet entirely possible to understand what was most important. Just as in the first poem of the *Vade-mecum* cycle, also here Norwid refers to the "late grandson."

31 This was pointed out by Sandauer, "Pasja św. Fortepianu," p. 21.

32 See Sandauer, "Pasja św. Fortepianu," pp. 22–24.

“Rejoice” is uttered completely seriously. In a world in which it is impossible to retain perfection, the only way to achieve it is through its dynamic *development*.³³ This, in turn, necessarily means dispersing and collecting, losing and rising again, death and resurrection – there is no other way. Life requires sacrifice; the future requires overcoming the past. The hope underlying this process is as strong as love, reborn in different shapes of beauty.

Such an interpretation of the ending of “Fortepian Szopena” allows us also to read its beginning in a different way. Strophe 1 now turns out to be a prelude announcing, in the most concise way possible, the entirety of the essential meaning of the poem. The words: “Pełne jak mit” [Full – like Myth] do not refer to an undefined concept of myth, but to the concept of development and achievement of fulfilment outlined in strophes 4 and 7. “Świt” [dawn] means hope for the new, the dawn of what is to arrive and come true despite the approaching death – or rather through it. And finally: “Gdy życia koniec szepce do początku” [When life’s end whispers to its beginning] does not necessarily have to be read as a reminder of the beginning of what was and is about to pass away completed, but as a prophecy of the beginning of a new phase of development of the same ideal, but in a changed, more mature and, above all, better and deeper form...

Although the direct object of the poem is Chopin’s art, the scene, the metaphysical horizon in the deepest deposits of the layer of content becomes *the entire reality*. It is stretched between what is absolutely perfect, characterised by fullness, “completion,” eternity, and finally, not called directly by name, beauty (we can call it the sphere of ideas), and the “globe” stigmatised by its accidentality. However, these two spheres are not isolated from each other. The ideal, which in its various manifestations (“the Love’s profile”) lends itself to earthly reality, does never fully remain in it in its pure form, but is condemned, or condemns itself, to “rozmienienie” [fragmentation], dispersion, and destruction. But this, too, never comes to an end, to absolute destruction, and perhaps this final stage of disintegration is an indispensable condition for entering the path returning to the ideal – *death* can become *untimely departure*. After all, the globe “wyrzucą przed się zadatek” [prefers always to pay – a deposit], thus it starts a new job – the difficulty is to bring it to the end and to achieve completion. Scattered values can undergo a purifying transformation and rise to a higher synthesis. Both the “descending” of the ideal and its “raising” are achieved through art. It is art that constitutes the main factor (and simultaneously the expression) of the development of mankind, if only it synthesises in itself the highest values that it is

33 See Makowiecki, “Norwid myśliciel,” esp. pp. 54–55.

able to develop. Among them, the most important are the humanistic values represented by ancient art and morality, Christian religious values, and finally, in particular, national values – though the poem only mentions Polish national values. All of them, however, must be “transformed,” i.e. brought to the purest and highest form – only then can they melt into a single whole, capable of reaching the ideal. This happens in those short moments when art, by the power of the artist's genius, reaches its fullest actualisation³⁴ and, at the same time, such a tension of perfection and harmony that it is simply no longer possible to maintain it under the conditions of our world.

2 A characteristic feature that imposes itself at the first reading of the poem is *its musicality*.³⁵ It manifests itself in various dimensions: in the formal construction resembling a cyclical form, in the polyphonic course of the main threads, in the waving and contrasting of moods and tensions, and finally in the most basic layer, in the selection of verbal sounds and the use of rhythm.

The poem begins with a phrase with a muted sound and a calm, as if halted, rhythm. This rhythm, like a slow and sweeping pace, seems to force us to reflect on both the deepest and ultimate matters.

But the rhythm of “Fortepian Szopena” is constantly changing. It adopts different figures but always those most closely corresponding to the meaning of the poem. At the same time, the agogic course of the work changes. In the middle part, the poem flows slowly, in a dignified manner, and calms down in evenly stressed phrases of verses proclaiming the ideal of art. In the last strophes, the

34 This moment of actualisation and simultaneously blending the artist with art is emphasised by Norwid in the drama *Kleopatra i Cezar* [Cleopatra and Caesar] (Act III, DW VI, 386): “Zniknąć we wykonaniu dzieła! – oto sztuka! / Kapitalniejszej nie znam precepty i myślę, / Że znać innej nie może uważny pracownik. / Powiadają, że dzieła mają nas uwiecznić: / Nie to wszelako czyni je drogimi. One, / Gdyby nasz przewlekały żywot z nędzą jego, / Ze zazdrościami ludzi, z odbytych walk trudem, / Zaiste, że cenniejsze byłyby, im wiotsze!...” [To disappear in the execution of a work! – that is art! / I know no more terrific recipe, and I think / That an attentive worker cannot know any other. / They say that works are supposed to immortalise us: / That does not make them valuable anyway. They would be / If they threaded our life along with its misery, / With the envy of people, with the hardships of the fighting, / Indeed, the more fragile, the more valuable they would be!...].

35 An excellent analysis of the aesthetic aspects of “Fortepian Szopena” was presented in a study by Makowiecki (“Fortepian Szopena”), the rhythm of the work was carefully examined by Filip, *Cypriana Norwida “Fortepian Szopena” ze stanowiska twórczości poety odczytany*, Chap. 4.

rhythm is accelerated which is strengthened through the multiplication of short, stressed syllables:

Patrz!... z zaułków w zaułki
 Kaukaskie się konie rwą
 Jak przed burzą jaskółki,
 Wyśmigając przed pułki,
 Po *sto* – po *sto* – –

[Look!... from alleys to alleys
 Caucasian horses tear forth,
 Like swallows before a storm,
 Ahead of their brigades –
 Hundred – by hundred – –]

– to change again and calm down at the very end, until the last words: “Ideal – sięgnął bruku” [The Ideal – has reached the street – –].

The dynamics of the poem goes hand in hand with the qualities of its rhythm and agogic. From the *piano* of the first strophes, silenced to a whisper, it goes in the middle part to the full voice revealing the essence of art, to the *forte* of “BRAK” [privation/lack/deficiency], to rise to a desperate cry of the last strophes through the *crescendo* in the description of what is happening next to the burning building and in it. Furthermore, we may have the impression that the words ending the poem sound like chords, each one quieter than the previous.

The musicality of the poem stems from the spirit of Chopin’s music. In saying this, I do not mean any literal “illustration” that could be made concrete, for example, in attempts to “backing” the particular strophes of the poem with Chopin’s works. It would make even less sense to ask what Norwid might have heard when he composed the verses of “Fortepian Szopena,” or which works he knew best, what he experienced “live,” or which of Chopin’s works were most important to him. This concerns an issue that is more important and, at the same time, much more difficult to capture – the special correlation between the aesthetic qualities and forms of those qualities, which seem surprisingly analogous in Chopin’s art and its “description” by Norwid. If “Fortepian Szopena” resembles cyclical musical work in its construction in which the individual links differ in tone, rhythm, agogic, emotional character, and yet still form *a single* cycle, then one cannot resist the thought, that the closest analogy of the poem could be Chopin’s *Preludes*, which encapsulates such an incredible wealth of feelings and moods, so compelling for reflection and revealing qualities impossible to express in another language – tragedy and serenity, drama and calmness,

idyll and metaphysical solemnity. But other works by Chopin may also come to mind, especially those with an elaborate form, and among them, above all, some polonaises. Provided that the interpretation proposed in the previous part of the article is correct, the juxtaposition of "Fortepian Szopena" with the polonaise, with its "idea," finds an interesting confirmation in Norwid's own opinion about this "Polish dance:"

POLONEZ, kreacja już nie prowincjonalna, pojedynczego elementu, ale *cało-narodowa*, mogąca się rozciągnąć od religijnego rytmu aż do tej poważnej mimiki chórów lub tryumfów starożytnych, które na barieliefach greckich i rzymskich spotykamy. Jako powaga rytmu tej jest wartości i to miejsce zajmuje u Polaków, co np. (w rozwijaniu się pieśni u Greków) *Epopeja*. (PWSz VI, 387)

[The POLONAISE, no longer a provincial creation of a single element but a *whole-national one*, which can range from a religious rhythm to that serious countenance of the choirs or ancient triumphs that we encounter in Greek and Roman bas-reliefs. The value of the seriousness of this rhythm and the place it occupies among Poles is similar (in the development of songs in the Greek culture) to *Epic*.]

Of course, a clear indication of a particular polonaise by Chopin would be impossible. But perhaps one of the most mysterious, evocative of the whole array of the imperceptible varieties of the idea of values: drama, tragedy, loftiness and reverie, but also surprising in its middle part due to the cheerful rhythm of the mazurka – in a word: *Polonaise in F sharp minor, Op. 44*, would be the closest to the emotional aura of Norwid's poem. Of course, it is only a suggestion, one of many possibilities, but probably worth noting and investigating in the future...

And what about the layer of images evoked?

The images that appear before our eyes are highlighted by the words of the text which clearly direct the gaze of the observer to the hand that "mieszała mi się w oczach z klawiaturą" [fused in my eyes with the keyboard], to the host that "przez blade widzę zboże" [through the pale wheat I see] – or drawing attention of another person to something: "Oto – patrz, Fryderyku!... to – Warszawa" [Look then – Frederic!... this is – Warsaw]. And everything appears in a clearly marked perspective, in close-ups or from a distance, as if as a result of particular camerawork – coming closer or moving away from the objects portrayed. Chopin's hands are visually blended with the keyboard because we look at them from a close-up, but the image of Warsaw "pod rozpłomienioną gwiazdą" [under a flaming star] is first presented as if from a bird's eye view, and only later to reveal more and more additional details: houses, the cobblestones of squares, Sigismund's sword, and even the organ hidden inside the Parish church. The

same “filmic” way of zooming in and out can be found in the description of the fire, except that the gaze slips from such details as “czoła ożałobionych wdów” [widows’ mourning brows], to “ganeł kolumny” [balcony’s columns], and all this is taking place in motion, in the nervous rush of a man really flipping his gaze from one place to another.

This is accompanied by a masterful and meaningful use of colour. The initial image emerges from an indeterminate pallor of dawn; and the whole is subordinated to this gentle glow, blurring all sharp contours – even when the attention is focused on the detail brought to the foreground:

Którego ręka... dla swojej białości
Alabastrowej – i wzięcia – i szyku –
I chwiejnych dotknięć jak strusiowe pióro –
Mięszła mi się w oczach z klawiaturą
Z słoniowej kości...

[Whose hand... with its alabaster
Whiteness – and manners, and chic,
Its swaying touches like an ostrich plume –
Fused in my eyes with the keyboard
Of elephant tusk...]

White remains the dominant colour of the images emerging based on the first strophe. An alabaster hand, keys made of ivory, marble – and later white grain, the host, and finally, not directly visible, but inevitably suggested, the bright whiteness of the robes of transfigured Christ on Tabor.

Only one more colour is recalled in this part of the work: “złoto-pszczoła” [golden-bee] Poland and an ear of wheat, “złoty kometa” [a golden comet] – thrown in like an embroidery against the background of whiteness that saturates everything.

But suddenly the picture changes. “Rozpłomieniona gwiazda” [a flaming star] appears in the sky; the view of the flames devouring the building adds redness to the image, and finally, everything is obscured by the blackness of smoke. And it is precisely black that now becomes the colour defining every detail: the Caucasian horses compared to swift swallows, “czoła ożałobionych wdów” [widows’ mourning brows], granite cobblestones, and finally, “sprzęt podobny do trumny” [coffin-likened object] – the piano. The gentle contours of objects described in the first strophes give way to brightness, the flimsiness of touches, and the gentleness of pushing keys – to the cruelty done to women’s bodies who are “kolbami pchané” [pushed by rifle butts]...

White and black – like black and white piano keys...

The qualities signalled here, which are present both in the layer of sounds and in the layer of images in the poem, harmonised with the richness and ever-growing depths of its meanings, lead to extraordinary selections of aesthetically valuable qualities, determining the values foregrounded in the individual parts of the poem. Here, it is difficult to speak merely of aesthetic values, unless one means integral aesthetics, capable of synthesising – in a particular kind of axiological unity – various types of values, including moral and religious values.

The lines of the first part of the poem, the most personal and reflexive, are enveloped in an aura of extraordinary gentleness, restraint, subtlety, and silence. Since everything that is described is evoked as a reminder, while at the same time it is presented in the detail of the closest view, it creates a specific dialectic of distance and closeness.

The thought runs in its own, apparently held back (*sostenuto*) rhythm, in line with what is described in the object layer, where everything also proceeds as if on its own, according to laws specific to itself: the nudging of the strings, the argument of the keys, the movement of Chopin's hand "błogosławiąca każdemu akordowi" [blessing each chord].

In strophes 4 and 5, which resemble an anthem celebrating Chopin's music, an anthem sung in joyful but subdued exaltation, new voices come to light – moments of joy and seriousness, but also extraordinary peace, familiarity, idyll, even pastorality – if we understand pastorality not merely as ordinary "rusticity" but its ideal, subjected in a way to the "shepherding" of values higher than it, including religious values. The calmness of these strophes and their particular *brightness* evoke an elegiac atmosphere which – still present in strophe 7, speaking of art in general – becomes more exalted, reaching the superordinate axiological categories of solemnity and loftiness...

It is in this mood of solemnity that the great words about Love's profile and perfect fulfilment are uttered. This mood only fades when the sharp and heavy word "brak" [privation/lack/deficiency] is spoken, and further when, in an atmosphere of certain sadness and resignation, the essence of "tego globu" [this globe] starts to be explained in a gradually calmer tone.

And finally, the final strophes – the most dramatic, breathing terror and rising to the point of screaming, strophes in which every image, every sound of the word is subordinated to the prevailing atmosphere of tragedy, which is all the deeper, because it is not only seen, almost tangibly felt, but the reader is also *aware* of all its horror, since the thread of bitter reflection constantly intertwines here with *vision*.

Then comes the "coda" containing the most difficult words – not only for a purely content-related interpretation but also an aesthetic interpretation.

For – despite the justification provided above – there remains a shadow of this mysterious ambiguity, a painful hiss of irony, which seems to want to break through to the surface, even if it is going to be ultimately suppressed by the deep and dominating *serio*. The final words of the poem make us think; it is due to them, inter alia, that this work, closed in its perfection, also becomes an “open work.”³⁶ Fulfilment is not equivalent to limitation; after all, through constantly re-initiated concretisations, it can be accomplished infinitely...

There comes a moment to put aside all analyses and interpretations and return to the very text of “Fortepian Szopena.” Let it speak for itself and reveal itself in its truth, undisturbed by anything, or any other foreign thought. Let it reveal itself as yet another sign of *perfect fulfilment*.

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36 See Makowiecki, *Norwid myśliciel*, p. 60.

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Marian Maciejewski

Fate Crucified

Abstract: “Fatum” from *Vade-mecum* is interpreted in the context of Norwid’s entire literary output and from the models of romantic, lyrical poetry. The author aims at showing Norwid’s attitude towards suffering, which disables man like an irreversible Ill Fate or Misfortune. A comparative analysis of “Fatum” points to the Christian concept of suffering where suffering is considered to be a profit rather than a loss. Man should experience suffering and not “swerve” in the face of Misfortune. He must adopt the priestly attitude (“Sfinks”) towards his own history and experience it as a great celebration “in Spirit and truth” (John 4: 23) and with everything good and acceptable since everything comes to us directly from God (“Dookoła ziemi naszej. Pieśń”). Yet, in his liturgy, which reflects the Mystery of the Passion sufferings resulting from all the misfortunes (but not from the sin!), occupy a privileged place. They bear the name of the cross and render it possible to experience the Pascha that is the transition from death to resurrection [“A Pani cóż ja powiem?”]. Biblical Adam, the first man, could not “see” and therefore was defeated by the Serpent; pre-Christian Socrates could “see” but was not conscious enough of his “seeing.” Only the man of the Christian era delivers himself and the whole world from Ill Fate by taking it upon himself. Christ, another Adam, revealed the mystery of the cross and now gives it to man as the armour of God for his wrestling against the world rulers of this darkness (Eph 6: 19–20). Christ had already won this fight and now this fact guarantees man’s victory. Therefore, this is a glorious cross, radiating resurrection. For, in Norwid’s world of values, the cross occupies the main point of the divine and human universe.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, Christianity, Christian tradition, Christian concept of suffering

I

Jak dziki zwierz przyszło *Nieszczęście* do człowieka
I zatopiło weń fatalne oczy...
– Czekaj – –
Czy, człowiek, zboczy?

II

Lecz on odejrzał mu, jak gdy artysta
Mierzy swojego kształt modelu;
I spostrzegło, że on patrzy – *co?* skorzysta
Na swym nieprzyjacielu:
I zachwiało się całą postaci wagą
– I nie ma go!¹

(PWsz II, 49)

1 All highlights in Norwid’s texts – unless stated otherwise – come from the poet.

[*Misfortune*, like a wild beast, accosted man
And pierced him with its fateful eyes...

– Waits – /

Will man swerve?

II

But he gazed back steadily like an artist

Who sizes up his model's form;

Noticing that he looks – how? to profit

From his foe:

It staggered with all its weight

– – And is gone!]²

I

This quote from “*Fatum*” [Fate] represents the thirtieth “stop” on the road through the “hell of modern times,” to use the expression of the tireless publisher, Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki.³ Through the hell of the nineteenth century daguerreotyped with the “Dantean” pen of Cyprian Norwid in the poetic cycle *Vade-mecum* which was not published during the poet’s lifetime, it is known that the call, “Follow me,” was addressed by the dialogue-thirsty author of this “artist’s diary” primarily to a contemporary audience. Taught through experience that manuscripts are lost, publishers in the end terminate contracts because of the permanent accusation of the “darkness of speech.” He ultimately relied on dialogue from beyond the grave, with “his late grandchild” that “on spomni mnie... bo mnie nie będzie!” (PWsz II, 17) [“will recall me... when I’ll be no more.”]⁴

In a letter to Henryk Merzbach dated 7 June 1866, a publisher and a poet (one lowbrow in comparison!), lucky in being able to make his poetry accessible to the audience, Norwid recommends his own cycle as “a reply-song to [Merzbach’s] booklet *Z wiosny* [From Spring] – because it is *Z jesieni* [From autumn]!” Later on, Norwid says:

Jest to moje “*Vade-mecum*” złożone ze 100 rymów najwzszelakszej budowy, a misterną nicią wewnętrzną zjętych w ogół. Są to rzeczy gorzkie, może głębokie, może dziwne – – niezawodnie potrzebne! (DW XII, 475)

2 Trans. Adam Czerniawski, Cyprian Norwid, *Selected Poems* (London: Anvil Press, 2004), p. 67.

3 *Comment. VII. Vade-mecum. 1865–1866*, in: C. Norwid, *Dziela zebrane*, ed. J. W. Gomulicki (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1966), Vol. 2: *Wiersze. Dodatek krytyczny*, p. 729 (further cited as Dz 2).

4 The last verse of the prologue piece in *Vade-mecum* begins with the incipit: “Klaskaniem mając obrzękle prawice” [Their Hands Swollen from Clapping]. Trans. Danuta Borchardt, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), p. 19.

[It is my *Vade-mecum*, composed of 100 rhymes of various structure, joined together by an intricate inner thread. These ideas are bitter, maybe deep, maybe strange – undoubtedly necessary!]

“Fatum,” as the thirtieth “rhyme,” diligently entangled with the “intricate thread” of references to preceding and following poems of the anthology, is surely “deep,” “strange,” and “undoubtedly necessary.” It may not be “bitter” in itself; so we have to ask, what is the source of this bitterness? Or perhaps it is “bitter” in the sense of readership pragmatics, meaning that the message to the reader contained therein is not executed, that the deep existential wisdom found in it remains in the “realm of the ideal” and the utopia inaccessible to human experience?

The semantic “strangeness” and “depth” of “Fatum” may have provoked the most prominent critics of our widely understood modernity to lighten the “darkness of [this] speech,”⁵ and to undertake many attempts to light the hermeneutic candles. In 1948, a comprehensive analysis of the poem was published in Stefan Szuman’s book *O sztuce i istocie poezji lirycznej* [On the Artistry and Essence of Lyrical Poetry]; it treated this Norwidan miniature in an exemplary manner and stated that “one of the essential features of an actual lyrical work is its lapidary nature.”⁶ In that same year, Kazimierz Wyka in his publication entitled *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz* [Cyprian Norwid. Poet and Magician] also refers to “Fatum,”⁷ as if it were impossible to discuss the essential qualities of the poetry of this nineteenth-century Magician without including this poem. In 1971, a jubilee year for Norwid, Zdzisław Łapiński in his monograph (a short but highly inspiring and balancing what was the most accurate in Norwidology), again despite the asceticism in quoting, recalls this text of interest and states in the chapter on Norwidan anthropology that “the role of artistic activities related to personal growth was most eloquently laid out in the metaphoric “Fatum””⁸ Furthermore, “Fatum” could not be overlooked in the paper by Michał Głowiński entitled *Norwida wiersze-przypowieści* [Norwid’s Poem-Parables] delivered at the conference of the Institute for Literary Research commemorating the 150th anniversary of the poet’s birth.⁹ And recently Danuta Zamącińska confirmed the

5 Formula from “Ciemność” [Obscurity] included in the *Vade-mecum* cycle (IX), PWsz II, 26. Further quote also from here.

6 Stefan Szuman, *O sztuce i istocie poezji lirycznej* (Toruń: Poligrafika, 1948), p. 113.

7 Kazimierz Wyka, *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1948), pp. 36–37.

8 Zdzisław Łapiński, *Norwid* (Kraków: Znak, 1971), p. 78.

9 Michał Głowiński, “Norwida wiersze-przypowieści,” in: *Cyprian Norwid w 150-lecie urodzin. Materiały konferencji naukowej 23–25 września 1971*, ed. M. Żmigrodzka

previous state of research on the poem with particular emphasis on the interpretation by Waław Borowy published in 1947 in *Główne motywy poezji Norwida* [Leading motifs in Norwid's poetry],¹⁰ and wants yet again to "light the candle herself." She rebels against:

formulas that lead us away from the monumental view of man, from intellectualism, from moralism – towards the observation of mechanisms that are rather simple but deeply rooted in every human being. If a psychologist calls them very unpoetically "self-defence mechanisms," typical to all living beings, then Norwid allows me to see this encounter with fate in more human categories – and without the lofty loneliness of the chosen one¹¹

From the perspective of the quoted statement of the last personal act of "lighting the candle," this attempt at interpreting the poem will be close to the protest against its intellectualism (Wyka), against moralism (Szuman), and against "monumental perception of man" (Borowy). However, the motifs that explain the condition of a Norvidian Man threatened by misfortune are also found in places other than "self-defence mechanisms." Because the second fragment of the piece, despite some artistic shortcomings revealed by Zamaćnińska,¹² cannot be belittled by indicating its nineteenth-century conventionalisation, which barrens the poetic potential and deprives the text of the power capable of moving the imagination a bit more vividly.

The poet fervently postulates the reception of individual poems in *Vademecum* in the context of the entire cycle, even his entire oeuvre, which is indicated by stylistic and conceptual references to "Fatum" found in other texts from Norwid as noted in a commentary by Gomulicki.¹³ It is true that rationalisation and objectivisation of (real) misfortune exceed the capabilities of the human condition, one shaped by "psychophysical parallelism." "Our integrity,

(Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1973), pp. 102–103. This article was published in the first volume of *On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays*, ed. A. Brajerska-Mazur and E. Chlebowska (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019), pp. 337–374.

- 10 Waław Borowy, *O Norwidzie. Rozprawy i notatki*, ed. Zofia Stefanowska (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1960), pp. 55–56. "Leading motifs in Norwid's poetry" was published in the first volume of *On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays*, pp. 123–172.
- 11 Danuta Zamaćnińska, "Kilka uwag o czytaniu liryki Norwida," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (1980), p. 197; see also the article "Discovering Norwid's Poetry" in the first volume of *On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays*, pp. 427–464.
- 12 Zamaćnińska, "Kilka uwag o czytaniu liryki Norwida," p. 197.
- 13 *Dz 2*, pp. 786–787.

therefore, requires – as Łapiński outlined Norwid’s thought – that all behaviours are the actions of a creation conscious of its carnality.”¹⁴ In Norwid’s lyrical experience that “człowiek cielesny” [carnal man] no longer exists on its own, but in unison with other men and potentially according to Christian views – organically joined since birth with the first one:

...
 Że cię egipskie przyniosły żurawie –
 Że Boga jesteś sąsiadem – *człowiekiem*.

(“Człowiek” [A Human]; PWsz I, 272)

[... That Egyptian cranes brought you –
 That you are God’s neighbour – a man.]

In relation to this couplet, Norwid offers a folk and biblical comment about the proximity of homelands, the neighbourhood of Man and God-man, Christ:

Dzieciom w Polsce mówią, iż człowieka na świat przynosi bocian lub żuraw: w czym leży parabola, iż z górnych stron i od wschodu ludzkość bierze początek. (PWsz I, 272)

[Children in Poland are told that a stork or a crane brings a child into the world: there lies a parable that humanity takes its beginnings from above and in the east.]

In the final part of this text, a man as God’s neighbour (also in the literal sense: Egypt and Palestine) will be called “God’s Man.” The Gospel of Matthew (2: 15) also moves from analogy to identity, asserting the fulfilment of the prophecy of Hosea: “And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my Son.’”¹⁵ Egypt is also the country of captivity which Yahweh summoned his Son Israel to bring him to the land of milk and honey.

It is notable that Norwid’s “man” profiled in this way, suspended between slavery and freedom, remaining in both happiness and misfortune, and will be “nie bardzo szczęśliwy” [not really happy] but this will enable him true existence in a carnal and spiritual identity, in a word – as a God-man:

Nie! – ty bądź raczej nie bardzo szczęśliwy – Pierwszym nie będziesz, ni ostatnim, przeto
 Bądź niezwodzonym! – umarły czy żywy? –
 Cykutą karmion czy miodem i mlekiem? –

14 Łapiński, *Norwid*, pp. 53–54.

15 *Holy Bible, New International Version*, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%20%3A15&version=NIV>

Bądź: niemowlęciem, mężczyzną, kobietą –
 Ale przed wszystkim bądź: Bożym Człowiekiem.
 (PWsz I, 274)

[No! – you'd rather not be really happy –
 You will not be the first, nor the last, so
 Be undeceived! – dead or alive?–
 Fed hemlock or milk and honey?–
 Be: an infant, a man, a woman –
 But above all, be: a God's Man.]

It is notable that the Norwidian postulate of becoming “God's Man” also takes into account self-knowledge triggered by suffering, present already in the pre-Christian period and attributed to Socrates (“cykutą karmion” [fed hemlock]). This Socratic anticipation of the Christian attitude towards suffering returns in the verses of this poet and stylistically correspond with “Fatum.” Patristic literature also annexed pagan wisdom according to the principle that everything true must be Christian.

2

The most outstanding achievements of pre-Norwidian Romantic poetry break with the rhetorical expression of Enlightenment, with its pursuit of essential approaches suggesting psychological expression reveals unique situations within human existence. The lyrical subject is the bearer of a particular biography immersed in clearly defined space-time realities. The Enlightenment optimism, originating in the belief in the meaning of life within a rationally integrated world, is negated in Romanticism by the events of large and small history. The time of both large history and the time of individual experiences become a source of permanent suffering. Hence, various attempts to exorcise time.

In patriotic poems, for instance, time destroying the national entity is repealed due to various forms of activities. The insurgent lyrics carried the apotheosis of the armed movement and heroic attitudes in the Romanticised ode, elegy, and soldier song.

A Romantic poet tries to eliminate the painful sensations of the destructive activity of time in individual history, time directed at the moment of death through various forms of immortalisations: permanent presence in culture, especially by the creative poetic word (Mickiewicz, Słowacki), embracing the moment, that Byronic “drop of eternity,” and, above all, by wandering “in search of the time lost” to the gone Arcadia of childhood (mystical lyrics of Słowacki,

Lausanne lyrics by Mickiewicz), or projections into the future that appear as an allegory of eternity (*Psalmy przyszłości* [*Psalms of the Future*] by Krasiński).¹⁶

Such attempts to tame misfortune, if only in the dimension of genesian mysticism, were undoubtedly rooted in escapism, building deluded asylums (the awareness of which again brought suffering) on the grounds of the psychological self-defence mechanisms or religious needs embedded in man, often nebulous or even unconscious.

“Fatum,” written by Norwid, who does not want to owe anything to the Romantic masters, fits this context. Even the poetics of didactic fables with the Enlightenment tend to favour the defined approaches or related mechanisms governing parables which are closer to his attitude. The “average man” will appear there again, but only seemingly close to the anthropology of Enlightenment. While Norwid shares the belief in the existence of real Misfortune with the Romantics, he does not bring it to the man disguised in historical-colourful entanglements but orders this naked man to defend himself outside a particular time and space, as each man is naked in his defencelessness: both in the biblical account from the Book of Genesis (it is commonly known that the name Adam means Man) and in the account from monumental Greece which knows the tragic activity of Fate. Also, the nineteenth-century man is lonely and weak, although “the work of history” devoted the most effort to form him (“Czasy” [Times]).

Where, then, does the incapacitating power of Misfortune come from if its simple stylistic expression is weighed, personification conventionalised by the still Enlightened tradition, and a very frugal comparison to an equally well-defined “beast?”

Furthermore, *Vade-mecum* contains a poem entitled “Śmierć” [Death] (LXXXII) – death is one of the most expressive names of Misfortune, which reads:

Prócz chwili, w której wzięła – nic nie wzięła:
– Człek – od niej starszy!

(PWsz II, 116)

[Barring the moment when he took, but took nothing:
– Man – is death’s elder!]¹⁷

16 My broader deliberations on the Romantics struggling with time to move existence into the eternal dimension may be found in “Mickiewiczowskie ‘czucia wieczności.’ (Czas i przestrzeń w liryce lożańskiej),” in: *Mickiewicz. Symposium w Katolickim Uniwersytecie Lubelskim*, ed. Andrzej Podgórski (Lublin: TN KUL, 1979), pp. 333–378.

17 Trans. Borchardt: Norwid, *Poems*, p. 57.

Leaving for a moment “on the side” the Christian belief that Man does not die, which is also an important notion for the interpreted poem, let us recall the thought from the second stanza since, if paraphrased, it proclaims that death does not “touch beings” but “circumstances.”

A moment in time dies or disappears, or the situation, not the man, undergoes a transformation. The first part of “Fatum,” by proper “poruszenia mowy” [stirrings in speech], perpetuates this sharp vision of the existential situation, one of the “Dantean” stops on the road leading through the hell of the living, with the daguerreotype method. Perhaps it contains there the most important calling of poetry, especially the existential type? The essence continues anyway, the circumstances disappear.

Therefore, all the compositional-stylistic means that paradigmatised time, let us call them situation-forming, gain immense importance. The situation is a synchronous approach to elements existing over time and seeing them in a relationship. What may be a better tool for reporting than measuring something with one’s own eyes? Therefore, the situation of a spiritual struggle, the very thought process is metaphorically interiorised by the author as a battle “of stares” known from the tales of hunters, Shakespeare, and the “mighty eye” of the Romantics.¹⁸

18 Prof. Z. Stefanowska, while reviewing “‘Fatum’ crucified” for print, graciously drew my attention to the fact that the Norwidian “battle of stares” has something of the Romantic “mighty eye” and that “in the situation presented in ‘Fatum’ it is possible to find “reminiscences from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, in the line of Caesar in act II, scene II, verse 10–12.” Activating the Shakespearean tradition, so eagerly updated by the Romantics, is entirely possible with Norwid, and even more so since it is known that the poet read *Julius Caesar* in London – perhaps – looking “in Shakespeare’s works ... for thoughts which in his days he could not literally feel” (C. Norwid. *O Juliuszu Słowackim w sześciu publicznych posiedzeniach (z dodatkiem rozbioru Balladyny)*, PWSz VI, 444). – Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar could fight evil only with an “open visor,” objectivising it cognitively exactly in terms of “staring battle:” “Caesar shall forth: / the things that threaten’d me / Néer look’d but on my back; / when they shall see / The face of Caesar, they are vanished” (http://shakespeare.mit.edu/julius_caesar/full.html). – It is a good place to ask a question what kind of thoughts Shakespeare did not feel? Thoughts which are also not included in Schiller’s *The Glove* translated by Mickiewicz, where the tiger fights the lion “snarling with rage, round him warily stalks?” – The Romantics will look for explanations for the power of the “mighty eye” in magic, in bestly magnetism and other supernatural forces inherent in man, cf.: Waław Borowy, “Potężne oko Mickiewicza,” in: Waław Borowy, *Kamiennie rękawiczki*, (Warszawa: Instytut Literacki, 1932), pp. 98–112, and Juliusz Kleiner, *Mickiewicz* Vol. 2: *Dzieje Konrada*, (Lublin: TN KUL, 1948), pt. 1, p. 325. The study attempts to reveal Norwidian source of power.

Stefan Szuman explains the metaphor imposed on the whole poem and constituting the situational core in the following way:

... in the eyes of misfortune, a man may read that it is as inevitable as fate, that there is no escape, that it is as unrelenting as fate. But this metaphor is also illustrative. Although “fateful eyes” (fateful gaze) do not exist, in the reader’s imagination, the eyes of a beast gain some incredible power, a hypnotic expression from which a man cannot escape, like a bird paralysed by the gaze of a snake. Fatal eyes are the relentlessness of fate and an overpowering gaze at the same time. Therefore, this metaphor leads to the so-called condensation of two meanings in one expression, which of course increases the range of meanings and the weight of expression.¹⁹

“Fatum” executes the poetics of a deep paradox in the sense that it is about every human being and every misfortune that totally degrades humanity and annihilating it in a universalist dimension beyond the division of time and space, but it is also simultaneously about misfortunes palpably tangible, actually prominent, and about the undiminished man presenting himself in his psychophysical complexity. This effect is achieved by Norwid by showing a situation precisely determined by the metaphor profiling the whole poem (“an eye fight”), and then by clarifying, “sharpening” details on the linguistic plane of the text beginning with the sound layer of the statements and ending with a functional outplay of syntactic patterns and the overall textual composition with meaningful punctuation.

Concerning the phonetic layer, the text of the first fragment is far from the classicist euphonic harmony or the songlike arrangements of Romantic lyrics that feed on folk poetry in the style of Lenartowicz’s *Lirenka*-like wailing. The poetics of dissonances and cacophonous rasps should be discussed here. This indicated impression originates primarily in the oversaturation of the text with fricative consonants (ż, z, ś, ś), and especially the affricative (ć):

Jak żiki zwięś pżyśło Nieśczęście do człowieka
I zatopiło weń fatalne ocy...
- Čeka -
Čy, człowiek, zbočy?

The “unpleasant” wording is an unmistakable reference to the semantics of misfortune and to the arrival of an unexpected Intruder who irrevocably and fatalistically wants to destroy the substance of life. These rasps are in a way the echoes of Misfortune and its intra-textual motivation. The sound structure of the statements is semantised by *Nieszczęście* [Misfortune] because the fricative consonants ś, ś and the affricate ć, ć that make-up half of the phonic material

19 Szuman, *O kunsztach i istocie poezji lirycznej*, p. 115.

of this word, which is the grammatical subject of the main clause of the conditional sentence. Misfortune spreads all over the entire sound layer of the utterance because the consonants *š* and *č* appear in virtually all other words. Above all, it is important to note that *č* occurs in the repeated word “człowiek” [man], in weapons used for combat, i.e. in “oczy” [eyes], and in verbs emphasising the tension of the struggle: “czeka” [waits] and “zbcoczy” [swerve]. Thus, the fortress is nearly conquered; the enemy attacks from within. The noisy storm of Misfortune is emphasised by rhymes with the consonant *č*: człowiek [man] – czeka [waiting], oczy [eyes] – zbcoczy [swerves]. The rhymes circle and enclose the enemy. The attack from within is symbolised by internal assonances: zwierz [beast] – weń [in it]. Misfortune compared to an animal resonates in the human-oriented pronoun “weń,” reinforcing the feeling of being surrounded.

The entrapment is also evoked by the syntactic structure of the comparison inverting the position of the secondary element to the first place to emphasise the wild, pervasive attack, and its bestial, anarchic dimension, strengthened by reversing the “natural” order.

But the change in word order also anticipates a decisive change in the situation in the second fragment, manifested precisely by the natural order in the comparison and introduction of an oppositional reference. “Dziki zwierz” [wild beast] – a reference from the world of natural chaos is confronted with the most conscious behaviour of man, who in these activities becomes similar to the Creator – in modelling his artistic work.

The second part of the poem, in which the attack is repelled (all the while maintaining the metaphorical consequence in the “eye fight”) in its compositional-stylistic profile seems to be freed from a suffocating embrace from nervous tension. The reply is delivered with a ‘full voice’ illuminated with a vocalic element.²⁰ The affricate consonant *č* does not appear at all, even though it dominated the sound layer of the previous fragment and symbolised Misfortune and its devastating expansion. Misfortune is also “disarmed” and linguistically tamed by

20 George Santayana, observing “rich vocalisation in various poets,” says that “the speech of one man or one nation is compact, full of consonants, rough, ripped with expressive buttons, and of the other one – open, light, fast, smooth” (“Interpretacje poezji i religii,” trans. Jadwiga Lekczyńska, in: *Teoria badań literackich za granicą*, anthology, selection, introduction, comments by Stefania Skwarczyńska, Vol. 2: *Od przelomu antypozytywistycznego do roku 1945*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1981) pt. 2: *Od fenomenologii do egzystencjalizmu. Estetyzm i new criticism*, p. 285). These two types of poetic speech, differentiated by the organisation of the sound layer Norwid activates to generate dramatic tension within a single poem.

defining it in terms of interpersonal relations as an “enemy.” This de-bestiality in favour of humanisation is also expressed by internal assonance (and alliteration) opposingly corresponding with the previous one:

Lecz on odejrzał *mu*, jak gdy artysta
Mierzy swojego kształt *modelu*; ²¹

[But he gazed back like an artist
Who sizes up his model's *form*;

The wild animal becomes an orderly model.

In the previous passage, the man was an object and something passive, but now gains the rank of a subject. His subjective behaviour is confirmed by the neologism “odejrzał” [gazed back]; the prefix of which was added similarly to the manner of forming words such as “odpowiedział” [replied]. After all, the main idea of the poem is to formulate the man's response to Misfortune. It is about a dialogue with events contesting the very process of life. Of course, this dialogue is imagined in a sensual way to not lose the carnality of experience, as this loss could lead to elusive theories. The image, however, is easy to precisely paraphrase into an unambiguous statement revealing the actual course of thought. The couplet:

I spostrzegło, że on patrzy – *co?* Skorzysta
Na swym nieprzyjacielu:

(PWsz II, 49)

[Noticing that he looks – how? to profit
From his foe:]

may be expressed in an unpoetic discourse: “and it understood that the man wonders how to benefit from his misfortune.”

3

And this reflection almost obsessively returns in Norwid's deliberations as in misfortune he sought for the key to solving the riddle of Man.

In 1849, in the introduction to the rhapsody entitled *Niewola* [Enslavement], nine years before writing “Fatum,” if we agree with Gomulicki that the missing *Model* of 1858 was its first version,²² Norwid wrote:

21 Underlining – mine [M.M.].

22 See PWsz XI, 215.

Nie mogę tu albowiem zapomnieć wzoru Sokratesa, który obrażenie od kajdan wytłoczone na nodze uważał za treść i za przykład popierający rzecz o bólu i stosunku bólu do żywota, *panując wyraźnie tym sposobem nad fatalnością położenia, owszem, rosnąc w wolności nie do pokonania pewnej siebie.* (DW IV, 42)

[For here I cannot forget the example of Socrates, who thought of the wound from the shackles engraved in his leg as the essence and example supporting the concept of pain and the relation of pain to life, *obviously ruling over the fatality of his situation in this way, growing in the indestructible freedom sure of itself.*]

Examining his own example (“wound from shackles”), “the relation of pain to life,” Socrates mastered the “fatality of his situation.” He entered the state of full freedom, destroying the attack of misfortune with his attitude in the mental dimension, though physically it may have continued to prey.

The strange attitude of Socrates, who does not escape his misfortune (“does not swerve”) but consciously wants to use it, will return in Norwid’s letter to Marian Sokołowski dated 2 August 1865 (it is the year in which the poet probably wrote “Fatum”). There will be formulas and syntactic constructions similar to those he had used in the poetic text, and they have been spaced as well:

Rzewnie wspominam, iż Sokrates *mając ból* od kajdan na nogach swoich *starał się stąd korzystać*, badając stosunek bólu do żywota. Nie wiedział on jeszcze jasno i nie mógł wiedzieć, co? przez to czynił... ależ! czas już wiedzieć jasno, iż *większa część ucisków na to przychodzi, aby prawda i znajomość jej nie były zatrzymywane.* (DW XII, 393)²³

[I wistfully mention that Socrates, *feeling pain* from the shackles on his legs, *tried to use it*, examine the relation of pain to living. He didn’t know it clearly yet and could not know, what? what he did through it... but! it is time to know for sure that *the greater part of the oppressions comes so that truth and knowledge of it are not withheld.*]

It is clear that Misfortune may be spoken of only if it becomes an internal experience and acquires a mental dimension. Therefore, although in the first part of the work it “czeka” [waits], it was already experienced as evidenced by the semantics of imaging, phonetic instrumentation, and sense of syntagmatic structure. And it is the only background against which Misfortune becomes “odejrzane” [gazed back at], i.e. recognised, objectified (light was cast upon it) similar to an artistic model that will come to life in the work of art. It must be a “cold” gaze, without sentimental falsification, though such temptation exists when one realizes that it is about a self-model and about one’s own life. Socrates was conducting an experiment on himself. The stake is a sculpture of oneself or, metaphorically speaking, a self-portrait that constitutes the interiorisation of one’s own personality without

23 Cf. also: a letter to Konstancja Górka [Paris, post office, 7 July 1866], DW XII, 504.

any falsification. The manner of looking in such a way is presented by passage XVI in *Quidam*, also mentioned by Gomulicki in his commentary on “Fatum:”

Jazon zaś – zimno patrzył nań z tą siłą,
Z którą ogląda rzeźbiarz dzieło swoje,
Tąż samą formą odlewane w dwoje;
Co? gdzie? udało się lub odmieniło.

(DW III, 217)

[And Jason – was looking coldly at him with the strength
Of the sculptor watching his work,
The same form cast twice:
What? where? succeeded, or changed.]

In the quoted letter to Sokołowski, Norwid wrote: “*iz większa część ucisków [a więc nie wszystkie!] na to przychodzi, aby prawda i znajomość jej nie były zatrzymywane*” (DW XII, 393) “*the greater part of the oppressions [so not all of them!] comes so that truth and knowledge of it are not withheld.*” First, it is necessary to distinguish between “truth” and “familiarity.” The “truth” probably also encompasses the fact that suffering caused by Misfortune is an inalienable part of being man.

Truth as well as the knowledge of it would be stopped if man swerved, if he did not take advantage of it, if he did not accept it in himself. This happens when a man fights the irreversible Misfortune “on its own field.” He accepts the enemy’s wild, animalistic weaponry and destroys himself in a hopeless struggle, becoming the Don Quixote’s Energumen. Also, he swerves in a literal sense when he escapes from the Misfortune understood as such, alienating himself in a deluded asylum of falsely immortalised time by returning to the country of childhood memories, embracing the moment or escaping into the future. He swerves when he puts on heroic-stoic, infantile, sorrowful, moralistic, mystical, Messiah-like masks, or other disguises stemming from natural religiousness.²⁴

4

In the quoted letter, the opinion about Socrates is intriguing. Although the philosopher tried to do his best to live with misfortune, “*badając stosunek bólu do żywota*” [“examine the relation of pain to living,”] he still “*nie wiedział on jeszcze*

24 When thinking about similar matters, Santayana states, e.g. “the hysterical forms of music and religion are refuges for strayed idealism; these roads are most often swarmed with wasted and lost human lives;” Santayana, “*Interpretacje poezji i religii*,” p. 301.

jasno i nie mógł wiedzieć *co? jeszcze czyni*” “[didn’t know it clearly yet and could not know, what? what he did through it”]. Why “didn’t know it clearly yet and could not know?” What happened afterwards that showed the mystery of Truth which could redeem a man even through his incomplete awareness of it?

It was probably the Truth about Man. In the era of Socrates, it was encrypted in the riddle of the Sphinx who also came to the Thebes “like a wild animal.” The riddle was solved by King Oedipus, but the solution he provided only triggered the next twists of crushing Fate. Norwidian fate is conquered, and it does not result in a tragedy. There probably is no room for tragedy in the Christian vision of reality adopted by Norwid:

Tragizm, understood as a closed circle of fate – as Maria Janion explains the thought of Roman Guardini – from which there is no appeal, “disappears if we accept the Revelation claiming that the way opens before us through Christ.”²⁵

A confirmation of this intuitive approach is brought by the Norwidian “Sfinks II” [Sphinx II] in *Vade-mecum*. Gomulicki aptly notes that “‘Fatum’ is structure-wise, verse-wise and even concept-wise a striking parallel to the poem ‘Sfinks’ (XV).”²⁶ It is even possible to go further and state that “Sfinks” semantically complements “Fatum” in terms of the determination of Man. It needs to be remembered that Oedipus’s response only related to the biological status of Man, while the Truth of the Norwidian subject (for a fuller commitment on this issue, he talks about it in 1. person) reveals his priestly dimension:

– “Człowiek?... jest to kapłan bezwiedny
I niedojrzały” –
Odpowiedziałem mu.

*

Alić – o! dziwy...
Sfinks się cofnął grzbietem do skały:
– Przemknąłem żywy!

(PWsz II, 33)

[“Man?... he’s an ignorant callow
Priest...”
I replied

*

And marvelling saw

25 Maria Janion, *Tragizm*, in: Maria Janion, *Romantyzm. Rewolucja. Marksizm* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1972), p. 18.

26 Dz 2, p. 786.

The Sphinx pressed against the rock:
I slipped alive!]²⁷

However, the Sphinx's question was about life in its most basic substance, not about ritual behaviour. Nevertheless, the Sphinx was defeated and Misfortune dissipated instantly, just as in "Fatum." Defining man as ignorant, the callow priest characterises well the pre-Christian ignorance of Socrates and the not fully Christian formation of a man of the nineteenth century; but even this little truth is enough.

Comparative analysis takes us towards the Christian concept of suffering as presented in "Fatum," where suffering becomes not a loss, but profit. However, man to suffer in this manner must assume a priestly attitude towards the events of individual history and experience his own condition as a great celebration "in Spirit and Truth" (John 4: 23), where there is no division into the sacred and the profane (Romans 12: 1–2) and where all facts are good because they come from God.²⁸ In this liturgy that mirrors the paschal mystery of Christ, the suffering born from all the misfortunes that were "odejranych" [gazed back at] is a place of privilege. It bears the symbol of the cross and allows for Passover to be experienced, i.e. the transition from death to life:

I nie ma krzyżów... oprócz na zimnym kamieniu, Albowiem *krzyż jest życie* już wiek dziewiętnasty:

Nowina! – którą przecie z *najweselszym* żalem Maryje i Salome, trzy święte niewiasty,

Przyniosły były jeszcze – tam, do Jeruzalem!...

(["A Pani cóż ja powiem?"] [What am I Going to Say to You?...], PWSz I, 266)

[And there are no *crosses*... except on the cold stone,
For the *cross is life* for the nineteenth century already:

News! – which with the *merriest* grief

Marys and Salome: three holy women,

Had delivered already – there, to Jerusalem!...]

27 Trans. Czerniawski: Norwid, *Selected Poems*, p. 62.

28 "I znajdziesz żywot w śmierci, a potęgę / W słabości, w słowie latającym księgę, / W ciemności jasność, a w jasności cienie! / To wiedz – i z plewy szczerze czyść nasienie." ("Dookoła ziemi naszej. Pieśń" [Around Our Land. A Song], PWSz I, 126). [And you will find life in death, and power / In weakness, in the flying word a book, / In the dark – brightness, and in the brightness – shadows! / Then know – and from the husks clean the honest seed.].

Norwidian “*Fatum*,” becoming a cross through enlightenment, is conquered not by adopting a stoic attitude,²⁹ but by the rising power from above – from Transcendence.³⁰ Hence, many lyrical situations in Norwid’s writing, haunted by such interference, depict a sudden twist as if a reminder of the presence of God in events, especially in the cross which for the religious people is an outrage, for the wise a trifle, and for the elect “the power and wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1: 17–31; 2).

In the poem “*Krzyż i dziecko*” [The Cross and a Child], after escalating the tension and fear that a bridge crossed with the mast of the boat will lead to its capsizing, suddenly (PWsz II, 96):

Oto – wszere i w z-wyż

Wszystko – toż samo.

*

Gdzież się podział krzyż?

*

– Stał się nam bramą.

[Here – upward, a-cross

All’s the same – and yet –

*

And where is the *cross*?...

*

It became our *gate*.]³¹

29 In the prosaic poem “*Na zgon śp. Józefa Zaleskiego*” [On the Death of the Late Józef Zaleski], February 1864, Norwid wrote: “*Przedwieczny nie pragnie tej boleści, która osłupia serce ludzkie i zamienia je w wytrwały głaz. On przenosi raczej ową boleść, która zwycięża siebie samą i z pociechami graniczy*” (PWsz I, 380) [The Eternal Lord does not desire the pain that staggers the human heart and turns it into a hard boulder. He rather conveys the sorrow which prevails over itself and borders with consolations].

30 Here is a poetic interpretation of this power, which in eschatic times will appear in the sky as a “sign of salvation” in a poem by Norwid entitled “*Do Pani na Korczewie*” [To the Lady of Korczew] (PWsz I, 350):

1

Jest sztuka jedna, co jak słońce w niebie Świeci nad wiekiem:

Mieć moc pocieszać – moc zasmucać siebie,

A być – człowiekiem!

[There is one art that like the sun in the sky / Shines over the century: / Have the power to console – the power to grieve yourself / And to be human!]

2

Trudna – bo Mistrzem jest tylko ten, który Odszedł daleko: By kiedyś wrócił na obłokach, z góry, Światłości- rzeką – – [Difficult – for the Master is only the one / Who has gone far: / To come back once on the clouds, from above, / The river-of-Light – –].

31 Trans. Borchardt: Norwid, *Poems*, p. 127.

Similarly, in “Fatum:”

I spostrzegło, że on patrzy – co? skorzysta
 Na swym nieprzyjacielu:
 I zachwiało się całą postaci wagą
 – – I nie ma go!

[Noticing that he looks – how? to profit
 From his foe:
 It staggered with all its weight
 – – – And is gone!]

Fate has been crucified, which is why Misfortune loses its infectious sting. The scales change, and what was supposed to be destructive starts the act of building because:

Krzyż, j a k w a g a ... przewidziany
 Od wszech-sumień wstęp do Boga...

(“Nieskończony. Dialog z porządku dwunasty” [Infinite. Dialogue twelve], PWsz I, 202)

[Cross, like the scales...foreseen
 From omni-conscience access to God...]

The metaphorical association of the cross with weight becomes another argument for interpreting “Fateful Misfortune” as the experience of the cross. If taken, it makes Misfortune “zachwiało się całą postaci wagą / – I nie ma go!” [It staggered with all its weight – And is gone!]. The poem “Bliscy” [Loved Ones] in *Vade-mecum* (L) provides further evidence supporting the adoption of the proposed interpretive hypothesis. Dying in time (“znikomość” [scarceness]), “taken for more than” a moralistic mindless “plague” – precisely taken for the cross – opens the prospect of its collapse, obliterating “shape and weight:”

Ludzie? – znikomość tę? – czy mieli siły Wziąć za coś więcej niż plagę?...
 Choć krzyż sam, waląc się na grobie, zgniły,
 Razem traci kształt i wagę!

(PWsz II, 75)

[People? – this insignificance? – did they have the strength
 To take for more than a plague?
 Though the cross is lone, falling onto the grave, rotten,
 Losing both shape and weight!]

“Kształt i waga” [Shape and weight] directly referred to the cross corresponding with “postaci wagą” [weight] in “Fatum.” These expressions emphasise the recognition

of the “sign of salvation” (“postać” [silhouette], “kształt” [shape]), the weight of the destructive attack (“waga” [weight]), and the fact of breaking through the situation and dominating over it (“waga” [weight / scales] as a measuring instrument).

5

“Fatum,” with the secret of the cross hidden deeply in it just as it was hidden in early Christianity that fascinated Norwid (*Quidam!*), carries the same message to people crushed by suffering as Yahweh sent to Moses wishing to save his people:

Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live (Num 21, 8).

This “look” is the Norwidian “gazing back” at Misfortune. The First Man (Adam) could not “gaze back,” which is why he was defeated by the snake. The pre-Christian Socrates³² “gazed back” in a way not yet fully aware of the world. Only a man of the Christian era can save himself and the world from Misfortune by taking advantage of it and taking it upon himself. For Christ, as the second Adam, discovered the secret of the cross and gave it to man for free as a weapon for a fight (Eph 6: 10–20; Gal 5: 24–25; 6: 14–17). He won earlier, becoming the guarantee of victory.³³ It is a glorious cross, illuminated by the resurrection; therefore, it can enlighten and give power, or spiritually punish. Such existential experience contests the fateful, animalistic strength of Misfortune.³⁴

“Crucifying” fate understood in a manner that includes the psychophysical and spiritual experience of man is, therefore, something infinitely greater than

32 Cf. p. 59 and further.

33 “This is the night when Christ broke the prison-bars of death and rose victorious from the underworld” – the Church sings in the joyous *Exsultet* during the Easter Vigil.

34 This power – thanks to the preservation of the faith – was experienced by St. Paul in “Dwa męczeństwa” [Two Martyrdoms] by Norwid; it reduced neither his own humanity in extreme situations nor the faith in the deifying power of God incarnate. The misfortune that wants to incapacitate Paul threatens him with entering into a state of false deification of the human situation and wants to finally bind him with its animal power, wants to paralyse as in “Fatum:” “I kazał Pawła więzić – potem ściął mu głowę.! / * / Więc był Apostoł Paweł pętany jak z w i e r z ę, / I jako Bóg obwołan – a wytrwał przy wierze, / Że c z ł e k i e m b y ł. – Albowiem stało się wiadomo, / Że człowiek zwierzęt bogiem, gdy Bóg: *ecce homo.*” (PWsz I, 121) [And he ordered Paul’s imprisonment – and then he beheaded him.! / So there was the Apostle Paul bound like an animal, / and as a God proclaimed, and he persevered his faith, / Because he was a man. – For it became known / that a man is a god of animals, when God: *ecce homo.*].

rationalising Misfortune to objectify it; then it becomes more than just a stoic agreement to respect out of necessity.

In the world of Norwid's values,³⁵ the cross is the centre of the God-man universe. It is "the bone of the Earth,"³⁶ as the Fathers of the Church referred to it. For this reason, it is not surprising that the cross as the "środek" [middle] of the spiritual space: earthly, bodily and heavenly,³⁷ will be defined in *Promethidion's* Epilogue as a way, due to the synonymous ambiguity of the word "środek" in Polish as it also indicates "sposób" [the way of doing something]. First of all, it is a way to reach the salvation of the tormented consciousness and the whole existence, but it also becomes the "means," i.e. "drogą [chrześcijanina] do uczestnictwa w sztuce" [the way (of a Christian) to participate in artistic creation]. Therefore, it is also the structural principle of Norvidian poetics:³⁸

Chryścianizm [przychodzi do uczestnictwa w sztuce – M. M.] – przez przecięcie linii ziemskiej horyzontalnej i linii nadziemskiej *prostopadłej – z nieba padłej*, czyli przez znalezienie *środk*a +, to jest przez tajemnicę krzyża (*środek* po polsku znaczy zarazem *sposób*). (DW IV, 133)³⁹

-
- 35 Cf. Edward Kasperski, *Świat wartości Norwida* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1981), p. 74 and 87–88.
- 36 In the patristic tradition, the cross is also referred to as "Jacob's ladder." Norwid, wishing to insert there the "gazing back at Misfortune," deleted elements such as "foundations" or "stairs" from the poem "Do panny Józefy z Korczewa. [Koszućskiej]" [To Miss Józefa de Korczew. Koszućska] and introduced "handrails of crosses" that came from God: "Podwalin nie ma, bo d e p t a ć je trzeba, / Ni schodów wyżej; / Ale poręcze sięgają do nieba, / Poręcze z krzyży!" (PWsz I, 354) [There are no foundations, because they should be trampled / Nor stairs above / But handrails that reach to Heaven, / Handrails of crosses!].
- 37 Towards "środek" [middle] understood as one that equates it with Love and Christ, "gravitates" the rosary prayer of the heroine of the poem "Do słynnej tancerki rosyjskiej, nieznaney zakonnicy" [To a Famous Russian Dancer, an Unknown Nun] (PWsz I, 393): "Płynniej i słodziej tylko ciekną fale, / Tylko różańców zlatują opale, / Grawitujące do Miłości-środk, / Co zwie się Chrystus – i każdą z nich spotka!" [More sweetly and flowingly only waves roll, / Only opal beads of a rosary fall down, / Gravitating towards the Love-centre / Whose name is Christ – Who will meet them all.].
- 38 In the conclusion of *Promethidion's* Epilogue, Norwid translates his own poetic vocation as taking a cross, his cross, and following Christ (Mk 8, 34): "Nie z krzyżem Zbawiciela za sobą – ale z krzyżem *s w o i m* za Zbawicielem idąc, uważałem za powinność dać głos myślom w piśmie tym objętym –" (DW IV, 140) ["Not going with the cross of the Saviour behind me – but with my cross behind the Saviour – I think it is my duty to give voice to the thoughts expressed in this writing – ...]."
- 39 Cf. also: *Pół-listu*, PWsz VI, 382–383.

[Christianism [comes to participate in arts – M. M.] – through the intersection of the earthly, horizontal and heavenly line, *perpendicular* – *falling from heavens*, so by finding the middle +, via the mystery of the cross (środek [centre] in Polish also means *sposób* [way of doing something]).]

In such a way, a Christian crucifies fate and the poet notices this situation at the intersection of glances.

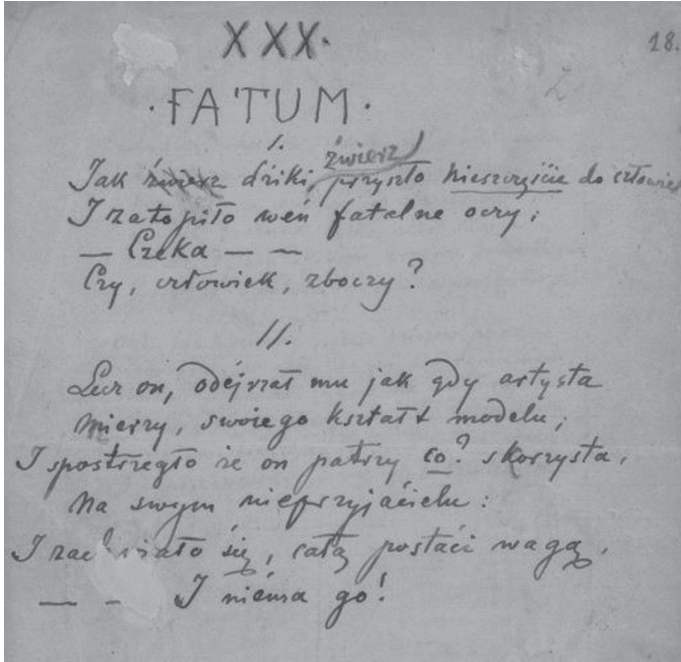


Figure 1. Manuscript of C. Norwid's poem "Fatum," National Library in Poland. Photo National Library in Poland.

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Ireneusz Opacki

Funeral Rapsody, First Rapsody

Abstract: The paper interprets one of the most famous poems written by Norwid, “Bema pamięci żałobny-rapsod” [A Funeral Rhapsody in Memory of General Bem]. The funeral described in the poem is stylised to resemble an ancient knightly funeral which symbolises the dignity of the deceased and the majesty of death. The moment of the funeral, the “now” of the poem, is reported in the present reporting tense – and encompasses or even accumulates the past within itself. Archaically stylised, in a way, “summarising” the life of the Great Deceased in the symbols of a tribute, a spear, and knightly props. This funeral procession – Old Polish, knightly – proceeds to the grave. It is moving to the final event that inscribes the hero in the past and identifies him as one of the ancestors –until the symbolic fall of the *archimimus* from the horse, “till it’s time to roll into the grave.” It is the finale of the hero’s life journey. Yet the border that was to close the past, opens the future; the grave is crossed over, *archimimus* does not fall from the horse, and the procession moves along. Before it happens, there is a significant change in the order of the procession. Up to this point it was led by the archimimus-Bem and was reported “from a distance,” “passively,” and from the standpoint of a disengaged observer. However, the poem does not end, it remains open. The anaphora of the last, unfinished stanza forecasts the further course of this stanza which, similarly to the first one, finishes and becomes a signal of the “new era” opened by the fact of inheriting Bem’s ideas by the community. Norwid’s poem appeals to the epic convention. The funeral, which usually ends the hero’s life and the epic, becomes the beginning which left an obligatory place for the story to be continued through the broken anaphora.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, Józef Bem, rhapsody, funeral procession, archaic stylisation

To Professor Henryk Markiewicz

This funeral was not “solemn and sullen.” The interned Hungarians carried the coffin with the body of Józef Bem on the hill opposite to the barracks in Aleppo, to a Mohammedan cemetery. The body was removed from the coffin and placed in a grave with the head towards Mecca. The assistance was not ceremonial; it featured several Turkish battalions without weapons, there was no salute fire. The commentator wrote, “This funeral was not a soldier’s funeral. A veteran who became grey-haired in the fights deserved more.”¹

1 The report from Bem’s funeral is provided by Maria Straszewska, “O poezji emigranckiego losu,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, No. 6 (1964), pp. 1–13.

“Was not a soldier’s funeral”... and Norwid showed even higher regard towards Bem when he juxtaposed him against Chłopicki, “od natury wojowniczego ducha w jenerale Chłopickim do natury potęgi, co sprawowała wątlým Bema ramieniem, jest jak od *wojskowości do rycerstwa*” (PWsz VII, 40) “from the nature of a warrior’s spirit in the General Chłopicki to the nature of the power that directed Bem’s arm is as far as from *military to knighthood*.”² He also wrote that Bem “w bohaterstwie na czele wieku stawa” (PWsz VI, 615) “stands in the fore of the entire century in terms of heroism.”³ So, if the truth about the funeral did not measure up to the hero-knight, was there room for a Great Lie of poetry? Apparently yes:

I

Czemu, Cieniu, odjeżdżasz, ręce złamawszy na pancerz,
Przy pochodniach, co skrami grają około twych kolan? -
Miecz wawrzynem zielony i gromnic płakaniem dziś polan,
Rwie się sokół i koń twój podrywa stopę jak tancerz.
- Wieją, wieją proporce i zawiewają na siebie,
Jak namioty ruchome wojsk koczujących po niebie.
Trąby długie we łkaniu aż się zanoszą, i znaki
Pokłaniają się z góry opuszczonymi skrzydłami,
Jak włóczyniami przebite smoki, jaszczury i ptaki...
Jako wiele pomysłów, któreś dościgał włóczyniami...

II

Idą panny żałobne: jedne, podnosząc ramiona
Ze snopami wonnymi, które wiatr w górze rozrywa;
Drugie, w konchy zbierając lżę, co się z twarzy odrywa,
Inne, drogi szukając, choć *przed wiekami zrobiona*...
Inne, tłukąc o ziemię wielkie gliniane naczynia,
Czego klekot w pękaniu jeszcze smętności przyczynia.

III

Chłopcy biją w topory pobłękitniałe od nieba,
W tarcze rude od świateł biją pachołki służebne,
Przeogromna chorągiew, co się wśród dymów koleba,
Włóczni ostrzem o łuki, rzekłbyś, oparta pod-niebne...

2 This is how Norwid wrote about Bem in “Z pamiętnika (O zemście)” [From an Album (On Revenge)], 1851. See Commentary on the poem made by J.W. Gomulicki, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, Vol. 2: *Wiersze. Dodatek krytyczny*, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1966), p. 411.

3 See Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, Vol. 2, p. 411. Quote from Norwid’s “Zmartwychwstanie historyczne” [Historical Resurrection], 1850/51.

IV

Wchodzą w wąwóz i toną... wychodzą w światło księżycza
 I czernieją na niebie, a blask ich zimny omusnął,
 I po ostrzach, jak gwiazda spaść nie mogąca, prześwięca,
 Chorał ucichł był nagle i znów jak fala wyplusnął...

V

Dalej – dalej – aż kiedyś stoczyć się przyjdzie do grobu
 I czeluście zobaczym czarne, co czyha za drogą,
Które aby przesadzić Ludzkość nie znajdzie sposobu,
 Włóczyńią twego rumaka zeprzem, jak starą ostrogą...

VI

I powleczem korowód, smęcąc *ujęte snem grody,*
 W bramy bijąc urnami, gwizdając w szczyrby toporów,
 Aż się mury Jerycha porozwalają jak kłody,
 Serca zmdlałe ocuć – pleśń z oczu zgarną narody...

.....

Dalej – dalej – –

(PWsz I, 186–187)

[A FUNERAL RHAPSODY IN MEMORY OF GENERAL BEM⁴

Iusiurandum patri datum usque ad hanc diem ita servavi...

Hannibal

I

— Why ride away, Shadow, hands broken on the mail,
 Sparks of torches playing around your knees —?
 The laurel-green sword is spattered with candle tears,
 The falcon strains, your horse jerks its foot like a dancer.
 — Pennons in the wind blow against each other
 Like moving tents of nomad armies in the sky.
 Long trumpets shake in sobbing and banners
 Bow their wings which droop from above
 Like spear-pierced dragons, lizards and birds...
 Like the many ideas you caught with your spear...

II

— Mourning maidens go, some lifting their arms
 Filled with scent-sheaves torn apart by the wind;
 Some gather into shells tears breaking from the cheek,

4 Trans. Adam Czerniawski, C. Norwid, *Poezje/Poems* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986), pp. 11–13.

Some still seek the road that *was built centuries ago...*
 Others dash against the ground huge pots of clay
 Whose clatter in cracking yet adds to the sorrow.

III

— Boys strike hatchets blue against the sky,
 Serving lads strike light-rusted shields,
 A mighty banner sways amid the smoke, its spear-point
 Leaning, as it were, against the arcs of heaven...

IV

They enter and drown in the valley... emerge in the moonlight
 Blackening the sky, an icy glare brushes them
 And glimmers on blades of spears like a star unable to fall,
 The chant suddenly ceased, then splashed out like a wave...

V

On — on — till it's time to roll into the grave:
 We shall behold a black chasm lurking beyond the road
 (*And to cross it humanity will not find a way*)
 Over the edge we shall spear-thrust your steed
 As though with a rusting spur...

VI

And we'll drag the procession, saddening *slumber-seized cities*,
 Battering gates with urns, whistling on blunted hatchets,
 Till the walls of Jericho tumble down like logs,
 Swooned hearts revive — nations gather the must from their eyes...

 On — on —]

A ceremonial funeral procession progresses: *pompa funebris*.

Moves [Bem] along the path of Old Polish warriors – writes Sandauer⁵ – of whom he is a rightful heir. The expedition is symbolic – as proven by his hands monumentally crossed on armour – symbolic just as the war insignia carried behind him, which are not for him to use in combat: instead of the modern weapons, parade ancient armament, axes, shields, spears, just as instead of a modern procession we are passed by – like an archaic bas-relief – “mourning maidens” and “serving lads.”

Indeed: the funeral is styled to resemble an antique knight's funeral.

Every funeral arranged with great style, especially hetman's, was associated with ceremonies, which were wonderful and dramatic spectacles and were meant to symbolise the

5 Artur Sandauer, “Wyprawa trzecia,” in: *Zebrane pisma krytyczne* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981), Vol. 3, p. 99.

dignity of the deceased and the majesty of death. Behind the coffin walked a favourite steed of the dead warrior, with a trailing mourning cover, people also carried his sword, basinet and shield with burning candles on it, and a knight in full armour rode to the church ...⁶

At the bier: “On both sides, the courtiers carried lit candles, holding the hem of the shroud with their other hand.”⁷

In the middle, behind the corpse walked the hired weepers (mourners) wailing, scratching their bodies, tearing their robes. ... The funerals of the chieftains of the Slavic tribes in 6th-9th century were also attended by, among others, captives, horses carrying war-time loot, wailing women and armed men.⁸

Funeral banners were associated with the rites of the noblemen funerals ... They were carried at the funeral, hung by the catafalque ... Among the depictions on surviving banners from the seventeenth century, there are ... scenes from the life of the deceased ... For contemporary people, the banners associated with the funeral belonged to objects reminding them of death.⁹

Such banners, *labara funebria*, “replaced epitaphs, were emblazoned with the name, coat of arms and date of death, and sometimes a painted portrait of the deceased.”¹⁰

The procession moved in a certain order; it was not a mixed crowd, but “a few hundred or thousand people progressing in a special formation”¹¹ Those groups of “mourning maidens,” each focused on different funeral items and activities, are so expressive in Norwid’s poem: groups of “boys with hatchets” and “serving lads” with shields...¹² It is also not difficult to find other props from a knight’s funeral in Norwid’s description: first, the funeral banner, which “sways amid the smoke,”¹³ mourners-weepers, the horse of the deceased, his sword...

6 Władysław Łoziński, *Życie polskie w dawnych wiekach*, ed. 3, Lwów (unknown publishing year), pp. 183–184.

7 An excerpt of the description of the funeral of Sigmund III, made by Albrecht Radziwiłł. Cited after: Jan Stanisław Bystroń, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce*, Vol. 2, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1960), p. 111.

8 Juliusz Chrościcki, *Pompa funebris: z dziejów kultury staropolskiej* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1974), pp. 84–85.

9 Chrościcki, *Pompa funebris*, p. 72.

10 Łoziński, *Życie polskie w dawnych wiekach*, p. 187.

11 Chrościcki, *Pompa funebris*, p. 52.

12 Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki (Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, Vol. 2, p. 414) recalls that “the coffin of Prince Józef was also followed by sappers with mighty hatchets.”

13 This banner is at the same time “spear-point ... against the arcs of heaven,” which evokes the image of a temple, metaphorically changing the sky into an arched ceiling.

First, the relationship between the vision of Bem's funeral in Norwid's poem and the Old Polish knight's funeral allows for, it seems, the settling with great certainty the dispute that grew around one of the picturesque motifs of this vision. It is about depicting the silhouette of Bem, when on the bier is he lying down – or is he riding his horse, sitting straight? The text itself does not give a clear answer here; perhaps more accurately, the association of the text with the stereotype of the funeral, where corpses are usually carried on the bier, prompts the first version:

Czemu, Cieniu, odjeżdżasz, ręce złamawszy na pancerz,
Przy pochodniach, co skrami grają około twych kolan? –
Miecz wawrzynem zielony i gromnic płakaniem dziś polan,
Rwie się sokół i koń twój podrywa stopę jak tanecz.

[– Why ride away, Shadow, hands broken on the mail,
Sparks of torches playing around your knees –?
The laurel-green sword is spattered with candle tears,
The falcon strains, your horse jerks its foot like a dancer.]

The association of the bier with the rows of courtiers with candles on both sides and the horse of the deceased led after them seems to settle the argument. For this reason, it was generally specified, “it should be remembered that the protagonist of rhapsody does not ride a horse but is carried on a mourning bier, with his hands crossed on armour.”¹⁴ However, Artur Sandauer opposed this, referring to the ambiguity in the text which does not allow the issue to be settled with such certainty:

It is not really that unambiguous. The poem does not mention any wagon, while the torches burning not along the body but at its knees seem to prove that the hero is riding on horseback, in an upright position, for the last spectral expedition.¹⁵

This concretisation is obviously most advantageous for the poem, giving it the pompousness of being unique. It also turns the funeral into, precisely, “the last, spectral *expedition*.” Is it possible to give stronger arguments, other than the category of the lack of mentioning of a mourning bier and a particular focus on light

It is a typical motif of *castrum doloris* – the banners at the arched ceiling over the cat-afalque. This is illustrated by the frequently recalled monograph by J. Chrościcki.

14 J.W. Gomulicki in Norwid, *Dziela zebrane*, Vol. 2, p. 413. Similarly – Anna Kamińska, “Pochód nieprzerwany,” in: *Od Czarnolasu: najpiękniejsze wiersze polskie*, ed. Anna Kamińska (Warszawa: Iskry, 1971), p. 186.

15 Sandauer, “Wyprawa trzecia,” p. 29.

reflexes? It is too weak of an argument to outweigh the opposing scales with the already outlined, customary procession with a bier...

And yet Sandauer is right, only the scope of the resources needs to be expanded. Especially concerning the area of funeral customs, with which the association with the bier is speaking so strongly. Łoziński writes:

The second original custom was that behind the coffin rode a man of similar attire, posture and face to the deceased and served as a kind of a posthumous yet living portrait. It created the impression of the departed escorting himself to the grave. For this purpose, people similar to the deceased were chosen, and physical similarity was further emphasised with art. ... Behind Koniecpolski's coffin rode Cossack rittmeister Komorowski dressed as the hetman with his "stature, and especially his beard, similar to the deceased, in his clothes." It was probably an imitation of a similar custom observed during funerals of kings, for we know that at the funerals of Sigismund Augustus and Stefan Batory there were people in the king's clothes, physically similar to the deceased monarchs. It is strange that an old Roman custom, where at the funerals of Caesars there was such an archimimus as a doppelganger of the deceased, ended up in Polish customs after such a long time and such a great distance!¹⁶

Actually, there is a thread of continuous European tradition between Old Roman and seventeenth-century Polish customs, which consolidates and constantly embodies this custom in the general consciousness.¹⁷ This custom was known in medieval Italy, where, for example, in the year 1375 a certain Blaise charged five soldos "for performing as a deceased knight during the funeral. At royal funerals, a leather effigy dressed in princely robes was usually used, aiming at the greatest similarity possible. ... The awe of the people concentrated on viewing these images." This custom, being quite popular, survived until the seventeenth-century in Poland where during the funeral procession "rode one of the courtiers, dressed as the deceased, which added a remarkable feeling of horror to the rite."¹⁸ But the advanced nineteenth century recalled it in Warsaw in 1826 during the Warsaw mourning ceremonies in honour of the late Tsar and King Alexander I: "In front of the coffin rode the Knight, in magnificent armour, carrying the king's sword with a blade towards himself; behind him, a mourning squire with a lance and a royal shield."¹⁹ It was a faithful prolongation of the

16 Łoziński, *Życie polskie w dawnych wiekach*, pp. 184–185.

17 See Chrościcki, *Pompa funebris*, especially in the early parts of the book; Johan Huizinga, *Jesień średniowiecza* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1961), p. 321. Quote from *Jesień średniowiecza*, p. 321.

18 Bystron, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce*, Vol. 2, p. 111.

19 Chrościcki, *Pompa funebris*, p. 87.

seventeenth-century custom, in which “during the funeral rode an archimimus on horseback with a squire.”²⁰ Such a funeral procession “passed under triumphal gates towards the cemetery or moved near the church with a prepared grave.”²¹ It happened in the same way at the symbolic Warsaw funeral of Tsar Alexander I:

Out of the whole procession, only the Knight and squire would ride on horseback into the temple. “Here ... the squire would throw the sword onto the ground, break the lance against the coffin, and fall down. It was a symbol of the disappearance of the king’s earthly power. Ceremonial maces and canes were broken, banners were lowered towards the ground.”²²

Here we reach the second funeral custom important to Norwid’s poem, the habit of falling from a horse over a grave or at a catafalque. Typically, this rite was performed by many knights from the procession to symbolise in this gesture their grief because of parting with the deceased:

... into the church rode a knight in full armour, broke wood, i.e., broke the lance at the feet of the catafalque and fell down from the horse onto the floor of the church. To reinforce the feeling of horror, this fall was all about a loud clang and rumble, with “thunder,” with “severe and immense crackle,” as the reports of the witnesses state.²³

Sometimes these effects were achieved by constructing a special floor which multiplied the rumble,²⁴ which indicates how important of an element of this custom was in a knight’s funeral. It also concerned the archimimus. Such an archimimus that imitated the deceased appeared in Poland for the first time in the year 1370, and replayed the scene mimicking the death of the deceased, falling from the horse at the catafalque.²⁵ Such situations were also reported in

... the epicedium of Corvinus dedicated to Casimir Jagiellon as well as in the later *Historia funebris ... Sigismundi Sannatarum Regis* by Pedro Ruiz de Moros where there appeared, for example, a description of a funeral procession in which one of the characters in full armour and on horseback – was to imitate the deceased. The procession

20 Chrościcki, *Pompa funebris*, p. 52.

21 Chrościcki, *Pompa funebris*, p. 52.

22 Chrościcki, *Pompa funebris*, p. 81.

23 Łoziński, *Życie polskie w dawnych wiekach*, p. 184.

24 The description of the funeral of Józef Potocki is commonly quoted here as reported in the diary of F. Karpiński. See e.g., Bystron, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce*, Vol. 2, p. 111; Ludwika Szczerbicka-Ślęk, *W kręgu Klio i Kalliope. Staropolska epika historyczna* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1973), p. 134.

25 Chrościcki, *Pompa funebris*, p. 86.

would enter the church where the knight would suddenly fall from his horse right in front of the catafalque. Corvinus's description was not a unique mention.²⁶

Those cited elements of a knight's funeral are sufficient enough to juxtapose them with the beginning and predicted finale of Bem's funeral in Norwid's poem:

Czemu, Cieniu, odjeżdżasz, ręce złamawszy na pancerz,
 ...
 Dalej – dalej – aż kiedyś stoczyć się przyjdzie do grobu
 [Why ride away, Shadow, hands broken on the mail.
 ...
 On – on – till it's time to roll into the grave]

– to conclude how precisely Norwid alludes to them.

He alludes – not selflessly because the fall of the archimimus from the horse near the catafalque has meaning in the ritual of the knight's funeral. Stanisław from Szczordkowice Morawicki made an ironic comment about it:

Niektórzy ten zwyczaj mają,
 Konie w zbroje przebierają,
 Swoje miecze pomiatając,
 A drzewce czarne druzgając

Wzdłuż na zbroi upadają,
 Stary obyczaj działają,
 Ukazując, iż to *isty*
*Był umarły rycerz czysty.*²⁷

[Some have this habit,
 Dress their horses in armour,
 Throwing away their swords,
 And breaking black lances.

Along they fall in the armour,
 Evoke the old custom
 To show that *indeed*
The dead knight was pure.]

A posthumous confirmation of chivalry. While discussing the Old Polish funebral poetry, Szczerbicka-Ślęk writes:

Against the background of several centuries of literary practice ... the situation of death served to "appoint" the deceased to the role of a knightly ancestor, helping him move to

26 Szczerbicka-Ślęk, *W kręgu Klio i Kalliope*, pp. 133–134.

27 Cited after: Szczerbicka-Ślęk, *W kręgu Klio i Kalliope*, pp. 133–134.

the world of the fathers ... This posthumous "appointment" was materialised not only in literature. A similar function was performed by funeral rites ... Captured by all writers scene [of falling down the horse – I.O.] had symbolic significance: it served as means of identifying the deceased with the persona of a knightly ancestor, as if it was a posthumous anointment of a knight.²⁸

Let us recall here the already quoted conviction of Norwid regarding Bem's knightly character, as opposed to Chłopicki... The conviction which was poetically incarnated in the stylization of the funeral imagery in this funeral rhapsody.

2

Moving into the world of the fathers, identifying with a chivalric ancestor – in a word, it all meant to root the hero in the past, to show him as the heir and continuator of tradition.

The spirit of nations answers best to our queries from a distance, like an echo. That is why it speaks from the past the most clearly – as wrote Michał Grabowski²⁹ – the time itself creates what is needed for the poet; for time has on its bosom the image of all peoples and history. – The very distance paints a charming veil over each object, veil that lends it tentative interest.

These sentences regard historical romance and reveal, however, a more general problem: a special value that the past and tradition had for the Romantics. That value meant, among other things, that the past was not merely the subject of a speech, but a *means of poetic expression*; in the eyes of the Romantics, it had the poetic quality "in itself." When, according to Grabowski, a writer reaches for the past, it "does not need elegy-like means to present its gentle grace,"³⁰ because the very past entails that "*it by itself* becomes a poetic costume."³¹

The rule also applies to romantic funebral poems in which the protagonist's rooting in the past becomes an important feature. It's not always bound with the actual moving of the hero into the depths of time, as in Norwid's rhapsody about Bem. Sometimes, as in "Śmierć Pułkownika" [Death of the Colonel] by Mickiewicz, the hero receives contemporary features – for instance, through the "rifleman's uniform" – but the ritual of death brings back the old chivalric

28 Szczerbicka-Ślęk, *W kręgu Klio i Kalliope*, p. 134.

29 Michał Grabowski, "Literatura romansu w Polsce. Część pierwsza," in: *Literatura i krytyka*, Wilno 1840, Vol. 2, pp. 39–40.

30 Grabowski, "Literatura romansu w Polsce. Część pierwsza," p. 40.

31 Grabowski, "Literatura romansu w Polsce. Część pierwsza," p. 40.

custom in which the protagonist obtains the features of a representative of the old tradition:³²

Kazał konia Pułkownik kulbaczyć,
 Konia w każdej sławnego potrzebie;
 Chce go jeszcze przed śmiercią obaczyć,
 Kazał przywieść do izby — do siebie.
 Kazał przynieść swój mundur strzelecki,
 Swój kordelas i pas i ładunki;
 Stary żołnierz, — on chce, jak Czarniecki,
 Umierając, swe żegnać rynsztunki.

[Saddle my steed once more for me,
 Who shared with me so many a fight!
 That noble steed, oh, let me see,
 Before I close my eyes in night!
 My sword and belt, too, let them lie,
 And all my trappings, at my side:
 Gazing upon my arms will I
 Die as the brave Czarniecki died!]

At other times it will be a metaphorical archaisation of the lyrical hero by giving him the features of a medieval, armoured knight fighting to the end alone (as in the first option) or styling him as a participant in the crusades, a Templar, fraught with a steadfast calling (as in the second one):

Że kto na walkę samotną, rozpaczną
 Patrzy tak zimno — tak jak ty patrzałaś, —
 I nieraz rękę podnosi niebaczną
 Zbroi, mieczami pobitej na ćwierci —
 — Gdy śmierć wyniknie — będzie winien śmierci.

32 See Bogdan Zakrzewski, “‘Ach, to była dziewica’ O Mickiewiczowskiej Platerównie,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, No. 3 (1976), p. 83 and further. In this excellent study, Zakrzewski also notes the “archaising” resemblance of the arrangement of the body of the Colonel on the peasant bier to the figure of the sarcophagi of the past (“He clasps the cross as when he died; Upon his saddle rests his head, His sword and fire-arms by his side.”), which makes the protagonist seem more heroic and grants the aura of a legend (p. 91). It also archaizes, let us add, the allusion to the former knighthood as in the motif of the “famous” horse, when not only the knight but also his horse had a “name” and was known in legends. This is also emphasized by linguistic archaisation – the use of the word “need” in the meaning of “struggle, skirmishing” (see: Stefan Reczek, *Podręczny słownik dawnej polszczyzny*, Wrocław 1968, entry “potrzeba”). Compare also remarks in: Maria Janion, Maria Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1978), p. 463.

[If someone on the lonely fight; despairing,
looks so cold – as you looked –
And more than once raised the hand unforgiving
With armour, with swords beaten in quarters –
– When death dare come – he'll be guilty of death.]
(Juliusz Słowacki, “Do E” [“To E”])

Bo serce moje jest losu i Boga,
A wprzód, iż miałaby je zdeptać noga,
Przędziej je zimnym żelazem rozetnę.

I próżno powiesz, bo nikt nie uwierzy,
Abym twój nosił znak u lewej strony;
Bo moje serce jest w płaszczu rycerzy.

Którzy na bieli mają krzyż czerwony;
A nad nim jeszcze jest pancerz stalony.

[For my heart belongs to fate and God,
And if someone's leg would trample them,
I'd sooner cut them with cold iron.
And you will say in vain, because no one will believe,
That I wear your sign at the left side;/For my heart is in the cloak of knights,
Who have a red cross on the white;
And steel armour above it all.]
(Juliusz Słowacki, “Do A. M. I.” [“To A.M.I.”])

In “Testament mój” [“My Testament”], Słowacki's time distance multiplies. On the one hand, it roots the lyrical hero in the past even deeper making him the heir and continuator of the grandeur of the ancestors:

Że płaszcz na moim duchu nie był wyżebrany,
Lecz świetnościami dawnych moich przodków świetny.

[That my mind's mantle was no drab for beggars meant,
But with the splendour of my ancient fathers splendid.]³³

After all, if the wording here is not “is not,” but “was not;” the past tense is determined not from the position of the time present for the action of speaking – that “now” of the lyrical subject – but from far future; the time of some future generation which will be the recipient of the tale about the protagonist and for whom the hero will be someone from more distant times:

33 Trans. Jarosław Zawadzki, <https://wolnelektury.pl/katalog/lektura/slowacki-my-testament.html>.

Ale kiedyś – o smętnych losach zadumy
 Mojej biednej ojczyzny – przyzna, kto szlachetny,
 Że płaszcz na moim duchu nie był wyżebrany,
 Lecz świetnościami dawnych moich przodków świetny.

[But he — that may reflect upon the detriment
 Of my poor fatherland — will say, if well-intended,
 That my mind's mantle was no drab for beggars meant,
 But with the splendour of my ancient fathers splendid.]³⁴

The word has been passed, for the future grandson and addressed towards the future, multiplying the temporal distance towards the hero. Multiplying, since the protagonist is equated with the *ancestors*, “moved back” with regard to own “now;” at the same time this “now” is viewed from the position of far “tomorrow,” for which the protagonist will also be a thing of the past. It is a speech – delivered within enormous temporal remoteness!

This stanza, and other adjacent ones, are worthy of a little more attention because they correspond with the theoretical enunciations of pre-Romantics and Romantics and enunciations on the topic of a nation and national poetry. In the quoted stanza, three concepts seem the most relevant here. The first is a category of the past, “old history” in which the subject-protagonist is rooted, wearing a coat of “the splendours of my old ancestors [that] are great.” The second is a category of the future, towards which the address and the message of a protagonist shaped in this manner is oriented. The third, is the shape-changing “now,” within which actually exists the subject-protagonist of the poem. In this regard, the poem by Słowacki truly constitutes a “model” for Romanticism, more closely, the period of post-partition Poles for whom Romanticism built self-awareness, turning literature into “recognition of the nation in its own existence,” according to the popular saying by Mochnecki.

The category of the past becomes fundamental for the concept of a nation whose existence is based on rooting its “now” each time in the in the past history. Mochnecki wrote:

All ancestral people, historical ones, present in the history of the world are like a plant in a patriarchal settlement; ... Its root is the historical past. And all the fates of its trunk expressed year by year with a new ring will tell a rich tale! In the middle, there is the core – the life of the plant, from which the primary leaves will spread; around, in ever wider circles, you will see the later years and centuries ... All of this together is covered

34 Trans. Jarosław Zawadzki, <https://wolnelektury.pl/katalog/lektura/slowacki-my-testament.html>.

with external bark, which welds it all into a whole. Such is the life of the people! ... How wrong are those who plant everything on what there is now ... The historical life of all people is, in my opinion, nothing else but a continuous, uninterrupted process of becoming embodied for oneself from the beginning, from the cradle, through all times. It is about comprehending, feeling oneself in the whole expanse of the ancestral being. Let us feel ourselves in all of our times so we have all the successive centuries of our being consciously available at every moment, so with every pulse and in every scarce breath in our lives, the past and the lost identity of the nation comes to the fore of our memory. ... That is what understanding oneself in the past and present entails. From the little bud, from the grain to the crown of the widely-spreading maple tree shade, sycamore or arch!³⁵

To put it another way – also in Mochnacki's words:

... everything we perceive outside of us ..., it happened, that is, came to fruition by action. ... A true naturalist does not take and does not consider it as it is but wants to know how it came to be ... Each phenomenon in nature, each factum is the sum of previous operations.³⁶

Therefore, the national “today” is, by means of simplification, the sum of the processes of “yesterday;” it is rooted in the past. Its understanding is dependent on comprehending and knowing the past. Its identity may be defined as the identity of tradition, “let us feel ourselves in all of our times,” “in the whole expanse of the ancestral being.” And so is fashioned the hero-subject of “My Testament,” not only because he wears a drab of great ancestors splendour. It is also true because he is presented, not as an individual, but from the perspective of including within himself the national values and traditions – these “ancestral splendours” – and is identified with national tradition in a way; after all, he will be recalled by the “late grandson” thinking about “sad fates” of the *homeland*... He is a *national* hero embodying the value of national tradition because he is inscribed into these traditions, rooted in the past history of his homeland.

And the future? It is recognised as a further series of unbroken historical events, as a “further now.” It is also meant to be the heir of the past, rooted in it, and conscious of it. So, this “now” – being the heir of the past – is inclined towards the future which is to be its heir. And so, just as the past has consequences in the present, giving it an identity, this “now” will have a result in the future, giving it identity and modelling it as a tradition of legacy:

35 Maurycy Mochnacki, *O literaturze polskiej w wieku dziewiętnastym* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1985), p. 67.

36 Mochnacki, *O literaturze polskiej w wieku dziewiętnastym*, p. 78.

Jednak zostanie po mnie ta siła fatalna,
 Co mi żywemu na nic, tylko czoło zdobi;
 Lecz po śmierci was będzie gniołta niewidzialna,
 Aż was, zjadacze chleba – w aniołów przerobi.

[But after me remains, however, the fateful force,
 That, of no use in life, adorned my forehead tall;
 But it will press you when I die, without remorse,
 So that, bread-eaters, you become sheer angels all.]³⁷

The identity of a nation is based on the awareness of its continuity, on the conscious belief that every “now” means inheriting that which has passed but is also the *inheritance* of the past. There is a rule applied here that could be called the “principle of delayed action” in history: idea, deed – are not effective *in their time*, in their present. Every “yesterday” – becomes an effective “today.” Every “today,” will be effective “tomorrow.” In a word: “Victory shall be mine — beyond the grave” It is clearly demonstrated by the quoted stanza, showing how the “fateful force” is nothing for the protagonist’s today, the effectiveness is acquired in later generations, those inheriting. Then when the hero is no longer present in reality (after all: “I *leave behind*”), he will live in legends and in fables: “But you that knew me well, in your *reports* convey.”

The concept of “historical stories” typical for Romanticism is born here; the premise is that this story becomes effective only when it is supported by the authority of “being from the past.” To have a chance of effectively impacting the collective, it must be a story rooted in the past, a story – so to speak – “historioderivative.” But that’s only the condition of effectiveness. The effectiveness as such is actually played out in the future that inherits all that has passed. It is the place where a story can affect history and become historiogenic. In fact, to really exist in history means to exist in the future and in the generations inheriting the past one by one. It means to exist, not because of the historiogenic effectiveness of the real act, but by the historiogenic effectiveness of the story of the act, the legends. Effectiveness – of will.

For the Romantics, obviously, the second matters most. In the poem “Na sprowadzenie prochów Napoleona” [On the Occasion of Bringing Napoleon’s Ashes], the emperor as a real, living ruler is, in essence, nothing. Only when he becomes physical nothingness, after his death and only when his legend will be

37 Trans. Jarosław Zawadzki, <https://wolnelektury.pl/katalog/lektura/slowacki-my-testament.html>.

able to affect, he will become a power that can model history because it influences the living generations of his successors:³⁸

Ale nigdy, o nigdy! choć w ręku
Miałeś berło, świat i szablę naga,
Nigdy, nigdy nie szedłeś śród jęku
Z tak ogromną litości³⁹ powagą,
Z taką mocą... i z tak dumnym obliczem,
Jak dziś, wielki! gdy powracasz tu niczem.

[But never, oh never! though in your hand
You had a sceptre, the world and a naked saber,
You've never, never walked amongst groans
With such grand mercy and seriousness,
With such power... with such a proud face,
Like today, o great! when coming back here with nothing.]

It happens that such a view of the “historical story” shifts the accents: the value of “historioderivity” will become less important, but the “historiogenicness” will gain value. Historical – that is, released in history and valuable in this regard – status may be gained not necessarily by what has been confirmed by past events. It is possible to exist in history by entering into its scope through legends, even fictional, as long as this legend has had its effects in the further course of history and became historiogenic. A historical story is not necessarily a tale of a hero who existed in history which resulted in a story about the person. It can also happen the other way round: the story – supported by the authority granted to it by being from the past – functioning as a legacy, affects the course of the future, and the protagonist immortalised in it – not necessarily truly – uses it to *enter history* and shapes the “future story.” In this way, for example, Słowacki thought out his dramatic legend about *Balladyna*:

... let the thousands of anachronisms scare the historians and chroniclers sleeping in their graves: and if all of that has any force of life, if it was created in the head of the poet according to the divine laws, if the inspiration was not a fever, but the result of this strange power, which whispers to my ear words never heard of before, and the eyes see creatures never seen before, even in a dream, ...: then *Balladyna*, against reason and history, will become a Polish queen, and the thunderbolt that hit during her momentary reign will shine and cut the fog of history of the past.⁴⁰

38 See Janion, Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia*, p. 231.

39 One of the earlier variants read: “With such immense seriousness of those that cannot die,” which more strongly accentuated the transition “beyond the grave.”

40 List dedykacyjny, in: Juliusz Słowacki, *Dzieła wszystkie*, Vol IV (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1953), pp. 21–22.

The historical value of a legend is measured by its historiogenic effects and its effects as a legacy of future generations. The historicity of the deed and the historical effectiveness of the act is measured not by its ad hoc effects in the contemporary moment, but by the effectiveness of the legend of the deed as a factor modelling the future history measured by the effectiveness of heritage. Effectiveness – of legacy. Hence the characteristic “bidirectionality” of these poems-legends. On the one hand these poems, in a way, “archaise” their heroes, equipping them with the authority of the past, at least with the authority of what has already passed if only a moment ago, the authority of the “bygone.” It is noticeable in the situational stylization of the “Death of the Colonel,” the Norwidian rhapsody about Bem, it may also be seen in the style Słowacki’s “Sowiński na okopach Woli” [“Sowinski in the Trenches of Wola”], a clumsy and incomplete eight-syllable syllabic verse evoking associations with medieval poems, strengthened by the archaicity of syntax, vocabulary and inflection, as well as the characteristic juxtaposition of “physical frailty” and “unbroken spirit” of the protagonist which shape associations with legends of saints.⁴¹ The “now” stylised in this archaic manner is leaning towards its effectiveness in future history:

Aby miasto pamiętało
I mówiły polskie dziatki,
Które dziś w kołyskach leżą
I bomby grające słyszą,
Aby, mówię, owe dziatki
Wyrószy wspomniały sobie,
Że w tym dniu poległ na wałach
Jenerał – z nogą drewnianą.

[That... this city might remember
And our little children, too
Who today are in their cradles
As the bombs play in their ears.
I will fight that these, our children
When they're grown, may well remember
That this day upon the ramparts
Died a General -- with leg of wood.]⁴²

Hence, the lyrical “now” of these poems – the “now” of their subjects-heroes or heroes – is the moment of delivering the will. It does not matter for the sake of

41 See Janion, Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia*, p. 463.

42 Trans. Walter Whipple, <http://www.mission.net/poland/warsaw/literature/poems/sowinski.htm>.

modernity – it is leaned from what passed or is passing, towards the future, as if writing down a will or the first moment of checking its effectiveness, and rooting it in tradition while planning to move it into the future. As Krasiński wrote to Koźmian:

Don't think, don't infer, dear sir that your voice will not be understood by your descendants. Indeed, it always happens that poetry is the only one that preserves the past lives of the predecessors for the descendants. It constantly tells the future both ways, in both directions of time called past and future; gives life, timbre, movement, resurrection to that which is no longer there. ... As the saviour of the dying and the dead, give them those shapes, lend them this power of preservation that is to save them for posterity, which will use them, those who are no longer before our carnal eyes, to sculpt from them eternal statues, ever-present to the spiritual eyes of the people of the future.⁴³

This is a poetry-testament, poetry-story of the past for generations of the future. For its protagonists, the tool of permanence is effective commemoration as well as a chance to experience a victory that is “beyond the grave.” Hence the characteristic hero of these poems, the funebral hero, is the Great Deceased. Therefore the characteristic situation described in the poems, the moment of death, the moment of the funeral – the moment of transitioning from the living past into the future of the legend, from real life into a historical story-fable, from themselves into others who inherit this story and “take it into themselves”⁴⁴ – confirms the posthumous entry of the hero into the history of the future. Hence, in the end, the presence of some distinctive instruments of poetry, certain ensembles of allusive evocations and stylisations. One is, for example, an allusion to the Gospel understood as an effective and enduring “story of Christ,” which granted Him with the influence on future history, the posthumous “victory of Golgotha.” Such allusions saturate Słowacki's poem, “Na sprowadzenie prochów Napoleona,” “and on the sword as if on a cross spread,” “the gravestone will crumble,” “you will prevail, but with the victory of Golgotha.” Such references are also used in *My Testament*; this “tale” is dictated to “the tiny comrade,” the tale that “after death” is to turn “bread-eaters into angels.” And in *Sowiński w okopach Woli*, there are many such allusions: in the death scene on altar, “where the priest reads the Gospel,” in that stabbed breast, in that kneeling of the soldiers in front of the general... This – alongside expressive conceptual, messianic relationships – also basing the legend on a proven pattern, one that passed the exam of historical effectiveness, and became, in essence, a “historiogenic story,” providing the protagonist with posthumous influence on “the history of the future.”

43 Cited after: *Zygmunta Krasińskiego myśli o sztuce*, collected by ... A. Grzymała-Siedlecki, (Lwów: Księgarnia Polska B. P 1912), p. 68 and further.

44 See Janion, Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia*, pp. 517–518.

The regret of the subject-creator of the legend expressed from time to time that the “matter of fact” given at their disposal does not stimulate the creation of a legend and does not provide an opportunity to root the hero among the ancestral heroes of the past is understandable:

Gdyby przynajmniej przy rycerskiej śpiewce
 Karabin jemu pod głowę żołnierski!
 Ten sam karabin, w którym na panewce
 Kurzy się jeszcze wystrzał belwederski,
 Gdyby miecz w sercu lub śmiertelna kula —
 Lecz nie! — szpitalne łożo i koszula!

[If at least with the knightly song,
 the soldier's rifle got under his head!
 The same rifle in which the belvedere shot
 Is still gathering dust on the pan,
 If by a sword in the heart or a deadly bullet –
 But no! – hospital bed and a nightshirt!]

(Słowacki, “Pogrzeb kapitana Meyznera” [Captain Meyzner's Funeral])

3

However, it is also not a moment to rashly believe in the direct meanings of words. As it is in poetry, sometimes it is better to believe in the meaning of the genre of the work, and this is in this case faithfully reproduced from Young's epic poem, “A Poem on the Last Day,” and the description of Pompey's death:

Gdyby przynajmniej duszę człowiek ten dostojny
 W polu wyzionął, wpośród okropności wojny;
 Gdyby smutne rycerzów konających krzyki,
 Gdyby żałosne tony wojennej muzyki
 Ostatnie bohatera zaszczyliły tchnienia!
 Nie: umiera bez chwały, ginie bez zemśczenia.
 (Young, “Sąd ostateczny,” Pieśń II, translated by F. K. Dmochowski)

[If this lordly man at the least yielded his spirit
 In the field, amongst the atrocities of war;
 If the sad cries of dying knights,
 If the sombre tones of war music
 Graced the hero's last breaths!
 No: he dies without glory, perishes without vengeance.]⁴⁵

45 “The original poem reads as follows: / When the world bow'd to Rome's almighty sword,
 / Rome bow'd to Pompey, and confess'd her lord. / Yet, one day lost, this deity below /

It is an important lead because Słowacki's poem finally refers to the epic and is repeating this reference using allusions in the last paragraph which is based on references to *Iliad*.⁴⁶ Apart from styling God as the arrow-shooting Apollo, there is a clear paraphrase of Ajax's request:

Zapał przynajmniej na śmierć naszą — słońce!
 Niechaj dzień wyjdzie z jasnej niebios bramy,
 Niechaj nas przecie widzą — gdy konamy!

[At least for the moment of our death light – the sun!
 Let the day come out of the bright gate of heavens,
 Let them see us – when we perish!]
 (Słowacki, *Pogrzeb kapitana Meyznera*)

Father Zeus, save the sons of Achaea from the dark, and clear the heavens so our eyes can see. Kill us if you will, but in the light.
 (*The Iliad*, Book XVII, translated by A.S. Kline⁴⁷)

Style-wise, as we pointed out, Słowacki's poem entitled *Do A. M. I.* sends the reader to Tasso's epic as the hero has Crusader-Templar features; styling the death of Emilia Plater in the "Death of the Colonel" should also be seen as rooted in the medieval romance genre. Even more may be said about the Norwidian rhapsody about Bem's funeral so meticulously referring to the Old Polish funebral custom, a knightly one – which also has its roots in the tradition of poetry epic, for instance in *Grażyna*:

Przecież i trąba ozwała się z wieży,
 I most opada, i wolnymi kroki
 Rusza się orszak w żałobnej odzieży,

Became the scorn and pity of his foe. / His blood a traitor's sacrifice was made, / And smoked indignant on a ruffian's blade. / No trumpet's sound, no gasping army's yell, / Bid, with due horror, his great soul farewell. / Obscure his fall: all weltering in his gore,

His trunk was cast to perish on the shore! / While Julius frowned the bloody monster dead, / Who brought the world in his great rival's head. / This sever'd head and trunk shall join once more, / Though realms now rise between, and oceans roar. / The trumpet's sound each vagrant-mote shall hear, / Or fix'd in earth, or if afloat in air, / Obey the signal wafted in the wind, / And not one sleeping atom lag behind. (Young, "A Poem on the last Day," Book II) <https://archive.org/details/poemonlastdayint00youn/page/24/mode/2up?q=When+the+world+bow%27d+to+Rome%27s+almighty+sword%2C>.

46 Juliusz Kleiner, *Juliusz Słowacki, Dzieje twórczości* (Lwów: nakład Gebethnera i Wolfa, 1923), Vol. 3, p. 258.

47 2009, https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Iliad17.php#anchor_Toc239246187.

Niosąc na tarczach bohatera zwłoki;
 Przy nich łuk, włócznia, miecz i sajdak leży,
 Wkoło purpurą świeci płaszcz szeroki;
 Książęce stroje, lecz nie widać lica,
 Bo je spuszczone zawarła przyłbica.

...

Za cóż do nieba nie idzie za tobą
 Twój giermek, każdej nieodstępny drogi,
 I z próżnym siodłem, okryty żałobą
 Towarzysz pola, koń jelenionogi;
 I sokół ...

[For even the trumpet sounded from the tower
 And the bridge falls, and with slow steps
 Approaches the procession in mourning attire,
 Carrying the hero's body on their shields
 Next to them, bow, spear, sword and bow case
 Around it glows a wide crimson coat
 Princely clothes, but the face cannot be seen
 For it is covered with the lowered visor.

...

Why are you not followed to heavens
 By your squire, being with you on every other road
 With an empty saddle
 Your deer-legged horse covered with a mourning cape
 And your falcon]

There is more in Norwid's poem than allusive stylisation of its fragment to resemble medieval romance because of the similarity of motifs. Also, its rhythm, the measure of the entirety of the text sends the reader of the epic a hexameter, meaning "six-beat lines of heroic nature," which "for its serious pace and magnificent movement is the most elegant for grand and serious objects, to heroic themes."⁴⁸ Indeed, hexameter is most strongly associated with the epic genre. In this spirit, the archaisation of the funeral rite is explained – after all, it is in the epic that "the past time of the action contributes significantly to its dignity and seriousness. Antiquity enables elevated imaging of how the action of the epic is supposed to progress. It evokes in our imagination the events and the persons."⁴⁹

48 K.L. Szaller, *Zasady poezji i wymowy* (Warszawa: A. Brzezina, 1826), Vol. 1, pp. 96, 97–98.

49 Józef Korzeniowski, "Kurs poezji," in: *Dzieła* (Warszawa: S. Lewental, 1873), Vol. 12, p. 69.

Dignity and seriousness – associated with the impact on the imagination of the recipient – contribute, of course, to the permanence in memory. The title of the poem, “Bema pamięci” [In Memory of General Bem], reveals the poet’s intention and explains, in this aspect, these epic-like stylizations; and the commemoration and consolidation of the heroes in the memory of the descendants as the role of the epic was well-known to the Romantics. When Krasiński wrote to Koźmian about the role of poetry consisting of consolidating the past world, in some other statements, he set the epic as an example: “After reading *The Iliad*, the Greek primary era engraves itself forever into the mind of the reader, leaving only the essence. After reading Dante, the whole man becomes more and more medieval and does so far more truly, deeply, vibrantly than after reading thousands of medieval chronicles.”⁵⁰

Therefore, epic stylization, similar to Gospel-like stylization, may act here as a means of effectively appealing to the memory of the audience which in a way guarantees that the characters praised in such stylised works are remembered by posterity. This is how Krasiński assessed *Pan Tadeusz*: “Adam did it masterfully: these dead people he managed to immortalise; it will not be lost.”⁵¹

What of the value of the concept being commemorated? Euzebiusz Słowacki stated:

Equally essential is the condition that concept intended to be the focus of the epic should be great and important. The poet should choose such an event that would represent a grand epoch in human history, and thus drew the attention of the entire humankind, or at least individual nations. This entails an event the effects of which triggered the largest changes on the area in which it sets off a long series of historical accidents.⁵²

Korzeniowski talks about the “primary era,” so the one from the beginning of the nation⁵³ – but it can also be an era of great changes in the life of a nation, one that in a way initiates a new era of its life. So: a beginning or a breakthrough in the history of the collective, a breakthrough becoming a new beginning.

This unique “totality” of references to the epic in Norwid’s lyrics and the characteristic hexametric flow of the whole text, the archaisation evoking the atmosphere of the “primary era,” the narration of the linguistic discourse, and finally the title (“rhapsody” is a part of the epic poem⁵⁴) impose a question: what is the

50 *Zygmunta Krasińskiego myśli o sztuce*, p. 69.

51 *Zygmunta Krasińskiego myśli o sztuce*, p. 71.

52 Euzebiusz Słowacki, *Prawidła wymowy i poezji* (Warszawa: Zawadzki i Węcki, 1833), p. 263.

53 Korzeniowski, “Kurs poezji,” p. 69.

54 Słowacki, *Prawidła wymowy i poezji*, p. 270.

significance of the event shown in the poem? perhaps more accurately: what is the category of historical validity in which this event was presented? Is there a signal of the “primary era,” ground-breaking, not only in poetic, archaising stylization, but also in the problems that this stylization encompasses and expresses of which it is a semantically profound object?

Wchodzą w wąwóz i toną... wychodzą w światło księżyca

...

I czeluście zobaczym czarne, co czyha za drogą,

[They enter and drown in the valley – merge in the moonlight

...

We shall behold a black chasm lurking beyond the road]

Between these two verses, there is an important – and doubled – difference in the narrative course. First, there is the opposition of the third-person and first-person plural. It is about the same collective and the procession of mourners, after all, it is once shown from the outside by the narrator-witness, and for a second time from the inside by the narrator-participant. It is a significant shift, marking a meaningful boundary in the course of the poem, more specifically, in its spatial layout. As long as the procession moves towards the grave, it is recounted by an outside observer from his position. At the moment of approaching the grave, marking the end of the way of the procession, the narrator moves to the position of a participant and starts to talk not only about the group of the participants but also as a member of this collective, “we.”

The second opposition between these verses is the opposition of times: the present and the future. As long as the funeral moves towards the grave it is reported in the present tense, with elements in the past tense when the history of the deceased is mentioned, his deeds accomplished during his lifetime (“Like the many ideas you caught with your spear”). At the moment of arriving at the prepared grave, that “black chasm” where the funeral route ends, time changes into the future. And in both cases, the border is the grave, the line between passively “witnessing” the funeral and participation in the procession, the border between the present joined with the past, and the future.

The moment of the burial, the “now” of the poem is reported in the present tense, in a reporting manner that embraces and accumulates the past; It is archaically stylised and in a way “summarising” the life achievement of the Great Deceased in the symbolism of tribute, spears, and knightly props... This funeral procession – Old Polish, knightly – made it to the grave. It progresses into the final stage, which is to include the hero in the past, to equate him with the ancestors, and to symbolise the fall of the archimimus from the horse: “till

it's time to roll into the grave"... It is the finale of the protagonist's life. And in this very moment – unexpectedly – the future tense enters the stage:

V

Dalej – dalej – aż kiedyś stoczyć się przyjdzie do grobu
I czeluście zobaczym czarne, co czyha za drogą,
Które aby przesadzić, Ludzkość nie znajdzie sposobu,
Włócznieją twego rumaka zeprzem jak starą ostrogą...

VI

I powleczem korowód, smęcąc ujęte snem grody,
W bramy bijąc urnami, gwizdając w szczyrby toporów,
Aż się mury Jerycha porozwalają jak kłody,
Serca zmdlałe ocucą – pleśń z oczu zgarną narody...

.....

Dalej – dalej – –

[V

On – on – till it's time to roll into the grave:
We shall behold a black chasm lurking beyond the road
(*And to cross it humanity will not find a way*)
Over the edge we shall spear-thrust your steed
As though with a rusting spur...

VI

And we'll drag the procession, saddening *slumber-seized cities*,
Battering gates with urns, whistling on blunted hatchets,
Till the walls of Jericho tumble down like logs,
Swooned hearts revive – nations gather the must from their eyes...

.....

On – on –]

The border of the grave, which has to close the past, opens the future; the tomb is crossed, the archimimus does not fall from the horse, and the funeral procession moves on. However, before he crossed the grave, the procession underwent a significant change. Until now it was led by the archimimus-Bem; it was also reported "from a distance," "passively," and from the position of a disengaged observer. Now the group becomes not an object, but a subject, the first-person plural, "we." It becomes an active collective and the one to decide about crossing the grave border, not the Shadow. The group decides in a drastic way, by forcing the archimimus-Bem to cross the grave: "Włócznieją twego rumaka zeprzem jak starą ostrogą..." [Over the edge we shall spear-thrust your steed As though with a rusting spur...]. The past, "the old spur," opens the way towards the future. Moreover, the role of this "old spur" that forces Bem's horse to jump over the

grave is performed by a spearhead – initially associated with Bem – his tool for “chasing ideas.” Later on, it is passed into the hands of the community participating in the procession and then, by the will of this collective, it becomes an instrument of enforcement with regard to the further course of the burial – into the future. A mournful procession turns into a conquering and creative march; one that closes the stage of history into a procession and opening a new stage. This is the epic “solstice,” the epic “turn” in the history of the collective.

A turn, made under the influence of inheriting Bem’s idea, symbolised here in the motif of the spear. First, it serves Bem. Then it passes into the hands of the procession, works according to its will and idea, and the procession uses it. It is used from the moment the group stepped on the edge of the grave as a subject of action as “we,” and moved beyond the grave, further way. In this aspect, the poem shows a breakthrough in the group mentality. It shows the community initially led by Bem, later turning into the subject of action and extending the route of the funeral procession started by the General. At first, the community does not comprehend the idea of Bem, after all, the poem begins with a question full of doubt: “Czemu, Cieniu, odjeżdżasz, ręce złamawszy na pancierz” [Why ride away, Shadow, hands broken on the mail]. Later, during the funeral, takes this idea “into itself,” inherits it, and shapes the conquering march already as an active subject. The procession that began as funeral further transforms into a triumphal one, triumphal for the idea of Bem, which was actively taken over by a living community.

The poem does not end; it remains open. Open in a characteristic way as it demands to be “completed.” This “On – on –” starting the penultimate paragraph and repeated at the end turns into an anaphora thanks to this repetition. The anaphora that initiated the penultimate paragraphs. It appeared again, as a final element, but in truth as an incipit, anaphora, of an unfinished paragraph, foreshadowing the further flow of this paragraph’s, similar to the pattern of the preceding, finite one. In the end, there is only the incipit and empty space for the continuation. We understand this is the beginning of a “new era,” opened by inheriting the idea of Bem by the community. The epoch which is supposed to be written by history from the other side of the grave, history which is already shaped by the heirs of Bem’s ideas. The finale of the poem does not deliver closure but, paradoxically, becomes an opening. The poem itself is shorthand of the process of transitioning what was supposed to be a closing element into an opening. A shorthand record of the actual “epic moment,” an important moment of change in the history of the group.

It is a highly remarkable, highly romantic, and very strange poem, a lyric that appeals to the conventions of the epic and the queen of epic genres. The funeral,

which usually ends the fate of the hero and ends the epic, became its beginning, a start that left the obligatory open, because of the broken anaphora, place for its continuation. A poem about a Romantic funereal protagonist, growing out of the archaized “yesterday” and entering “tomorrow,” entering as his own legacy, shaping the “history of the future,” modelling the behaviours of heirs in history.⁵⁵

A tribute to Bem, arranged as a stylised allusion to the beginning of an epic. Perhaps the epic comprehended in the same way Hegel understood it:

As ... the primal totality, the epic work is a book [sacred – I. O.], a bible for a nation; so every great and eminent nation possesses these kinds of books as absolutely the first, as through them the basic property of its spirit is expressed. This is why monuments play such an extremely important role as the source of proper basis of national consciousness.⁵⁶

If so, this poem is a most beautiful tribute to Bem.

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55 See Kamieńska, “Pochód nieprzerwany.”

56 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wykłady o estetyce* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1967), Vol. 3, pp. 397–398.

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“There, Where *No-Body* Is, Lingers a *Person*:” About the Poem “To the Departed”

Abstract: The paper attempts a reading of the poem “Do Zeszłej...” [To the Departed]. Norwid’s text presents a supernatural reality, the reality of God, who is none of us, and yet a personal being. It is the reality of perfect community, which can be understood from the human perspective through paradox, similarity, and symbol; those form the basic reference systems for the poem. In the work, the poet tries to come closer to the mystery of God and Heaven and use poetic means to make them real and fit them in the world of his poetic vision. It is at the same time an abridged view on the history of humanity and human fate, shown through theological thought (rooted e.g. in apophatic theology, which stressed the negation in describing God). The situational context given in the title places the poem in the category of a sepulchral poem addressed to a late woman close to Norwid; any further specification of that woman, undertaken in research and reading of the poem, does not seem possible to achieve from a historical and philological point of view (due to the lack of suitable data). As a sepulchral poem, while maintaining the formulae and functions: practical, informational, and consolatory, at the same time “Do Zeszłej...” breaks the convention of the genre, in which the topic is the deceased person with information about them or laudation of them. Here, the words are addressed to the space where the Deceased is gone; towards the space where time and the history of each person finds its completion. Thus, on the one hand, the poem follows the appearance of the consolatory convention, but on the other hand, it shatters that convention by abandoning its utilitarian character and directing the poetic thought towards a deeper, general theological reflection.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, sepulchral poem, apophatic theology, eschatology, heaven

Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki, in his commentary on poem LXXXV of *Vade-mecum*, explains only the initial word of the poem, “sien” [hall, vestibule], “The hall mentioned in the first line is, of course, earthly life, which is only a door to eternal life.”¹ As if everything else in the piece was clear and understandable. Yet it is not so. “Do Zeszłej...” is one of Norwid’s most ambiguous poems. It is also one of the most fascinating in the poet’s oeuvre.

DO ZESZŁEJ
(na grobowym głazie)

1 Cyprian Norwid, *Dziela zebrane*, Vol. II, ed. Juliusz W. Gomulicki (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1966), p. 833.

Sieni tej drzwi otworem poza sobą
 Zostaw – – wzlećmy już dalej!
 Tam, gdzie jest *Nikt* i jest *Osoba*:
 – Podzielni wszyscy, a cali!

*

Tam, milion rzęs, choć jedną łzą pokryte,
 Kroć serc łkających: “*Gdzie Ty?*”
 – Tam, stopy dwie, gwoźdźmi przebite:
 Uciekające z planety...

Tam, milion moich słów – tam – lecą i te.²

[TO THE DEPARTED...

(ON A TOMBSTONE)

Leave this door of the vestibule open
 Behind you – let’s fly up higher!...
 There, where *No-body* is, lingers a *Person*:
 – Divided all, yet whole!...

There, a million eyelashes, though under one tear,
 Myriad hearts, sobbing: “*Where art Thou?*”
 – There, two feet, pierced by nails –
 Fleeting – from the planet...

There, a milion of my words – there, fly also these.]³

An interpretation can have different goals. It may seek to understand a work by placing it in a specific philosophical, social, historical, and literary context, and to define its place and meaning in that context. It may try to reveal the artistic concept of the work, its internal links and tensions which determine its value. But there is a basic need for an interpretation which arises whenever there is any semantic ambiguity; the latter is always an incentive for the interpreter. Clarification of individual meanings and the sense of the whole work is the first goal of any interpretation. Clarification is also the purpose of this essay on one of Norwid’s most original poems.

2 Text according to *Vade-mecum. Podobizna autografu*, ed. Waław Borowy (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1947), p. 87.

3 Trans. Danuta Borchardt in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2012), p. 59. In this article the graphical layout of the word “nobody” has been alternated by A. Brajerska-Mazur.

Gomulicki commented on the word “sień” quite accurately. Yet the emphasis within the meaning of the word should rest, not on the moment of “transition” or “door,” but of “introduction.” With a “transition,” both boundaries defining it would have to be more clearly specified. The hall in the poem is an “initial” space, preceding and introducing the centre of the house. Naturally, a hall does not only lead one into the house, it is also a way out of the house. If focus centres on that part of the word’s meaning, it should be assumed that for Norwid, home in this work is an abandoned “stary dom” [old house], “stary łąd” [old land], and a symbol of life on earth. Such an interpretation is unlikely since in a letter written to Joanna Kuczyńska of 1862 – the time when the poem “Do Zeszłej...” was written – the poet gives the term “sień” to the present, earthly life. “Parę dni temu grzebałem kolegę, który strzałem z pistoletu zamknął sobie drzwi tej szanownej sieni, którą obecnością nazywamy.”⁴ (DW XII, 15) [A few days ago I buried a friend who, with a pistol shot, closed the door of that honourable hall which we call presence.] Thus – with all the indeterminacy of meanings – he means leaving the hall, but such a direction also leads into the house. Further sentences of the work make it clear that he means God’s house.

In the fragment quoted above of the letter to Joanna Kuczyńska, the poet describes death as closing the door of mortality. In the poem “Do Zeszłej...” he asks the person who has passed away to leave the door open. Is that a different understanding of death, or its different valorisation in this case? Likely, it is an exception made to the one who remained, opening the door to his words, thoughts, and imagination – his own and those of all who would like to “fly forth” following the Deceased one, up to the where the hall of human life leads, to the holy place.

Norwid’s entire poem is oriented towards that space, towards another reality, and defined with a double paradox:

Tam, gdzie jest *Nikt* i jest *Osoba*:
– Podzielni wszyscy, a cali!...

[There, where *No-body* is, lingers a *Person*:
– Divided all, yet whole!...]

Naturally, he means God, who is no-body in the human sense. No “image and likeness” which humanity has at their disposal can effectively bring us closer to God’s mystery. God is someone entirely different, not one of us, “no-body” from the human view. Nothing can really be said about God. What one can use are

4 Norwid meant Walenty Pomian Zakrzewski (1822–1862).

negative terms (who He is not) or silence. Yet at the same time, God is a personal being, and thus one close to us. He is someone to whom we can pray, and whom we can fully trust. He is the Father of all people and of each person. That is a paradox which can only make the mystery a little clearer. Yet it is a contradiction which can be overcome since the word “No-body” plays on two meanings at the same time. One (“no one at all”) builds the paradox, and the other (“not one of us”) seems to suspend that paradox. The fact that both words are capitalised and that the words are emphasised in the manuscript makes it clear the poet means God.

The pronoun “No-body” as a proper name has a very ancient tradition in literature. It appears in *The Odyssey*, which was well known to Norwid and the fragments of which he translated, where the pronoun is the basis of Odysseus’ stratagem in the adventure with Polyphemus described in song IX. Norwid uses the device in a completely different function, to approximate the ineffable otherness of God. With that, he follows the thinking characteristic of apophatic theology which emphasizes the negative definition of God.⁵ Such thinking is also close to the mystics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Jakob Böhme or Angelus Silesius, who were well-known to the romantics and to Norwid. God is described by them impersonally as the “eternal Nothing,” a being opposite to diversity in its negative unity.⁶ The “Mighty Nothing” is also present in Baroque poetry, especially in the works of English metaphysical poets, with its use of antithesis and paradox.⁷

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- 5 See the entry “Apofatyczna teologia” [Apophatic theology] in *Encyklopedia Katolicka KUL* (Vol. I) by Waclaw Hryniewicz; also some parts of Hilda Graef’s *Der Siebenfarbige Bogen* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1959), particularly the chapters on Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite and on 14th-century negative theology. Significant is Dionysius’ conviction that the Emanations of God can only be defined with the term of Not-Being, or the Non-Existent (τὸ μὴ ὄν) (Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, trans. Clarence E. Rolt (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2007), chap. III).
- 6 “Wenn ich betrachte, was Gott ist, so sage ich: Er ist das Eine gegen der Kreatur, als ein ewig Nichts; er hat weder Grund, Anfang noch Stätte; und besitzt nichts, als nur sich selber, er ist der Wille des Ungrundes, er ist in sich selber nur Eines, er bedarf keinen Raum noch Ort: er gebäret von Ewigkeit in Ewigkeit sich selber in sich: er ist keinem Dinge gleich oder ähnlich und hat keinen sonderlichen Ort, da er wohne” (Jakob Böhme, *Glaube und Tat. Eine Auswahl aus dem Gesamtwerk*, ed. Eberhard Hermann Paltz, Marburg a.d. Lahn: Union Verlag, 1976, p. 71).
- 7 See Margaret Schlauch, “Angielscy poeci metafizyczni XVII wieku,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 1960, No. 5, pp. 47–74; Stanisław Barańczak, “Bóg, człowiek i natura u angielskich ‘poetów metafizycznych’ XVII wieku,” in: *Sacrum w literaturze*, ed.

O Mighty Nothing! unto thee,
 Nothing, we owe all things that be.
 God spake once when he all things made,
 He sav'd all when he Nothing said.
 The world was made of Nothing then;
 'Tis made by Nothing now againe.

R. Crashaw, *And He Answered Them Nothing*⁸

Norwid refers to the tradition of paradoxical definition of what is sacred also in the fourth verse of the poem, which introduces the reader to the reality of eschatological unity and community: “– Podzielni wszyscy, a cali!” [– Divided all, yet whole!...]. That is the most essential and final perspective for Christianity, a perfect community of people “united with God through Christ;”⁹ regardless of their different relations to God and the differing identities of the saved. The source of that communion of saints is the unity of God, the One and Triune. The whole verse can be seen as referring to that ultimate unity, especially as the colon ending the previous verse might justify its treatment as a complementary phrase and theological deepening of God seen through the paradox. Christian eschatological unity (*unitas plena atque perfecta*) has a Trinitarian character. A community based on a paradox of separateness and unity marks the entire sacred space towards which the Deceased and the person speaking to her in the poem “fly up higher.” The circle of “Tam” [lit. There] is the circle of all the saved who, without losing their distinctness, partake of the perfect community gathered around the Father and are present in His inner life.

The word “Tam” [There] also opens the second stanza of the poem. Does it mean the same as in the first part of the lyric? If one were to follow one possibility of spatial interpretation, one would have to admit that it means the actual opposite. The question is whether the flight announced at the beginning of the poem comes true in the reality of the poetic world, or whether it was just a projection of the imagination, a metaphor of longing and dreams?¹⁰ If the first possibility

Jan Gotfryd, Maria Jasińska-Wojtkowska, Stefan Sawicki (Lublin: TN KUL, 1983), pp. 207–228.

8 See also John Wilmot’s poem *Upon Nothing*.

9 See Wincenty Granat, *Ku człowiekowi i Bogu w Chrystusie*, Vol. II, (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1974), part II, chap. III; Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common destiny of Man* (Ignatius Press, 1988), chap. IV: *Eternal Life*.

10 Here it is worth quoting a fragment of Norwid’s letter to J. Kuczyńska of 1866: “Myślę, że jeżeli w sekund kilka można już przesłać literę jedną z Ameryki do Londynu – przez te otchłanie, które oglądałem po dwakroć oczyma mymi – przez te fale od masztów wyższe o pół – wśród wrzawy tych ptaków białych, wielkich jak jednoroczne dzieci

is accepted, the “There” appearing in the second stanza of the poem would be related to a view “from above” and not “upwards.” The spatial situation would be different – “There” would mean now the earth. The “sieni tej drzwi” [door of the vestibule] left open would be a poetic window to the earthly world, and the words from the last line of the lyric – words related to the earth and directed towards it.

Such an interpretation would be possible as well as effective, adding internal differentiation and dynamics to the poem. Yet despite that, priority should quite likely be given to the semantic interpretative trope, rather than the spatial one. “There” appears five times in the poem. Its significance in the first stanza cannot be doubted. Connected with the “upward” direction, it signifies a space where God and the Christian heavens are particularly present. That is also the case in other texts by Norwid.

Więc TEN, o! dobry, tam, gdzie miłosierdzia źródłisko,
Śpiewaki swoje nam sprawił i przysłał tu blisko –

Psalmów-psalm [The Psalm of Psalms], l. 22–23

[So HE, oh! the good One, there where the spring of mercy flows,
Has procured His singers and sent them to us close –]

It is unlikely that a change in the clearly defined meaning would be caused by a change in the spatial situation which has not been clearly marked, as such happens in e.g. *Oda do młodości* [Ode to Youth]. The first “There” dominates semantically over the other ones and suggests the direction of interpretation. The flight motif in line two is also clearly directed upward. The words from the last line: “Tam, milion moich słów – tam – lecą i te” [There, a milion of my words – there, fly also these] seem an extension of the motif and its fulfilment. They “fly” in the same direction. Bearing in mind the tremendous succinctness

nasze – myślę – – że nie tylko na szerokość, ale i na *wysokość* zwyciężona jest także przestrzeń – i że tchnienie jedno i myśl jedna, i poczucie jedno sakramentalnie czyste i czujne, jeżeli nie dziesięćkroć większą, to dwakroć przynajmniej bystrzejszą posiadły możliwość” (DW XII, 528) [I think that if you can already in a few seconds send *a single letter from America to London* – through the depths which I have seen with my own eyes twice – through the waves topping the masts by half – among the screams of those white birds, huge as our one year old children – I think – – that space is conquered not just in its width, but even in its *height* – and that one breath and one thought, and one feeling sacramentally pure and keen, have a capability if not ten times greater, than at least twice as fleet].

of the poem, its “openness,” “indeterminateness,” semantic looseness, and the presence of a “spatial” interpretation in the horizon of reception,¹¹ one ought to assume the “upward” lyrical situation and the identity of the adverb “There,” which is the recurring name for God’s space, heaven, as constants in the poem. However, while the first stanza discusses the place, “where (there is),” at the end it is a direction, “where to.”

A relatively large part of the discussion focuses on the beginning of the second stanza as it forms the key to understanding the entire content. A view from above is not a very convincing choice for a vision of Christ ascending into heaven. He is clearly shown in the poem “from below,” the feet “przebite gwoźdźmi” [pierced through with nails] are seen by the witnesses of the event, staring up at Christ Crucified departing from Earth, “the planet of people.” A look from above dramatises human life by locating their fate in the “valley of tears,” and in the dusk of human existence. But a view “upwards” allows for the sight of the Christian cosmos more fully. The question “*Gdzie Ty?*” [*Where art Thou?*] corresponds semantically with the previous “empty” and paradoxical definition of God, and both constitute an important structural axis of the poem. Stefan Kołaczkowski included that within the issues of irony and believed that in the poem “*Do Zeszłej...*,” God was a tragic nothingness, a projection of doubt and despair.¹² Not following such an extreme and, in this case, wrong path,¹³ it must be acknowledged that to this “There” millions of people crying, tormented, waiting, longing and doubting send their poignant question. Everyone. Also, those from the “valley of tears.”

Also those who are in a situation of posthumous sanctification which was so subtly understood by Norwid.¹⁴ And perhaps those to whom Christ descended

11 It would have been more convincing for the poem by Juliusz Słowacki, for whom creativity of the poetic world was more important than the “real” situation of a person speaking in a poem.

12 “Nothingness and death seemed, to the poet, bereft of all, and the only content of life left to him, the only thing in common with others. And in moments of utter despair ... only death seemed to him to be the essence of the world, the face of God. Such a sense can be read into the shockingly calm sepulchral poem ‘*Do Zeszłej*’” (Stefan Kołaczkowski, “Norwid’s Irony,” in: *On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays*, Vol. II, ed. A. Brajerska-Mazur and E. Chlebowska (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021), p. 40).

13 The error in S. Kołaczkowski’s interpretation was indicated already by Waław Borowy in *Norwidiana 1930–1935*, part III: *Studia nad twórczością* and in the article “Norwid poeta,” in: Waław Borowy, *O Norwidzie. Rozprawy i notatki*, ed. Zofia Stefanowska (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1960), p. 19 and 200.

14 See e.g. his notes in the essay “Zmartwychwstanie historyczne,” PWSz VI, 617.

after his resurrection. And finally those from John's *Apocalypse*, who are standing at the threshold of complete happiness.

They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;
for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne
will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters.
And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.¹⁵

And, also, the tear which covers "milion rzęs" [a million eyelashes], symbolizing the human fate.

They all turn their thoughts and feelings, "There." "There" ascends the Risen Christ with the marks of his passion on the cross. Christ the Saviour. He ascends right next to those who desire God, and for whom His departure could also cause questions and fear; he ascends to satisfy their need. He returns to the Father to unite himself "There," with all the saved ones. The space towards which everything is heading is the ultimate fulfilment of human history. The words of the poet also head toward that space; the words of this poem, along with millions of other words – prayers and poetry.

There remains the question of the addressee of the poem "Do Zeszłej...". Until now, the discussion avoided the determination of the lyrical "you." The title is so general that it should be respected. Everyone agrees, however, that it was addressed to a deceased woman who was close to Norwid. Gomulicki sees the possible addressee of the poem in e.g. the poet's sister, Paulina Suska, who died in 1860, or a Madame André, of whom little is known.¹⁶ Przesmycki links the poem's creation with the death of Zofia Węgierska, a friend of Norwid.¹⁷ Yet the current state of research on *Vade-mecum* precludes Przesmycki's suggestion, as the manuscript of that volume of poetry was ready in April 1866,¹⁸ and Węgierska died in November 1869. If not for that fact, Przesmycki's suggestion would have been very likely. In her last letter to Norwid dated 1st November 1869, a week before her death, Węgierska described her "sen z ostatnich dni" [recent dream].

15 *Revelation* 7: 16–17, according to the New King James Version. The relation of the poem "Do Zeszłej..." to the *Book of Revelation* is indicated by Alina Merdas in her book *Łuk przymierza. Biblia w poezji Norwida* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1983), pp. 41–42.

16 See Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, Vol. II, p. 209 and 839.

17 See Cyprian Norwid, *Poezje wybrane z całej odszukanej po dziś puścizny poety*, edition and notes by Miriam (Warszawa: Wyd. J. Mortkowicza, 1933), p. 50.

18 See Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, Vol. II, pp. 174–175.

Thus thinking and tossing in the bed, the pillows feeling hard and swan fluff in the pink bedding feeling like lead... I finally fell asleep... and soon I caught up with you leaving in the dark corridor, and soon we went out into the moonlight, to the gardens full of the most mystic scents – and thus relishing all, we walked over to the blooming myrtle, where you sat down and began to read to me from a great book such exquisite things as no one on earth preaches...

I was delighted – enchanted...

But soon a black cloud came and poured out with streams of lightning – the fire turned the sky into a horror... Such wind arose that the cypresses and birches bent their foreheads deep to the ground and there was a terrible cataclysm of nature... and I was not afraid at all, for I was holding your hand tight... Until you called: let us be gone from here! And there came a huge white bird, and we clang to its wings and flew up... And then, what was then? Can it even be described? (PWsz IX, 635)

In both texts, there are striking similarities of the motifs (hall-corridor, flight, “wniebowzięcie” [ascension or enchantment]), the lyrical situation and personal relationships, as well as the general “mystical” atmosphere. Węgierska’s description of it all is different, more private, personal, more romantic, but the similarities are so extensive that perhaps it is more than just coincidence. As Norwid could not use Węgierska’s letter in the poem “Do Zeszłej...,” there may be a chance that her dream was born from having read the poem.¹⁹

Not only the title of the poem lacks clear definition, the subtitle is also not entirely explicit. The words “on a tombstone” could be understood as the speaker’s spatial location, analogous to the one shown in the painting by Walenty Wańkowicz *Mickiewicz na Judahu skale* (*Portrait of Adam Mickiewicz on the Ayu-Dag Cliff*). Yet in that context, that would likely be a lyrical situation painted too artificially and lacking subtlety, without good support from the poet’s works. It would not bring a new argument for an interpretation based on spatial differentiation either, because the adverb “There” of the first stanza (heaven) would have to correspond to the “Here” of the second stanza (earth). Thus, the current understanding of the poem “Do Zeszłej...” as a sepulchral poem ought to be retained.

Still, it is so different from the otherwise known poems of the genre and subject to practical and informational functions as well as the context.²⁰ The usual

19 Józef Fert indicated that fact to me.

20 See Jan Trzynadlowski, *Małe formy literackie* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1977), pp. 67–69; Alina Siomkajło, *Ewolucje epigramatu (do początków romantyzmu w Polsce)* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1983), chap. I, 8; *Epigram grzebalny*; Jacek Kolbuszewski, “Kilka uwag o ‘wierszach z cmentarza,’” *Przegląd Powszechny*, 1983, No. 11, pp. 211–224.

topic is the deceased person, as well as information about them or praise of them, and often the grieving of those left behind. In the poem “Do Zeszłej...” the poet goes definitely beyond the pattern.²¹ His words are directed at the space where the Deceased one has gone; to a space where time and the history of each of us shall find its fulfilment. The poem contains the history of humanity and the fate of the human with fascinating conciseness. While outwardly remaining in the convention of the genre, it breaks that convention with its utilitarian, “applied” character, its popular religiousness, and takes the topic to the broad roads of theological thought. Again, one ought to seek similarities in the baroque poetry mentioned above, English metaphysical poetry, perhaps even modern poetry; although it would be difficult to find an epitaph-poem of such a vast circle of reflection, manner of expression “do tajemniczości zwięzy”²² [concise up to mysteriousness], and, at the same time, so poetically convincing.

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21 Some orientation in the poetics and value of the sepulchral poems of 1839–1955 is provided by a little anthology titled *Literatura Cmentarna*, prepared by Kazimierz W. Wójcicki in Vol. III of his book *Cmentarz Powązkowski* (Warszawa: S. Orgelbrand, 1858), pp. 188–198.

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Elżbieta Dąbrowicz

“Lord Singelworth’s Secret” by Cyprian Norwid: The Strategy of Public Speaking

Abstract: The starting and reference point of the analysis of “Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth” [Lord Singelworth’s Secret] is the antinomy between the private word and the public word, which is essential for Norwid’s model of literature. The novella resembles a monographic study on the public word, public situations and the person in a public role. Both in Toni di Bona Grazia’s performance, and in the balloon experiment of the eponymous lord, the word’s meaning is conveyed by its sound, the circumstances of its utterance, as well as the gesture. By replacing words with ambiguous symbols, the title character simultaneously defends the autonomy of the unspoken word and his own person. The main prop, the balloon, conveys a whole range of meanings: from protest to glorification, from *serio* to *buffo*. The lord’s action acquires myth-making, and, at the same time, a foundational character, heralding the death of old Europe which rejects the ballast of tradition. Toni di Bona Grazia’s performance, on the other hand, considers, through its Aesopian language, the conspiring listeners and the eavesdropping confidants. The former are sensitive to what di Bona Grazia is saying, the latter to how he is saying it. Both characters are united in their protest, which is a result of their negative diagnosis of reality, and both play with distance – in the name of truth and purity. The work deals with mystery in a world consumed by “materiality.” It is not so much concerned with a riddle, but with what can be communicated through it, evoking cognitive anxiety.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, novella, Venice, improvisation, strategy of public speaking, balloon flight

[1873] In summer, a Frenchman, Captain Bunelle, arrived in Warsaw with a large balloon offering rides for a fee. One of the first to come to him was Mr Bruno Ciemniowski, who having paid 100 roubles booked a place for himself. On a beautiful, sunny day in the courtyard of the Kaźmierowski Palace at the University, from the early morning the balloon started to be filled with illuminating gas, with the help of hired soldiers. In the afternoon, in the presence of numerous spectators, admitted with tickets, Captain Bunelle and Mr Ciemniowski got into the balloon boat, ... At the sign given by the captain, the last rope was released, and after emptying a few sacks of sand from the ballast, the balloon quickly and calmly ascended and went eastwards across the Vistula.

The next evening, Mr Bruno returned home, but he had to go to bed right away. He caught a cold since he had not taken the right clothes for his air ride. He paid for this lack of foresight with pneumonia.¹

It is easy to weave a moralising point into this delightful picture from Stanisław J. Czarnowski's memoirs. Any intrusive columnist working for a "tabloid" or "courier" would certainly be lured by the taste of gratification and the humorous aspect of the event. Mr Ciemniowski's unfortunate adventure would serve as a didactic reflection condemning any extravagance in the name of the old custom.

Norwid turned this newspaper anecdote into the plot of "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth" [Lord Singelworth's Secret]. The genre of the work, the brochure edition, as well as the title, which the nineteenth century audience associated with entertainment literature² were intended to encourage the average, everyday audience. These features located this work in the circle of assimilated tradition. The short, concise form estimated to take an evening to read, catered to the tastes of readers familiar with "small literature" – after the expansion of the picture and sketch, amidst the unflagging popularity of the storytelling and systematic contact with column writing.³ "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth" categorically contradicts the commercial character of the project. The novel deliberately introduces a conflict with the audience's predictions. It confounds the aroused expectations, launching a game of perceptual attitudes. The readers expect an attractive plot, but they find a two-dimensional, allegorical or symbolic construction, which treats events as a pretext.

Tension between the competing reading styles is already signalled in the title of the work, "Lord Singelworth's Secret," i.e. the mysterious story of an English aristocrat. At the same time, the meaningful allegorical name of the weirdo⁴

1 Stanisław Jan Czarnowski, *Pamiętniki. Wspomnienia z trzech stuleci XVIII, XIX i XX. Z. 7: Wydawnictwo i aplikacja sądowa moja w Warszawie 1869–1873* (Warszawa, 1922), p. 34.

2 This affinity to sensationalised literature is indicated by Marek Adamiec in his article "Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth' albo metafizyka balonu," *Studia Norwidiana*, Vols. 3–4 (1985–1986), p. 202. A similar communicative mechanism was used in the title of *Vade-mecum*. It evoked the use of non-literary texts, a manual (this is only one of the possible connotations).

3 Here, I am trying to recreate the communicative situation that was contemporary with the text, a situation that is only hypothetical, because it never existed.

4 Singelworth is both a meaningful and an ambiguous name. Single – 'singular, separate,' also 'uniform, cohesive,' which, depending on the context, may be associated with resoluteness or limitation, primitivism. (The second protagonist, Toni di Bona Grazia, also has a significant name.).

dictates an interpretation in universal categories. And yet, the allegorical element does not necessarily make a particular event less important. Indeed, the system of subordinating the exemplar to general meanings is dominant in Norwid’s work.⁵ However, the novellas also feature the opposite direction: from a parable to actualisation, from observation to participation. As the audience starts reading the work from a distance to the presented world, they are suddenly thrown into action. They have to be very careful when trying to prioritise the issues they encounter. Seemingly trivial gestures, words, and moments often contradict the conventional scale of grandeur. They reveal ominous power when they control the fate of the characters (e.g. “Bransoletka” [Bracelet], “Stygmat” [Stigma]). They can also be a visible sign of deep, inexpressible experiences and emotions⁶, e.g. “plecionka długa z włosów blond” [a braided long blonde curl]⁷ (“Czułość” PWsz II, 85 [“Tenderness”]); “spadły listek, do szyby przyklejony” [a fallen leaf stuck to a windowpane]⁸ ([“Daj mi wstążkę błękitną”] DW VI, 101 [“Give me a blue ribbon”]). The “fleeting novella” can unexpectedly express much. The reading of Norwid’s works does not find fulfilment in a situation of fun,⁹ in a sphere excluded from the life “proper.” This is not possible because of the formula of the work as “testament-czynu” [a testament of the deed].¹⁰

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- 5 Michał Głowiński, “Norwida wiersze-przypowieści,” in: *Cyprian Norwid. W 150-lecie urodzin. Materiały konferencji naukowej 23–25 września 1971*, ed. Maria Żmigrodzka (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1973), pp. 72–109 [published in the first volume of this edition as: “Norwid’s Poem-Parables,” pp. 337–374 – editor’s notes]; idem, “Ciemne alegorie Norwida,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (1984), pp. 103–114 [published in the first volume of this edition as: “Norwid’s Obscure Allegories,” pp. 465–478 – editor’s notes].
 - 6 The function of trifles in Norwid’s poetry was discussed, among others, by Waław Borowy, “Główne motywy poezji Norwida,” in: Waław Borowy, *O Norwidzie. Rozprawy i notatki*, the edition compiled by Zofia Stefanowska (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1960), pp. 37–46 [published in the first volume of this edition as: “Leading Motifs in Norwid’s Poetry,” pp. 123–152 – editor’s notes].
 - 7 Trans. Danuta Borchartd in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), p. 53.
 - 8 Trans. Borchartd, p. 119.
 - 9 I use the term “fun” in the sense described by Johan Huizinga, *Homo ludens. Zabawa jako źródło kultury*, trans. Maria Kurecka and Witold Wirpsza, ed. 2 (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1985).
 - 10 Norwid’s work paid tribute to this concept from the very beginning. In a letter to Jan and Stanisław Egbert Koźmian [of July 1850], Norwid stated: “literatura, moim zdaniem, już jest albo za chwilę będzie, musi być – tylko testamentem-czynu, więc zwykłem pisać to jedynie, czego zrobić nie mogę, inaczej bowiem ani jest użytecznie,

The indicated peculiarities of Norwid's model of literature lead to an antinomy, perhaps a primary one, between the private word and the public word. It is difficult to encapsulate the essence of this distinction in a synthetic definition. The criteria for the division are sometimes formulated explicitly by Norwid. The multifaceted nature of the word is an important thought motif in his discursive writing. The first lecture within the series, *O Juliuszu Słowackim* [*On Juliusz Słowacki*], is preceded by the necessary terminological clarification:

Słowa publiczne i prywatne nie różnią się przez tła i formy, ale więcej przez ich naturę samą; prawda ta ważna jest szczególnie dla nas, jako nie mających bytu politycznego, a przeto opierających się na bezwzględnej ważności słowa. Pod klasycznymi filarami frontonu Magdaleny widzieliście dorodnego człowieka w hełmie rzymskim, odzianego szatą podobną do *sagum* i mówiącego patetycznie; tło tutaj klasyczne, forma klasyczna, jednak słowo człowieka tego publicznym nie jest – jest to bowiem sprzedawca ołówków. Gdyby zaś Kopernik kilku poufnym przyjaciółom zwierzał prawdę objaśniającą harmonię światów, słowo jego, lubo przy mniej patetycznych warunkach, należałoby do całego świata. Taka to wielka jest różnica między słowem prywatnym a słowem publicznym (PWsz VI, 407).

[Public and private pronouncements are different in nature though not in form. In our present position of a people deprived of political existence and dependent only on the gravity of words, we Poles must pay heed to this truth. A few blocks from here, under the neoclassical facade of La Madeleine, stands a good-looking man in a Roman helmet, dressed in quasi-Roman attire and speaking in a sonorous voice. The stately background and form suggest that the man makes a public pronouncement; but he does not, for he is merely selling pencils. In contrast, if Nicholas Copernicus were to talk about the harmony of the universe to a few close friends, his words would have been public words in spite of private circumstances. Make sure then that you understand the difference between public and private speech.]¹¹

The paragraph quoted above, although clear, requires supplementary commentary. First of all, one must bear in mind the whole range of meanings that are updated by Norwid's word. It means both the Logos – a divine element, a sign of communication between man and the absolute, and speech – linguistic

ani estetycznie, naumyślnie walać się atramentem” DW X, 245 [... literature, in my opinion, is already, or will be soon, must be – only a testament of a deed, so I used to *write* only what I cannot *do*, otherwise it is neither useful nor aesthetically pleasing, to deliberately get oneself dirty with ink].

11 “Six Lectures on Juliusz Słowacki (excerpts),” *Sarmatian Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (1993) <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~sarmatia/993/norlec.html>.

communication between people.¹² Every act of speaking situates a person in relation to God and places him/her in a community. While maintaining contact between people, the word must always remember its divine origin. Then it bears witness to the truth. And there is only one truth:

... co? prawdą jest w ziarneczku piasku, i w obrocie słońca, *na skroś bytów*, tylko to *Prawda!* a co nie jest na skroś wszech bytów prawdą – to CZAS, to BŁĄD... (List do Karola Ruprechta z kwietnia 1866. DW XII, 439).

[... What? the truth is in the grain of sand, and in the rotation of the sun, at the *foundation of beings*, only this is *the Truth!* and what is not the truth at the foundation of all beings – this is TIME, this is MISTAKE...] (Letter to Karol Ruprecht from April 1866).

The truth is not sanctioned by social approval, by the rank of the speaker, by a combination of external circumstances. On the contrary, the truth modifies situations. Likewise, the word is not made public due to the setting. It is not the result of circumstances, but its originator; the cause, not the effect. The public word inspires action, it stores the energy that can be released in a given situation. That is why the motif of the race against time – the battle for “wczesność” [earliness] – ziarneczku piasku [little grains of sand] recurs in Norwid’s work. Hence, his tragedy as a writer is the feeling of being late. The word, though spoken, hits a vacuum. He has to wait until it is realised by “późny wnuk” [a late grandchild].

It seems that “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” is particularly predestined to seek answers to questions from a range of outlined issues. Not only does the novella embody Norwid’s writing strategy, which I call here the strategy of public speaking, but also, in a way, the novella thematizes the writing. It is like a monographic study of the public word, the public situation and man in a public role. Here the property of “being public” belongs to the sphere of ethics, aesthetics and pragmatics. This broad definition is based on a colloquial recognition of the public word. It is known that it is a spectacular word, spoken out loud to a group of people.

In “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth,” public speaking is repeated several times and in various ways. It is recognisable in the performance by Toni di Bona Grazia and the sky ride experiment of the eponymous lord. Both the sound and gesture are adequate transmitters of meanings. Here, Norwid is interested in one of the aspects of the social dimension of an individual’s existence, the relationships that one enters into with a community in exceptional circumstances.

12 A relatively complete outline of the problem of the word was presented by Paweł Siekierski, “Literatura i historia w Norwidowskiej teorii słowa,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, Vol. 27, No. 8 (1983), pp. 131–145.

The case of Lord Singelworth reveals an extreme attitude: doubting the effectiveness of verbal contact. The lord does not wish to confront his own views with those of others. His refusal takes the form of a provocation. The appalled audience expects an explanation. He strives to define a situation¹³ that is unfamiliar to people in everyday practice. The observers involuntarily contribute to the event. The audience does not understand the actions of the mysterious aeronaut because they cannot understand it. The would-be partners live in different worlds, they profess different values. The universally “local” Lord Singelworth protests not against a particular community, but against humanity itself. And it is the local community, which is looking back to the time of past glory, that reacts to his provocation. The participants of the performance are also separated by a social chasm: the aristocrat faces the plebeian element. The meeting is ultimately thwarted by the perverse direction of Lord Singelworth. The lack of contact turns into contact – the last one. The lord coerces this contact only to reject it. The protagonist is not the victim of the course of events, but its creator.

Lord Singelworth is aware of the dialogical entanglement of the word that is articulated in public.¹⁴ The spoken word is always also the word of the recipient to whom it is addressed, something more than just an intention. What has been said is often far different from what one intended to express. By replacing the word with an ambiguous symbol, the lord defends the autonomy of his unspoken word and, eventually, of his own person.

For the author of the happening himself, the juxtaposition of the vertical and the horizontal is important; however, the vertical is valued positively. From another perspective, the balloon could symbolise the triumph of civilisation – the taming of space and time. In contrast, the interpretation variant chosen by the audience places the balloon escapades in the category of ludic and carnival behaviour. The main prop of the performance encompasses the whole range of meanings: from protest to glorification, from *serio* to *buffo*. Its semantic scope isolates a person, protects one from the stigmatising power of circumstances, allows one to grasp the border between the “self” and the “non-self,” and detach the private “self” from the public “self.” From the point of view of the protagonist,

13 I used the notion “definition of a situation” in the meaning proposed by William J. Thomas, “Definicja sytuacji,” in: *Elementy teorii socjologicznych. Materiały do dziejów współczesnej socjologii zachodniej*, eds. Włodzimierz Derczyński, Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, Jerzy Szacki (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1975), pp. 67–69.

14 The dialogical nature of language in Norwid’s concept of the word was discussed by Zdzisław Łapiński, *Norwid* (Kraków: Znak, 1984), pp. 10–12.

speaking threatens the autonomy of a person.¹⁵ By manifesting his refusal, the lord undergoes a kind of therapy. The multiple repetition of activities is supposed to sanction it. The action takes on a mythogenic character. An unusual traveller heralds the death of old Europe. He rejects the burden of tradition. Lord Singelworth’s happening juxtaposes the contestator and the community, and internally integrates the audience. The stronger the antagonism on the first level, the more intense the sense of community on the second. The effect of the demonstration is strong but temporary.

Another type of interaction is triggered by Toni di Bona Grazia. External restrictions (interference of the censorship) do not disqualify the spoken word as an originator of contact. The ban includes speaking directly. To be an artist in a country that is enslaved is to speak the Aesopian language but, nevertheless, to speak. The performance of the improviser considers the two types of audience: conspiring listeners and eavesdropping confidants. While for the desired audience it is important *what* is being said (with the sixth sense sharpened in the time of enslavement, they could read the camouflaged content), it seems that the agents of the “foreign government” care especially about *how* this content, regardless of its danger, is uttered. An improviser can speak to an enthusiastic crowd in St. Mark’s Square, not because he “*ładzi depotę*” [resembles a despot] so perfectly, but because the “*obszerne buffo*” [extensive buffo] of his play is an effective buffer against emancipatory upheaval. The word spoken in between juggling has no chance of breaking through the cordon separating the show from the life “proper.”

The contact arranged by the lord and the relation between the improviser and the audience indicate the processual nature of the public word. It takes place between the partners of an interaction. The public word is a word articulated and interpreted as public. It is therefore created by the intention of the speaker and the listener, and moreover, the action of first, the speaker, and then the listener. But it does not stop there, there is still context. The situation of enslavement causes chaos and the collapse of the barriers that give structure to society. Structures and hierarchies collapse. It is unknown where privacy ends and the public sphere of existence begins, what is important and what is trivial,¹⁶ what is moral and what is unethical.

15 The fear of verbal contact with another human being returns in Norwid’s other novels (also in his poetic works, e.g. in “*Nerwy*” [“Nerves”], “*Ostatni despotyzm*” [“The Last Despotism”]).

16 Norwid directly indicates one of the symptoms of decay: “*Plotek, we właściwym tej nazwy poziomej znaczeniu, być mogło w Wenecji więcej aniżeli w innym jakim*

Lord Singelworth and the improviser are united by protest – the result of a negative diagnosis of reality. Each of them tries in his own way to control the threat, to establish a place in a situation of total destruction, to point out the value. The analysis of the scenes presenting the protagonists' speeches reveals the strategies adopted by them.

The improviser, adorned with a pork fangs necklace, stages a fun situation. The costume, clownish movements, unnatural voice inform about the rules of the game. The audience play the role of circus spectators. These conditions must be met for the improviser to be able to say anything and to certify his status.¹⁷ The content that he wants to convey to the audience does not harmonise with the imposed form; he is wrestling with it. The speech of the improviser is vibrating with extremely different tones, moods and meanings:

– *i tu monologista biegly odmieniał nagle głos, jak gdyby ktoś zza sceny wdał się w rozmowę* – Wprawdzie, ażeby starożytną lub ubiegłą zachwycać się swobodnie triumfalnością, należałoby usilnie zapomnieć, iż z tych gotyckich wież, z tych triumfalnych łuków i kolumn tego rana, wczora i w różne onegdaje zrzucali się rozpaczą gnani śmiertelnicy nieszczęśni, i podobno że oni zrzucić się dziś jeszcze zamyślają lub będą jutro. ... Tu Tony di Bona Grazia kichał silnie i powoli wyciągał z kieszeni szerokiego fraka chustkę jaskrawej barwy ... (“Tajemnica lorda Singelworth,” DW VII, 222).

[– at this point the skillful monologist's voice suddenly changed as though someone from behind the stage had interfered with his speech – Even though, in order to delight freely in an ancient or recent triumphancy, one should entirely forget that from these towers, from these triumphant arches and columns, this morning, yesterday and on days

mieście. Owoczesny despotyzm rządu obcego musiał mieć tę nierozłączną od siebie ostrożność, granic naturalnych nie mającą, która czyni, iż lada poszept, rosnąc szybko, nie spotyka także swych naturalnych granic, i że im bywa więcej uwstręconą wolność opinii jawnie i swobodnie wyrażanej, tym głębszej, donioślejszej i bardziej piorunnej siły nabierają przemilczenia, niedopowiedzenia, mgnienia powieki, chrząknięcia i kichnięcia!” [The *gossip*, in the proper horizontal sense of the name, may have been more common in Venice than in any other city. The despotism of a foreign government at the time had to have this indissoluble caution, having no natural boundaries, that makes any whisper, growing fast, not meet its natural boundaries either, and that the more it despised the freedom of opinion expressed openly and freely, the deeper, more resonating and thundering force was given to silence, understatement, the blink of an eyelid, grunting and sneezing!...] (DW VII, 220).

17 The essence of improvisation was discussed by Zofia Stefanowska, “Wielka – tak, ale dlaczego improwizacja?” in: *Próba zdrowego rozumu. Studia o Mickiewiczu*, ed. Zofia Stefanowska (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1976) pp. 71–86.

of by-gone years, unfortunate mortals, pursued by despair, jumped to their death and probably intend to jump today or tomorrow. ... At this point Tony di Bona Grazia produced a loud sneeze, slowly taking from the pocket of his wide tail-coat a brightly coloured handkerchief ...]”¹⁸

The improviser takes off the mask behind which hides a return. However, doubt arises as to where the boundaries of mystification lie when he reveals his true face. “Obszerne buffo” [extensive buffo] gets out of control of its originator. The irony, which is used profusely, turns out to be a double-edged sword. It spreads to everything that is within its reach.

The official speech of the improviser is intended to defend Lord Singelworth’s reputation and to argue with his slanderers. Ironic questions expose the absurdity of the slander, but they also do not spare the eccentric traveller. The improviser ridicules the aristocrat and mocks the Austrian police. The irony serves to separate “others” from “one’s own.” It distances the Venetian from Singelworth – both a lord and an Englishman. Mockery becomes an impenetrable wall standing between a member of the conquered nation and the conquerors. The ironic distance gives way only to sympathy for desperate suicides. Mockery turns into tragedy. The improviser mobilises a rich repertoire of rhetorical tricks to create an apocalyptic vision. Against the background of monumental centuries-old buildings, tragedies of “unfortunate mortals” take place. The speaker exposes (through amplification), especially the soaring height of the buildings, their aspiration to rise high: “high towers,” “triumphant arches,” “victory columns.” The term “triumphant” – a pompous, grandiose, onomatopoeic expression – appears three times in this short fragment. In the face of ancient monuments, man feels his fragility and lostness in an exceptionally intense manner. He cannot bear the burden of existence. He chooses death. The improviser shows the universal dimension of the phenomenon (emphasising its iterative character). This catastrophic image is also not free from irony. But this one “z czasu jeno pochodzi” [comes only from time] (Letter to Jan Koźmian [September-October 1852], DW X, 449). Buildings erected by man’s hand triumph over their creator. In this view, the speaker contrasts the opposing movements in the vertical direction: upwards and downwards. He uses hyperbole and contrast to expose his emotional attitude. An authentic emotion breaks through the convention of art.

In the second part of the speech, the improviser uses another trick, allowing him to go beyond “buffo.” It consists of imitating the physical closeness between

18 Trans. Olga Scherer-Virski, *The Modern Polish Short Story* (Hauge: Mouton 1955), pp. 56–57.

the speaker and the audience. The starting point is the panorama of the city, a view from above. Also, this time the aesthetic experience is obscured by hatred for the worm-eaten reality. The strangeness of the faraway and hostile city is shocking. The next image changes the perspective and scenery. Toni di Bona Grazia leans over the garbage dump to read human history from the pitiful waste. The plasticity and tangible character of the description is achieved by zooming in on and enumerating small objects lying in the dump. The speech of the Venetian stimulated sensual perception, it activates all senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch. It obsessively exposes movement; dynamism brings animalistic comparisons, e.g. prisons looking like “pełzające płaskie robactwo” (DW VII, 222) [crawling vermin].¹⁹ Things are shown a moment after they are immobilised (“konwulsywnie skręcony” [convulsively twisted²⁰] shoe), or when they are strong enough to break out of their inertia (abandoned pen). All this mobility is apparent, caused by visual illusion (operating with chiaroscuro), imagination, or memory. It results from the perceptual properties of the subject. It is not an attribute of reality. The all-pervasive perceptual sensitivity of the improviser as well as the appropriate amount of linguistic sophistication elevate the Venetian speaker above the representatives of the police of the “Apostolic State.” The orientation in the world of the latter is based on information provided by the sense of smell, somewhat embarrassingly, the most animalistic of all the senses.

The basic mechanism of the improviser’s strategy is to play with distance. Toni di Bona Grazia separates himself from “others” (foreigners) and all the more strongly identifies himself with his “own” people. By undermining the lord and the invaders, he glorifies the audience.

Equally important is the distance in Lord Singelworth’s speech. Here, however, all the energy is focused on monumentalising distance. The Lord uses a high register. He creates an aura of seriousness and pathos around him. His speech strongly exposes the opposition of “I” – “you.” The “I” participates in harmony with the cosmos. All the others live in a sewage pit, stuck in chaos. In a structured, almost scientific argumentation (definitions, logic of proof, and scientific lexis) the lord makes a devastating diagnosis for the society. The key concept of his argumentation is “purity.” While describing his system of values, the lord emphasises the metaphorical meaning of the word. At the same time, however, he evokes the literal, physical component of the word for better

19 Trans. Scherer-Virski, p. 57.

20 Trans. Scherer-Virski, p. 57.

persuasion – “purity” is objectified.²¹ The tension is actualised; the abstraction is made concrete. In the lord’s intention, this juxtaposition creates a distance that cannot be overcome. However, this conviction turns out to be illusory. The property of language works against the speaker – concreteness prevails, exposing the pointlessness of ideas. After all, the lord rises only physically. The mountain has no divine value for him. His ascent does not correspond to a mystical experience. The experience is treated mechanically; it is just a balloon – that is all!

Lord Singelworth’s empty gesture fails as a sign of the inexpressible. But this balloon, apart from the fact that it may or may not mean anything, is mainly supposed to fly. Similarly, the lord, funny or solemn, according to audience’s “pochopów humoru” [proclivity for humour], first and foremost, exists. Is the balloon not a form of being rather than a form of speech?

This raises the question of the relation of the lord’s speech to his aeronautics. Singelworth provides explanations at the request of the delegation, not of his own accord. He is not interested in the effect of the speech, and, therefore, he uses ready-made rhetorical formulas. The speech negates all the power of the gesture. The protest comes down to harmless eccentricity. It becomes a private affair of the protagonist.

The question remains open as to who is really compromised by Lord Singelworth’s balloon. Why does it compromise anyone at all? The lord is behaving as if he wanted to say something extremely important to the largest audience possible. He is making all the European capitals his audience. He is building a situation for the word that is public *par excellence*. The novella shows a reflected, deformed picture of this event.

The reader becomes acquainted with the story of Lord Singelworth through a narrator and a participant of those events. He has every right to identify his voice with that of the author. The work resembles a recollection, and the narrator (the main character) reveals his profession as a writer (metanarrative remarks). The main character plays a special role in “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth.” His work does not consist of describing, but in interpreting; instead of verismo there is expressionism.

21 A similar technique was used by Norwid in his poem “Idee i prawda” [“Ideas and Truth”] where he also used the juxtaposition top – down (Michał Głowiński, “Przestrzenne tematy i wariacje,” in: *Przestrzeń i literatura*, ed. Michał Głowiński and Aleksandra Okopień-Stawińska (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1978), pp. 79–96).

The novella begins with a bizarre anti-presentation of the protagonist. This device provides information about the resignation from using the protagonist's biography as plot material. It highlights the very act of storytelling. Apart from that it evokes distrust in the reader towards Lord Singelworth, his lordship.²² The second sign of reluctance sounds even clearer: "wymaga się od protestującego, ażeby choć *zasadę* bardziej obowiązującą wskazał" (DW VII, 231) [... a man who protests should be expected to indicate a more workable *principle*...].²³ The narrator spreads an aura of lenient disbelief around the traveller. Where does this prejudice come from?

The contents of the novella are filled with reactions to events, different interpretative variants, and paraphrases (a version of the Parisian columnist, governor of Odessa, professor from Heidelberg, Toni di Bona Grazia, and finally the main protagonist). These proposals are not isolated from each other. Three of them form a sequence with a common grotesque and ironic overtone – the interpretation of the journalist, improviser, and writer – creating a story within a story. The Frenchman reacts directly to the event. Toni di Bona Grazia grabs and develops the tone of narration of the columnist. The narrator somehow tries to explore the truth, get to the sources, omitting the senses that have been accumulated around the case. There is direct contact between him and the lord. However, the knowledge that the narrator has possessed before cannot be eliminated. The Venetian's point of view has influenced his perception. The narrator's version is created as a third interpretive layer, hiding the event itself even deeper.

The overlapping assessments terrorise the reader. The public opinion imposes on the reader a certain point of view, suggests criteria, scales, and overwhelms with stereotypes. This is the price of living in a society.

The burden of these relationships is much more incapacitating when the public opinion reacts defectively, when public life, or rather its substitute, takes place in conspiracy. The improviser's calling is to shape public opinion. In a situation of enslavement, this function degenerates. In one of the last paragraphs of the novella, the narrator reports the improviser's speech:

Natomiast improwizator *Tony di Bona Grazia* z większym niż kiedy zapalem głosił, że ulatujący podróżnik jest mężem *misji*, jest uprzedzicielem i zwiastunem Wielkiej Epoki nowej, która ma stać się dla ludzkości całej rodzajem puryfikacji i czymś do *Revivalu* amerykańskiego podobnym... *Revivalu*, o którym (mówiąc i szczerze, i na stronie) ani

22 This motif is exposed in M. Adamiec's interpretation: "Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth," p. 205.

23 Trans. Scherer-Virski, p. 61.

nasz stary, *uksztalony i niewolniczy* kontynent nie ma słusznego pojęcia, ani byłby na siłach, ażeby go u siebie spróbować i zaszcześcić!... Archeologia tu raczej, lubo *wstecz*, ale żywo i świetnie działa (DW VII, 232).

[But the public speaker *Tony di Bona Grazia* kept announcing with increasing zeal that the aerial traveller was a soldier with a *mission*, the forerunner and herald of a great new epoch which is to become one of purification for humanity, something resembling the American Revivalist Movement, a movement (speaking frankly and off the record) our old, *cultivated and slave-bound* continent interprets wrongly and would be unable to attempt to inculcate on its own lands!... In this respect archaeology acts with splendid energy, though with a somewhat *backward* trend.]²⁴

This passage is a real puzzle. At some point it becomes unclear who is talking. I will try to put it in order: first the narrator is talking (ironically) about the improviser, then the improviser is talking about the lord. The problem here is whether the rest of the speech is a self-deprecating comment from the improviser or an ironic comment uttered by the narrator with regard to the Venetian speaker. Regardless, this confusion proves that the strategy chosen by the improviser based on irony becomes an end in itself. By using irony, the improviser testifies to his own irony and nothing else. The vicious circle closes. The language, which the speaker uses with such virtuosity, bears only witness to the act of articulation. It turns into a form liberated from meaning; Just as the painted decoration pretends to be connected to history (the regatta on St Mark’s Day). The pride of the past is manifested by admiration for junk. The great mystification.

Such an assessment corresponds to the bitter assessment of another “*stolicy nieledwie marsowym rządzonej prawem*” [capital governed by almost military law] (p. 150). In his last letter to Konstancja Górską (12 December 1882), Norwid wrote:

Warszawa jest od lat stu przeszło *miastem wyobraźni*... tam nic rzeczywistego nie ma – ani bytu historycznego – ani własnego przemysłu – ani własnego ruchu umysłowego – ani społeczeństwa... *Wszystko jest powierzchowne, nie źródlane. Jest to Feeria!*... (PWsz X, 194).

[Warsaw has been a *city of imagination* for more than a hundred years... there is nothing real there – neither a historical entity – nor its own industry – nor its own intellectual movement – nor society... *Everything is superficial, not coming from the source.* It is a phoney *Spectacle!*...]

The lack of public life takes a terrible toll. The efforts of the improviser carry the stigma of enslavement.

24 Trans. Scherer-Virski, p. 62.

Both the lord and the improviser respond to the emergency. There is no alternative in the work: either this or another form of protest. Balloon flights are both a way of existence and a sign. Toni di Bona Grazia is not only speaking – speaking makes him who he is. As long as he is speaking to the audience, he is an improviser. The spectacle plays a self-identifying function. In both cases, the impulse for action comes from the mismatch of ideas with the state of the world. It is a retort to absurdity. The narrator shares the assessment of the protagonists and imitates their strategy – he watches everything from a distance, including the characters. This distance does not come from time (a memory). It is an immanent perceptual property of the subject. It allows the sight of an event from several perspectives simultaneously: diachronic, synchronic and transcendental. It considers the private point of view of the initiator of the events, the public opinion of the co-participants and the universalising position of any future reader. For the protagonist, the action sets the boundaries of the “self.” For the audience, whether contemporary or in the future, it is primarily a sign, which is, by the way, semantically inhomogeneous. The narrator (the main protagonist) incorporates both perspectives.

The narrator’s own perception is elucidated in an impression of Venice, which symbolises European culture. This fragment seems to be loosely and inorganically linked to the whole work (a similar impression evokes, for example, the point of the novella “Stygmata” [Stigma]). The simplicity of the relationship subject-object is surprising in confrontation with the complexity of the sender of the earlier parts of the novella, where the narrator spoke about the lord through invoking the opinions of others. The separateness of this paragraph also applies to the subject of the relation itself. There is not a single word here about Lord Singelworth. The relationship is hidden in “drobiazgi” [trifles], in the symmetry of motifs and images. The notion of Venice as a layered system of archaeological traces (DW VII, 224) refers to the utterance made by the improviser:

jakkolwiek bowiem wy! – lubo słusznie – odwracacie oczy wasze od śmietników, mnie zdarzało się w głębokim zadumaniu nad nimi stawać i odczytywać dzieje godzin ubiegłych z tych okrytych kurzawą palimpsestów! (DW VII, 223).

[although you, quite lightly, turn your heads away from rubbish heaps, I have often stopped before them in deep meditation to read the history of recent hours from those dust-covered palimpsests!]²⁵

25 Trans. Scherer-Virski, p. 57.

In turn, the image of Venice reflected on the surface of water corresponds with the scene in the lord’s drawing room, where “posadzka jedynie mozaikowa odzwierciadlała wszystkie meble, polerowane jak kryształ, zaś poutwierdzone w ścianach weneckie zwierciadła odzwierciadlały znowu wszystkość, a ta, razem więcej jasną i świetną była niż uroczą” (DW VII, 228) [only the mosaic floor reflected all the furniture, polished like crystal, while the Venetian mirrors fixed to the walls reflected all, and this, altogether, was more resplendent and great than charming]. Venice-garbage dump and Venice-hermetic space, cage, the dying world – this aspect is supported by the motif of ruin – and the isolated, closed, self-centred world.

The mirror image is also created in the eye and awareness of another person. The main protagonist communicates with Venice through contacts with people who are blended with the atmosphere of the city. These meetings are quite peculiar. The visit paid to the patrician is limited to sending a business card. The man is being spoken about (as in the case of the lord) by paper. Only this time it wanders up, to the heights of aristocracy. One returns to this world to take one’s own designated place. The second contact requires the use of language and ritual. It is made possible by a seemingly magical spell – an old Venetian expression, the slogan recognised by one’s “own.” A third relation can also be distinguished: that between the narrator and the reader, the contact between them is confidential, almost intimate. The narration in the second person places the reader inside the text. This passage is preceded by an apostrophe to history. The whole sequence is rather an appeal than a description.

A striking feature of “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” is the rhetoric nature of the narrative. This principle applies, without exception, to all parts of the work, all of its levels, from the construction of a sentence to the composition of the whole. Rhetoricity means focusing on the expression and action, not on the story, “perpetuating through a faithful image,” as befits to the traditional novella, of which the author perversely informs at the beginning. The work was written as if it were intended to be publicly presented, encapsulated in a form that has been conventionalised for centuries. The speech praising or reprimanding Lord Singelworth – the mystery is realised through this ambiguity – begins with laudation, and bizarre as it may be, it is a perfectly familiar device.²⁶ The structure

26 “Laudation consisted of elements such as the praise of the ancestors, upbringing and education, the offices held by the protagonist of the oratorical speech, his virtues and merits.” Edmund Kotarski, “Polska polityczna proza publicystyczna XVI i XVII wieku wobec tradycji retorycznej,” in: *Retoryka a literatura*, ed. Barbara Otwinowska (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1984), p. 57.

of speech can be imposed on the whole work. Each time this classification may have to account for a certain reservation, but the pattern will not be broken. The convention, which is a result of joint participation in the tradition, although it causes deformations, is a necessary condition for every contact. Especially in the case of a public contact, when it is the only kind of bond between the speaker and the listeners.

Finally, the seemingly fundamental question should be answered: What is “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” about? The title is associated with popular literature. The eponymous “mystery” brings to mind other connotations – the mystery of being, the meaning in the world on the edge. The novella is not intended to explain the motives of some eccentric person. They are revealed unexpectedly easily. The reader has no reason to doubt the sincerity of the statement of the protagonist himself. The narrator ignores the event and deals with it casually. He is not interested in Lord Singelworth’s secret, but what can be said through it. This “something” is an indication of the mystery in a way that would not destroy the sense through articulation. The mystery cannot be told, it must be experienced, it must cause cognitive anxiety. “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” fulfils the intention expressed somewhere at the beginning of Norwid’s creative path:

Trzeba by jakoś miejsce na tę sztukę uprzątnąć – dzisiaj zwłaszcza, kiedy praktyczność, a jaśniej powiem *rzeczywistość*, stała się *materialnością*, *prawda wielomowstwem*, a *idealność czczością*. Warto by jakoś wagę temu wszystkiemu wrócić (List do Cezarego Platera z 23 stycznia 1847, DW X, 109).

[We should somehow clean up the place for this art – especially today, when practicality, and I would say it more clearly: *reality*, has become *materiality*, *truth* has become *multispeech*, and *idealism* has become *emptiness*. It would be worth bringing back somehow the importance to all this] (Letter to Cezary Plater of 23 January 1847).

The work reminds us of mystery in a world consumed by “materiality,” fascinated by the civilisational progress, balloons, electricity and iron railways. It also speaks to us “who have no political existence” about the trivialisation of mystery in enslavement. If what should be revealed stays hidden, where is the place for something that is mysterious by nature? Slavery degrades the person in man, humiliates it, and throws it into chaos. That is why Norwid is constantly renewing his efforts to create in exile, even if only in the appearance of public life. Hence, his works speak in public words.

However, this function of literature also becomes a source of ambivalence in the artist’s attitude. The artist exposes his entire personality to the public view. He constantly translates his own privacy into the language of the community; he sells himself.

The novella ends with an image of celebration on St. Mark’s Square. Above the spectacle of vibrant colours and the whole hustle and bustle, Lord Singelworth’s barely visible balloon is ascending. It seems that the irony and mockery, which the narrator has not spared the lord, go silent this time. Instead, a note of nostalgia can be heard here. The narrator is looking with jealousy at the balloon floating away, a symbol of the psychological luxury of the English aristocrat. This longing is not surprising in the case of the Polish writer who was constantly speaking out loudly to empty places.

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Krzysztof Kopczyński

The Poem *Obscurity*: An Interpretation Attempt

Abstract: The article tries to explore the meaning of the poem “Ciemność” [“Obscurity”], taking into account the four sources of the poem: the calligraphic autograph from the *Vade-mecum* codex (dated 1861 or 1865–1866), the handwritten amendments made by Norwid on the same autograph, creating a new edition of the poem (dated by Gomulicki back to 1876), the first print of the text (its new edition) as part of *Rymy dorywcze* [*Casual Rhymes*] (published in the 1877 issue of “Echo”), and the autograph of the last edition (found in the papers left by Józef Bohdan Zaleski in the Jagiellonian Library.) The author concentrates on highlighting the essential differences in the messages – i.e. those which are important for interpretation. Shifts, subtle transformations, changes of word order or lexemes lead to different approaches to important fragments of the text or even to its poetic entirety. The motif of darkness can, of course, be considered on the level of Norwid’s reception and his conflict with critics and readers, with all the aspects of the temporal context and the poet’s situation. The analysis is complicated by the tendency to evaluate darkness in biblical terms, which (at least in some variants of the poem) introduces ontological and ethical meanings into the text (darkness is the domain of the world and man, light – the domain of God). In one point of view, “Ciemność” can be treated as a parable, where abstract truths are presented through images taken from everyday life.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, Vade-mecum cycle, editing, manuscript, motif of darkness, parable

There have been many complaints about the obscurity of Norwid’s language; thus, the interpreters dealing with the poem sometimes found an easy biographical explanation for its intricacies. Whom did Norwid mean here? He probably meant Kajetan Koźmian, whose social standing was so high that it allowed him to benefit from the help of “servants” bringing him candles.¹ It was probably by their light to follow this trail, that he was writing his diaries where he virulently criticised Norwid.

Enough has already been said about Norwid’s conflict with his epoch, and his resulting complexes. Józef Tischner proved that Norwid’s thought was dying

1 See Marian Piechal, *Mit Pigmaliona. Rzecz o Norwidzie* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1974), pp. 217–218.

“not because of a lack of spiritual power, but because of a lack of the questions that knowledge-hungry listeners usually ask the masters after a finished argument.”² The lack of understanding among readers is an extremely important issue for Norwid, and none of his works can be interpreted without mentioning it. But is Koźmian really the addressee of the lyric? Or is it maybe Krasiński or Cieszkowski? The final determination of whether Norwid had someone specific in mind in the poem would certainly be interesting; however, it is of little importance for the interpretation. All of these three potential addressees have already been targeted by Norwid experts, as if taking revenge for the failures of their master and making evaluations from the perspective of 150 years. However, Józef Fert showed how dangerous this can sometimes be.³ Could it be that there is still a danger of “Norwid wining against the Romantics,” which Stefan Kołaczkowski already wrote about insightfully in 1933?⁴ Is reading Norwid’s works impossible without condemning the era? I do not want to get involved in any considerations on this subject. I shall return to the matter of the addressee of “Ciemność” [Obscurity] in the further part of this text.

In the current interpretation, I would like to make another attempt at reading some of the “secondary meanings,” the existence of which in the poem was indicated by Zdzisław Łapiński.⁵ I consider the four versions of “Ciemność”:

1. ci zawsze niósł pokojowy

Światłość?... patrz – że ja cię lepiej znam.

II.

Knot, gdy obejmiesz iskrą, wkoło płonie
Grzeje wosk, a ten kulą wstawa,
I w biegunie jej nagle płomień tonie,
Światłość jego jest mdła – bladawa –

III.

Iuż-już, mniemasz że zgaśnie: skoro z dołu
Ciecz rozgrzana; światło pochłonie –
Wiary, trzeba – niedość skry i popiołu..
Wiarę dałeś?.. patrz – patrz jak płonie!

2 Józef Tischner, “Ptakom na wędrownie,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1984).

3 See Józef Fert, “Norwid – Krasiński (drobiazg biograficzny),” *Ruch Literacki*, Vol. 20, No. 5 (1979), pp. 365–369.

4 See Stefan Kołaczkowski, “Ironia Norwida,” in: Stefan Kołaczkowski, *Pisma wybrane*, Vol. 1: *Portrety i zarysy literackie*, compiled by Stanisław Pigoń (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1968), pp. 162–166.

5 Zdzisław Łapiński, *Norwid*, 2nd ed. (Kraków: Znak, 1984), p. 39.

IV.

Podobnie są i słowa me o! człeku
 A Ty im skąpisz chwili marnéj;
 Nim, rozgrzawszy pierwej żimnotę wieku
 Płomień w niebo rzucą, ofiarny...

[IX. OBSCURITY⁶

I.

You, protest the obscurity of my speech:
 – Have you *yourself* ever lit a candle?
 Or did your servant always bring you
 Light?... watch – for I know you well.

II.

A wick, lit with a spark, burns down
 And warms the wax, which rises like a ball,
 At its pole, the flame suddenly drowns,
 Its Light is wan – a fading glow –

III.

Quick – quick, you think it will die: as from below
 The hot liquid; drowns the light –
 It's faith you need –ash and spark are not enough..
 Have you faith?... then watch – watch it blaze!.

IV.

Such are my words, o! my fellow man
 Yet You stint them one meager moment;
 Ere, first kindling epoch's chill,
 They cast a flame into the skies, in atonement...]

2. Norwid's handwritten amendments on this autograph, forming the first new edition of the poem hypothetically dated by Gomulicki back to 1876:⁷

IX. CIEMNOŚĆ

I.

Nie skarż się^a na ciemność mojej mowy:
 – Świecę czy raz zapalałeś *sam*?
 Sługa ci wnosił pokojowy
 znam.

6 Trans. Danuta Borhardt in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), p. 25. Punctuation has been altered to adjust this rendition to the given version of the original.

7 Dz 2, 227–228.

II.

Nić, objąwszy iskrą – płonie – płonie,
 wosk zalewa i wгурę^b kulą wstawa,
 Cały płomień i światłość tonie,
 bladawa.

III.

Iuż-już, mniemasz że gaśnie; alic z dołu,
 Że rozgrzana, ciecz blask pochłonie –
 Wiary, trzeba – niedość skry i popiołu..
 dałeś ją – widzisz, jak płonie!.

IV.

Podobnie są pieśni o! człowieku
 Ktory im chwili skąpisz marnéj;
 Nim, rozgrzawszy zimnotę wieku
 Rzuć Płomień ofiarny...

^a The version: "You do not complain" regarded as an author's mistake.

^b Uncertain reading. Another reading: fire.

[IX. OBSCURITY⁸

I.

Do not protest the obscurity of my speech:
 – Have you *yourself* ever lit a candle?
 Or did your servant always bring you light
 I know you well.

II.

A wick, lit with a spark – burns – burns down,
 Floods the wax and rises up like a ball,
 The entire flame and light drown,
 a fading glow.

III.

Quick – quick, you think it will die; but from below,
 because heated, the liquid will drown the light –
 It's faith, you need – ash and spark are not enough..
 You have faith – watch it ablaze!.

8 Trans. D. Borchardt in collaboration with A. Brajerska-Mazur, p. 25. Punctuation and wording of this rendition have been altered by Agata Brajerska-Mazur to adjust them to the quoted version of the original.

IV.

Such are my words, o! my fellow man
 Who stints them one meager moment;
 Ere, first kindling epoch's chill,
 They cast a flame in atonement...]

3. The first print of the second new edition of the poem, made (as part of *Rymy dorywcze* [*Casual Rhymes*]) based on a still unknown autograph sent to Zygmunt Sarnecki, published in "Echo" in Issue 1 of 1877. The first print contains typographical errors; it is the least authentic version of all four.⁹

CIEMNOŚĆ

On się skarży na ciemność méj mowy
 – Czy też świecę raz, zapalał^a sam?
 Sługa^b mu ją wnosił^c pokojowy.
 (: Mnóstwo przyczyn, tak ukryto nam!):

Nić, objąwszy iskrą płonie – płonie!

Wosk zalewa się i w górę wstawa,
 Światłość cała, na raz zda się tonie...

Już, już ledwo modra, i bladawa...
 już, już mniemasz że zgaśnie – że zdołu
 Rozgrzana ciecz, wszystko pochłonie:
 Trzeba wiary – – niedość skry i popiołu!
 Daleś chwilę... patrz... patrz... jak płonie!

– Podobnie są pieśni me. – O! człeku
 Który im skąpisz chwili marnéj,
 Nim, rozgrzawszy zimnotę – wieku,
 Płomień błysnie ofiarny.

^{a, b, c} – treated as typographical errors: zapalał, Sługa, wnosił.

[OBSCURITY¹⁰

He protests the obscurity of my speech
 – Has he *himself* ever lit a candle?

⁹ "Echo," No. 1 of II (1877).

¹⁰ Trans. D. Borchardt in collaboration with A. Brajerska-Mazur, p. 25. Punctuation and wording of this rendition have been altered by Agata Brajerska-Mazur to adjust them to the quoted version of the original.

Or did his servant bring him light
 (: Many causes, so hidden from us!:)
 A wick, lit with a spark, burns down!
 The wax is flooded and rises up,
 The entire flame, instantly drowns...
 Already, barely blue and faint...
 The hot liquid; will drown it all:
 It's faith you need –ash and spark are not enough!
 Have you faith?... then watch – watch it blaze!
 Such are my words. – O! my fellow man
 Who stint sthem one meager moment,
 Ere, first kindling epoch's – chill,
 A flame will shine in atonement.]

4. The autograph of the last known edition, as part of the documents left by Józef Bohdan Zaleski, stored in the Jagiellonian Library (ref. III 9260, c. 22):¹¹

– CIEMNOŚĆ –
 1877

I.

On skarży się na ciemność méj mowy:
 <A czy> Czy choć świecę raz zapalił sam!?
 Sługa mu ją wnosił pokojowy –
 (Wielość przyczyn tak, ukryto nam)

II.

Nić, obiąwszy iskrą zrazu płonie
 zalewa wosk, który górą wstawa
 Gwiazda iaśni powoli tonie
 Modra światłość <jest> jój i bladawa.

III.

Już, już, myślisz że zgaśnie – że, z dołu
 Ciecz rozgrzana, wszystko pochłonie –
 Wiary trzeba, niedość skry i popiołu
 Daleś wiare... patrz, patrz, jak płonie!

IV.

Podobnież są i pieśni me – O! człowieku
 Który im chwili skąpisz marnéj;

¹¹ See Dz 2, 227–228.

Nim rozgrzawszy żimnotę wieku
Płomień błysnie ofiarny!

Cyprian Norwid

< > – author's crossing-outs

[OBSCURITY¹²

1877

I.

He protests the obscurity of my speech:

< *And* > *Has he himself ever lit a candle!?*

His servant brought him light

(Many causes, hidden from us)

II.

A wick, lit with a spark immediately burns down

Floods the wax, which rises up

The bright star slowly drowns

Its light <is> blue and faint.

III.

Quick – quick, you think it will die – that, from below

The hot liquid, will drown it all –

It's faith you need – ash and spark are not enough

Have you faith?... then watch – watch it ablaze!

IV.

Such are my words. – O! my fellow man

Who stints them one meager moment;

Ere first kindling epoch's chill,

A flame will shine in atonement.

Cyprian Norwid]

In this sketch I do not bring out all the differences in these versions of the poem, but only those that I deem important for its interpretation.

The title of the poem is ambiguous. “Ciemność mowy” [the darkness/obscurity of speech], of which the poet was accused, is of course only apparent darkness. The answers to people writing about Norwid's incomprehensibility create one of the most important self-comments to his work. Jan Koźmian's review of *Pieśni społecznej cztery stron* [A Social Song in Four Pages], to which Norwid replied at the end of March or the beginning of April 1850 in a scalding and

12 Trans. D. Borchardt in collaboration with A. Brajerska-Mazur, p. 25. Punctuation and wording of this rendition have been altered by Agata Brajerska-Mazur to adjust them to the quoted version of the original.

lofty letter,¹³ probably became the first pretext for making important comments on this subject. In November of that year, Norwid wrote “Jasność i ciemność” [The Light and the Darkness], dedicated to two of his antagonistic friends, Cieszkowski and Krasiński.¹⁴ Following that, Norwid’s relations with them deteriorated for a longer period. Between 1850–1851, his letters frequently included mentions that interpreted the poet’s alleged “darkness.”¹⁵

Norwid returned to this issue in his lectures *O Juliuszu Słowackim* [On Juliusz Słowacki] in 1860 (PWsz VI, 449–450) and finally in *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On the Freedom of Speech], delivered on 13 May 1869 (DW IV, 249). It was also always present in his letters; Norwid mentioned it for the last time shortly before his death.¹⁶

The “darkness of speech” is, as I said, apparent, but the real one is the “darkness” of the addressee of Versions 1 and 2, the “darkness” to which this addressee condemns himself since he does not even light the candle *himself*. The ambiguity of the title makes it possible to include it in the group of titles from the *Vademecum* cycle, forming an ironic commentary on the text. In this context, Józef Fert also mentions the following texts: “Harmonia” [Harmony], “Socjalizm” [Socialism] and “Wakacje” [Holidays].¹⁷ According to Elżbieta Nowicka, the “darkness” featured in the title may foreshadow both the description of the night and the abstract “obscurity” of the object of expression or its course.¹⁸

The range of possibilities in interpreting the title of the poem presented above becomes even more complicated if we consider the biblical meaning of “darkness.” First, however, a few reservations need to be made.

Writing about the significance of the motif of darkness in Norwid’s poetic view of the world, Jacek Trznadel points out that it is not possible to talk about this subject without outlining the poet’s view of evil in an ontological and ethical sense (which Trznadel does in an interesting way).¹⁹ I would add that Norwid’s concept of art should also be taken into account here as well as his understanding of the role of an artist and educated person in the contemporary world. One should

13 See Letter to Jan Koźmian [of 2 April 1850] (DW X, 226).

14 PWsz VI, 598–601.

15 See DW X, 261, 270, 272, 370, 383, 492.

16 Letter to Seweryna Duchcińska [of 13 March 1882], PWsz X, 172.

17 See Józef Fert, *Norwid. Poeta dialogu* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1982), p. 95.

18 See Elżbieta Nowicka, “O dialogowości *Vademecum* Cypriana Kamila Norwida,” *Ruch Literacki*, Vol. 20, No. 5 (1979), p. 317.

19 See Jacek Trznadel, *Czytanie Norwida. Próby* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1978), pp. 46–49, 128–229.

also reconstruct his vision of truth and his views on the Word and language, i.e. the language of the nation and the language of the society. Such a task is akin to the description of Norwid's entire thought, which, after all, creates a coherent system,²⁰ a system whose only partial interpretation may prove difficult or even impossible. This, of course, does not fall within the scope of this article and my competences. However, in order to interpret "Ciemność," it seemed necessary to me to recall, if only briefly, Norwid's statements on the opposition between light and darkness, with particular reference to *Vade-mecum*. For this opposition is the compositional axis of the poem, introducing the reader, as it was observed by Jacek Trznadel and Alina Merdas,²¹ into the circle of multiple biblical meanings.

For instance, a quotation from the Gospel of John (1: 5) appears at least three times in Norwid's writings:²²

Jako członek Ojczyzny – [mam] to, że *mię nie rozumie*, że języka swego mi zaprzecza, że moralnie odpycha mię – to, że nikt w niej nie chce albo nie może pojąć, iż samochcąc idzie do upadku... to, że nikt w niej nie chce albo nie może pojąć, że *światłość w ciemnościach świeci, a ciemności jej nie ogarnęły* – to, że chce książek nie prawd, śmierci nie życia – że chce nowin i jasnych przypowieści – choć nikt się nic jeszcze nie nauczył z książek jasnych – owszem, wszystko od ciemnego się pojmowania rozpoczyna, *bowiem światłość w ciemnościach świeci*. To – jednym słowem – że nic już z dna ducha przynieść nie mogę mej Ojczyźnie, bo stanowczo wszystko odepchnęła. (Letter to August Cieszkowski [of November 1850], DW X, 271, 272)

[As a member of the Homeland [its people] – I face the fact that *they do not understand me*, that they deny me their language, that they morally repel me – the fact that nobody wants or cannot understand that they voluntarily are heading to a fall... the fact that no one wants or can understand that the *light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it* – the fact that they want books, not truths, death, not life – that they want news and clear parables – although no one has yet learned anything from lucid books – indeed, everything begins with understanding the dark, *because the light shines in the darkness*. In a word, I cannot bring out anything from the bottom of my spirit to my Homeland, because they have definitely pushed everything away.]

20 See Andrzej Walicki. *Między filozofią, religią i polityką. Studia o myśli polskiej epoki romantyzmu* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1983), pp. 195–196.

21 Alina Merdas RSC], *Łuk przymierza. Biblia w poezji Norwida* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1983).

22 The Polish quotes from the Bible are given after *Biblia gdańska* (Berlin, 1810). New Revised Standard Version is used for English.

Unikanie *ciemności* w wysłowieniu jest kierunkiem, który w tej chwili sam się pożera własną bez-twórczością swą – kierunkiem, którego myśl polska przyjąć nie może bez pokalania się, bez zajścia w brudne długi, na jakich się właśnie łamie ten kierunek.

Ci, którzy nań myśl polską naprowadzą, sami od jej aplikacji zginaą, albo się tłumaczyć będą *myślami tymi, które w tej chwili kreślę*.

Które może w pierw rzucą, ale których zawezwą potem.

Bo unikać-ciemności-wyslowienia jest toż samo, co szukać jej.

† Światłość (bowiem) w *ciemnościach świeci, a ciemności jej nie ogarnęły*. †

I każda inna światłość nie jest z tej światłości – ale z tej, której koniec – która się pożera sama sobą – która się potępia sama sobą, co dzień, co gazeta, co cytacja... Aż się zniszczy i poźrze.

A wtedy *Słowo* wstanie te, którego wszyscy pragną, chcą – Słowo, które pieśniami opiewałem – i za które kuglarzem, nieukiem i wariatem jestem. (“Jasność i ciemność” [The Light and the Darkness], PWsz VI, 599)

[Avoiding the *darkness* in speech is a direction which, at the moment, is devouring itself with its own non-creativity – a direction which the Polish thought cannot adopt without disgracing itself, without getting into the dirty debts at which point this direction gets broken.

Those who will guide the Polish thought towards it will themselves die from its application, or they will explain themselves using the *thoughts I am currently writing down*.

[The thoughts] Which they may reject at first, but to which they will call later.

Because *avoiding the darkness of speech* is the same as *looking for it*.

† (For) *the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it*. †

And every other light is not from this light – but from that which ends – which devours itself – which condemns itself, every day, in every newspaper, in every quote... Until it is destroyed and gone.

And then the *Word* will rise up which everyone craves, wants – the Word that I have extoled in songs – and for which I have been recognised as a conjurer, ignoramus and madman.]

Zapewne, Droga Pani, że wszystko czarne na świecie, jak mi to Pani pisze w listku swoim. Ależ powiedziane nam było i nie zakryte, że światłość w *ciemnościach* świeci – a ciemności Jej nie ogarnęły! Tak jest i z tymi czarnociami świata – światłość w nich małym promyczkiem świeci zawsze i one jej nigdy ostatecznie nie ogarną. (Letter to Konstancja Górską [of 1 September 1862], DW XII, 108)

[Surely, Dear Lady, everything is black in the world, as you write me in your letter. But we were told, and it was not hidden from us that the light shines in the *darkness* – and the darkness did not overcome it! This is also true of these blacknesses of the world – the light in them is always shining with a little ray of light, and they will never overcome it eventually.]

If we want to read the title in accordance with the interpretation of darkness contained in the quotations above, it is not ironic at all. The author intentionally chooses the “darkness of speech.” Of course, it is not a linguistic ambiguity resulting from a lack of poetic craftsmanship, but an acceptance of the biblical order to come out of the “darkness,” which is the place of creation, and an understanding that rejecting this order implies condemning oneself to the “lucidity” that is only apparent.

According to the Gospel, the only light in the world is Christ, who is supposed to free the world from the power of darkness,²³ while people who, through evil deeds, have loved darkness more can at most approach the light if they meet the requirements of the truth (John 3: 19–21). Darkness prevails when Christ is captured (Luke 22: 53), and it engulfs the world when he dies on the cross (Mark 15: 33; Luke 23: 44).

The Epistle to the Ephesians, on the other hand, presents the light as all that has been revealed (Ephesians 5: 13). Christ calls his disciples the light of the world as they were meant to spread the message to all corners of the earth (Matthew 5: 14–16).

For Norwid, “słowo jasne” [the lucid/bright word] is only the word of God, which can only be accessed through darkness. Also, the saints: Magdalena [Magdalene] in “Mój psalm” [“My psalm”], Paweł [Paul] in “Dwa męczeństwa. Legenda” [“Two Martyrdoms. A Legend”]²⁴ are “jaśni” [lucid]. In contrast, using this notion in the sense of “a simple thought that is easily accessible to anyone” is for him tantamount to vulgarisation. It is an indication of the end of art and the end of national thought. Of course, Norwid could have expressed himself clearly and written popular books. It would have been “światłość” [light] – but not “światłość szczerą” [honest light]. Norwid introduced this distinction in the poem “Krytyka” [“Criticism”],²⁵ but he did not intend to lower himself to the level of “płynność słów” [liquidity of words].²⁶

23 See John 8: 12, 9: 5, 12: 46, and also Colossians 1: 13.

24 PWsz II, 252; PWsz I, 118.

25 PWsz II, 141.

26 The phrase comes from the poem “Kolebka pieśni” [“The Cradle of Songs”] – PWsz II, 114. See also Zofia Stefanowska, “Norwid – pisarz wieku kupieckiego i przemysłowego,” in: *Literatura – komparatystyka – folklor. Książka poświęcona Julianowi Krzyżanowskiemu* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1968), pp. 423–460.

The light is more visible in the darkness which provides an outline for it. Jacek Trznadel associates this opinion by Norwid with Aristotle's concept of form.²⁷

Generally speaking, in the Bible, light is an attribute of good and truth while darkness is an attribute of evil. In the Old Testament, they are clearly differentiated, because, after all, light was separated from darkness by the Creator himself (Genesis 1: 3–5). Everyone can take the side of light if they are willing to accept the grace of Revelation. We can read in the Gospel of Matthew:

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! (Matthew 6: 22–23)

It seems that in *Vade-mecum* Norwid adopts the biblical symbolism of light and darkness. He often writes about “*światło* sfałszowane” [falsified light]²⁸ – because there is more of it today. Consider an excerpt from the poem “*Źródło*” [“Source”]:

– Gdy przestąpiłem nędzy=próg – kłamstwa=podwoje
I mijałem już Zbrodni labirynt bezczelny,
Pooklejany zewsząd wyrokami prawa – –
Znalazłem się na miejscu, gdzie pod stopą lava
Stygła – i szedłem dalej w powietrzu i porze
I światle; które były rzetelnie bez= Boże!..²⁹

[– When I had passed the threshold=of=misery – the door=of=lies
And I was already passing the impudent labyrinth of Crime,
Covered from all sides with the judgements of law – –
I found myself in a place where under the foot there was lava
Cooling down – and I walked further in the air and in time
And light; which were honestly God=less!..]

In his poem “*Ciemność*,” Norwid analyses the already mentioned opposition in its fullness. Elżbieta Nowicka rightly writes about the first stanza: “The beginning of the poem introduces ... into the very centre of a dispute or polemic (because the dialogue takes place without the participation of another person). It is a kind of conflict, or at least a play with the reader's expectations: the dialogue becomes a dialogue with the repertoire of reader's attitudes and habits, it introduces an element of surprise.”³⁰ Nowicka's statement concerns the first and also maybe partially the second version of the poem. In the second version, the

27 See Trznadel, *Czytanie Norwida*, p. 47.

28 Letter to Maria Trębicka of May 1854; DW X, 498.

29 Dz 1, 660. Text corrected in accordance with the autograph. BN II 6313 c. 41 v.

30 Nowicka, “O dialogowości *Vade-mecum*,” pp. 316–317.

indicative sentence in Verse 1 is replaced by a categorical ban: “Nie skarż się” [Do not complain...].³¹ The justification for the ban comes in Verse 2. You have no right to complain if you have never even lit a candle yourself. The candle is used metonymically here.³²

It may be worth noting that at this point light as a biblical symbol of Christ is firmly rooted in morality. In the volume of *Encyklopedia kościelna* [*Church Encyclopaedia*] published shortly after Norwid’s death, we can read:

In the new order, it used to be customary in the evening, with appropriate prayers, to light a lamp or a blessed candle that was reminiscent of Jesus Christ himself. ... Perhaps our custom to speak: “May Jesus Christ be praised” when someone brings in the light in the evening is a relic of that.³³

In Norwid’s poem, the light is brought by a peaceful servant, so this undoubtedly refers to the poet’s views on the nobles’ lifestyle and way of thinking.³⁴ In his writings this is an important thread and not at all as unambiguous as it is sometimes believed to be.

The dialogue mentioned by Nowicka is removed by Norwid in the third and fourth versions, in which he changes the second person singular to the third person: “On skarży się” [He complains...] etc. The reader is no longer attacked but rather assigned the role of a judge who must assess who is really to blame. In Verse 2 of the first version only the word “sam” [alone] is emphasised, which most likely expresses the outrage at the total (symbolic) dependence of the lyrical “you” on the servant. In the fourth version, all of Verse 2 is emphasised in order to highlight the whole first (though not the most important) accusation against the poet’s antagonist. We can also find an important amendment in Verse 4. In the first version, there is an attempt to specify the accusation already mentioned. I know you better – that is, better than you know yourself, or: better than you know me, even though it is you who is accusing me of the “darkness of speech.” You will not defend yourself; your true face is now coming to light.

Already in the second version, the poet tries to edit this version differently, and the final shape it takes in the fourth version brings to mind a double

31 Actually, the autograph reads: “Nie skarżysz się” [You are not complaining...], but I assume – following Gomulicki – that Norwid did not delete the ending “-ysz” by mistake.

32 Nowicka, “O dialogowości *Vade-mecum*,” p. 317.

33 *Encyklopedia kościelna*, published by Fr. Michał Nowodworski, Vol. 17 (Warszawa: Franciszek Czerwiński, 1891), p. 176.

34 See Łapiński, *Norwid*, p. 39.

association. First, it is ironic to say that it conceals the multiple reasons for not lighting a candle. There really is one cause, and it will be revealed mercilessly. Second, by introducing the word “us,” the author of the statement and the reader are recognised to belong to the same community: a community of those who are trying to make false accusations and hide their other faces. In the poet’s opinion, the meaning of this version must have been very strong since, by introducing it, he even resigned from the word “światłość” [light], which in the first version strengthens the opposition that emerges here: the darkness – a candle lit.

The second stanza was aptly commented on by Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki:

The wax melts under the influence of heat and partially overflows to the outside, which in turn causes the wick (and the flame) to be in some depth, surrounded by walls of wax.³⁵

In the second and third versions, Norwid only makes new stylistic editions of this stanza. In the fourth version, on the other hand, the metaphor “gwiazda jaśni” [the bright star] appears here as an expression referring to the “sinking” flame, which may again contain a biblical allusion (I cautiously refer to this hypothesis here; it is not entirely obvious to me). A similar thing occurs with the amendment in Verse 10, the liquid consumes: in the first version, “światło” [light], in the second version, “blask” [brightness], and in the third and fourth versions, “wszystko” [everything]. What path did the author take when he eliminated the word “światło” [light] from the text for the second time, which brought about generalisation that must again have a symbolic dimension? If the candle goes out, darkness will prevail – this time irrevocably, and it will consume all human existence.

The faith referred to in Verses 11 and 12 is, according to Trznadel, “combined with effort, is an adopted attitude.”³⁶ Let us recall that biblical faith can relocate mountains (Matthew 21: 21; Mark 11: 23). All miracles happen through the power of believers; not even Christ can perform a miracle because the inhabitants of Nazareth lacked faith (Matthew 13: 58; Mark 6: 4–6). Faith in Norwid’s poem sustains the flame and is contrasted with a “skra” [spark] and “popiół” [ash]. Without faith, the spark, which is the beginning, would be extinguished (this is a reference to Verse 5). The word “popiół” [ash] probably was not only used here for rhyme, as it was proposed by Gomulicki,³⁷ but it is supposed to stand for sacrifice and penance; here, Norwid refers to the centuries-old tradition, existing already in the Old Testament and later reinforced by the New Testament,

35 Dz 2, 936.

36 Trznadel, *Czytanie Norwida*, p. 46.

37 Dz 2, 936.

the writings of the Church Fathers and the Ash Wednesday custom. In this case, they cannot be accepted because there is a lack of faith, and without it, the altar for burnt offering and sprinkling the head with ashes will be of no use. The ashes from Verse 11 are not ashes from which something can be reborn. It is just a sad souvenir of a wasted spark, of a fire that is not warm enough to make Norwid's century more moral. The accusation that Norwid levels against his antagonists in these two verses seems to be the most serious: it is an accusation of not only mental laziness, but also of falsehood and misunderstanding Christianity.³⁸ And again, Verse 11, similar to Verse 2, is highlighted in its entirety in the fourth version.

Stanza 4, which introduces important reflections on the poet's own work, fully reveals the allegorical, didactic meaning of the poem. According to Elżbieta Nowicka, it is based on the clash of abstract notions (the opposition between light and darkness) along with their specific attributes. "The direction of thought is ... as follows – from a polemical reference to someone else's arguments, through an allegorised lecture with a reference to the listener's "you," to a self-reflective conclusion about the language of one's own poetry."³⁹ According to the findings of Michał Głowiński (who does not analyse the poem "Ciemność" itself in his sketch),⁴⁰ this poem can be treated as a parable, which presents abstract truths through images taken from everyday life.⁴¹

Norwid's words need faith, effort, and a moment of reflection. An allegory with motifs taken from the Bible, setting oneself the goal of warming up "zimnota" [the cold] of one's own age, and finally the juxtaposition of the poem with, for example, the letter to Karol Ruprecht of 5 November 1868, which states that *Vade-mecum* "przeznaczone było na zrobienie skrzętu koniecznego w poezji polskiej" (PWSz IX, 377) [... was intended to make a necessary twist in Polish poetry ...], or with the meaning of the title of the *Vade-mecum* cycle, it directs us towards the vision of the poet – the disciple of Christ. For, it is Christ who has rescued us from the power of darkness (Colossians 1: 13). This subject was thoroughly discussed by Jacek Trznadel.⁴² Meanwhile, Alina Merdas, in the last

38 See similar allegations in Norwid's letters.

39 Nowicka, "O dialogowości *Vade-mecum*," p. 317.

40 See Michał Głowiński, "Norwida wiersze-przypowieści," in *Cyprian Norwid. W 150-lecie urodzin. Materiały konferencji naukowej 23–25 września 1971*, ed. M. Żmigrodzka (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1973), pp. 72–109 [published in the first volume of this edition as: "Norwid's Poem-Parables," pp. 337–374 – editor's notes].

41 See commentary to Matthew 13: 3 in *Biblia Tysiąclecia*, p. 1138.

42 Trznadel, *Czytanie Norwida*, pp. 293–323.

verse of “Ciemność”, sees a distant echo of Christ’s words about bringing fire to the earth to kindle human hearts (Luke 12: 49).⁴³

In the second version, Norwid introduces a significant change in Verse 13. He replaced “słowa me” [my words] with “pieśni” [songs]. The reader’s effort must therefore involve every reading of poetry, and not just reading Norwid’s texts. However, in the third and fourth versions, there is a return to the original concept. Norwid writes: “pieśni me” [my songs]. It is thus possible that the amendment in the second version is simply the author’s mistake.

Editing the second, third, and fourth versions, Norwid makes another important change. The flame is no longer thrown into the sky, which might have been a symbol of acceptance of the offering (see the second version), nor is it ignited by the poet’s words. The following is only said:

Nim rozgrzawszy zimnotę wieku
Płomień błysnie ofiarny!

[Before, having warmed up the cold of the century,
A sacrificial flame will flash!]

It is no longer clear what the origin of the fire will be, the fire which would completely change the face of that century hated by Norwid. Can this amendment testify to the poet’s growing pessimism, to the fact that in 1876 he already knew that his thoughts would not provoke any response from society, that it was not worth fighting for if, during his lifetime, this fight were doomed to be a failure? After all, similar thoughts gave rise to the tragic decision to abandon Polish literature and art, about which he wrote in a letter to Bronisław Zaleski on 19 January 1877.⁴⁴

Attempting to read the thought which Norwid wanted to poetically convey to the reader, while remembering about his antagonism to his contemporary era, it is inevitable to ask once again about the reasons for rejecting the poet’s concepts, which are extremely interesting and sometimes important from today’s perspective. It seems to me that it is easier to read about a bygone era than about one’s own, especially if it was only about borscht and gherkin; it is easier to endure someone’s megalomania if one knows that his fate was tragic and that his faith in future generations was great. This is difficult and cannot be dealt with in one sentence; however, it seems to me that researchers and critics who have addressed this issue have often forgotten how unjust Norwid was sometimes

43 Merdas, *Luk przymierza*, pp. 82–83.

44 PWsz X, 91.

when expressing his judgments about his own era. It really was not just about borscht and gherkin.

At the same time, Norwid was right when he wrote that the most eminent poets, Mickiewicz, Słowacki, and Krasiński, were just as much, perhaps even more, misunderstood as he was. Unfortunately, this did not mean that he managed to create a masterpiece readable for his contemporaries which could accompany them during those difficult years, one that they would consider important for themselves, just as Mickiewicz's idea of messianism and national martyrdom was nevertheless important for them. This was undoubtedly one of the causes of Norwid's tragedy, and it meant that at the end of his life he could no longer notice much more between his own work and "świat sfałszowany" [the falsified world].

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Adam Cedro

Parable, History: On the Directions of Reading *Quidam*

Abstract: This paper presents some doubts which arise when reading the poem as well as studies pertaining to it. The first of the presented fragments, with genealogical orientation, refers to what is in a way “outside” of the poem and includes analysis of the title, subtitle, motto, and the epistolary dedication to Z. K. The context of other statements Norwid made about *Quidam* is also considered. The second part discusses the issue of the narrative situation’s dependence on the historical character of the presented world, which is usually defined visually to observe on one’s own. That is realised by the poet describing the appearance of objects from the perspective of a reduced distance between the described and the describer. The addressee of the narration is often put in the role of a co-participant in the presented events or situations, while the narrator changes his own perspective.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, *Quidam*, Christian tradition, narrative poem, genealogy, nineteenth-century epic

1. ON THE SURFACE OF THE POEM

Czytałeś – i nawet, czego nie spodziałem się być, dawałeś do czytania ten rękopism *przypowieści* mojej, nazwany “*Quidam*.” Uważałeś zapewne, że dziełu temu dałem nazwę *przypowieści*, nie zaś *powieści*, a to z przyczyny, że intrygi i węzła dramatycznego, właściwego *powieściom*, wielce się tu wystrzegalem – nie o to mi szło, ale właśnie że o to raczej głównie, co zazwyczaj tylko pobocznie z właściwych *powieści* wyciągamy. (*Do Z. K. Wyjątek z listu* [To Z.K. Excerpt from a letter], DW III, 119)

[You have read and even, something I didn’t expect, you gave [others] to read that manuscript of my *parable*, called “*Quidam*.” You likely noticed that I named that work a *parable* and not a *novel*, and that is for the reason that I took pains to avoid the dramatic plot and knot, proper to novels – it was not my aim, but mainly that which is usually only secondarily drawn from novels proper.]

The beginning of the letter to Zygmunt Krasiński, a letter which functions as an introduction to the poem, is quoted here for a reason. It is not clear why – whether due to the authority of the writer, or to the “obviousness” of the statements contained therein – it has not been granted a critical comment in the

hitherto research;¹ it was silently acknowledged that *Quidam* was a parable.² In the interpretative efforts of reconstructing the order of meanings superior to the plot itself,³ the possibility of understanding the term used by Norwid in a different manner was overlooked. And yet, the author is quite emphatic (“uwazałeś zapewne” [you likely noticed]) in placing his “parable” in opposition to a novel (and only the novel), a genre consistently rejected by Norwid.⁴ The matter is spiced up by the fact that in a somewhat parallel fragment of the poetic letter, “Do Walentego Pomiana Z.” [To Walenty Pomian Z.], the author states: “Marzyłem o powieści bynajmniej okazałej” [I dreamt of a *novel* quite extensive; emphasis

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- 1 The following articles are focused fully on *Quidam*: Jan Arcab, “O *Quidamie* Norwida,” *Nasza Przeszłość*, Vol. 25 (1966), pp. 253–276; Ewa Bieńkowska, “W poszukiwaniu wielkiej ojczyzny (O poemacie *Quidam* Cypriana Norwida),” in: Ewa Bieńkowska, *Dwie twarze losu. Nietzsche – Norwid* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975), pp. 89–112; Władysław Dobrowolski, “Norwidowa opowieść o wiecznym Rzymie i wiecznym człowieku *Quidamie*,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 24 (1927), pp. 291–308; Zygmunt Falkowski, *Cyprian Norwid. Portret ogólny* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Tygodnika Ilustrowanego, 1933), pp. 97, 106–124; Mieczysław Jastrun, “*Quidam* i sobowtóry,” *Poezja*, Vol. 5, Nos. 7, 8 (1969), pp. 17–39, 25–38 (reprinted in: Mieczysław Jastrun, *Gwiazdzisty diament* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971)); Adam Krechowicki, *O Cyprianie Norwidzie*, Vol. 2 (Lwów: Gubrynowicz i Syn, 1909), pp. 86–126; Izabela Kuźmińska, “Wywyższenie chrześcijaństwa w *Quidam* C. K. Norwida,” *Przegląd Katolicki*, Nos. 36, 37 (1938), p. 584–585, 600–602; Zdzisław Łapiński, “Obrazowanie w *Quidamie*,” *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1956–1957) (Prace o Norwidzie), pp. 117–173; Zdzisław Łapiński, “‘Gdy myśl łączy się z przestrzenią.’ Uwagi o przypowieści *Quidam*,” *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1976), pp. 225–231; J. Malinowski, *Konstrukcja świata przedstawionego w poemacie Cypriana Norwida ‘Quidam’* (Lublin 1978 (MA thesis typescript)); Tadeusz Sinko, “Klasyczny laur Norwida,” *Przegląd Powszechny*, Vol. 198–199 (1933), pp. 57–78; Zbigniew Zaniewicki, “Rozmyślenia nad *Quidam*” in: *Norwid żywy*, ed. Władysław Günther (London: B. Świdorski, 1962), pp. 165–187.
 - 2 In the colloquial understanding of the story which “does not say what it says,” since the issue of the generic structure of a narrative poem had not been commented on yet.
 - 3 See Michał Głowiński, “Norwida wiersze-przypowieści,” in: *Cyprian Norwid. W 150-lecie urodzin. Materiały konferencji naukowej 23–25 września 1971*, ed. Maria Żmigrodzka (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1973), p. 75.
 - 4 See Michał Głowiński, “Wokół ‘Powieści’ Norwida,” in: Michał Głowiński, *Gry powieściowe. Szkice z teorii i historii form narracyjnych* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1973), pp. 151–194.

by A. C.] (Pwsz II, 154).⁵ It is worth quoting a comment given by Głowiński to Norwid's vision of a novel as formulated in the poem mentioned above (l. 82–94):

Surely, that discourse is clearly in polemics with the romantic aesthetics. It would seem that it actually formulates a credo of a *realistic novel*, yet such an impression would have been mistaken; the quoted fragment is the author's poetic comment to *Quidam* – a work with is *quite obviously* not a novel. ... here, a novel turns into a contradiction of myth-making. Such a view given by the poet who saw the growing popularity of the novel as a sign of degradation (and degeneration) of literature is deeply ambiguous. The project of the work which was to contradict romantic fantasticality and ornamentation had to come close – clearly against the poet's intention – to the literary programme considered by authors of the scorned novel as their own. That ambiguity is another aspect showing the singularity of Norwid's historic situation as a romantic who was not a romantic, a Parnassian who was not a Parnassian, a realist who was not a realist.⁶ [emphasis by A. C.]

The question arises whether the unconditional approach which denies *Quidam* the right to be called a novel can be overruled or weakened.

In the linguistic and literary consciousness of the nineteenth century, the name functioned in a variety of meanings.⁷ It could continue to update its older sense of “pisemne utrwalenie tego, co ktoś powiada, ustnie opisuje”⁸ [a written record of what is recounted, described in speech], to retain the colloquial value of a word, evoking authenticity. It could also mean a plot, a motif, an episode, or in particular narration.⁹ Yet, Norwid's ironic comments directly concerned a *prose* novel, a genre which had dominated the literary market in the “age of trade and industry.” As Głowiński indicates, a novel was actually an aesthetic category to Norwid, a manner of presenting the world connected to a certain attitude and

5 See also the letter to Władysław Bentkowski [of late May 1857], where *Quidam* is defined as: [a work] “formę mającą historycznego romansu” [in the form of a historical romance].

6 Głowiński, “Wokół ‘Powieści’ Norwida,” p. 156.

7 Beside Głowiński's essay (see footnote 6), rich documentation and valuable problematisation is found in a treatise by Marian Maciejewski, *Narodziny powieści poetyckiej w Polsce* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1970), particularly part I: *Powieść poetycka w świadomości epoki*. See also Antonina Bartoszewicz, “Z dziejów polskiej terminologii literackiej pierwszej połowy XIX wieku,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (1963), pp. 133–180. Nothing new on the topic can be found in the paper by Krzysztof Raczyński, “Terminologia epicka Cypriana Norwida,” in: *C. K. Norwid w setną rocznicę śmierci* (Opole: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna im. Powstańców Śląskich, 1984), pp. 83–85.

8 Maciejewski, *Narodziny powieści poetyckiej*, p. 13.

9 See Bartoszewicz, “Z dziejów polskiej terminologii,” p. 146.

philosophy (one which he found foreign).¹⁰ The values promoted mainly by the Polish prose works stood in clear opposition to the romantic axiology, and a certain laic quality¹¹ of the novel situated it in the antipodes of Norwid's ideal – a Christian epic.¹²

Those issues will be developed at a later point. For the purpose of further considerations, it suffices to adopt the view that, due to his ideological and artistic convictions, Norwid simply could not call *Quidam* a novel in a situation where the term was used mostly to denote a specific prose genre. Proof of the trouble the writer found himself in as he had dreamt of a “powieść bynajmniej okazała” [a novel quite extensive] while he could not apply the name for specific reasons, could be the words “wielce się tu wystrzegałem” [I took pains to beware]. However, the fact Norwid clearly distanced himself from the novel “proper” does not mean that the narrative poem cannot be considered an “improper” novel in the sense described below. The formulated programme of an “antinovel,” with respect to compositional and event structure, would thus be limited to maximum neutralisation of the “intryga i węzeł dramatyczny” [dramatic plot and knot]. Even if it were assumed that Norwid completes it with the value of opposition towards romantic aesthetics, it would be difficult to consider such descriptions to form a sufficient definition of a post-romantic “nouveau roman,” and it is completely unclear why a work with such construction should be a parable (in the generic meaning) in the same breath.

The author of the essay quoted above “Norwida wiersze-przypowieści” notes that the writer of *Promethidion* consistently distinguished between the terms “parabola” [parable] and “przypowieść” [parable/allegory].¹³ The former was reserved for theoretical considerations,

and the latter served as a specific generic qualifier used by the poet for some of his works (*Quidam*, *Epimenides*, *Wzroki* [Eyesights]). Yet research practice uses the terms interchangeably which blurs the distinction maintained by Norwid. While that could be done in research concerning the function of parabolisation in all Norwid's works,¹⁴ in the case of work specified in its subtitle to be a parable/

10 Głowiński, “Wokół ‘Powieści’ Norwida,” p. 163.

11 Głowiński, “Wokół ‘Powieści’ Norwida,” p. 174.

12 Zaniewicki describes *Quidam* as an epic of “szlachta Chrystusowa” [Christ's gentry] (“Rozmyślenia nad *Quidam*,” p. 165).

13 Zaniewicki, “Rozmyślenia nad *Quidam*,” p. 78.

14 Beside Głowiński (footnote 4), the significance of the method was also stressed by Irena Sławińska, “O prozie epickiej Norwida,” in: Irena Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1971). See also Sławomir Świąntek, *Norwidowski teatr świata* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1983), pp. 159–168.

allegory, one should use the category with particular caution, even bordering on suspicion. Concerning *Quidam*, the term “przypowieść” given in the subtitle, may be mainly information to have the work read in a specific (parabolic) manner¹⁵ and not necessarily specify the genological affinity of that “bynajmniej okazała powieść” [quite extensive novel]. It may be that Norwid’s contrast of a “novel” (“powieść”) with a “parable” (“przypowieść”) also refers to the other meaning of the latter: *przy-powieść*, which could be translated as a near-novel, something beside a novel, or a literary form with some *elements in common* with a novel.¹⁶ Analysis of such “common elements,” with an attempt to situate *Quidam* within a specific epic tradition, may be a research issue worthy of pursuing further.

In this part, focus is given on the “*Quidam*” from the title. The name is identified with at least two characters of the poem. One is a nameless son of Aleksander of Epirus; as Norwid states in the introduction: “*ktoś – jakiś tam człowiek – quidam!*” [*someone – some person – quidam!*] The other is “*Quidam, któremu to nazwisko przeszło było w imię własne, ale i ten jest tylko jakiś ogrodnik, jeden z miliona chrześcijan*” [*Quidam, to whom the name became his own proper name, but he is also just some gardener, one among a million Christians*]. That much is given by the author.¹⁸

One may note a detail which takes quite an important place in the ideological composition of the poem. It seems that one can indicate the author’s distinction

15 Arcab (“O ‘*Quidamie*’ Norwida,” p. 261) writes: “With the subtitle: ‘Parable,’ by analogy to the evangelical parables which served in Christ’s teaching to explain particularly difficult truths, Norwid likely wished to forewarn the reader to look for more than just the plot in the poem, to notice its philosophical and ideological load, to make the effort to uncover the truths contained therein and draw the right conclusions.”

16 Such a possibility is allowed by *Słownik wileński*; the entry of “Przy” states: “(3) = with nouns, it means: a) that an object named with a noun with the preposition is in close vicinity of an object named with same noun without the preposition, e.g. Przysionek [room adjoining the vestibule], Przyszecze [place by the river], Przyślubek [promise, near-oath]. ... c) = that a certain object has some of the features expressed with the noun without the preposition, e.g. Przymrozek [light frost, lit. near-freeze], Przydech [aspiration, lit. half-breath.” An analogous understanding of Norwid’s word-formation: *przy-słowie* [by the word] is proposed by Stefan Sawicki (“Gdzie ‘Ewangelia?’ Komentarz do wiersza ‘Koncept a Ewangelia,’” in: Stefan Sawicki, *Norwida walka z formą*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1986, p. 106).

17 See also “Do Walentego Pomiana Z.” (PWsz II, 154, lines 92–96).

18 Bienkowska (“W poszukiwaniu wszelkiej ojczyzny,” p. 91) sees that idea as being “strange.”

between the two characters already at this point. *Quidam* and *quidam*, *Someone* and *someone*. The matter may be that of “koma and jota” [comma and iota], but a trace of the author’s valuation may be noted already at the level of the graphic shape of the word.

Of one it is only known that he “szuka prawdy i dobra” [*seeks truth and goodness* (emphasis by A. C.)]. *Quidam* seeks nothing; he *is* a gardener¹⁹ and a Christian; he is also named.²⁰ It is worth considering the motto opening the poem, too, composed of *two* Gospel quotes: from Mark (14: 51) and Matthew (16: 28).

In a letter to Antoni Zaleski [of December 1858], clearly preceding the publication of the poem by four years, Norwid wrote about the principles of issuing his works:

Proszę u pierwszych mianowicie utworów dewizy z Ewangelii odrzucić – nie należy Pismem Ś[wię]łym tak szastać – był czas, kiedy się to przez antagonizm robiło. (DW XI, 282)

[I wish to have the mottoes from the Gospel taken out of the first works – the Bible cannot be thus squandered – there was a time when that was done through antagonism.]

In light of the words above, as well as the whole practice of Norwid “mottoing” his works,²¹ it is difficult to assume that the motto preceding *Quidam* is casual information on the merely “literary” etymology of the poem’s title. In the New Testament one can find several dozen cases of the indefinite pronoun “quidam” (some, a, etc.), thus discovering the principle of the author’s selection should bring further data. The most obvious sense of the word “quidam” moves to the forefront, revised as it is used to define an average figure, in the function of a word opening a series of evangelic parables.²² Thus, a person defined with that pronoun would be unimportant for their individual features, serving as an

19 The symbolic function of such a character (gardener) is discussed by Władysław Arcimowicz (“Assunta” *Cypriana Norwida. Poemat autobiograficzno-filozoficzny* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Wiedzy Chrześcijańskiej, 1933), pp. 9–12).

20 In this case, Norwid’s “etymological feel” failed him. As given by Henryk Fross and Franciszek Sowa (*Twoje imię* (Kraków: WAM, 1982), p. 262), Gwido is a rare form of a Latinised German name Gwidon (Eng. Guido; a more common form was Vido, -onis). Actual Latin equivalents of Gwidon are Silvestrus, Silvius and Silvianus.

21 See Józef F. Fert, *Norwid poeta dialogu* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1982), pp. 59–67.

22 Like in the following type of statements: “There was a landowner who planted a vineyard” (Matthew 21: 33). Quoted after the New International Version.

example of universal attitudes towards the fundamental dilemmas of human existence.²³ Yet, Norwid does not directly refer to the model of a parable – a *story* which serves to illustrate the teachings of Jesus. The first of the quoted fragments concerns a historic event – an unclear one and noted only by Mark²⁴ – which occurs just a moment after Christ is seized:

Then everyone deserted him and fled. A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind. (Mark 14: 50–52)

The second fragment, directly preceding the description of Transfiguration, is a quotation of the words of Jesus:

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. (Matthew 16: 27–28)²⁵

In both cases, the word “*quidam*” *excludes* some people from all humanity; it certainly does not mean the same as the Everyman from a morality play. Extended context allows a more clear separation of the two uses of “*quidam*.” The main points are: the Singular and the Plural form; an event in which one person participates and Christ's promise concerning a certain number of people; inconsistently, momentarily, accidentally(?) following the seized Jesus, and the guarantee of this-worldly participation in the Kingdom of God – those are the main differences. They may give reason to make a distinction between the two

23 See Michał Głowiński, Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, Janusz Sławiński, *Słownik terminów literackich* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1988).

24 The choice may be interpreted in the aspect of Norwid's love of “detail,” here an evangelical one. Commentaries most commonly identify the mysterious figure as the Evangelist himself. See also *Notatki z historii* (PWsz VII, 336): “Ś. Chryzostom mówi, że ten młodzieniec prześcierałem okryty to był Jan Ś., także uczeń, który znał arcykapłana” [St Chrysostom says that the youth covered with the cloth was St John, also a disciple who knew the high priest].

25 See also the comment in *Biblia Tysiąclecia* (Poznań-Warszawa: Pallottinum, 1971). Synoptic Gospels speak at this place of the coming of God's Kingdom. As a side note, the motivation to examine the context of the fragment quoted by Norwid results also from the dash placed at the end of the motto. The potential importance of considering a broader context may be proven e.g. by a quote from Isaiah preceding *Psalmów-psalm* [The Psalm of Psalms] (PWsz III, 399). Beside the quotation, you find descriptions which go beyond the framework of objective polemics (see Isaiah 8: 19).

protagonists, the “participant” and the “observer,”²⁶ which are representatives of two kinds of attitudes one may take towards the reality of God’s Kingdom (Christianity), already on the first page of the poem. It may be noted here that the conflict, or rather a specific network of relations establishing between the two worldview attitudes of Gwido and the Epirote, may, to some extent, take the function of the “intryga i węzeł dramatyczny” [dramatic plot and knot] – the phenomena declaratively removed from the event plane of the work.

Another issue to be discussed here is the matter of indicating the proper manner of reading the poem. The author himself caused much confusion in that matter by including the category of “parable” in the work’s subtitle. Adopting the analysis of some of Norwid’s statements as the point of departure, one may wish to take a closer look at how the author himself read *Quidam* and what directions of reception he indicated to the readers of his work.

The expressiveness of *Do Z. K. Wyjątek z listu* [To Z.K. Excerpt from a letter] results not only from the first-person forms, natural for epistolary convention. The function’s presence is stressed by the typical poetic elements of Norwid’s writing: emphases stressing the explanatory function, rhetorical questions, and exclamations to strengthen persuasiveness. The form “moja przypowieść” [my parable] is used twice indicating that the author happened to “szlachetnie się różnić” [differ nobly] concerning the autonomic sense and shape of his own work. Proof of the highly emotional attitude of Norwid towards his extensive “przypowieść” [parable] can also be found in some other letters sent by the author of *Quidam* to his friends in the years 1857–1859, when he could not reach the printing house. Most significant in this respect is his letter to Władysław Bentkowski [of late May 1857]:

Wiele razy patrzyłem na rękopism mój, na moją pracę dawną, ważną, jedyną może – leżał – leżał – nie mogę wydawać na przepisywanie – a dam oryginał, to, jak zetracą, i słowa nie odrzekną – i obrócą gdzie na nicość, bez pozwolenia pierw oczytawszy do woli z tym i owym! – grubianie bez serca i sumienia ...

Donoszę Ci więc, że leży u mnie praca skończona od dawna, objętości tomu jednego zwykłej miary – formę mającą historycznego romansu, wierszem pisana – chciałem Ci wraz posłać – ale lękam się, nie wiem, czy odpowiesz na warunki, o które nigdzie indziej żaden pisarz i człowiek nikogo nie pyta – o które pytać pierw nieprzyzwoitością jest. ...

26 That category is suggested because of the phrase “lubo może jej był świadkiem” [or maybe was witness to it] found in the letter “Do Walentego Pomiana Z.” [To Walenty Pomian Z.] (PWsz II, 155) has a meaning of “giving testimony/being witness.”

Nie udaję się do przyjaciela mego, p. Cieszkowskiego ... – nie udaję do przyjaciela mego p. Zyg[munta] Kr[asińskiego], bo może za wielki koszt pieniężny, aby literaturze ojczystej dodać rzecz, *której w literaturze naszej całej nie ma*. ... Cóż więc dopiero dla rzeczy, którą więcej od *osoby* mojej cenię, zrobić by podążyli, kiedy dla osoby nic nie zrobią – a osoba u nich wszystko jest...

Racze mi odpisać, czy mogę w tym zaprzątnąć Cię, czy też, *jak myślałem już*, czekać mam, aż umierając spowiednikowi zlecę, aby nie ztracony był rękopism. (DW XI, 161, 162)

[I looked many a time at my manuscript, my work of old, of import, perhaps the only one – it lay – it lay – I cannot spend [money] on rewriting – and if I give the original, and they lose it, they shan't say a word in reply – and they shall turn it to nothing, first reading it without permission to their hearts' delight with some one or other! – heartless, conscienceless boors ...

And so I inform you that I have with me my work done of old, in one volume of the usual size – in the form of a historical romance, written in verse – I wanted to send it to you – but I am in fear: I know not if you reply to the conditions for which no other writer or [any] person asks anyone anywhere – for which to ask first would be indecency ...

I do not go to my friend, Mr Cieszkowski ..., - neither do I go to my friend, Mr Zyg[munt] Kr[asiński], for the financial cost may be too much to add to Polish literature a work *which cannot be found in all our literature*. ... What may be done for the work which I value higher than my person to make them follow, if they do nothing for the person – and the person is everything to them. ...

Be so kind as to reply whether I can bother you in this respect, or if I should, as *I was already considering*, wait until on deathbed I commission my confessor to keep the manuscript from loss.]

The repertoire of arguments proposed by Norwid clearly extends beyond the scope of the usual means which must be taken by an author in a normal publishing process in order to have their work issued. It is worth noting that the “work” is valued over the person (!) of Norwid, that it is assigned the value of a “last will,” the execution of which the author wishes to entrust to a confessor. In a letter of a slightly later date to the same addressee [of early June 1857], Norwid does not hesitate to use his top argument: sin against the Holy Spirit (DW XI, 165). In the specific analysis presented in his letter, Norwid places his poem among the works which have remained unpublished long after the death of their authors. The activated stylistic field allows for the transformation of the phenomenon of death from a biographical plane to the cultural dimension, where the (parallel) times of the works of different authors being “silent” could be totalled to set some “absolute value” of the losses incurred by Polish literature. On the other hand, apart from the supernatural and cultural sanctions, Norwid

also lists in his letters a number of quite earthbound and very strict conditions regarding the manner of reading and storing the manuscript, as well as the principles of its potential publication.

In view of so many arguments of such singular nature, it might be expected that, beside the author's authoritative estimate of the work's value, the letters hold a more detailed justification for such a high appraisal of the poem, indicating the main values and aims of *Quidam*. The most extensive presentation of the work's content can be found in the letter quoted above to Władysław Bentkowski:

Rzecz pracy tej jest z czasów panowania Adriana imperatora, kiedy Izrael robił ostatnie powstanie, i był naonczas Messias, którego za takiego uznano, zmyliwszy się pierw, bo nie poznawszy Zbawiciela – jest to czas ostatecznego immolowania Grecji – czas wynurzania się chrześcijańskich pierwszych organów – czas panteizmu państwa rzymskiego na świecie.

Sądzę więc, że cenzura takimi starymi rzeczami nie będzie się drażnić, idzie tylko o to dla czytelników, że to nie patriotyczne polskie, i nie ma tam ułanów z wąsami, ale cóż robić – nieobojętna jest rzecz także znać i historię społeczeństwa chrześcijańskiego – to także coś, co przecie troszkę obowiązuje porządnego obywatela. (DW XI, 162)

[*The matter of this work is from the rule of Adrian the Emperor, when Israel had its last uprising and it was the time of the Messiah, who was considered thus, but first they were mistaken for they did not recognise the Saviour; it is the time of the final immolation of Greece – a time of emergence of the first Christian bodies – a time of pantheism of the Roman empire across the world.*

I thus believe that censorship will not be vexed with such old things; it is only about the readers, that it is not Polish and patriotic, and no moustached lancers, but what can be done – tis also essential to know the history of the Christian community – tis also something of an obligation of a decent citizen.]

The first part of the quotation specifies the content of the “forma historycznego romansu” [form of historical romance]. Since the dominant category of description is time (the term is used five times), it may be concluded that the author primarily emphasises the *historical* character of the reality presented in the poem. The second part refers to Norwid's view on some of the elements of the social process where the work would exist. Particularly interesting is his view on censorship. That reservation of the author, although literally soothing to the reader, may imply that the reality presented in *Quidam* serves as a costume which romanticism traditionally employed to disguise issues of the contemporary world. Simply replacing or removing historical names suffices; components thus gained (emperor, last uprising, false Messiah, immolation of a country, pantheism of the state) seem to constitute a fairly accurate match of the topography

of, say, the eastern part of Europe. Proof of such reading can be found e.g. with Zbigniew Zaniewicki, who, in the character of Jazon the Magus seeks some symbolic features of Mickiewicz or Towiański.²⁷ Although such an interpretation cannot be absolutely precluded, it seems to stem from – as already mentioned – a too direct reading of the parabolic meanings of the poem.

According to Norwid, the condition of historical and literary awareness of contemporary readers was an even greater danger to the proper functioning of the work than censorship. Ironically, the poet anticipates the critique potentially resulting from a narrowed horizon of expectations that “że to nie patriotyczne polskie, i nie ma tam ułanów z wąsami” [it is not Polish and patriotic, and no moustached lancers]. The universalist attitude of the author of *Quidam* is thus in definite opposition to the particularism of “kosmiczny-patriotyzm-kapusty-kwaśnej” [cosmic-sauerkraut-patriotism]. Shifting the reader’s attention from the vicious circle of Polish history to the history of the Christian community is the fundamental moment which is the reason for the author to say that *Quidam* is a work “której w literaturze naszej całej nie ma” [which cannot be found in all our literature].

Momentarily setting aside the issue of *Quidam*’s place against nineteenth-century literature, it should be noted that Norwid had certain pragmatic goals in taking *history* for the theme of the poem. As a “romans historyczny” [historical romance] set in the history of the Christian human collective, *Quidam* had to bear the function of referring to a specific, temporally defined reality to evoke rich and scientifically verifiable images of the presented era. I see it as the main function of the world presented in the poem. However, the veristic orientation of the work joined forces with a specific type of didacticism in which presentation of values and personal models brought by Christianity to the arena of history had to be accompanied by a question posed to the status quo of nineteenth-century civilization and to the degree of its Christianisation:

Cywilizacja składa się z nabytków wiedzy izraelskiej – greckiej – rzymskiej, a łono jej – chrześcijańskie – czy myślisz, że w świadomej siebie rzeczywistości już tryumfalnie rozbyłło? (*Do Z. K. Wyjątek z listu*; DW III, 120)

[Civilisation is composed of the acquired *Israeli – Greek – Roman* knowledge, and Its bosom is Christian; do you think [the bosom] has already come to shine in triumph in a reality which is aware of itself?]

27 Zaniewicki, “Rozmyślenia nad *Quidam*,” p. 180.

The issue of whether the situation described as such concerns the times contemporary to Norwid or Hadrian can be easily solved, even without the need to reference the content of the poem. A few sentences earlier, Norwid writes that “Cywilizacja, według wszelkiego podobieństwa, do dziś jeszcze podobna jest do tego kościoła” [Civilization, in all likelihood, is similar to that church until this day ... (emphasis by A. C.)].²⁸ Also the relevant fragment of the poem “Do Walentego Pomiana Z.” [To Walenty Pomian Z.] leaves no doubt in the matter. In view of the similarity perceived by Norwid between the Church’s “wczora i dziś” [yesterday and today], a parabolic construction forms a certain conclusion here. The question remains, however, whether Christianity (historically and as was contemporary for Norwid) is to be treated as a spiritual force that has assimilated foreign elements unto itself, or whether he intends the (negatively understood) remainders of pre-Christian attitudes found in nineteenth-century Church. *Quidam* researchers are quite divided on the topic. Reading the poem from the perspective of “neo-paganism” would thus detail and document issues formulated explicitly in *Ruiny* [Ruins]:

O! ty ukochana
 Ludzkości chrześcijańska – czy taić ci o tem,
 Że jesteś nieskończenie szanowne *nic-potem?* –
 Osiemnaście więc wieków trwasz? a taka próżnia
 We wszystkim – mało gdzie cię myśl wyższa odróżnia
 Od pogan, ... (DW IV, 164)

[Oh! you beloved
 Christian humanity – should I the words avoid
 That you are an infinitely esteemed *ne'er-do-well?* –
 So you are eighteen centuries old? and such a void
 In everything – rarely differentiated by a higher thought
 From heathens, ...]

Another reading option is revealed in *Do Z. K. Wyjątek z listu* [To Z.K. Excerpt from a letter], where Norwid contrasts his own vision of “ruins” with that of the author of *Irydion* and writes:

Serce tej Zofii, tak czarującej talentami, a tak nerwami i wołą do siebie nienależnej, może właśnie całej jednej *świętyni-wiedzy* jest ruiną? (DW III, 119)

28 The Polish terms “podobieństwo” [similarity, analogy] and “podobna” [similar], present here in close vicinity, refer to a tradition of translating the term “parabola” [parable] with “podobieństwo.” It was done by Jakub Wujek in his translation of the Bible of 1599, and in recent times by Miłosz.

[The heart of Zofia, so charming with her talents, and her nerves and will so not her own – perhaps it be the ruin of the whole, one *temple-of-knowledge*?]

This fragment gives a clear suggestion to apply allegoric understanding to at least some elements of the work. It might seem that such reading of the poem is fully justified. Yet, the complete personification of Wisdom in Zofia is opposed and hindered by the strong specification of the latter due to the emphasis placed on her personality traits (talents, heart, nerves, will). Also, other characters are endowed with features too realistic to have them treated as typical “osobistości paraboliczne” [parabolic personalities].

Ten lines later, another suggestion is provided: “*Mag jest Żyd – Artemidor i Zofia są Grekowie – znajdziesz tam i Rzym*” [The *Magus* is Jewish – *Artemidor* and *Zofia* are Greek – you shall find Rome there, as well.] The author’s emphasis may indicate that Krasiński had some issues with viewing the characters of *Quidam* as representatives of entire cultural groups.²⁹

Finally, one more “parable.” It is about the case of the special self-perception of the poem by Norwid after the January Uprising. The issue of *Quidam*’s accidental death³⁰ – which in the eyes of the poet became a symbol of the needless victims of 1863 – comes to the forefront. The words written by Norwid to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski [March-April 1863] seem to hold a glimmer of some prophetic satisfaction:

Co do popularności – – toć na parę lat pierw op[ra]cowany “Krakus” dziś się grał między dwoma Dyktatora. *prawie że słowo w słowo*, aż strach pomyśleć!

A *Quidam* zabity jest przypadkiem w jatkach rzeźniczych! – – Juźci, można było choć kiwnąć ręką z daleka i powiedzieć – *Merci Monsieur, vous n’êtes pas de ce[ux] qui dorment!* – ale to o tym – tam – – (DW XII, 181)³¹

29 See Sinko, “Klasyczny laur Norwida,” pp. 58–59: “And since the poet Zofia, called in the letter to Z. K. a ruin of one whole temple of knowledge, expresses nothing characteristic of Greek poetry, the presentation of the Greek element is reduced to comments by the author himself within the poem.” Similar doubts were expressed by others, e.g. Tadeusz Makowiecki, Irena Sławińska, “Za kulisami ‘Tyrtēja,’” in: *O Norwidzie pięć studiów* (Toruń: Księgarnia Naukowa 1949), p. 41 [the book co-authored by Konrad Górski].

30 That “accidentality” is questioned by Jacek Trznadel (*Czytanie Norwida. Próby*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1978, pp. 126, 216–217).

31 See also the letter to August Cieszkowski [of January 1865] (DW XII, 330, 331). In that interpretation, Norwid emphasises the repetitiveness of the “*rzeź w jatkach*” [slaughtering/butchering] (“co kilkanaście lat” [every dozen or so years]).

[As to popularity — “Krakus,” written just a few years before, was played *today* between two Dictators *nearly word for word*, tis scary to consider!

And Quidam is killed accidentally in a butchering! – – Certainly, you could just wave your hand from afar and say – *Merçi Monsieur, vous n’êtes pas de ce[ux] qui dorment!* – but about it – well – –]

Norwid’s complex of blood, slaughter, death, sacrifice and martyrdom raises its head here. And, although the death of the son of Aleksander must definitely be situated against such a background, the question ought to be posed whether Norwid had an “objective” right to provide such a narrowed interpretation of his “parable;” whether such a reading of the poem (“prophetic” one may call it) is actually possible; whether the construction of Quidam’s story, ending with an “accidental” death, can be identified with the pattern of death of the victims in the 1863 uprising. A negative answer to the questions could be easily justified.

The issue is further complicated, for a trace of an interpretation approximate to the one above can be found already in 1859 – again in the poem “Do Walentego Pomiana Z.” [To Walenty Pomian Z.] (PWsz II, 155):

...
*Miałżeby to być przeto obraz pokolenia,
 Co w wilię chrześcijańskiej prawdy objawienia,
 Między zachodem greckiej i żydowskiej wiedzy,
 Dziko rośnie i ginie jak zioło na miedzy,
 A za patronów jeśli w niebiosach ma kogo,
 To chyba rzezi ciosem duszki wypędzone
 Z ciała, które żołdak rzymski popychał ostrogą,
 Przed-męczeńskie i w wieków wieki uwielbione.*

[*Would it thus be the image of a generation
 Which on the eve of Christian truth’s revelation,
 Between the sunset of the Greek and Jewish knowledge,
 Grows wild and dies like weed on a balk,
 And if it has any patrons in the heavens,
 They are likely ghosts banished with slaughter
 From bodies pushed by a Roman soldier with a spur,
 Pre-martyr and eternally glorified.*]

It may seem that the parabolisation of Quidam’s life (and death) given in that work occurs primarily on a “horizontal” plane of history and is intended to include a specific generation in terms of time. If the “*wilia chrześcijańskiej prawdy objawienia*” [*eve of Christian truth revelation*] is understood as the beginnings of Christianity, then “*zachód greckiej i żydowskiej wiedzy*” [*the sunset*

of the Greek and Jewish knowledge] would also concern the first centuries of our era. At this point, a “modernising” interpretation is not considered in the discussion. In such a situation, the parable (allegory) of Quidam’s death, and the death of the uprising generation, would be based only on the joint patronage of “przed-męczeńskie duszki” [pre-martyr ghosts]. One may wonder whether that is enough.³²

Tego, coś dotąd czytał, pisać miałem wstręty,
Przeto iż chemią trąci – trąci alembikiem –
I jest, jakobym w bajce handlował bydłety,
Wołając: zapęd głupi nazywam tu *dzikiem*;
Wół z rogi złoconymi? – jest bursowy cielec;
Żołądek? – jest publiczność; doktryner? – *widelec*.
– Któż by chciał tak wycinać w pień gaje majowe,
By widz leniwy, w stronę pozierając owę,
Coraz to nowszy przedmiot odbitym czuł w oku,
Nie domyślił się ruszyć – i umarł... w szlafroku!

[What you have read so far, I was averse to write,
Since it smells of chemistry – smells of alembic –
And it’s as if I were trading cattle in a fairy tale,
Shouting: foolish drive I call here a *boar*;
An *ox* with gilded horns? – a young calf is here;
Stomach? – there is the audience; doctrinarian? – a *fork*.
– Who would thus want to cut down the May groves,
That a lazy viewer, glancing that direction,
Might have a new object again and again in his view,
Did not think to move – and died... in a housecoat!]

The fragment is easily recognisable as a further part of the poem “Do Walentego Pomiana Z.” [To Walenty Pomian Z.] – the part directly following the quotation given previously, yet clearly separated with the number II. The situation presented seems to be a perfect illustration of a literature researcher who must cut down “gaje majowe” [May groves] in order to reveal the abstract frame of the work. But mainly, this fragment is the author’s defence of the polysemy of the work’s meanings, a testament to his protests against the situation when a writer has to “explain” his own work – and that using a method fit for a vulgariser.

32 The sense of the form “miałżeby” [would it] is not entirely clear. A conditional form, strengthened with a particle, seems to rob the sentence of an assertive nature. It also gives the impression that the fragment should end with a question mark, even a rhetorical one.

Therefore, those thoughts might likely be considered a form of the author's permission to read the work in a manner not limited to revealing the work's parabolic senses, but to notice the at least equally autonomous value of the directly presented world.³³

This part of the paper has attempted to provide a critical view on the "parabolic places" of the poem, already visible in the introduction (*Do Z. K. Wyjątek z listu* [To Z.K. Excerpt from the letter]). The presented hypotheses can be only validated with a thorough analysis of the whole poem; although it seems at this point that the fundamental problematisation of the issue would not be highly modified.³⁴

It is also worth noting that the entire introduction, despite its form of polemics with Krasieński's views, is in fact in *defence* of the poem since it is addressed to a person who has already read the work. In that case, the open presentation of *Quidam's* construction and ideology premises may stand as proof that either the reader "nie domyślił się ruszyć" [did not think to move] or that the concept of the work being a parabolic structure is inconsistent. The element which may determine that inconsistency would then be the "novel" components, resulting from *Quidam* realising partially the principles of the *poetics of realism*.³⁵

2. HISTORY AS THE TOPIC

The specific difficulty faced by a researcher of *Quidam* results from the separate and unique position that the poem occupies both among Norwid's works and in the entire nineteenth-century literature. That makes it impossible to apply the

33 The "surface" reading of the poem also requires considering editorial issues. Noteworthy is e.g. the fact that there is no rule guiding the use of italics with the word "quidam." The justification for most emendations introduced by the Editor ("wymogi rytmiki" [rhythmic requirements]) could also be disputed – see comment in *PWsz* 3, 731–732. It is also worth considering whether *Do Z. K. Wyjątek z listu* [To Z.K. Excerpt from a letter] is rightly included among Norwid's epistolography (DW III, 119, 120), as the stylistic shape of the text indicates that it is rather a consistently constructed foreword.

34 In this place, the name of Stefan Kołaczkowski should be brought to mind. His careful reading of the introduction to the poem resulted in a particularly valuable introduction to the essence of *Quidam's* tragedy. It was also an inspiration, even though not fully conscious, for the above comments.

35 The phenomenon of the poem anticipating the "teoria najnowszej powieści realistycznej" [theory of modern realist novel] was signalled by Tadeusz Sinko ("Klasyczny laur Norwida," pp. 57–58). See also Makowiecki, Sławińska, "Za kulisami 'Tyrtēja,'" pp. 39, 40.

basic analytical approach, i.e. comparing it with another work. Of course, many works of Norwid can be found which are dominated by motifs and threads parallel to *Quidam*, referring to the period when Greek and Roman antiquity turned into the time of Christianity. Thus, it is not the strictly understood thematic layer which is the factor to essentially determine the distinctiveness of the poem. Such a distinction might only be determined by the concept of the work fully using the possibilities offered by the extensive epic form to a writer concerned with history.

Norwid's epic experiences from before *Quidam* were not particularly abundant. Excluding "Łaskawy opiekun" [Kind Guardian] for obvious reasons, as well as his prose focused on contemporary events inclined towards memoirist convention ("Menego," *Czarne kwiaty* [Black Flowers]), the following come under consideration: *Wesele. Powieść, Pompeja* [Poemat], *Szczesna. Powieść, Epimenides. Przypowieść* and [*Wędrowny Sztukmistrz*]³⁶ [Wedding. A Novel; Pompeii [Epic Poem]; *Szczesna. A Novel; Epimenides. A Parable; [Wandering Magician]*]. Concerning *Wesele* and *Szczesna*, the topic is contemporary, and a convenient starting point for the open digressiveness of the author. First-person narration, open presentation of the narrative situation, direct addresses to the reader, and the author's dominant commentary allow those works to be placed within the tradition of a romantic digressive poem. Thus, *Pompeja* and *Epimenides* are much closer to the "parable," at least in the thematic layer; but significant differences may be noted within the narrative premises shaping those works compared to *Quidam*. That is determined primarily by the visible presence of a specific narrator, who is also a participant of the presented events. The creation of the situation when the narrator has a direct meeting with the spirit of a Greek wiseman (*Epimenides*) or with the consul and poet emerging from the ruin of Pompeii³⁷ is quite the opposite of a method which animates and organises the *realistic* image of Hadrian's times. Only some of *Pompeja's* descriptive fragments can be considered consistent with the poetics used in *Quidam*. Therefore, only [*Wędrowny Sztukmistrz*] remains in the discussion. As a matter of fact, despite a different thematic layer, the narrative construction of the surviving fragment of the poem shows one fundamental similarity with *Quidam*: the narrator does not belong to the presented world in the form of a witness or participant of the events.³⁸

36 Translations and some poetic works of a narrative shape (e.g. *Dwa męczeństwa* [Two Martyrdoms]) are not considered here.

37 See Zdzisław Łapiński, *Norwid* (Kraków: Znak, 1984), pp. 113–114.

38 The consistent use of the main protagonist's perspective in *Sztukmistrz* [Magician] (based on fluently shifting from indirect speech to free indirect speech) betrays the presence of a personal narrator.

When he undertook the writing of *Quidam*, Norwid faced a difficult task.³⁹ The historical topic and the planned scope of the ideological issues did not allow for the reach of either the “unserious” form of a digressive poem, or the convention of conversing with ghosts emerging from ruins. The narrative ego had to unconditionally yield from the plane of the presented events to a new dominant: a veristic image of the “predawn” of Christian civilization. While not completely resigning his rights as an author to analyse and comment on the presented events, Norwid had to bring the narrative conception of the new poem closer to the rules which governed storytelling in nineteenth-century historical novels.⁴⁰

The world presented in a historical novel (and a historical poem) is shaped according to specified rules, subordinate to the primary function of the genre, reconstructing the past. The basis of establishing communication between the author and reader of the novel is mainly

[... eye-witness knowledge, direct and rich in detail. The aim here is to reconstruct the past, not by outlining it with a network of historical concepts, not by analogy or contrast, but by giving it directly, just as singular and self-sufficiently comprehensible as the present.]⁴¹

The greatest role in shaping “eye-witness knowledge” in a work on historical topics belongs to narration. Depending on the techniques adopted for storytelling and description, the nature of the distance between the narrator and the presented world, and the qualitative and quantitative relation of the narrator’s generalisation to the degree in which the work is filled with details, the presented reality may appear as more or less visual in its historical concreteness. Thus, an

39 That difficulty is realised only by Trznadel (*Czytanie Norwida*, p. 233).

40 It is mostly about two elements of the poetics of a historical novel: concealing the narrator and the narrative situation, and distinct dissonance between the time of events and the time of narration. See Kazimierz Bartoszyński, “Aspekty i relacje tekstów (źródło – historia – literatura),” in: Kazimierz Bartoszyński, *Teoria i interpretacja. Szkice literackie* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1985), pp. 21–22.

41 Kazimierz Bartoszyński, “*Popioły* i kryzys powieści historycznej,” in: Bartoszyński, *Teoria i interpretacja*, p. 251. Various artistic means are used in *Quidam* to visualise objects and events, starting from imaging (the various functions of which are described by Z. Łapiński) up to the method of “staging a story” in the sense given to the term by Sławińska. See also comments by Kazimierz Wyka on the function of gesture and word in: *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz* (Kraków: PAU, 1948). That set of issues, while important for the poem, has enjoyed quite a thorough discussion, so at this point of the study it is merely mentioned in a footnote.

attempt should be made to specify the role played by the narrator in evoking the impression of directly witnessing the reality; to ask about his share in shaping the phenomenon which was succinctly described by Z. Łapiński: “When reading *Quidam*, we almost physically interact with the ancient world.”⁴² The analysis shall start with the first “song”⁴³ of the poem.

The perspective from which the world of this work appears to us is movable, fluid. In the introduction, we are distant companions, but in a manner of an eye-witnesses, of the “son of Aleksander” as he arrives in the capital of the Empire. The actual action begins precisely one year later.⁴⁴

The synthetic remarks formulated by Łapiński may be further elaborated to clarify the nature of the “distance” and “eye-witnesses.” The opening chapter of the poem is a convenient starting point to present the phenomenon of the interference of basic narrative tendencies which also occur further in *Quidam*. In the first “song,” is not so much important when the protagonist arrives in Rome, but the description of the entire road (in the geographical sense) which the young man had to travel in his search for “the good and the truth.”

The “pre-action” of the plot-less poem begins at the southern tip of the Apennine Peninsula, in the port city of Reggio (Regium) on the Strait of Messina, where the son of Aleksander completes the first leg of his “educational” journey. The initial description is, on the one hand, limited to general information concerning the protagonist’s origins, and on the other hand, provides quite specific knowledge about the features of the Epirote’s face. The tendency towards a synthetic outline (here: presenting the protagonist’s past) and the tendency to use the possibility of a “direct” look (viewing the face from two points of view: in profile and *en face*)⁴⁵ determine the general character of the “fluid” perspective which is constantly present in *Quidam*.

The general characteristics of the Epirote’s cultural and biological “past” are, likely intentionally, presented in the very first fragment which opens the “present” of the poem. The character’s actual educational journey begins with Reggio. The choice of a city located a long way from Rome as the starting point was certainly

42 Łapiński, *Norwid*, p. 74.

43 The quotation marks are used to indicate that the term “song” is used in reference to particular parts of *Quidam* with some hesitation.

44 Łapiński, “Gdy myśl łączy się z przestrzenią,” p. 225.

45 See also Wyka, *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz*, p. 12.

intentional.⁴⁶ The convention of a “journey’s recount,” limited in the event plan to little more than listing major urban centres along the route to Rome, allowed the author to introduce a large amount of detailed information building the “truth” of the presented era. Following the successive stages of the Epirote’s journey, the reader pays little attention to the abundance of specific historical information (concerning e.g. the ways of traveling in the Empire), which must be based on a thorough knowledge of the author. The tendency allows the imagery of the face of a narrator-historian, who gathers and “plants” nearly archaeological elements of material and moral culture of the ancient world into the world presented in the poem.

In an equally imperceptible way and always tied to the event plane of the work, generalisations are introduced within the poem (e.g. in lines 9–18) in order to present synthetic historical judgments. Such judgments form an important element of the ideological plan of the poem, a fundamental plane which motivates and gives sense to the events presented in the “eye-witness” view and forming *Quidam’s* action.⁴⁷ Bearing in mind the presence of the two types of narrative perspective (“archaeological” and “historiosophical”), the main discussion shall now return to the analysis of the narrator-*witness* perspective, which is fundamental for the poem (at least in a quantitative sense).

The eye-witness view of presenting the reality of the poem is achieved in several ways. It is mainly built by descriptions⁴⁸ of the presented objects from a maximally reduced (in a spatial and temporal sense) distance between the speaker and the object of interest at a given moment. In the linguistic plane, the directness of perspective is introduced with verb forms denoting the activity of visual perception. That is done in two variants. The first one, more numerous, uses impersonal forms (most often participles) of such verbs:

Krwi też dwoistej wzajem przeniknięcie
Na twarzy jego dostrzec można było:
W sposób, iż profil z greckich miał medali,
A w oczy patrząc – skroń nabrzmiałą siłą,
I włos mniej ciemny, i usta z korali.

(DW III, 121)

46 The journey to the capital of the Empire is of much significance for the composition. Once the city gates are passed, the space symbolically closes; only the last chapter of the poem takes the action *extra muros*.

47 That function is fulfilled by chapter XX, which is much of the climax of the work.

48 “Instead of action, there is a series of scenes, instead of behaviours – gestures which freeze. There is a clear dominance of description over storytelling. Categories of time translate into categories of space.” Łapiński, *Norwid*, p. 117.

[Also, double blood's interpenetration
 On his face one could see,
 For he had a profile from Greek medals,
 And looking him in the eye – a temple swelling with strength,
 And hair less dark, and coral lips.]

The strategy of such an “eye-witness” presentation is quite cunning. The use of impersonal forms eliminates direct linguistic signals of a personal presence of a specific narrator. The grammatical neutrality achieved also indirectly opens a space for “visual” perception performed in parallel of the recipient of the constructed message.

The other variant, less complicated and yet more visible against a neutral (third-person) narration, directly addresses the recipient. The most characteristic example of that perspective is the description of Zofia (DW III, 126, 127):

Ty, coś ją widział, zakryj sobie oczy
 I powiedz, co z niej pamiętasz szczególnie?
 Nie gładkość czoła, ni wieniec warkoczy,
 Pamiętasz jakieś *wzięcie się* – ogólnie –
 I *głos*: ...

[You, who have seen her, cover your eyes
 And tell me, what you remember of her especially?
 Not a smooth forehead, nor the wreath of braids,
 You remember a certain *demeanour* – in general –
 And the *voice*: ...]

A direct address to the recipient of the story is meant to create an illusion based on identifying the narrator's point of view with the potential perspective of the recipient, and indirectly the reader. In this variant, the recipient of the narration has the role of a *participant* of the presented events imposed on them which is aimed to evoke a deepened sense of direct witnessing.⁴⁹

The perspective also occurs in another, “enhanced” version. A case for study can be the description of Zofia directly after her conversation with the servant (VI, 196–205):

49 A similar phenomenon, although in reference to a different narrative form, was termed by Głowiński “metoda inwokacji” [the invocation method]: “the reader ... performs a type of substitution, i.e. enters in a direct relation with the narrator, becomes the “you” whom the narrator addresses.” “Narracja jako monolog wypowiedziany,” in: Głowiński, *Gry powieściowe*, p. 121.

Pani się przeszła swobodnie po sali,
 Lecz gdybyś pierwiej na oną twarz starą
 Patrzył, a potem zatrzymał się w dali,
 By, niewidzialnym będąc, Zofię widzieć –
 Rzekłbyś: “Zaiste! *piękne straszne bywa,*
Odkąd się człowiek pocnie za nie wstydzić.”
 Tak bo bezładnie na twarzy jej grało
 Uczucie błędne i znużone ciało.

To rzekłbyś, widzu, i dodałbyś: “*Smutno!*
Patrycjatowi, scyjenji, epoce.”

[The lady walked casually about the room,
 But if you were to see first that old face
 And then stopped afar,
 So as to see Zofia, while unseen yourself –
 You would have said: “Truly! *beauty may turn scary,*
Once a person starts being ashamed of it.”
 Such was the chaotic play on her face
 Of an errant emotion and a weary body.

You would have said that, viewer, and added: “Sad it is!
To the patriciate, to science, to epoch.”]

This situation is also based on the illusion of narrating from the perspective of the epic “second person.”⁵⁰ Yet, the recipient of the narration is meant to not only observe the events as they occur before their eyes, but also add their “own” commentary.⁵¹ The artificial nature of such a procedure is masked by the conditional, which waives the possibility of the recipient “realistically” participating in the thus specified narrative situation. This variant occurs seldom in the poem. However, it is quite often that another, almost directly formulated narration method can be observed, based on adopting such a perspective “by, niewidzialnym będąc, widzieć” [so as to see while being unseen].

The “eye-witness” quality relates to more than just the appearance of the characters. The same can be observed in numerous descriptions of the

50 See Michał Głowiński, “Norwidowska druga osoba,” *Roczniki Humanistyczne* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1971), pp. 127–133.

51 The second part of that “common” judgement (lines 204–205) is the starting point for a digression which is aimed at such general and abstract “drogi wyrozumienia” [ways of understanding]. The voices of the narrator and the recipient separate again into an opposition. It is also worth noting the use of the form “widzu” [lit. you the viewer], which confirms the “stage” qualities of *Quidam*.

background, complementing the character's stories. A comparison of three descriptions: Zofia's house (DW III, 151), the way to Jazon's house (DW III, 169, 170) and the dwelling of "z Epiru młodzi" [the youth from Epirus] (DW III, 225, 226) allows for a more general conclusion concerning narrative perspectives to be drawn.

In the composition of individual "songs," those descriptions occupy an identical, "opening" place. That is important since the reader is immersed in the presented world from the very beginning; as the epic "second person" they participate in a narrative situation which has not been foreshadowed and wants a specific narrator. The dominance of the present tense in the account shifts a constructed statement towards "visualising" storytelling. It's mainly those elements of linguistically shaping the narration that form the basis of the evocative power of the descriptions in *Quidam*.

Extremely important for that function to occur is the presence of characters in the presented plan. *Quidam* has no descriptions which would be detached from events, be they are limited to a single gesture. The descriptions of the three places chosen for the analysis as examples reveal another common feature: each anticipates a visit by a character or accompanies such a visit. In the first case, immediately after the descriptive fragment, Artemidor enters Zofia's house (DW III, 151); the path leading to Magus has just been taken by Artemidor and Zofia, to be followed soon after by Quidam and Barchob (DW III, 169); finally, the description of the frescoes in the Epirote's dwelling (through the open door) precedes an almost simultaneous appearance of two people: the servant cleaning the room and "some" man interrupting her as he brings flowers (DW III, 226). That comparison shows that the occurrence of a visualising description is always motivated by the arrival (or presence) of a specific character who could "see" just like a narrator, if not "describe" with the same measure of talent, what they saw as they neared or entered a given object. That method must be considered a specific variety of *personal narration*.⁵² Consistent use of the perspectives of the presented characters fundamentally determines the visual, "eye-witness" quality with which the ancient world in *Quidam* is painted.

The personal narration is accompanied by other phenomena which complement it. For instance, when new characters are presented, the scope of knowledge

52 It ought to be noted here that the particular "voices" differ only in the scope of knowledge or the point of observation, while there are no significant divergences in the general method of presenting events and judging them.

of the main narrator suddenly narrows. The information provided about the characters comes mainly from their closest circle, further fed with the nutrient of gossip and stereotypical beliefs firmly rooted in the customs of Hadrian's time.⁵³ In the "scene" of the trial of Christians (DW III, 145–150, 154–164), the account is given "amidst" from the crowd, which is also the initial source of information on why, where, and who is going to be tried. Only later comes the "stage" presentation,⁵⁴ in which the main defendant bears witness to the truth through his attitude and words.

Finally, it is worth noting one more issue. The third chapter of the poem presents a group of philosophy lovers who meet at night in Artemidor's house. The narrator states that among the guests there is "Zofija z Knidos" [Zofia of Knidos] (followed by a longer description), and that Jazon the Magus and his disciple

... weszli oba, boczną furtką małą.
 Weszli – ostatni goście spodziewani.
 Perystyl odtąd pustą już przestrzenią – –
 W alabastrowej lampie stojąc bani
 Mdląła – kolumny blado się czerwienią
 Od strony światła, ciemniejąc od drugiej –
 Czasem słów kilka posłyszysz za sienią,
 Czasem leniwy krok sennego sługi.
 Lampa przedzgonnym co tryśnie promieniem,
 To się mozaiki na ziemi poruszają,
 To arabski zatrząsą sklepieniem,
 Jakby gmach – ciałem, ona – była duszą. –
 (DW III, 127, 128)

[... both entered through a small side gate.

They entered – the last expected guests.
 The peristyle is since empty space – –

53 See the thorough characteristics of Jazon, presented in chapter XI, lines 68–108. It includes a set of the Magus's typical behaviours and statements, and further his attitude towards the Emperor, Romans, disciples, Christians. Later the reader learns of the Emperor's attitude towards Jazon, the attitudes of other characters, of Jews, and the entire presentation closes with an extensive comparison with Artemidor.

54 See Franz Stanzel, "Sytuacja narracyjna i epicki czas przeszły," in: *Studia z teorii literatury. Archiwum przekładów "Pamiętnika Literackiego"* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1977), pp. 211–223.

The lamp, standing in an alabaster vase,
 Faded – the columns turn pale red
 From the side of light, darkening from the other –
 Sometimes you'll catch a few words from outside the hall,
 Sometimes the lazy step of a sleepy servant.
 As the lamp bursts out a pre-death flame,
 The mosaics move on the ground,
 Arabesques shake the vault,
 As if the building – [were] the body, and [the lamp] the soul. –]

Here the account ends of the meeting of philosophers; here, the “song” ends. The horizon of expecting the polyphonic dialogues remains empty. In the next fragment, the narrator is interested in the Epirote's return home; then in chapter V, the action moves again to Artemidor's home. There, the philosophical disputes are just about to end, and the guests go to breakfast:

Szli więc do sali, gdy niewolnik zasię,
 Do laurowego wbiegnąwszy ciennika,
 Zdjął lirę Zofii wiszącą na pasie,
 Pargaminowe zwitki spod stolika,
 Pudełko z kości słoniowej z woniami –
 I oddał służbie stojącej za drzwiami.

 Niedługo uczta u Artemidora
 Zwykłymi kończyć się będzie toasty;

(DW III, 132)

[So they walked to the hall when a slave,
 Rushing into the laurel's shade,
 Took Zofia's lyre hanging on a strap,
 Parchment rolls from under the table,
 A box of ivory with perfume,
 And gave to the servants behind the door.

 Soon the feast at Artemidor's
 Shall end with the usual toasts;]

The reader is disappointed again in their expectation of a “wonderful” description of the feast, this time a non-spiritual one. The question arises, why is the “eye-witness” narrative, rich in descriptive elements, interrupted in places which seem so intriguing. The answer to that must be sought in the event structure of the fragments quoted above. In the first case, the point of view remains in the

peristyle. The light from the lamp fades, and the “pusta już przestrzeń” [empty space] is animated by voices from the street (the epic second person) or footsteps of a “senny sługa” [sleepy servant]. In the second example the preparations for the feast end with an apparently unimportant gesture: the slave gives Zofia’s things to her servants “stojący za drzwiami” [standing behind the door]. Then the narration stops. This is a clear signal that the narrative perspective was *that of a servant*. Only that can explain the sudden limitation of the omniscience of the main narrator and the unexpected “cut” in the action when the door is closed “za państwem” [after the gentry].

The servant’s point of view is an important method – in compositional and artistic terms – of shaping narration (particularly in the opening parts of the poem). The use of a “low” perspective allows for direct visual contact with the situations in which the main characters of the “drama” are involved. A range of intimate information basically provided first-hand in such a narrative structure gives significant authentication to the “omniscience” of the narrator since he refers to accounts from within the presented world.

That is not the end of the case, however. In the ending of part VI, Zofia asks her servant about the time again.

Lecz dłoń odpowiedź była obojętną,
A głos już więcej szczery i otwarty,
A sługa cicha bynajmniej natrętną.

Po tym przechodnim dysonansie ona
Stała się trzecią osobą – tą samą,
Którą widziałeś wśród mądrego grona.
Z służbą jej stojąc ukradkiem za bramą.

(DW III, 144)

[But the answer was to her immaterial,
And the voice more sincere and open,
And the silent servant quite a bother.

After that passing dissonance, she
Became the third person – the same
Whom you saw among the wise circle.
Standing secretly with her servants behind the gate.]

This fragment provides a discursively formulated and nearly complete definition of the narrative situation of interest here. The narrator, who often reveals his position to be that of a servant, defines the recipient of the narration situating

them as the same role.⁵⁵ The only component lacking is the “silent protagonist;” but he appears later in the next chapter. If one were to assume that the idea of a new epic, which Norwid planned to title *Ziarnko gorczyczne*⁵⁶ [Mustard Seed], referred to *Quidam*, then the author’s concept of the “silent protagonist” would be supplemented with two elements: a “silent” narrator and a “silent” addressee or recipient of the narration, and the consistency of a thus constructed narrative situation would greatly enhance the ideological message of the work.

Blessed silence...?

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55 The word “sługa” [servant] collocates most often with “cicha” [silent/quiet].

56 See the letter to Maria Trębicka of May 1854. (DW X, 492–501).

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Marek Buś

Norwid's Longing

Abstract: The article presents a critical analysis of “Moja piosnka [III]” [“My song (II)”] by examining the existing interpretative paradigms of the poem. Firstly, the author of the article rejects readings that highlight patriotism, nostalgia, sincerity, directness, religious reverie, and sadness. Secondly, the author enters a dispute with scholars or critics who equate Norwid’s poem with Mickiewicz’s imitation of Goethe in his “Do H*** Wezwanie do Neapolu” [“To H*** Calling to Naples”]. And thirdly, the author does not agree with linking Norwid’s text to Romantic individualism and religious subjectivism, which is manifested, for example, by the obtrusive juxtaposition of “Moja piosnka” with Słowacki’s “Hymn [Smutno mi, Boże!]” [“Hymn (I am sad, God!)”] in literary history. The interpretation aims to highlight the contrast between the two works and the juxtaposition of Norwid’s Christianity and Słowacki’s Romanticism. The former is free from egocentric perspective, internalisation of the world and God, aestheticization, or even theatricalisation of religious experience, which is so characteristic of “Hymn.”

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, poem, patriotism, Romantic tradition, Christian tradition, spiritual experience

Do kraju tego, gdzie kruszynę chleba
Podnoszą z ziemi przez uszanowanie
Dla *darów* Nieba...

Tęskno mi, Panie...

*

Do kraju tego, gdzie winą jest dużą
Popsować gniazdo na gruszy bocianie,
Bo wszystkim służą...

Tęskno mi, Panie...

*

Do kraju tego, gdzie pierwsze ukłony
Są – jak odwieczne Chrystusa wyznanie:
“Bądź pochwalony!”

Tęskno mi, Panie...

*

Tęskno mi jeszcze i do rzeczy innej,
Której już nie wiem, gdzie leży mieszkanie,
Równie niewinnej...

Tęskno mi, Panie...

*

Do bez-tęsknoty i do bez-myślenia,

Do tych, co mają tak za tak – nie za nie –
Bez światło–cienia...

Tęskno mi, Panie...

*

Tęskno mi owdzie, gdzie ktoś o mnie stoi?
I tak być musi, choć się tak nie stanie
Przyjaźni mojej!...

Tęskno mi, Panie...

(PWsz I, 223–224)

[For that land where a crumb of bread
Is raised from the ground out of respect
For the gifts of heaven...
I long, O Lord...

*

For that land where it is a grave sin
To damage a stork's nest in a pear tree,
Because storks serve all...

I long, O Lord...

*

For that land where the first greetings
Are like an eternal profession of faith:
“Praised be Jesus Christ!”

I long, O Lord...

*

I long for yet another thing,
Though I know not where its home lies
Just as innocent...

I long, O Lord...

*

For non-yearning and for non-thinking,
For those who hold yea for yea – nay for nay –
Without light and shade...

I long, O Lord...

*

I long for the place where who cares for me?
And it must be so, though it won't happen
To my friendship!

I long, O Lord!']

1 Translation of “Moja piosnka [II]” [“My song II”] by Michael J. Mikoś, *Polish Romantic Literature. An Anthology* (Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2002), pp. 131–132.

"Truly, these splendid stanzas, in their absolute non-rhetoric, are among the most honest Polish poems. They are an absolute extract ... saturated with all Norwid's pains and stuffy longings."² And another opinion: "a testimony of longing, expressed simply with almost childlike words, but in perfect artistic form is *Moja piosnka*."³

These two opinions contain all the elements that justify the high position of "Moja piosnka [II]" ["My song (II)"] in the awareness of Polish readers. The terms used here condense in themselves (along with Miriam's suggestion of the poet's love for Maria Trębicka hidden in the poem) the basic and still dominant directions of the interpretation of the poem. It displays patriotism, nostalgia, honesty, directness, religious reverie, a tone of hopeless sadness, and bitterness.⁴

Both the critical acclaim of the poem and the outlined course of interpretation seem so obvious that "Moja piosnka" does not appear to require any separate attention.⁵ Many features of the work indicate that its interpretation, as described above, seems obvious. The title itself is already rich in connotations. The word "moja" [my] contains a tone of privacy and intimacy. The word "piosnka" [songlet] is a diminutive form, which essentially excludes the expectation of a poetic or ideological manifesto that the title pronoun might suggest. Further, there is the imposing "communal," folk origin of the word "piosnka" [songlet], which is associated with simplicity, "non-learnedness," innocence, elusiveness, and musicality. This is connected with a romantic ennoblement of these qualities, interpreted as an expression of moral purity and simplicity, combined with unquestionable truthfulness, perfect unity of the singer's heart (or "soul") and his work. "Piosnka" assumes the limitation of semantic perspectives rather than

2 Władysław Folkierski, "Norwidowe inferno amerykańskie," in *Norwid żywy*, ed. Władysław Günther (London: B. Świdorski, 1962), p. 68.

3 Stanisław Baczyński, *Literatura polska Polski porozbiorowej (1795–1865)* (Lwów-Poznań: Wydawnictwo Polskie, 1924), p. 375.

4 Let us quote, for example, some typical descriptions: "The attachment to the homeland is most clearly and directly expressed in 'Moja piosnka,' which consists of six poignant chords of longing" (Manfred Kridl, "O lirykach Norwida," *Droga*, Vol. 11 (1933), p. 1138); "And he was devoured by the longing for Poland" (Władysław Günther, "Tragiczny poeta," in: *Norwid żywy*, p. 17); "a non-disturbed feeling is poured out in simple and hot words" (Stefan Gacki in a review of Zrębowicz's *Wybór poezji* by Norwid, *Prawda*, Vol. 40, 1908).

5 Thus, the work was usually discussed "on the occasion" of other considerations, usually in connection with the needs of school. It is, however, one of Norwid's most frequently reprinted or quoted poems, and undoubtedly one of the most famous Polish poems. "An interpretive attempt" by Marek Buś and Bogusław Gryszykiewicz was published in *Ruch Literacki* (Vol. 2, 1977), some of its theses will be addressed here.

the sphere of emotions, which are often elegiac in nature and limiting one's own ambitions, so clearly formulated in Lenartowicz's "Turnieje" ["Tournaments"]: "If the songlet moves them so much, / That it reaches the core of their soul, / Then it will be enough for me." This is usually a "wistful," "mourning," "sad," "simple," "native," "bitter" songlet, usually "hummed." In all this, it stands in opposition to the romantic song, which is serious, great, hymnic, and inspiring. This opposition is also present in Norwid, especially in his earlier works.⁶

The announcements made in the title appear to be immediately confirmed by the versifying structure of the work which limits the size of the stanza (in relation to the original, the Sapphic stanza) and suspends, through specific syntactic and intonational division, its course in the third verse; thus it delimits a quasi-refrain – features of a stanza that is meant to be sung.

The contexts that the work triggers are probably even more suggestive. First, the literary context – the similarity of the poem to Słowacki's "Hymn (Smutno mi, Boże!)" ["Hymn (I am sad, Lord!)"], is described as very clear and striking. From the beginning, the affinity with the best-known manifestation of "fully romantic lyricism"⁷ drew the reader's attention to "Moja piosnka;" it was an asset, but also... a curse. In this relationship, Norwid's poem, published during Young Poland's "reign" over the author of *Król-Duch* [*The Spirit King*], could only become a "poor relative" of "Hymn." Thus, it was sometimes read as an equally masterful work, a "reference," or even an "inept imitation." However, almost always through Słowacki's poem, it was read through its atmosphere and senses. The natural mechanism of explaining "the less known" through "the more familiar" is fully applicable here: "longing" is "sadness;" A pear tree with a stork's nest is undoubtedly growing "in the Polish fallow field," and the tone

6 This can be seen (in all contextual modifications) in expressions: "łada piosnka" [unconcerned songlet] (PWsz I, 73), "piosenki nieuczzone" [unlearned songlets] (PWsz III, 474), "piosenkę zanuć" [I will hum a songlet] (PWsz I, 13); the opposition "piosenka-pieśń" [songlet-song] is sometimes also addressed directly: "Jam nie śpiewak ludu, którego piosenkę kiedyś kmieć powtórzy ... Pieśń ma tam – ówdzie" [I am not a singer of the people, whose songlet will one day be repeated by a peasant ... My songlet is there – elsewhere] (PWsz I, 312), "Miłość tylko ... a nie ... jaka śpiewka. Pieśń to cała i ogromna" [Love only ... and not ... some song. The song is whole and vast] (PWsz I, 33).

7 See Czesław Zgorzelski, *Liryka w pełni romantyczna: studia i szkice o poezji Słowackiego* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981), p. 167: "The poems by Słowacki from the years 1835–1842 are fully romantic lyrics." Also in that book, see a study on "Hymn (Smutno mi, Boże!)."

and emotional atmosphere of the poem undoubtedly match the atmosphere of "Hymn."

The motifs of country and Polish customs strike another note – the sphere of patriotic references. Also in the stylistic plan, according to Ireneusz Opacki, the formula of "Do kraju tego, gdzie" [For the land where...] is a "certain sign of the poem's belonging" to current poetry which realizes "the convention connected with the 'human' longing for the 'earthly' land."⁸ What draws attention is the religious tone of this patriotism typical of romanticism. Several evangelical references and the nature of the lyrical situation allow Alina Merdas to see a poetic "patriotic prayer," "an expression of longing for a country entrusted to God" in this work. At the same time, it is supposed to be an "oral" prayer, not "myślna" [a thoughtful one] (and thus probably effusive and direct, not meditative and contemplative).⁹

At this point, the interpretation seems to be settled. It is yet another expression of nostalgia, one more manifestation of the "tone of apologia and longing,"¹⁰ and one more articulation of the emigrant's "pains and stifling longings." Especially since Norwid appears to us as an acute example an omni-exile, hence the biography, epistolary documents of the poet's fate and experiences from the American period suggest themselves as an obvious source of motivation for the imagery of "Moja piosnka." Therefore, in the fourth stanza one can see an address to Maria Trębicka; the postulate of sincere truthfulness (yes for yes) can be read as a reference to the poet's former fiancée, Kamila L., largely unknown, while Norwid's repeated complaints that he has been forgotten (e.g. in a letter to A. Jełowicki of 18 May 1854) would motivate the bitterness that can be heard in the statement "gdzie ktoś o mnie stoi" [where who cares for me?].¹¹

As we can see, the sphere of concreteness is very strong in the poem. The interpretation reconstructed here has important textual and extra-textual

8 Ireneusz Opacki, "Jeżeli kiedyś w tej mojej krainie" (interpretation of the poem), in: *Juliusza Słowackiego rym błyskawicowy. Analizy i interpretacje*, ed. Stanisław Makowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1980), pp. 124–126.

9 Alina Merdas, *Łuk przymierza. Biblia w poezji Norwida* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1983), pp. 111, 114.

10 Jacek Trznadel, *Czytanie Norwida. Próby* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1978), p. 192.

11 Such relationships are indicated as possible and probable in an exhaustive, erudite commentary on the poem by Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki, "Dodatek krytyczny" in: C. Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane. Wiersze [Collected Works. Poems]*, Vol. II (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1966), pp. 449–450.

motivations, and, at the same time, due to the emotional dimension of the value plan exposed in it (the love of the homeland imbued with religiousness, the cult of simplicity and sincerity), is characterised by a certain exclusivity. In fact, this collective “we” demands this exclusivity and unambiguity – in defence of Norwid (that he can, after all, be simple and cordial), in defence of the readers’ vision of those stanzas that have become automatised as unique formulas for expressing things emotionally close and difficult to voice states – longings: human love of the homeland and human simplicity, trust, and faithfulness.¹²

*

However, can an interpretation following this direction be regarded as the only appropriate interpretation and, more importantly, capturing the essence of the poem? “Moja piosnka” is unambiguous as a moral gesture in its saturation with the element of light – good, a tone of warmth, love, and crystal simplicity. But this ethical unambiguity does not have to be tantamount to one sense, the “perfect artistic form” does not have to mean structural harmony and accessibility. For Norwid’s “secondary range of content” emerges here; in the reception of the work there have appeared, though rare and occasional, voices suggesting the existence of a second “bottom” of the text, a hidden “inner seed.”¹³

A fundamentally different understanding of the poem was presented by Zdzisław Łapiński, who, upon analysing the last stanzas in the context of Norwid’s poetic attitude, sees its ironic character. Since I need to refer to the researcher’s peculiarly formulated arguments in my interpretation, it is worth quoting them here:

Longing for a lack of longing, meaning: for all painful emotional experiences, and for a state of naïvety and simple-mindedness. And yet this is written by a poet who elsewhere wrote: “*Tam, gdzie ostatnia świeci szubienica, / Tam jest mój środek dziś – tam ma stolica, / Tam jest mój gród*” [Where the last gallows is shining, / There is my centre today – there is my *capital*, / There is my city]. And he also addressed the Village with an open mockery: “*Twoja przeszłość?... – to wczora, / A przyszłość?... Ty nie łamiesz głowę, / Zawsze u ciebie pora: / W-czasów królowo!*” [Your *past*? – it is yesterday, / And the *future*?... You don’t break your head, / You are always in time: / the queen of

12 The first three stanzas have become immensely popular as a handy illustration of the longing for country. Because of this, “Moja piosnka” was probably the most frequently quoted and reprinted poem in various emigration memoirs, writings, and soldiers’ letters during World War Two. In addition, unlike many other stanzas written by Norwid, the fifth stanza became autonomous, playing a bit different role.

13 For example, see Folkierski, “Norwidowe inferno amerykańskie.” Similar suggestions can also be found in earlier statements about the poem.

time-holiday!...] In the light of this context, it becomes clear that this longing expressed in "Moja piosnka" is not a longing for the real country, but for the country of dreams, because only there it is possible to have a legitimate lack of "chiaroscuro." Here on earth – to invoke a similar metaphor – irony is "koniecznym bytu cieniem" [a necessary shadow of existence]. But even in dreams, since they will be aware of themselves, as it is the case in the above work, "Roz-siędą się sny ironiczne" [Ironic dreams will sit down].¹⁴

The reasoning above, firmly rooted in Norwid's poetic world, encourages us to go on a search, to take a closer look at the text of the work.

The construction of the poem exposes the basic sentence: "Do kraju tego ... Tęskno mi Panie" [For that land ... I long, O Lord...], which seemingly constitutes the frame of the stanza reinforced by a threefold repetition. The inner parts of the stanzas are composed of subordinate sentences, characterising the "land." The repetitions are accompanied by variations; the only thing that changes in the first three stanzas are the elements that make up the image – the characteristics of the object of longing, one image – such a conclusion is dictated by the invariability of the repeated elements, also the feeling of closeness, the genetic community of the existing motifs. There is no relation of result between the successive characterisations of the "land." They also do not form a list or sequence; they follow one another as if they exist next to each other. Thus, we can talk about three chords of memories (connected by the plane of reminiscing) and three Polish customs.

At this point, let us recall Opacki's opinion that "Moja piosnka" refers to the trend of poems "very characteristically composed in their style," originating "somewhere from Mickiewicz's imitation of Goethe "Do H*** Wezwanie do Neapolu" ["To H*** Calling to Naples"]." Further, we read:

This was taken up by Gaszyński in a poem entitled *Tęsknota za krajem* [Longing for the Country], which is characteristic of this trend of poetry: "A znasz ty kraj ten, gdzie brzegiem strumieni ... Gdzie zbóż falami ... Gdzie chmiel złociste" This form is soon adopted by Norwid ... It is also adopted by Kraszewski in the poem *Do **** [To ***]: "Znaszli ten kraj, gdzie kwitną ... Gdzie niebo ... Gdzie pola." The formula, supported by almost unchanging, because almost invisible variational, phraseological elements "ten – kraj – gdzie – gdzie," [this – country – where – where] constitutes here an infallible hallmark of this trend in poems about longing, the human longing for the land.¹⁵

As it seems, the issue whether Norwid's poem belongs to this trend is questionable – it adopts the formula, but, at the same time, is a kind of denial of

14 Zdzisław Łapiński, *Norwid* (Kraków: Znak, 1971), pp. 89–90.

15 Opacki, "Jeżeli kiedyś w tej mojej krainie," p. 125.

the essence of this convention. However, significant modifications have already taken place in the formula. In Norwid's poem, it lacks this emphasis on emotional closeness, resulting from the co-textual neighbourhood: "Znasz-li" [do you know], "A znasz ty?" [and you know...?], "mojej krainie" [my land]. The word "gdzie" [where] is not (as in other poems belonging to this trend) another link invoking "sensual" images of the land. The word order is also not without significance. "Ten kraj, gdzie" [This country where...] – the pronoun has an identifying function; here it refers to the excellent knowledge of the land shared with the addressee ("ty" [you]). It does not so much indicate as it emotionally values the "land." Norwid's phrase "Do kraju tego, gdzie" [For that land where...] ¹⁶ does not contain this sense of obviousness; the pronoun appears to refer to something else – the characteristics of the land. It is not an entity similar to the objects of longing in other poems within the nostalgic trend with "hops," "waves of grain," "streams," "sky," "fields," and "lily of the valley springs;" it is woven as if from a different matter. The forms in the present tense do not situate, but rather emphasise the permanence, and unchangeability of phenomena not susceptible in their importance to simple transitoriness. It seems that the spatial location of this "land" is even less defined.

If there are any specific details, they are presented in a very specific form. Undoubtedly, one can consider the actions of carefully lifting "kruszyne chleba" [the breadcrumb] as a specific Polish custom. However, the poem emphasises the motivation: they raise it "przez poszanowanie, / Dla darów nieba" [out of respect, / For the gifts of heaven], not just because their ancestors did so. This refers, not to heaven in the astronomical sense, but to God's heaven. This introduces very old contexts, starting with the biblical gift of manna. The heroine of "Słodycz" [Sweetness], the Roman woman Julia Murcja, sentenced to death by starvation, "gdy chleb jej spuszczone ... Wzniosła oczy... i chwilę była zamyślona... / A potem rzekła: «dzięki...» i chleba kruszyne / Podała myszy" (DW V, 279) [when the bread was lowered to her ... She raised her eyes and for a moment she was thoughtful... / And then she said: 'thank you' and she served the breadcrumb / To the mouse]. The respect of the shepherd from

16 It should be noted that Norwid first wrote consistently "tego kraju" [this country], establishing the final order by writing over the expression in lines 1, 5 and 9 a wavy line and figures: "2" over "tego," and "1" over "kraju" (see the autograph of the letter to M. Trębicka of 21–23 February 1854, Jagiellonian Library, MS 4285, c. 55). Unfortunately, we do not know how this formula looked like in the lost copy sent by poet to J. Łuszczewska. It may be assumed that it was consistent with the version "kraju tego" as recorded in print since 1905.

“Częstochowskie wiersze” [“Poems of Częstochowa”] results from the fact that grain “to Boża spuścizna / I to Bóg nam sprawuje, / Bo on myśli o chlebie / Dla wszystkiego, prócz Siebie” (PWsz I, 145) [is God's legacy / And God gives it to us, / For He thinks of bread / For everything except for Himself]. He acts as “dawca spokojny / Czyni, okrzętne łącząc obyczaje / Do datku swego – i kruszynę chleba / *Tam, tak i wtedy* daje, jako trzeba” (*Quidam*, DW III, 158) [a calm giver / Does, combining thrifty customs / To his gifts – also a breadcrumb / *There, as in the past*, he gives as needed].

Therefore, in Norwid's poetic world, “Coś jest szczególnego / W tym powszednim – chlebie – w rozłamaniu / Złamka ostatniego” [There is something special / In this daily bread – in the division / Of the last portion], because it is also “najświętsza z dotykalnych i niedotykalnych na świecie rzeczy i istot, *kruszyna* obecności Bożej” [the most sacred of touchable and untouchable things and beings in the world, the *crumb* of God's presence] – the Host, the sign of the covenant of heaven and earth. Thus the image of the father who shares bread with “skąpstwem anioła” [angel's stinginess], and hence “trzeba o każdej *kruszyńce* pamiętać, kiedy się rozłamuje chleb–ofiarny!” [every *crumble* must be remembered when the sacrificing bread is being divided!...] (emphasis added – M. B.).¹⁷

Likewise, the essence of the second image is the evocation of such a social atmosphere where “popsowanie” [damaging / destroying] of the common, higher good “winą jest dużą” [is a grave sin]. The nest is “na gruszy” [in a pear tree] (not on the household – maybe it is to emphasise the community: “wszystkim służą” [they serve all]), here it is probably a sign of the safety of the place the stork has chosen, a confirmation of the social harmony of the community distinguished by the presence of the stork family. The fragment of the poem “Człowiek” [“A Human”] (“*Że* cię egipskie przyniosły żurawie – / *Że* Boga jesteś sąsiadem – *człowiekiem*” [That you were brought by Egyptian cranes – / That you are a neighbour of God – *a man*]) is accompanied by a footnote:

Dzieciom w Polsce mówią, iż człowieka na świat przynosi bocian lub żuraw: w czym leży parabola, iż z górnych stron i od wschodu ludzkość bierze początek (PWsz I, 272).

17 See *Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy* [The Noble Lady's Ring], DW VI, 119; “Bransoletka” [Bracelet], DW VII, 85; *Quidam*, DW III, 160; Letter to J. Kuczyńska of 1867, PWsz IX, 282. Cf. the interpretation of the motif of the transformation of grain into the host in: Władysław Stróżewski, “Doskonałe wypełnienie. O ‘Fortepianie Szopena’ Cypriana Norwida,” in: Władysław Stróżewski, *Istnienie i wartość* (Kraków: Znak, 1981), p. 187.

[They tell children in Poland that man is brought into the world by a stork or a crane: which contains a parable that the mankind originates from above and from the east.]

In “Salem” we can read:

Každy już naród stanął na okopie
I kruchym szczudłem podparł się kaleki,
I patrzy sobie na żurawie loty,
Nadziei cichej pełen i tęsknoty...

(DW IV, 182–183)

[Every nation has already stood on a trench,
And supported itself on a cripple’s fragile crutch,
And is looking at the cranes flying,
Full of silent hope and longing...]

In an early allegorical poem “Do wieśniaczki” [“To the Peasant”]:

Bo gdy da Pan Bóg dożyć, bocian zaklekocze,
Wszystko się razem znajdzie, wszystko się odżywi.

(PWsz I, 45)

[For when God let us live, the stork will clatter,
Everything will get together, everything will revive.]

The extracts above from Norwid’s texts indicate a figurative, parabolic interpretation of the crane flight or the presence of storks. The stork does not bring happiness or children, but its presence testifies to the existence of happiness, reassurance, and is a source of hope and comfort.

The third image is also quite general. It is a land where the first words, gestures to another person, *are like* Christ’s confession – a confession of faith as a confession of brotherhood in Christ. It is as an attitude of openness and trust, stemming from the spirit of Christian personalism – this “jak” [like] extends the meaning of the stanza: it can refer to all words of greeting, all gestures towards a neighbour that carry those moral, emotional or religious values associated with the phrase “*Bądź pochwalony!*” [(May the Lord) *Be praised!*]. It is not the “letter” that matters here the most:

... można powiedzieć *panie* i powiedzieć *bracie*, powiedzieć *bracie* i rzec przez to *panie*,
i wszystko w tym ... zależy od tego, jako się powiada albo słyszy

[... one can say *sir* and say *brother*, say *brother* and by it say *sir*, and all this ... depends on how one says it or hears it]

– writes the author of *Białe kwiaty* [*White Flowers*] (DW VII, 69).¹⁸

As we can see upon careful reading, even the first “simple” stanza directs our attention to broader meanings, to the reconstruction of meanings that are different from the ones obtained on the first glance. This does not mean that it excludes specific references – that the gesture of respect for bread, the image of a stork's nest, and the gesture of greeting do not have material, psychological basis in the sphere of memories, in the sphere of social experiences of the lyrical “I,” in Norwid himself; that they have not been noticed, experienced by Polish people. However, in Norwid's case, a crumb of daily bread is also a crumb of God's presence, respected in various communities and epochs; the stork and the stork's nest do not appear because of their picturesqueness; the “Eastern land” of the Caucasus is also characterised by trustworthy hospitality:

Gdzie imię “brata” – “gościa” – lub “przechodnia” –
Oznacza jedną myśl... nie trzy... nie dwie!...¹⁹

(“Pamięci Alberta Szeligi hrabi Potockiego,” PWSz II, 121)

[Where the name “brother” – “guest” – or “passer-by” –
Means one thought... not three... not two!...]

(“In memory of Albert Szeliga Count Potocki”)]

The “customs” presented in “Moja piosnka” do not so much explicitly mention but rather portray a country, it is a country (land) of values, which fall within the sphere of “moralności-zbiorowych-ciał” [morality of collective bodies] rather than individual achievements. It is not *my land*, but *our land*. Through customs, the laws that fund them manifest (bloom with them). “Word” vs. “work” in art, “law” vs. “custom” in life – in “trzeźwym uścisku” [a sober embrace] they motivate and make each other unnecessary: “I jedno znasza drugie, posiłkując wzajem, / Jak *prawo*, gdy przekwitnie ludu *obyczajem*” [And the one abolishes

18 The very phrase “Bądź pochwalony!” [Be praised!] is solemn, “literary;” a similar one can be found in Karpiński's popular but sublime “Pieśń poranna” [“Morning Song”], while in everyday use the wishing form “Niech będzie pochwalony” [May be praised...] dominates.

19 However, according to Norwid, these are extremely rare situations because the nineteenth-century forgets about “górnny” [the upper/from above/high] origin of man, for one has to experience the horror of a sea storm in order to see “w prawdzie nagiej” [in the naked truth] “ludzi, choć tak marnych” [people, though so poor], situations between people that are not tainted by lie (“Pierwszy list, co mnie doszedł z Europy” [“The First Letter I received from Europe”] PWSz I, 218).

the other, making use of the other, / Like the *law* when it shed blooms with *custom* of the people]. Customs incarnate, certify laws, truths.²⁰

The fourth stanza introduces important differentiating elements; the previously regular rhythmic and intonation system is disturbed. “*Tęskno mi*” [I long for] is put in the foreground, the lyrical “I” is unaware of the object of longing and is only felt as “just as innocent.” The expression “*już nie wiem*” [Though I know not] is here a gesture of helplessness, of inability to define this “yet another thing,” of the lyrical subject getting lost in the face of overwhelming longing. It is a moment of apparent hesitation of the collapse of a calm, prayerful tone, followed by the fifth stanza which erupts with an ardent, rushed enumerations, but, at the same time, is as if inhibited by the forcefulness of its statements,²¹ categorical in its extreme postulation. With reference to the “thing” mentioned in this stanza, Norwid says that he does not know where its home lies. Thus, though longing in the initial stanzas, still has some kind of object to correlate, here it is absent. Here we deal with a gradation of a sense of longing: this is both a broader and a different quality of longing. Therefore, it is not possible to treat these stanzas (which are also separate in terms of composition) on the same plane as the previous ones.

The issue of the fifth stanza clearly hinders those interpretations which treat “*Moja piosnka*” as a “sincere,” still serious “confession” of the poet, and thus it is usually overlooked.²² A reference to the commandment of Christ: “Let your words be yes, yes – no, no” (Matt 5: 37), can still, as Jacek Trznadel claims, be regarded as the expression of a “stubborn desire for the ultimate reason;”²³ but, as Łapiński has shown, the appearance of the desire for “*bez-tęsknota*” [longing-lessness] in “*poezja obowiązku*” [the poetry of duty], the desire for “*bez-myślenie*” [thinking-lessness] in “*poeta-myśli*” [the poet of thoughts], as attitudes maintained to the end as “seriousness,” not overcome internally and not even questioned by the very poetic structure of the work, must be striking. Either (reading seriously) these sentences are an expression of unbearable pain,

20 See “*Do Walentego Pomiana Z.*” [“*To Walenty Pomian Z.*”], *PWsz* II, 152; *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On the Freedom of Speech], *DW* III, 262.

21 The spelling of the word “*bez-tęsknoty*” [longing-lessness] etc., the multiplicity of important monosyllabic words (some underlined with a space) – this kind of emphasis imposes a “strong” realisation, almost chanting.

22 Almost all the school “presentations” of the poem that I know of do so. This trend of school reading even leads to the inclusion in textbooks of a truncated version of the text, without the fifth and sixth stanza.

23 Trznadel, *Czytanie Norwida*, p. 333.

a temporary desire to escape from what hurts,²⁴ into the soothing unconscious, or their speaking is already accompanied by the bitter, ironic self-awareness of the lyrical subject.

However, even if we adopt the first position, this resignation from humanity, the illusion that one may not feel it when the awareness that "I am homesick" even where nobody is standing for me and for my longing, that one cannot stop being human and that "tak być musi" [And it must be so] sounds very ironic (and self-ironic).

The fact that man misses, feels, suffers, loves, is an irreducible component of humanity; even his "friendship," every friendly intention and initiative were to remain not taken, not completed and not reciprocated.

It seems that this self-ironic awareness is already being revealed in the fifth stanza. It is doubtful whether the image of those "co mają tak za tak" [who hold yea for yea] is seen by the lyrical subject as existing or achievable in the human world, and not based on projection or idealistic desire. One may even doubt whether Norwid (the author of the poem, and, in a way, the lyrical "I" of the work) would recommend such simple, rigorous sincerity, rigorous in its maximalism, as a realization model and not an ideal world of values. Let us recall the poet's epistolary reflections on the moral ambiguity of all "szczerze mówienie" [sincere speech] that sometimes turns into slander and kills. Also the reflections on the enormous chasm between "natural" simplicity – crudeness, and "artificial," perfect simplicity achieved through spiritual work. Also, the reflection on the fact that by telling "the truth" one can lie on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a "lie" can be told "w natchnieniu / Współ-miłosierdzia" [in the inspiration of con-mercifulness]. (*Quidam*, DW III, 155).²⁵

Finally, let us recall Norwid's opinion, where he also uses the formula that interests us:

24 Norwid writes: "w Ameryce ... w taką popadłem melancholię, która mało mię od obłąkanego odróżniała" (Letter to M. Kleczkowski of 14 July 1854, DW X, 514) [in America ... I have fallen into such melancholy, which has hardly distinguished me from a madman].

25 All of this demonstrates a full appreciation of the importance of specific conditions for valuing truth, lies, honesty, simplicity, and falsehood. What is significant here is the opinion of Roman Zrębowicz (*Wybór poezji* Norwida, Lwów: nakładem B. Połonieckiego, 1908, 1911, p. 248), according to whom, in "Moja piosnka" there is "an allusion addressed to people who recognise the 'formalism of truth,' to those for whom relativism, the closest moment of every truth, is foreign."

... powiedziałem to P. Olaj słowami, na jakie mię stać, to jest tymi, które starożytni zwali *verba-regia* – a Zbawiciel mówi o onych na dnie ostateczne – które to słowa amarantowe są: “*tak, tak; nie, nie*” (List do P. Semenki z sierpnia 1857, DW XI, 178)

[... I said this to P. Olaj in the words that I can afford, that is, using the words that the ancients called *verba-regia* – and the Saviour speaks of those for the final days – which are amarantine words: “yes, yes; no, no” (Letter to P. Semenkenko of August 1857)]

“He speaks of those for the final days” – there, which, even if they come here one day, they are not the result of a miracle, or something angelic, but a point of access to great moral works.

The opinion of Józef Czechowicz, who sees Norwid’s formula as an element of faith in the pre-established order, sounds interesting in this context:

One has to take “yes for yes,” “no for no,” one has to believe in the order of superiority and inferiority of events and matters – this is heaven. Reversing this is tantamount to reaching for the fire of hell.²⁶

In the temporal, existential perspective, the world built by Norwid’s formulas is seen by Andrzej Werner in terms of a myth:

It will also be necessary to pay the high price of the combat culture that is still assigned to us, which must create a myth of a conflict-free world of primary values (“yes for yes, no for no, without a chiaroscuro”) when they are being fought for.²⁷

And returning to “Moja piosnka” – the ironic and paradoxical nature of the lyrical subject’s situation results from the fact that, as a suffering person, he wants to escape; he wants to be soothed but he sees the apparent nature of such a solution. He is fully aware of the duty to think that is related to human fate and the inevitable will to long for something. Stanisław Dąbrowski puts it as follows:

Norwid prayerfully expressed his longing for “bez-myślenie” [thinking-lessness], but considered it as something he irretrievably passed by spiritually, a state of spiritual

26 Józef Czechowicz, “Truchanowski i towarzysze,” *Pion* Vol. 5 (1938); quoted after: Kazimierz Truchanowski, *Zatrute studnie* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1957), p. 496. In order to directly interpret the contents of the fifth stanza, it would therefore have to be assumed that “kraj” [land] refers to Heaven or the future Kingdom of God. For it is only there, as the poet describes it, in the eternal dwelling of man, that longing is fully realised in love, while the effort of thinking ceases to be an elementary human duty, a condition for communication. Similarly, only the Supreme Light is entitled to the attribute of the absence of shadow – this motif persistently returns in Norwid’s correspondence from America.

27 Andrzej Werner, “Milczenie i ‘nowe kino,’” *Dialog*, Vol. 3 (1983), pp. 133–138.

"innocence," "której już nie wiem, gdzie leży mieszkanie" [which I no longer know where its home lies].²⁸

Hence the poetic force of the statement – writes Łapiński – which appears in the last stanza and "tak musi być" [it must be so]. This simple phrase contains a wealth of pictorial and emotional content. His stoicism is the stoicism of full and delusion-free moral awareness.²⁹

Therefore, in the sixth stanza we find a description of an individual experience that "już się znam" [I already know myself] and, at the same time, a general statement about the nature of the world and the situation of man in it. "Piszę w dojrzałości wieku cierpienia" [I write in the maturity of the age of suffering] – as Norwid confides in the Resurrectionists, and this is also his philosophy – not only an intellectually accepted system, but, if we recall the problems addressed in the poem "Syberie" ["The Two Siberias"], the effect of "śmiertelne próby" [fatal trials]. The last "Tęskno mi, Panie" [I long, O Lord!] is also somewhat different; the clear cadence in the third verse makes it (even syntactically) distinct, more independent, and its senses are generalised.

*

"Kraj" [the country/land] and the situation of the subject, as expressed by the intrusive "tęskno mi" [I long], are the key issues in the poem. And thus, the country of dreams and yet somewhat real, for it is not so much woven from dreams (and as fleeting as they are), but rather conceived in a dream, seen as a rough and in its own way unchangeable construction of elementary laws probably close to the evangelical virtues of faith, hope and love. It is not a beautiful fruit of imagination, not only an idealistic memory, a record of "chwila wielka" [a great moment] in the history of this or that nation, but a model, an ideal and a distant hardly achievable goal. It is a reminder of a road – the one that is constantly being lost by humanity and sought after, "choć przed wiekami zrobiona" [although it was built centuries ago].

Such an image of the object of longing clearly contradicts the nostalgic, dark, melancholic understanding of longing. The lyrical subject of "Moja piosnka," the one who says "Tęskno mi, Panie" [I long, O Lord...], is, as it seems, someone fundamentally different from the one complaining "Smutno mi, Boże!" [I am sad, God!].

28 Stanisław Dąbrowski, "Gaston Bachelard o 'obrazie poetyckim,'" *Teksty*, Vol. 1 (1979), pp. 126–142.

29 Łapiński, *Norwid*, p. 90.

In “Hymn,” the very first words introduce overwhelming sadness. The lyrical subject is in the “world” – he is watching the sunset, has a sense of spatial and temporal conditions and observes his own experiences and behaviour; he is complaining that he is lonely, that compared to the splendour of nature he is meaningless, that, even though God “złoci” [gilds] him so much, he only feels bitterness, doubt, sadness. Maybe he is a bit rebellious that it must be so. He is the subject – an artist: sensitive and in the habit of recording impressions, observing himself through his own reactions to the world and to God’s presence in it, but making sure that even sadness is beautiful and beautifully expressed. He is the centre and the measure of the value of everything that surrounds him.

In contrast, we do not know at all who the lyrical “I” of Norwid’s poem is when he speaks or where he is. By escaping from the distressing “here and now,” he exists only through an act of longing; he situates himself only in relation to the object of longing and God. The relationship with the “Lord” does not change – the subject is not delving into this relationship, does not rebel, does not blaspheme, ask or threaten. Instead, he is exploring his own consciousness, the awareness of the object of longing (the whole poem presents consecutive attempts to define it) and the essence of the fact “tęskno mi” [I long, O Lord...]. What does it mean to long for? Must I be homesick? Does the fact that I long have any value? These are the questions posed in the work.

“Smutno mi, Boże!” [I am sad, O God!] – “Tęskno mi, Panie” [I long, O Lord...]. These expressions are so similar and yet so different. Even in the choice of the term for the Supreme Being – it seems that the choice of “Panie” [Lord] was dictated not only by its phonetic qualities (a soft, “singing” ending appearing at the end of every second verse owing to rhyme-based duplication). In a slightly earlier dramatic letter-poem to Trębicka, we can find a poignant passage:

O! Boże... jeden, który JESTEŚ – Boże,
Ja także jestem...
...choć jestem przez Ciebie.

(PWsz I, 219)

[O! God... the one that IS – God,
I also am...
...though I am because of you.]

It is a full, dramatic “wniebo-głos” [voice to heaven]. The tone of address in “Moja piosnka” is different. It is a tone of humility, and, at the same time, calm confidence that one is “Pański Żołnierz” [Lord’s Soldier].

All the more reason to see “ *tęskno mi*” in this poem as something radically different from “ *smutno mi*” in Słowacki's poem. In times of enslavement and exile, longing became a sort of Polish speciality. It is a spectre, something that crushes the chest and wraps souls; it is “ *bezmierna*” [immeasurable], “ *straszna*” [terrible] and “ *żałobna*” [mournful]. It is a state of hopelessness, a state of devastating love without fulfilment. Such an understanding of longing appears also in Norwid's works, especially his early ones.

However, the phrase “ *tęskno mi*” has a different tone in Norwid's text. In part, it only describes a state or an affliction (something that has overwhelmed me, is troubling me) – in fact, it does not denote a state, but an attitude, a desire, a hope, a leaning beyond “ *self*” towards the object of longing. This interpretation is confirmed by the peculiar “ *clarity*” of the poem about longing, its fervour, directing the longing “ *do kraju*” [to the land] and not “ *za*” [for] or “ *po*” [after]; although these forms dominated in that era. “ *Do*” initiates the poem, and, by its insistent repetition, it introduces the sense of activism which is then supported by the active formula “ *tęskno mi [jest] do*” [I am homesick/I long for].

Norwid's “ *perversity*” – his tendency to reevaluate meanings and his desire to discover the hidden or faded (through passive use) meanings of words is well known. Such reevaluation probably takes place in the case of the words “ *tęskno*” [wistful/longing], “ *tęsknić*” [to long]. In Norwid's texts we can find examples of typical nostalgia, a sad and melancholic yearning for the homeland; but, they often appear in very ironic contexts! In *Epimenides*, written shortly after “ *Moja piosnka*,” there appears “ *pisarz narodowy, / Flamand z rodu, tęskniący do dżdżystego nieba, / Do włosów blond, do znanej wódki jałowcowej*” [a national writer, / A native Flemish, longing for rainy skies, / For blonde hair, for the famous juniper vodka...] (DW III, 86). This patriotism is “ *kosmiczny patriotyzm–kapusty–kwaśnej i hajdamackich akcentów*” [cosmic patriotism of sauerkraut and Haydamak elements] of which Norwid so often accused his compatriots, its subtle variation is the wistful “ *liryzm czekania*” [lyricism of waiting], “ *patriotyzm liryczny*” [patriotic lyricism] swung by “ *marzeń litania*” [the litany of dreams]³⁰ (DW IV, 164; DW XI, 161).

30 In one of the letters (DW XII, 324) we find a picture of “ *Melancholii, ale nie tej, którą Albert Dürer silną narysował ręką, jeno Melancholii z fletem w ręku i włosom plugawie nieuczesanym, która ci rzecze (na nutę piosnki Kalinowej lub *Aldony*): / «Gdzież rozwinąć te prace – gdzie? / Skoro my nie mamy piędzi ziemi? » etc.*” [Melancholy, but not the one that Albert Dürer drew with his strong hand, but of Melancholy with a flute in hand and filthily uncombed hair, who says to you (to a tune of Kalina's or

This is not the kind of longing Norwid is after because only in “ogrodowych roślin życie” [the life of garden plants] can nostalgia stand “za pieśń i lirykę” [for song and lyricism] (“Naturalia”); among people, this attitude means being pushed to forms of existence such as Beckett’s “vegetable-men.”

One must know how to long for something – this is a difficult skill that involves having hope and, simultaneously, remaining sober about one’s dreams. In “Niewola” [“Enslavement”] (DW IV, 45), the poet seems to say: you, “co tęsknić nie umiecie” [who do not know how to long] are as crippled, one-sided as those “których tchnienia gonią, / W poza-teraz, w poza-lecie” [whose breathing is chasing them, / into beyond-now, into beyond-years]. Not every pain that results from “za-ojczystość” [for-homelandness] is longing, but “*ta tylko, co aż w psalm się leje*” [only that which pours into a psalm], that “która zwycięża / Siebie samą – i z pociechami graniczy” [which wins / Over itself – and borders on solace], for only such one has Hope (the virtue of hope, not “spodziewanie się” [expectation]), any other “osłupia serce ludzkie” [stupefies the human heart] or pushes it into despair.³¹

Further, longing is a state of leaning towards perfection and divinity, even when we are aware of the “real” limitations of fulfilment: you can sing to Maria – the poet turns to (most probably) Lenartowicz “– Gdy mnie – zaledwo tyle stało rymu, / Bym do Nazaret tęsknił lub do Rzymu, / A zatrzymywał się u boku... *Marty!*” [When I – am left with just as many rhymes, / To long for Nazareth or Rome, / And stop by... *Martha’s side!*]³² (“Na ostatnie cztery wiersze odpowiedź”

Aldona’s songlet): / «Where to develop these works – where? / If we do not have an inch of land? » etc. etc...].

31 See “Fulminant,” DW IV, 195; “Na zgon ś.p. Józefa Z.” [“On the Death of the Late Józef Z.”], PWSz II, 148.

32 Norwid’s interpretation of Krasiński’s attitude, his longing, is very characteristic here: “– I koniec jest: że marność ta, pod dni ostatnie / Zygmunta, gdy rozrywał skrzydłami tę matnię, / Na wół już ulatując; że ta p o w i a t o w o ś ć / W imię kapusty (rzeczy skądinąd wyborniej) / Pozwie go, iż pominął swoją narodowość, / Człeki em? że był zanadto, że minął grunt orny, / Brzozy płaczące, bydła wracające trzody, / A szukał Polski kędyś pomiędzy narody, / Gdzieś – u świętego Piotra grobu, lub w Nowinie / Apokaliptycznej... perły że rzucał ...” (“Do Walentego Pomiana Z.,” PWSz II, 156–157) [– And it is the end: that this futility, towards Zygmunt’s / Last days, when he was tearing apart this predicaments with his wings, / Already half-fighting; that this provincialism / In the name of the cabbage (an otherwise delicious thing) / Will sue him that he has omitted his nationality, / That he was too much of a man? that he passed the arable land, / Crying birches, the returning herds of cattle, / And he was looking for Poland somewhere between nations, / Somewhere at St. Peter’s grave, or in the Message / Of the Apocalypse... he threw pearls.....] (“To Walenty Pomian Z.”).

PWsz II, 185 ["An Answer to the Last Four Poems"]). Such longing is accompanied by purity and selflessness: The Blessed Virgin Mary is "bliska przez czystość, / Wszelkiej tęsknocie ludzkiej" [by her chastity, / Close to all human longing] ("Do Naświętszej panny Marii. Litania" PWsz I, 193 ["To the Blessed Virgin Mary. A Litany"]).

Having mostly the associations of hope and harmony, Norwid's longing sometimes reaches its extreme intensity, embracing almost everything having a paralyzing effect.³³ However, even then, at the moment of the ultimate test, it ends in self-restraint in exiting the state "gdzie łkanie boleści nie ułożonej na modlitwę, i gdzie tylko sam smutek" [where there is sobbing of sorrow not arranged in a prayer and only sadness] ("Monolog" PWsz I, 80 ["Monologue"]), in the control, often difficult and painful, of the fatality of a position.

The poet's correspondence covering the American "inferno" and the following years bring a lot of evidence that he treated his "wysamotnienie" [solitude] as a trial imposed by circumstances and tragic, but one in which he ultimately "skorzystał na nieprzyjacielu" [benefited from his foe], he stood "w swojej mierze" [true to his values].³⁴ The poetic relation in the poem to Lenartowicz (1856) is as follows: "słuchaj... cóż człowieka boli? / Za-ojczyźność? – lecz jeśli użyjeś wszech-woli, / I czasy ... / Bliżej są, odepchnąwszy twoje utęsknienia, / To ty, jak każdy Stoik (że już nie policzę: / Jak Chrześcijanin), w takiej ty właśnie że porze / *Królem jesteś!*" (PWsz I, 241) [listen... what hurts a man? / For-homelandness? – but if you used all-will, / times ... / They are closer, pushing away your longings, / Then you, like any Stoic (I will not enumerate any more: / like a Christian), exactly at such time / *you are King!*...].

"Moja piosnka" is, as it seems, a record of this spiritual process. The spiritual experience of the protagonist of *Quidam*, which was created in those years, seems to be analogous. A young man from Epirus, who "szuka tylko i pragnie dobra i prawdy" [seeks only and desires goodness and the truth], experiences states in which "wejrzenie tęskne miał – i lica / Pełne takiego bezmiaru pogody /

33 In "Vendôme," in a conversation with Caesar, Napoleon draws a picture of the present time: "Więc i od łuku bliżej dziś do łuku, / Aż się wypełnią sny prze-tryumfalne, / I ze wszech-łuków rozpekłego bruku / Podrzuci ręce glob niezamykalne, / Najokropniejszą rozpadłe tęsknotą, / Jako wyrobnik głodny – za robotą" (PWsz I, 111) [Thus, it is closer today from the arch to the arch, / Until the all-triumphant dreams are fulfilled, / And from the all-arches of the cracked cobblestones / The globe will throw up the pleading hands, / Broken by the most horrible longing, / As a worker hungry – for work...].

34 See "Fatum" ["Fate"], PWsz II, 49; "Fraszka [III]" ["Epigram (III)"], PWsz I, 170.

... I ciężar siebie poczuł” (DW III, 238) [he had a longing look – and face / Full of such immense cheerfulness ... and he felt the burden of himself]. We can read:

Błyskami także zórz nieznaney doby
 Widywał czasem kraje wyobraźni:
 Gdzieś ponad groby, czy gdzieś poza groby –
 I czuł pogodę jakoby przyjaźni
 W wiosennych wiatrach nieznanego kraju –
 I rytm, muzykę jakąś – obyczajuj!

(DW III, 229)

[Through flashes of the dawn of an unknown day
 He sometimes saw imagined lands:
 Somewhere above the graves, or somewhere beyond the graves –
 And he felt a seemingly friendly aura
 In the spring winds of an unknown land –
 And a rhythm, a customary music of some kind!]

Quidam is looking for something. The lyrical subject of “Moja piosnka” already *knows* many of the features of this dream land, and thus – if we use Norwid’s self-characterisation from a slightly earlier letter – even though it is a “z-stępowy” [descending] man who “idzie sobie do grobu po pochyłościach życia tego” [goes to his grave on the slopes of this life], “nie wstydzi się stanu tak lichego – owszem, bezczelny jest w tęsknocie” (DW X, 159) [he is not ashamed of being in such a miserable condition – indeed, he is insolent in his longing]. This longing (in addition to all its specific earthly references) also involves “wydzieranie się w błękity” [yelling in the blue], “Boga by oglądać lice” [to see God’s face] (“Niewola” DW IV, 61, [“Enslavement”]; *Promethidion*, DW IV, 111). This universal and religious dimension of Norwid’s longing is shown in the poem “Psalmów-psalm” [“The Psalm of Psalms”], slightly earlier than “Moja piosnka,” where the phrase “Tęskno mi, Panie!” [I long, O Lord!...] appears also in a very special function:

A teraz, bracia, cóż, gdy wiosna pieśni przekwita,
 Czy nad pieśniami pieśń Salomonowa nie wita? –
 Czyż nie omyli znów Ludzkość, gdy z łoża powstanie
 Za Oblubieńcem swym, wołając: “Tęskno mi, Panie!”

(DW IV, 79)

[And now, brothers, well, when the springtime of the song is over,
 Does the Solomon’s song not come before the songs?
 Will it not confuse Mankind again when it rises from its bed?
 To its Bridegroom, calling out: “I long, Lord!”]

Here, "Tęskno mi" refers to the voice of Mankind in the face of the Covenant which has not yet been fulfilled; it is for the Covenant, for Poland, that the poet, after the chaos of the Spring of Nations, is looking for new paths in this somewhat prophetic and messianic poem. Will mankind, like the biblical Bride, worry about "clothes," "fragrances," "ointments," not be late again for the call of Christ the Bridegroom, the call for brotherhood and love – and will continue to run round in circles, yearn, endure humiliation and speak like her: "Powiedzcież Jemu, *żem z miłości Zachorzała*" [Tell Him *that I got Sick from love...*]?³⁵ Here, longing is a disease of unfulfilled love filled with a desire to realise the values announced by the promise of the Covenant. And such longing (similar to the longing in *Psalmy Dawida* [*The Psalms of David*]) is – according to Norwid – inevitable, especially strong in places where there are no oases in the human desert, where it is only a consolation that "jest w niebie step szczęśliwszy" [there is a happier steppe in heaven], where the effort of building a spiritual homeland, a moral effort – allow for nurturing hope. However, longing that is transcendently directed, in its fervent desire of fulfilment, is aimed at action "here and now," at bringing this "przyszłość wieczna" [eternal future] closer through the effort of daily vigilance and shaping the present. Such work by the sweat of one's brow requires this "nie podległej złudzeniom świadomości moralnej" [moral consciousness which is free of illusions], constancy of mind and steady will. The initial "Smutno mi, Boże!" [I am sad, God!] in Słowacki's work is a starting point, a registration of an unrecognised and a not yet realised experience. The closing "Tęskno mi, Panie" [I long, O Lord...] is the result of bitter, but inevitable and ultimately valuable, spiritual experiences of both the subject of the poem and probably of Norwid himself.

Finally, let us return to the very title, which is both very honest and bitterly ironic. It is ironic because (in contrast to the elevated title of Słowacki's poem) it seems to constrain the meaning of the work; there is a considerable distance between the "light" announcement in the title, and the weighty problem addressed in the poem, not at all typical of a songlet. The title is honest because I think Norwid is using the specific meaning of the word "piosnka" [songlet], visible in the expression quoted in dictionaries: "śpiewał ciągle swoją piosnkę" [he kept singing his songlet] (meaning: he stuck to his opinion, he did not change his

35 For an interesting interpretation of the poem, cf. Zofia Trojanowiczowa, *Ostatni spór romantyczny. Cyprian Norwid – Julian Klaczko* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981), pp. 110–111.

mind). We can find a beautiful example of that in the poem “Do Józefa Bohdana Zaleskiego w Rzymie 1847-o” [“To Józef Bohdan Zaleski in Rome 1847”]:

Ej – i z lutnią złoto–runą,
 Złoto–ustą, siedmiostruną,
 Nieba obiec sklepy
 Lżej – niż piosnkę raz zaczęta
 Już we fletnię dąć pękniętą,
 Jak włóczęga ślepy.

(PWSz I, 85)

[Hey, and with a lute of golden fleece,
 Golden lip, seven strings,
 To run around heaven vaults
 It is easier – than to put a songlet once started
 Into the flute that is cracked,
 Like a blind tramp.]

Something very important takes place here; a grey, poor songlet extracted with effort is driving away the one that is spun as if unknowingly “z głębszej krainy” [from a deeper land], “z barankowej wełny” [from lamb’s wool].³⁶ It also replaces the romantic inspired song. There are a few of these songs by Norwid, important to him “*jak żywemu orłu pióro: / Aż z krwią*” [like a feather to the living eagle: / *Along with blood*] (II, 164). As important and as serious as “Mój psalm” [“My Psalm”], so poignant despite its apparent jocularity. The first “Moja piosnka” was created in sunny Italy, but is so sad, dark, and devoid of hope. Even with the help of “rzecz czarnoleska” [the things of Czarnolas], art, the lyrical subject did not manage “wywalczyć się” [to win his way through it]. In the second “Moja piosnka,” written after ten years, the subject is completely *alone*, seemingly a wreck of a man thrown into hell of “bez-serdeczność” [heart-lessness]. Yet, as we have seen and as we feel, this second “Moja piosnka” is so “crystal-like” and – despite a sediment of bitterness – cheerfully victorious. It contains pain, bitterness, but also encouragement, despite the awareness of the tragic entanglements of the human fate. As a twentieth-century thinker would paradoxically say – there is tragic optimism.

36 See a discussion on “*piosnki nieuczone*” [unlearned songlets] in *Promethidion* (DW IV, 104).

Another song, addressed to “z la Manczy szlachcica” [a nobleman from la Mancha], is “Epos-nasza” [“Our Epic”] “kawalerów błędnych” [of mistaken knights], no less “own” than these mentioned above:

Czyli cię kochał i czy prawdę piszę,
Wiedz to ze wspomnień, które tu skreśliłem,
Bom niepiśmienny ja i mało grzészę
Twórczością: piszę – śpiewam – tak jak żyłem...
(PWsz I, 159)³⁷

[Whether I loved you and whether am writing the truth,
Know this from the memories I have written down here,
For I am illiterate and I am not particularly
Creative: I write – I sing – as I have lived...]

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37 The earlier, much shorter version of this paper was published in the collective volume entitled *Cypriana Norwida kształt prawdy i miłości. Analizy i interpretacje*, ed. Stanisław Makowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1986), pp. 43–55. Cf. also an interesting article presenting a different interpretation of the poem analysed here by Zofia Trojanowiczowa, “‘Moje piosnki’ Norwida. Próba nowej lektury,” *Studia Polonistyczne* XI/XII (Poznań, 1983/1984), pp. 91–108.

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Self-Creation in *Promethidion*

Abstract: Norwid intended his poem *Promethidion*, written and published in the middle of the nineteenth century, as a programme piece, a statement of particular significance in the face of the literary transformations, and new artistic tendencies of the time. Yet, the poem failed to fulfil that role. Blamed for being obscure and chaotic, it was rejected by the readers. The article's author considers the causes of such opinions and puts forward the thesis that one of the reasons why the poem was misunderstood was the polyphonic and fluid mode of creation of its subject, which has all the marks of self-creation. The proximity of the subject to the author's self-image in this case does not translate directly into the senses. The multiple perspectives in the poem are connected with the way Norwid styles his "self." The author discerns three types of stylisation: Socratic stylisation, the mask of a gladiator, and the mask of a prophet. Each of the figures: Socrates, the gladiator, and the prophet, is a sign of critical change and in some respect the anticipation of Christianity. The complex literary self-portrait in *Promethidion* is evidence of Norwid's effort to internalize tradition and make it a part of his own spiritual and intellectual biography.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, self-creation, literary self-portrait, stylisation, Socrates, Christian tradition

The wording used in the title needs a comment. Self-creation here is not an evaluative category, opposition to truth and authenticity, but a descriptive category analogous to a self-portrait in a painting. Among Norwid's visual works, nearly twenty self-images of the artist have survived; they include both caricatures and dramatic self-portraits from the last years of his life, where the lines of the drawing fades and blurs to be swallowed by the background. The strife to give an artistic shape to the author's self, so strongly present in Norwid's drawings, is also clear in his poetry, even if hidden more deeply. The subject of Norwid's poems remains in the background of the truth, images and symbols, and wishes not to obscure them. At the same time, it is that self's creation which gives significance to the works' message. That shall be presented here in the example dialogues in *Promethidion*.

If one wished to find such moments in Norwid's life, when the irony of fate, the dissonance of intentions, and expectations versus the course of events occurred particularly distinctly, the artist's first stay in Paris between 1849 and 1852 provides many examples. After journeying across Europe, after the influence of Italian artistic inspirations and a dramatic adventure with politics, the

writer reached maturity and was aware of that. He conveyed the sum of his experiences and beliefs in the poetic treatises and dialogues; he wished to mark in the Polish thought and art his own unique presence, as well as the presence of the young emigration generation. It seemed all the more important as the ideological and artistic proposals of the first generation of romantics were losing their creative power. Literature was seeking something new through mystical experience, escaping into digressiveness or epigonism. A turning point was coming. However, Norwid's works did not become a link in that chain; rather, they were rejected by critics, ridiculed in the private correspondence of Krasiński, Cieszkowski, and Koźmian – to mention only the most eminent of Norwid's opponents – and disregarded by readers.

The same happened with the narrative poem *Promethidion*. In December 1850, right after completing the work, the author thus wrote to Michalina Dziekońska:

Pani –
 Na piśmie i przez ręce Pani oddaję to, co tu załączonym, pani Laurze – przywiązuję do tego *taką wagę*... tłumaczyć się nie zawsze można, dlaczego? – przyszłość nieraz dopiero pokazuje i objaśnia.

[Milady –
 In writing, through your hands, I send what is attached to Ms. Laura – I attach *such weight* to it... you cannot always explain: why? – often only the future shows and explains.]

And further:

Pani Laura – której dana jest cnota grzebania umarłych i balsamowania ciał – cnota Magdaleny – wie, co z tym zrobić – to fortuna Cezara! (DW X, 296)

[Ms. Laura – possessing the virtue of burying the dead and embalming bodies – the virtue of Magdalene – knows what to do with it – tis Caesar's fortune!]

Laura Czosnowska knew what to do; she gave Norwid's manuscript to the Parisian Martinet printing office, and the poem was issued early February 1851. However, the nearest future was not favourable for the work which the author had intended to be a breakthrough. Critical voices proved to be superficial in reading and lacking understanding. The publication of the work coincided with the issue of a column libel ridiculing Norwid's literary style in *Goniec Polski* (1851, No. 48) by Władysław Dienheim-Chotomski. The reactions to the concepts contained in *Promethidion* dialogues were not far in tenor from the said article.

Jan Koźmian wrote in the daily *Czas*: "One would truly need to forget all the works of our poets... to be able to find a fancy in those foggy ideas for a

moment”¹ In a letter to Jan and Stanisław Koźmians, Andrzej Edward Koźmian expressed an even more severe opinion:

... in *Czas* I came across fragments of his *Promethidion* and *Zwolon*. On reading them, I trembled [in concern] for the state of his mind. I feel honestly sorry for him. He used to be a pleasant, witty, good-natured young man in the beginnings of his profession. Once they started to flatter him in Warsaw ... – he was made to believe he was an eagle [i.e. genius], and an eagle he became, but a two-headed, monstrous one. None in the world can create a darker night and confusion.²

Even Józef Bohdan Zaleski, who wished the poet well, reacted with impatience to the thought of spreading the ideas contained in the poem during the London Exhibition:

A letter from Cyprian Norwid, long and nearly mad. Such haughtiness rises in him, he is dreaming of something extraordinary for the London Exhibition: some brilliant brochure, higher than *Imitatione*, and similar sinful nonsense; ... (PWsz VIII, 504)

The same elements recur in all opinions: charges of obscurity, stigmatisation of chaos and, mainly, charges of haughtiness or even madness. The attack is aimed at the author; the poem and the message it contained remain somewhat obscured by that personalised critique. That results from the style of writing about literature at the time, but it may also be related to the area of the obscure phenomena in the work.

Much attention in studies on the poem was given to Norwid’s aesthetic conceptions. Their origins were sought in platonic and neoplatonic sources,³ analogies with the philosophical thought of the nineteenth century were studied; the system of beliefs was reconstructed. Some researchers, like Tadeusz Makowiecki,⁴ sought the key to the poem’s interpretation in compositional analysis. Even the nineteenth-century reviewers who were ill-disposed towards Norwid sometimes noticed an apt thought or an interesting idea lost among the

1 Jan Koźmian (review) “*Promethidion*, *Zwolon*,” *Czas*, No. 191 (1851), p. 1. Quoted after: Norwid. *Z dziejów recepcji twórczości. Wybór tekstów*, edition and introduction by Mieczysław Inglot (Warszawa: PWN, 1983), p. 99.

2 Norwid. *Z dziejów recepcji twórczości*, p. 100.

3 That motif of reflection is developed the fullest in Zofia Szmydtowa’s “Platon w twórczości Norwida,” in: Zofia Szmydtowa, *Poeci i poetyka* (Warszawa: PWN, 1964), pp. 299–303.

4 Tadeusz Makowiecki, “*Promethidion*,” in: Konrad Górski, Irena Sławińska, Tadeusz Makowiecki, *O Norwidzie pięć studiów* (Toruń: Księgarnia Naukowa, 1949), pp. 5–32.

“pretentious,” “foggy” (the range of epithets being quite rich) expressions. Thus, his strife for defining and specifying terms as well as the dominance of thought over other elements of the work’s structure were noticed.

The effort for a clear deduction and clear naming of an object, is accompanied by a flickering subject. The first person, the sender close to the image of the author, splits into various voices, wears different masks, and dons historical costumes disguising symbolic senses.

In the complex introductory section (two introductions, three mottoes, and a dedication to a late friend, Włodzimierz Łubieński) and in the Epilogue, the author’s voice is heard directly. Also, the narrator seems to be close to the author; he is more a witness who discreetly comments a refined conversation than an active participant therein. The role of guides leading towards essential truths was given by Norwid to fictitious figures; in the first dialogue it is Bogumił, in the other, Wiesław. Yet, the autonomy of the characters is limited. They are more the author’s *porte parole* than independent creations. That fact is proven by the imperfection of their literary images (they are rhetors, not protagonists who may initiate action) and the fact that the ideas they express are supplemented and commented on in the author’s footnotes and repeated in the Epilogue. Norwid also repeats them in his letters in early the 1850s, in particular those to Józef Bohdan Zaleski. That gives the characters Bogumił and Wiesław the status of the author’s masks. In the first dialogue, self-creation is further complicated by Bogumił’s rhetorical means which introduces the eternal human who answers questions about the essence of Beauty and Work. The manner in which the character exists and his relation towards the image of the author is a complex issue. At this point, it should only be established that the subject here is polyphonic. The “I” is both the author and the narrator, Bogumił and Wiesław, as well as the descendant of Aeschylus’ Prometheus. That polyphony and fluctuation of various personifications allows for the expansion of argumentation, enhances the power of persuasion, but it could just as well cause accusations of the author’s conceit and him usurping the right to formulate final arguments.

Yet, there is another form of self-creation in *Promethidion* hidden deeper, which was likely intended to enhance the author’s right to define basic values or even present them arbitrarily. That concept is composed of three masks, the three costumes of the subject.⁵

5 The references to Plato’s *Apology of Socrates* and the motif of a prophet-gladiator in relation to *Promethidion* and the poem’s contexts were discussed by Antoni Zaleski

SOCRATIC STYLISATION

The first mask is related to the genological choice. In the prose introduction *Do Czytelnika* [To the Reader], Norwid justifies that choice and emphasises its significance, and in the footnote he even justifies any departures from the Platonic model.

Forma greckiego dialogu zdała mi się być najkorzystniejszą do zaszczeplenia głównych pojęć o *powadze sztuki*, bez czego niepodobna do rozwinięcia dalszego – w prozie historycznej i w prozie technicznej – przystąpić. (DW IV, 97)

[The form of Greek dialogue seemed to me the most beneficial to communicate the main concepts on the *significance of art*, without which it would have been impossible to approach further development – in historical prose – and in technical prose.]

The analogy with Greek dialogue defines the structure of the poem in a vital manner. For example, some similarities with the first part of Plato's *Symposium* can be given. Athens' citizens assembled in Agathon's house, after the delights of the table and a concert from a flutist, take turns in holding speeches in praise of Eros. Due to Socrates, the oratory pastime soon transforms into a serious dispute about love, its relation to Beauty, Goodness, and art. That shift from entertainment and a light tone of casual conversation to a serious search for truth can also be found with Norwid. In a nineteenth-century drawing room, after listening to a piece by Chopin, conversation steers towards art. Subsequent speakers present various concepts. For the first speaker, art is a manner of evoking emotions, since "serce bierze i odmyka" [the heart takes and opens]. Art might be a function of harmony – according to the Count – or imitation of perfect models, in the words of Maurycy. Each of the speakers uncovers only one aspect of a classical or romantic theory, and due to that one-sidedness, none reaches the essence of the problem. Similarly, one-sided assessments of Eros were presented by the participants of the feast in Agathon's house. In both works, there does appear a person who, while not cancelling any of the opinions at first, endeavours to define the concepts. The role is taken by Plato's Socrates in *Symposium*, and by Bogumił in *Promethidion*. Here, Socrates is described as "Plato's" because Plato actually enriches the thought of Socrates with his own views; thus, the Socrates from the dialogues also becomes the voice of his brilliant disciple, who in turn supports his own ideas with the authority of his teacher. Thus, the identity of views of the author and the created sage also connects Norwid's poem with Plato's

[Juliusz W. Gomulicki] in the introduction to the most recent edition of the work: C. Norwid, *Promethidion* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1989), pp. 40–41.

dialogues. In *Symposium*, Socrates does not express all his thoughts directly. To reach not so much the nature of Eros, but rather the truth about love and happiness, he constructs a dialogue within a dialogue. His guide, Diotima, a prophet from Mantinea, leads the philosopher step by step, with the maieutic method towards the nature of what is invisible.

‘Then you see that you also deny the divinity of Love.’

‘What then is Love?’ I asked; ‘Is he mortal?’ ‘No.’ ‘What then?’ ‘As in the former instance, he is neither mortal nor immortal, but in a mean between the two.’ ‘What is he, Diotima?’ ‘He is a great spirit (daimon), and like all spirits he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal.’ ‘And what,’ I said, ‘is his power?’ ‘He interprets,’ she replied, ‘between gods and men, conveying and taking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them, and therefore in him all is bound together, and through him the arts of the prophet and the priest, their sacrifices and mysteries and charms, and all prophecy and incantation, find their way. For God mingles not with man; but through Love all the intercourse and converse of God with man, whether awake or asleep, is carried on [...]’⁶

Diotima has a similar role towards Socrates as the “eternal human” does towards Bogumił. It is not only the structure of dialogue which is similar in the two works. The topic considered also bears surprisingly a lot of similarity. Diotima sees Eros (Love) as an intermediate between the mortal and the divine, the human and the transcendent; with Norwid, that function is taken by art, understood as the embodiment (shape) of Love.

That range of analogies between Socrates and Bogumił makes Norwid’s protagonist undergo a Socratic stylisation. And, if Bogumił is viewed as a variant of the author’s voice, Socrates becomes part of self-creation. The author’s ego, under the cloak of Socrates, evokes the question for the symbolic senses thereof. Their scope is quite rich for the Athenian philosopher who belongs to the favourite heroes of history and appears at various stages of Norwid’s writing (“[Coś ty Atenom zrobił, Sokratesie...]” [What have you done to Athens, Socrates...], lectures *O Juliuszu Słowackim w sześciu publicznych posiedzeniach* [On Juliusz Słowacki. In Six Public Meetings], “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth” [Lord Singelworth’s Secret]). He is a sign of what is most valuable in Greek tradition, the seed for its rebirth in modern times, and at the same time, the anticipation of Christianity.

6 Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Project Gutenberg, 2008), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1600/1600-h/1600-h.htm>.

Była też i Grecja ponad wszystkie nieledwie ludy uposażona, ale ta nie tylko Zbawiciela, ale nawet przezacności Sokratesowej znieść nie mogła i podawczy mu truciznę, aby narodu nie przerósł, poniżyła się sama.

[...]

I tak na przykład prawda ta, iż *Mądrość* nie jest samą tylko *wiedzą*, lecz że ona w *życie* przejść musi i je ogarnąć, jak i ta druga, że dusza jest nieśmiertelną, dawno były znane: pierwsza u wszystkich mędrców, druga u Egipcjan; ale prawdy te nie obowiązywały były tyle, aż dopiero od chwili, gdy w życiu samego Sokratesa kielich jego prawdom tym moc nadał. (*O Juliuszu Słowackim*, PWSz VI, 411, 414)

[Greece was also endowed beyond nearly all peoples, but it was unable to bear not only the Saviour, but even Socrates' worthiness and, in feeding him poison, so he does not rise over the nation, it degraded itself.

[...]

And so, for instance, the truth that *Wisdom* is not merely *knowledge*, but it must also transform into *life* and encompass it, just as the truth that the soul is immortal, were both known for ages: the former with all philosophers, the latter with Egyptians; but those truths were not as binding until the moment when the cup gave those truths power in the life of Socrates himself.]

Closing with such conclusions for this part, the discussion should move to the second mask of the author.

GLADIATOR'S MASK

While the sources of Socratic stylisation are philosophical and literary in nature, the gladiator's mask is primarily inspired by sculptural and architectural motifs, and only secondarily by literary ones. It appears in two mottoes at the very beginning: in the first motto which precedes the entire work, and in the second ("Morituri te salutant, Veritas") which comes before the introduction verse. Thus, it is particularly emphasised. Norwid took the motto for the work from Pliny's work *Historia naturalis*.

Ctesilaüs executed a statue of a man fainting from his wounds, in the expression of which may be seen how little life remains ...

The subordinate part of this sentence was chosen for the motto of the poem with a note that it concerns *The Dying Gladiator*. That sculpture from the Capitoline Museums drew attention and animated the imagination of many Polish travellers visiting Rome, and its interpretations fit the romantic and postromantic reflection

on the sense of history.⁷ Quite commonly it was ignored that researchers claimed the presented figure was not a dying gladiator, but a Gaul dying in the battlefield, and the sculpture was a Roman copy of one of Attalus of Pergamon's "votive offerings" to celebrate his victory over the Galatians. Byron's poetic vision was believed more willingly than the arguments of art historians. The interpretation of the sculpture as a gladiator and a Slav has its origins in Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:

I see before me the Gladiator lie:
 He leans upon his hand—his manly brow
 Consents to death, but conquers agony,
 And his drooped head sinks gradually low—
 And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow
 From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,
 Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now
 The arena swims around him: he is gone,
 Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed the wretch who won.

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He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes
 Were with his heart, and that was far away;
 He recked not of the life he lost nor prize,
 But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,
 THERE were his young barbarians all at play,
 THERE was their Dacian mother—he, their sire,
 Butchered to make a Roman holiday—
 All this rushed with his blood—Shall he expire,
 And unavenged?—Arise! ye Goths, and glut your ire!⁸

The poetic image contains two motifs particularly close to Polish romanticism: the conviction of the moral triumph of the defeated, related to the foretelling of an uprising, and yearning after the unattainable homeland. The ideas corresponded with messianic conceptions, and the symbolic figure of Poland/Greece which would one day defeat Russia/Rome. That is most likely the reason why Teofil Lenartowicz chose the poetic interpretation of the statue as expressed in *Gladiatorzy*, rejecting the scientific one:

Byron was first to recognise a Slav in the statue of *The Dying Gladiator*, the thought followed by Mickiewicz and Zaleski; and so, even though researchers of the ancient,

7 Cf. Waldemar Okoń, "Wizerunek gladiatora w sztuce polskiej XIX wieku," in: Waldemar Okoń, *Alegorie narodowe. Studia z dziejów sztuki polskiej XIX wieku* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1992), pp. 28–45.

8 George Gordon Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

proficient in their research, assure us that the said statue presents one of the ... Gaul, I would prefer to follow the lead of the great poet...⁹

In Mickiewicz's interpretation of the sculpture there appears one more aspect later preserved in the Polish reception of the motif. The Capitoline statue of the dying man became a symbol of "ród słowiański dojrzały już do przyjęcia chrześcijaństwa"¹⁰ [the Slavic people who have matured to accepting Christianity] and heralded the fate of Christian martyrs. All the aspects related to the Polish reading of the motif recur in Polish literature and visual arts until the end of the century. They can be found in the character of Ursus in Sienkiewicz's *Quo vadis*, in the gladiator in Siemiradzki's painting *Pochodnie Nerona* [Nero's Torches], as well as in Weloński's sculptures. In the opinion of Waldemar Okoń, the gladiator became one of the national allegories, an element of the Aesopian language of Polish culture discussing the national theme in captivity.

The question may be asked if the motif introduced in *Promethidion* with the first motto has a similar function. The paraphrased gladiators' greeting, used by Norwid as the other motto, also affects the sense of the first one relating the image of the gladiator with the category of truth. The relation had to be significant since the artist repeated it three times – twice in his letters to Zaleski: in May 1851 he did so in hopeful words. In January 1852, with resignation:

Rzecz w wyrazach swych krótka jest, ale da Przedwieczny, że obróci wszech-sztuką tak, jak już czas, aby *nowa-sztuka* powstawszy obróciła.

Naturalnie – wszystko, co naprzód, to walki pewnej potrzebuje. Wszakże, *morituri te salutant, veritas*. (DW X, 332)

[The matter is short in wording, but may the Eternal One turn omni-art in such a way as is time for *new-art* to turn itself on emerging.

Naturally – all that goes forward needs some fight. However, *morituri te salutant, veritas*.]

Co do publiczności czy społeczeństwa naszego, od tego nic już nie wymagam – opuszczam ludzi na pastwę – nie wesprze nikogo, niczym –

Jak zapotrzebuję takiego kawałka kamienia, jak ten papier, z napisem *morituri te salutant, veritas*, to Ty jeszcze może, lubo *starszy*, położysz może, ...

Gorzki to chleb jest Polskość... (DW X, 372, 373)

9 Teofil Lenartowicz, *Gladiatorowie* (Paris: Libraire-Éditeur Dentu, 1857), quoted after: Okoń, *Alegorie narodowe*, p. 32.

10 Adam Mickiewicz, *Literatura słowiańska*, in: Adam Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, Vol. 11 (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1953), p. 230.

[As to our public or society, I require naught of them: they leave people to their fate – no support provided to anyone –

When I need such a rock like this paper, with the words: *morituri te salutant, veritas*, you might still, even though *older*, put it, ...

Tis a bitter bread, Polishness...]

Those quotes uncover the face of Norwid the wounded gladiator.

The motif of the gladiator returns in *Promethidion* several more times in various contexts. In the foreword of *Do Czytelnika* [To the Reader] it is close to the sentiments from the letters to Zaleski; it is a metaphorical description of the situation of the author who uncovers truth difficult to accept. True wisdom “musi sobie *krzyżem*, to jest bolesnym bojowaniem, drogę pierwiej otwierać, i dlatego czytelnik wiele niemiłych rzeczy tam napotka, których smutno było *dożyć w sobie* – smutniej dowiedzieć się – a jeszcze smutniej wywlekać na *forum* i pasować się z nimi.” (DW IV, 98) [must open its way first with the *cross*, that is a painful struggle, and hence the reader meets many an unpleasant thing there which would have been sad to *experience in oneself* – even sadder to learn – and still sadder to drag out to the [public] *forum* and wrestle with them.]

At the same time, Norwid considers that “dragging out into the public forum” and “wrestling” with the values resulting from the artist’s inner struggle, which are to become the property of national art, are the essence of the artistic calling. Such an approach is connected with objecting to petrified, simplified, or false thoughts and patterns in a culture. Their rejection dooms one to the outer fight marked with many failures, for familiar patterns are easy and ensure the comfort of domestication in culture. Hence, the gladiator also becomes a metaphor of Love (with a capital L) whose expression in Norwid’s view is art.

Bo Miłość strachu nie zna i jest śmiała,
Choć wie, że konać musi, jak konała;
Choć wie, że krzyżów za sobą pociąga
Pułk, jak wiązanych arkad wodociąga,
I że przyplynie krwią do kaskad wiecznych,
Czerwieniejących w otchłaniach słonecznych.

(DW IV, 111)

[For Love knows no fear and is bold,
Though knows it must be dying as it was;
Though knows it pulls a regiment of crosses

With it, like a network of aqueduct arcades,
 And that it flows with blood to eternal cascades,
 Turning red in sun's abyss.]

The “regiment of crosses” compared to “aqueduct arcades” seems to be a clear allusion to the motif of Spartacus and the fate of the defeated gladiators who were participants of the quelled uprising. The image of the revenge of Rome (the revenge of the old social order) was six thousand crosses, on which captives were hung along the Appian road from Rome to Capua. Thus, the motif of the gladiator in *Promethidion* refers the reader to the motif of Spartacus, a recurring topic in Norwid's writings; a discussion of the motif has been undertaken before in detailed analyses.¹¹ Meanwhile, this paper is intended to present just a few points corresponding with the poem. Spartacus, the main protagonist of Norwid's same-named poem *Spartakus* [Spartacus] of 1857, is primarily a sign of opposition against the dead audience petrified in old forms.

Za drugą, trzecią, skonów metą
 Gladiator rękę podniósł swą:
 “To – nie to – krzycząc – *Siła*, nie to,
 To nie to *Mądrość*, co dziś zwą [...]”
 (PWsz I, 285)

[After the second completion of life
 The Gladiator stood with his hand raised
 “This is not – he shouted – this is not *Might*
 This is not *Wisdom* what they call these days”]

The dying man seems to know what *Might*, *Wisdom*, *Love* and *Friendship* truly are; while the audience assembled in the amphitheatre lives only apparently, caught in the spells of “umarłe formuły” [dead formulae].

– Siedliście, głazy, w głazów kole:
 Całe już życie wasze – *śmierć!*
 (PWsz I, 286)

11 The theme of Spartacus in Norwid's work was discussed among others by Zdzisław Łapiński (analysis of the poem *Spartakus* in: *Liryka polska. Interpretacje*, ed. Jan Prokop and Janusz Sławiński, edition 2, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1971) and Zofia Trojanowiczowa (*Ostatni spór romantyczny. Cyprian Norwid – Julian Klaczko*, Warszawa: IBL PAN, 1981).

[– You sat – rocks in a circle of stones:
All that is life for you: *death!*]¹²

The Roman gladiator recurs later in Norwid's prose *Do Spartakusa (o pracy)* [To Spartacus (on Work)] of 1866, associated – just like in the dialogues of *Promethidion* – with the concepts of work, freedom, and art.

Wiadomo jest wszystkim na świecie, że praca odnosi się swoją dzielnością i obfitością do miary wolności: gdzie więcej wolności, tam i pracy więcej, i o ile wolniejszym społeczeństwo, o tyle dzielniejszą jest i praca. ...

Praca jest tak dalece samodzielnością, iż najemnik ulicę brukujący, jeśli tylko tak jak drudzy ręką rusza, a nie wkłada w robotę swego oryginalnego akcentu... to próżniak...
... (PWSz VI, 640, 641)

[It is known to everyone in the world that work refers with its boldness and abundance to the measure of freedom: where there is more freedom, there is also more work, and the freer the society, the bolder the work. ...

Work is so far independence that a hired worker who cobbles a street, if he merely moves his hand like the others, without giving his original accent to the work... a loafer he is... ...]

A harbinger of those later functions of the motif of Spartacus can be found already in *Promethidion*, but that does not exhaust its role. The image of the gladiator in the poem also evokes the space of the Roman Colosseum, one of the holy places of Polish romanticism.

To strach! – – milczycie teraz – strach to wielki:
Ten głos, przez potów, krwi i łez kropelki
Ociekający w sumienia naczynie
Pod narodami, jak w mistyczną skrzynię,
...
Jak w ściek pod męczeństw tu amfiteatrem...
(DW IV, 123)

[Tis fear! – – you are silent now – tis great a fear,
The voice, through drops of sweat, blood and tears
Dripping into the vessel of conscience
Under nations, like into a mystical chest,
...
Like into sewers under the amphitheatre of martyrdom...]

12 Trans. Agata Brajerska-Mazur and her students: "Norwid, 'Spartakus' i Internet," in: *Strona Norwida*, ed. Piotr Chlebowski, Włodzimierz Toruń, Elżbieta Żwirkowska, Edyta Chlebowska (Lublin: TN KUL, 2008), pp. 26–27.

The blood of the gladiators is connected with the blood of Christian martyrs with symbolic coincidence; the cross triumphing over the ruins of the Colosseum explains the sense of the crosses along the Appian road and the fate of the gladiators' presages in the culture of Rome, the martyr road to Christianity. Perhaps a digression may be noteworthy here: the theme of the Roman Colosseum was at the centre of Norwid's visual ideas during his stay in Rome in 1847 and 1848, and that is when the dialogues of *Promethidion* were written. At that time, the artist was working on an oil painting which he termed "wielka wizja nakolizejska" [a great vision over the Colosseum], which provided a symbolic visual interpretation of the martyrdom of the first Christians. In 1850, the illustrations for *Irydion* were created, highly appraised even by Julian Klaczko, who was otherwise little fond of Norwid. What may be striking here is thus the mutual permeation of visual and literary motifs, the pursuit of the sense of similar symbols: gladiator, cross, ruins, etc., in the language of painting and that of literature.

Among the connotations of the gladiator's image indicated thus far, one especially needs further elaboration, as it bears particular significance in the dialogue *Wiesław*. The image of one fighting against the falsehood of the world, which appears in the final part of the second dialogue, refers back to the motto "Morituri te salutant, Veritas" and is the last accent of the gladiator recurring in the work:

Ten – ów – widzicie, mąci – mąci tyle, [ten = fałsz]
 Że gdy do walki wyjdzie z nim gladiator,
 To nieraz bracia, co wątpią o sile,
 Wpierw mu jak Jowisz murem staną *Stator*
 Albo rozszarpią... i uczczą – w mogile!...
 (DW IV, 128)

[It – the one – see it stir – stir up so much [it = falsehood]
 That when a gladiator steps up to fight it,
 Oftentime brothers who doubt the strength,
 First stand all *Stator* to him like Jove,
 Or tear him to pieces... and honour him – in the grave!...]

The image is a prefiguration of every fight against untruth, a symbol of the fate of people rejected by their own community, which is not ready to understand their stand and reacts with hostility. The fate of the gladiator in Norwid's interpretation is creeping strangely close to the fate of a prophet. In *Wiesław*, both motifs start to interweave, forming a vivid counterpoint.

... Owoż widzę ich tam wielu,
 Jako z pospólstwem, z książętą, z kapłany
 Najuporczywiej walczą te łachmany –
 Któż oni? – prawo jakie ich podpira?
To – że dla prawdy każdy z nich umiera
Co dzień, co chwila, co słowo, co groza,
Co oklask... ...

(DW IV, 122)

[... I see many of them there,
 When those rags fight the populace, the princes, the priests
 With the greatest persistence –
 Who are they? – what law is their ground?
The one – that each of them is dying for the truth
Each day, each moment, each word, each dread,
Each bravo... ...]

The quoted fragment refers to prophets, but the motif of dying for the truth, a reference to the motto, and phrases like “co groza” [each dread], “co oklask” [each bravo] link it also to the situation of the gladiator.

The closeness of the two motifs may be surprising. The gladiator and the prophet are two conditions which are diametrically opposed and rooted in different cultures. Besides that, Roman adoption of Christianity meant the end of the institution of games, as they were in obvious opposition to the evangelical perspective on men and their calling. Yet Norwid, who studied the art and customs of the Etruscans, also knew the religious origins of gladiator fights, as they relate to the Etruscan funeral ceremony. Funeral games replaced an older custom of bloody sacrifice of captives at the funeral pile of the deceased – traces of that custom can be found in the *Iliad* and in the *Aeneid*. The religious origin of gladiator fights was indicated by Tertullian as late as 2nd century AD, stressing the fact that after some time, the *munera* (funeral games) lost their connection to the ceremony which gave rise to them to be combined with the celebration of Saturn instead.¹³ Saturnalia were celebrated in December and preceded the Christian celebration of Christmas in Roman culture. Norwid, always sensitive to any symbolic coincidences, remembered that as well in his poetic interpretation of the gladiator.

13 Cf. Michael Grant, *Gladiators* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1968), p. 12.

PROPHET'S MASK

The closeness of the images of the gladiator and the prophet leads to another mask of the author – the prophetic one, particularly important in the dialogue *Wiesław*. Already the comparison of the subtitle of *Wiesław* (“Dialog, w którym jest rzecz o prawdzie, jej promieniach i duchu. JAKO TREŚĆ” [Dialogue which presents the matter of truth, its rays and spirit. AS CONTENT]) with a motto from the Letter to the Corinthians (“For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged”)¹⁴ places prophecy and prophetic stand in the centre of the issues, and also indicates a close, if not entirely clear relation of Truth and prophecy. Prophecy is a “promień prawdy” [ray of truth] or its “duch” [spirit], and perhaps both at the same time. *Wiesław*'s monologue explains the metaphors, introducing the motif of conscience. The speaker considers conscience to be the source of truth in the individual dimension; in the dimension of a community (nation, society) Opinion – “ostatni promień proroctw” [the last ray of prophecies] – is the equivalent of conscience. Such a description of Opinion appears twice and is highlighted graphically, thus considered important – yet not necessarily unambiguous. “Ostatni” [the last] can be understood as one which closes a series of prophecies, but it may also mean a weaker, second-rate ray of truth, which is in effect more difficult in reception. However, if conscience be “najdoskonalsze urzeczywistnienie” [the most perfect embodiment] of truth, then the analogous “Opinion” is its last ray only in the former meaning. The power of Opinion results from the fact that, like conscience, it draws on the voice of God and is a tangible expression thereof. If the transmission of God's message is not clouded with “fałsz świata” [world's falsehood] and occurs in the pure atmosphere of truth, a community may be strong with the power of Opinion alone. That provides a chance and a difficult hope for Poland.

O Polsko! granic twych nie widzę linii,
 Nic nie masz oprócz głosu – tak uboga!
 Istniejesz przecie – tyś córą opinii,
 Tyś głosem, który jest to – co głos Boga.

(DW IV, 126, 127)

[Oh, Poland! the line of your borders I cannot see,
 You have naught except *voice* – how poor is that!
 Yet you exist – you are *opinion's daughter*,
 You are *the voice which is the same – as voice of God.*]

14 1 Cor 14: 31 (New King James Version).

In such context a prophetic attitude is linked to an absolute imperative of seeking the Truth, serving it, and thus listening to the voice of God. Norwid links the attitude with the Old-Testamental model.

... W Izraelu
 Skąd są proroki? – z tym się zapytaniem
 Przechadzam... ..
 ...
 Któż oni? – prawo jakie ich podpira?
To – że dla prawdy każdy z nich umiera
 (DW IV, 122)

[... In Israel
 Whence come the prophets? – with the question
 I wander... ..
 ...
 Who are they? – what law is their ground?
The one – that each of them is dying for the truth]

In Israeli tradition, a prophet was “called” (nabi) in a clearly supernatural manner. They received a gift which allowed to them to act as the voice of God. The gift was both a distinction and a burden. Prophets were, in the words of Tadeusz Żychiewicz, “very strongly linked to their contemporariness, but at the same time all their prophesying inclines towards the future. That circumstance also brought the risk of death. Israel was sure that nothing has changed or can ever change in their relations with Yahweh ... And the prophets, listening to the Voice – they knew – that people, Israel included – broke the Covenant.”¹⁵ They spoke of it without flattering the listeners’ opinions. As a result, they were persecuted, and often killed.

Norwid’s creation of a prophet is also connected with the context of Paul the Apostle. In the 1st Letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle indicates that prophesy is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Yet the gifted one is not determined – you may ask for that grace (“Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy;”)¹⁶ but you may also stifle it. The emphasis is on the postulate of inner formation, related to being open to love and truth. One is not always a prophet; one must work to be one.

15 Tadeusz Żychiewicz, *Prorocy* (Kraków: Znak, 1982), p. 13.

16 1 Cor 14: 1.

The poet's prophetic attitude also has its romantic context. Bogumił's soliloquy is introduced and announced in much the same way as the Small Improvisation in Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve, Part III*:

– Przestańmy! cyt... uciszcie się, moi kochani –
Władysław wołał – wkrótce Bogumił zaśpiewa...
(DW IV, 105)

[– Let's stop! shh... be silent, my dear –
Władysław called – soon Bogumił shall sing...]

In a similar manner, Feliks in *Forefathers' Eve* prepares his cellmates for the song of Konrad, who has particular charisma. A direct allusion to the protagonist of Mickiewicz's work appears also in Bogumił's argumentation:

Pieśń masz – lecz pieśni gdzież rozgałęzianie?
Toż i przywódzca Konrad uwięziony
Mówi-ć, że czuje jej zaokrąglenie,
Że się lubuje wdziękiem onej stróny
I zda się dłońmi tykać już wcielanie...
(DW IV, 112)

[You have a song – yet where is the song's ramification?
The leader Konrad imprisoned, also
Says that he *feels its rounding*,
That he *delights in the grace* thereof
And seems to nearly touch its incarnation with his hands...]

Konrad, a Byronic poet pretending to a prophetic role, has not matured to his calling. In Mickiewicz's drama, Father Piotr shows him the way. Norwid, through Bogumił and Wiesław, designs a different direction to take – not through suffering and heroism, but through work, art, and pursuit of the truth.

It may be asked, to what extent the prophetic attitude is linked to the creation of Wiesław and Norwid's self-creation. In contrast to Bogumił, Wiesław does not ask the "eternal man." He arrives at the essence of the matter, the definition: conscience, opinion, truth without a mediator, listening to an inner revelation and each tremor of opinion. A signal of opinion may even be silence from the audience, embarrassed with a low joke of one of the interlocutors. Wiesław, forming his definitions by referring to concepts defined as sources, might be seen as a vicious circle if not for the fact that it is the circle which becomes the image of the flow of truth in his argumentation. Maybe Wiesław is then a prophet lost in a nineteenth-century drawing room? Konstancy's ironic question ("– Ho! więc

prorokiem jesteś – nie wiedziałem! – / Konstanty wrzaśnie”, DW IV, 123 [(– Ho! So you are a prophet? – I knew not! – / Konstanty yells / ...)] remains unanswered. If the prophet is one who suffers persecution and dies for the truth, traces of such a bloody drama cannot be found in the work. Yet signs of a “white tragedy” may be indicated in the situation of the protagonist of the dialogue, speaking among protests and mocking comments meant to lower the tone of dispute and erase the authority of the truth.

The author’s prophetic stylisation is even more obvious in the Epilogue. “*Nie książek, ale prawd – to mi przewodniczyć zwykło w piśmie*” (DW IV, 140) [*Not books, but truths – that is what leads my pen...*], declares the poet. He knows that the price of such an attitude is rejection from his own people and lack of recognition in his home country. The Biblical context seems to explain Norwid’s biographical situation here and to have a consolatory function. Yet at the same time, the task of the artist-prophet consists of overcoming the state of affairs in which a prophet’s attitude leads to inevitable suffering.

Postęp prawdziwy dąży owszem do tego, aby prorok, to jest sumienny mąż, głos prawdy, uczczony albo raczej zrealizowany był w Ojczyźnie swojej i w domu rodziców swoich. Trzeba bardzo czystego powietrza prawdy, ażeby skutek ten nastąpił – i trzeba urobienia wybornego powściągliwości, aby miejsce dla głoszącego prawdę się znalazło. ... Powietrze prawdy może się do tyła zanieczyścić, iż nic się wznioślejszego nie rozwinie w narodzie aż przez sokratejskie zwycięstwo nad narodem własnym... Takich zwycięstw stopniowe umorzenie, przez wcielanie dobra i rozjaśnianie prawd, przyprzewadzić winno do uniepotrzebienia męczeństw – to jest POSTĘP. (DW IV, 135, 136)

[True progress does indeed strive to make the prophet, that is a man of conscience, the voice of truth, celebrated or otherwise recognised in his Homeland and in the house of his parents. You need very pure air of truth to achieve that effect – and you need excellent formation of restraint to find a place for one who preaches the truth. ... The air of truth can be insofar contaminated that nothing truly sublime develops in a nation, until a Socratic *victory over one’s own nation*... Gradual discontinuation of such victories, by incorporating goodness and clarifying truths, should lead to rendering martyrdom unnecessary – that is PROGRESS.]

Here, the prophetic motif is interwoven with the Socratic one, just like it was earlier interwoven with the motif of the gladiator.

CONCLUSION

What connects the three masks of the author? Each one belongs to a different cultural formation (Israel, Greece, Rome), but then, European culture gained its shape by drawing from all three sources at the same time. That is also the source

of Polish tradition if it is understood as presented in the poem “Moja ojczyzna” [My Country].

The attitudes of Socrates, the prophet, and the gladiator are also connected in Norwid’s interpretation in that each of them was a sign of a crisis and in some aspect anticipated Christianity. Each one complemented but also shattered old forms, and as a result brought suffering and death. Yet such martyrdom had the value of a saving sacrifice. Moreover, each was connected with spiritual titanism, and thus with the Promethean myth.

The combination of those attitudes and the author’s image in the poem makes self-creation and the figure of the eternal human interweave and strive for identity. The question of whether it is the author’s arrogance or a result of his efforts to internalise tradition and make it part of his biography, remains open.

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Kazimierz Cysewski

Greatness and Individuality in *Black Flowers*¹

Abstract: *Czarne kwiaty* [*Black Flowers*] is prose of fact. However, the article does not deal with its biographical connections; instead, it views *Czarne kwiaty* as a work of art in which every element is endowed with an artistic sense. The article deals more specifically with the creation of a character's greatness and individuality, one of the most important points in the poetics and semantics of the whole cycle. The presented analysis reveals that every motif and every single word of *Czarne kwiaty* has a function to perform; in that, it contributes fragments of information from which a full image of the character can be constructed. Because of the nature of the work, our observations have been arranged into four problem categories: 1) the narrator's general diagnoses concerning the artists' personalities, 2) the location of the artists' dwellings as a means of characterisation, 3) the appearance of the dwelling vs. character, 4) the descriptions of the protagonists' appearance and behaviour.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, prose, poetics, prose of fact, semantics

This article discusses one aspect of *Czarne kwiaty* [*Black Flowers*]. It is the result of carefully reading the work in relation to the emerging image of its characters. It aims to discover the "character-forming" sense of the evoked elements of reality and the ways they are communicated. The creation of characters in *Czarne kwiaty*, in its basic framework, is intertwined with the indication of their greatness and individuality. The greatness and uniqueness of the characters is indicated by all the elements of the work. However, this study will try to describe Norwid's efforts in this area, correlated with the ideas that the poet considered particularly valuable (silence, symbolisation, speaking through situational concreta and object-like details, avoidance of schematising perspectives, vagueness in communicating the most subtle content that are subject to experiencing rather than denoting their truth).

Every component of the reality presented in *Czarne kwiaty*, every element of the narrative reference and narrative "technique" of capturing the given fact, constitute the "language" of the work; they are mentioned because they are necessary in the creation of non-obvious and non-translatable meanings. The following questions: "Why do you talk about this when you could talk about many other things that have happened in a real situation?" and "Why do you talk about

1 Fragments of a larger whole.

this using this style and create this perspective?” – determine the methodology of this study. It, thus, offers an interpretation in terms of artistic and semantic purpose, and it aims at overcoming the tendency to explain the work's content primarily in terms of mere fidelity to the facts described.

OVERALL ASSESSMENTS AND DIAGNOSES

The narrator in *Czarne kwiaty* rarely uses the simple technique of directly expressing opinions and generalised descriptions of characters. The information contained there is never given a priori and in a detached manner, but blends harmoniously into the overall picture of the character. This type of narration can be found in the descriptions of Chopin, Słowacki, Mickiewicz and Delaroche. The reminiscence about *Chopin* offers the following characteristics of him:

... piękny był bardzo, tak jak zawsze, w najpowszedniejszego życia poruszeniach mając coś skończonego, coś monumentalnie zarysowanego... coś, co albo arystokracja ateńska za religię sobie uważać mogła była w najpiękniejszej epoce cywilizacji greckiej – albo to, co genialny artysta dramatyczny wygrywa np. na klasycznych tragediach francuskich, które lubo nic są do starożytnego świata przez ich teoretyczną ogładę niepodobne, geniusz wszelako takiej np. Racheli umie je unaturalnić, uprawdopodobnić i rzeczywiście uklasyczyć... Taką to naturalnie apoteotyczną skończoność gestów miał Chopin, jakkolwiek i kiedykolwiek go zastałem... (DW VII, 47).

[he ... looked very beautiful, as always, displaying in the most mundane movements something of perfection, something of a monumental outline... something which either Athenian aristocracy could have adopted as a cult during the most beautiful epoch of Greek civilisation – or that which an artist of dramatic genius portrays, for instance, in classical French tragedies, which because of their theoretical polish, in no way resemble the world of antiquity, but can nevertheless, thanks to the genius of a Rachel, become naturalized, credible and truly classical... Chopin possessed such naturally idealized perfection of gestures, whenever and how ever I saw him...]²

This reflection exposes a special trait of Chopin's behaviour, indicating the composer's unique personality. The basic element of the artist's characteristics lies in the description of his gesture (hence the natural association with theatrical art). The portrayal of Mickiewicz highlights the word; in the case of the pianist – a very sick pianist who can no longer play – it makes sense to emphasise the movement of his hands, because it is from this movement that music flows.

2 Trans. Adam Czerniawski, in: Cyprin Norwid, *Selected Poems* (London: Anvil Press, 2004), p. 52.

Chopin's art, arising from "the most mundane movements" evokes something monumental, aristocratic, absolutely perfect, and capable of serving as a kind of religion of the spirit for aristocrats; its far-reaching and sublime artificiality is so perfect that it becomes quite natural. This description points to the unity of man and his work; it indicates the concept of great art as an expression of the truth and sincerity of the artist, an expression of his totality of being.

In the description of Słowacki, the narrative characterisation concerns two peculiar features of this poet (Słowacki "pejzaże zwłaszcza rysował wcale dobrze" [in particular, drew landscapes fairly well] and used the irony that was "nadobnie-bez-zjadliwą" Dw VII, 50, [comely-un-scathing]), but in the context of the whole, it constitutes a "biały" [white] description of the fate of the great artist. It becomes a diagnosis of the irony of life and a criticism of the present day, finally touching upon a sphere of mysterious and unaware premonitions so important throughout the whole series.

The sad image of the funeral (twice as sad because a great poet died, and at his funeral "żeńskich istot widziałem *dwie*" – Dw VII, 49 [of female creatures, I saw *two*]) was associated by the narrator with the tearing of Słowacki's drawing as well as the irony contained in *Beniowski*. It is an announcement of the future glory of the author of *Kordian*, even though (or perhaps precisely because of that, since this is the irony of life) the reaction to his death seems to reveal the opposite. The tearing of the drawing also seems to be an expression of disrespect for the artist's entire work. However, it is only apparent, because, firstly, it resulted from the desire to give something valuable to a person who had arrived from the country; secondly, it was a deliberate action in the sense that it resulted from a conscious incorporation into the irony of life and from the conviction that, in the future, every "fragment" of the artist's work will be an object of worship – similar to what Słowacki said in *Beniowski*, ironically "foretelling" a "devout" attitude towards the hero, who, being forgotten, left home in misery and never returned to it. Norwid suggests in a "white" manner that in *Beniowski*, Słowacki predicted his own fate. Norwid shows the fate of the poet confirms his work and confirms the accuracy of his diagnoses. The landscape created by Słowacki becomes an image of the poet's entire work, his life, and future meaning.

"Ironia bowiem taka nadobnie-bez-zjadliwa jako ironia Juliusza pośmiertnym naj najmniej wspomnieniom nie zawadza" (DW VII, 50) [For such an overly-un-scathing irony as Juliusz's irony by no means disturbs the posthumous memories] – especially since it is, in fact, a praise for the poet. The similarity of such irony to the words of Philip of Macedon allows us to notice a kind of ambiguity hidden in them, and even "overly-un-scathing irony;" after all, the sun is already rising ("umrzesz, w niewidzialny świat odszedzisz, więc żyć będziesz;

nowe lepsze życie zacznie się również dla twojego dzieła” [you will die, going into the invisible world, so you will live; a new and better life will also begin for your work]). In such a context, calling “*Królu!*” [King!] elevates Słowacki by metaphorically referring to him. For a great artist, death becomes a threshold for a better life.

The reminiscence about Mickiewicz gives a generalized characteristic of the poet, corresponding to the fact that the word was the source of his greatness and strength: “nieboszczyk pan Adam miał to do siebie, iż nie tylko, *co mawiał, ale i jak mawiał*, zatrzymywało się w pamięci” (DW VII, 55) [... it was characteristic of the deceased Mr Adam that not only *what he used to say*, but also *how he used to speak* was kept in memory...]. The narrator justifies his information by the need to explain why Mickiewicz’s...*Adieu!* was engraved in his memory. However, the semantic load of this diagnosis goes beyond this justification and is connected with the entirety of Mickiewicz’s portrayal encapsulated by the micro-novella, as well as points to the sphere of secret feelings and relations between words and events.

The narrator emphasises the poet’s ability to attract to attention and the equivalence of the two aspects of language: “what he used to say” and “how he used to speak.” After all, the values of “what” and “how” are two aspects of valuable art and poetry. Mickiewicz’s words are treated in the work as an expression of a deep and mysterious truth that is difficult to understand in its entirety, which the poet himself is probably not fully aware of.

The construction of the micro-novella contains an “imperative” to look closely at all the poet’s words used in the work; it is not without reason that the very conclusion, as if a summary, contains the characteristics analysed here which highlights what is particularly important. From such a perspective, Mickiewicz’s words are imbued with a multitude of additional meanings. This applies not only to...*Adieu!*, which is particularly put on display in the work, but also in the words about the fear of death and the commentary connected with Norwid’s departure to America. “...*To on tak jakby na Père Lachaise pojechał!*” (DW VII, 52) [...*It is as if he went to Père Lachaise!*] – the metaphor used in relation to Norwid turns into a subtle announcement of the death of Mickiewicz himself.

The relatively frequent narrative assessments and general diagnoses of the greatness and individuality of the character portrayed in the reminiscence about *Delaroche* are of a different nature. They do not take the form of an extensive description, but rather appear several times as a short evaluative phrase. Thus, the narrator calls *Delaroche* “poważny artysta” [a serious artist], “wielki artysta” [a great artist], “na tym już stopniu stojący artysta” [an artist standing already at this level]; he explicitly expresses his appreciation for a specific portrait, excellent

in all respects, and for the uniqueness of the painter's entire art: "jest przecie na świecie artysta" [... there is an artist in the world...], and in his death "ostatni promyczek *Leonarda da Vinci* mrokiem się okrył" DW VII, 56 [... *Leonardo da Vinci's* last ray was covered with darkness...]. In a longer statement, he presents the painter's attitude to "making his works public:"

"Skoro tylko dwa inne obrazki zrobię... pokażę je panu – pokażę je," co zwykł był określać dobitnie, bo nie eksponował publicznie dzieł swoich ani nie każdemu je pokazywał, zwłaszcza od niejakiego czasu... (DW VII, 56)

["As soon as I've made two other pictures... I'll show them to you – I'll show them," which he used to say emphatically, because he did not show his works to the public, nor did he show them to everyone, especially for some time...]

Repeated expressions showing Delaroche's greatness create his image as an unrivalled artist in the contemporary world, an artist rising alone in the heights of art; some statements point directly to this very moment ("ostatni promyczek *Leonarda da Vinci*" [*Leonardo da Vinci's* last ray], "jest przecie na świecie artysta" [there is an artist in the world...]). Emphasising the master's reluctance to show his own paintings is, in fact, a veiled criticism of contemporary artists and the art audience, but it is also another indication of Delaroche's excellence and his awareness of his own individuality; the awareness that outgrows average people who are unable to perceive his works properly.

The creation of the greatness of Delaroche (but also of his imminent death) remains in some mysterious correspondence with the work being watched, in which:

... dawało się więcej *czuć*, niż *widzieć* przez podobną do okna szczelinę, iż człowiek, którego zwano Mistrzem, Rabbim, Mesjaszem, królem i prorokiem, i uzdrawiającym pewnym lekarzem, a który był Chrystus, syn Boga żywego, właśnie że jest wzięty przez strażę i prowadzony od urzędu do urzędu, a może właśnie na Górę Trupich Głów. (DW VII, 55–56)

[... one could *feel* more than *see* through a window-like crack that a man called Master, Rabbi, Messiah, king and prophet, and a certain physician who was a healer, and who was Christ, the son of the living God, already taken by the guards and led from office to office, or perhaps to the Hill of the Skulls].

What could be the other, artistically justified function of this narrative enumeration of Christ's "names," and what could be another, more important function of this highlighted word "*czuć*" [*feel*] if not to prove the Master's greatness and to point to the mystery of art and the artist's very figure as well as the announcement of the completion of his life. The image of Delaroche's figure, in Norwid's view, is an image of the life and death of a man of exceptional greatness, in relation to

whom one must think of the priesthood of art (i.e. art penetrating the mysterious and divine nature of things), for whom the most appropriate interpretative context is religious, royal, and prophetic.

The information provided by the narrator quoted above about the Master's reluctance to show his works not only creates his greatness and loneliness, but, at the same time, symbolically indicates the "invisibility" of what art really says, and in the context of Delaroche's own words which preceded it, becomes a sign of a parable that connects life and art, as well as death and art. Thus, it speaks about the identity of life and work of the great artist. Through his death and resurrection (in a religious and social sense), Delaroche will complete the triptych, the first part of which was seen by the narrator in his studio. At the end, the narrator is wondering "czy dwa inne obrazki zaczęte były przed śmiercią wielkiego artysty, ale nie... może w szkicach" (DW VII, 56) [whether the other two images were started before the death of the great artist, but not... maybe in sketches...]. After all, these sketches are also, in line with the metaphors activated in the work, the outlines of future events; they are mysterious announcements of the accomplished work.

After the death of Delaroche, "ostatni promyczek *Leonarda da Vinci* mrokiem się okrył" [the last *Leonardo da Vinci's* ray was covered with darkness...]. These words of the highest praise for the painter's greatness, as the work suggests – the last great artist of modern times – are deeply rooted in the artistic and semantic concept of the micro-novella. Leonardo da Vinci, a great reformer of modern painting, is a model of greatness and responsibility of an artist. If we take into account the revealing use of chiaroscuro in Leonardo's painting and the particular ability to move through the image of the mysterious nature of life and man, which, from a formal point of view seems to be barely marked (e.g. in portraits), we will be able to discover, not only the legitimacy of recalling the portrait of Thiers and the sense inherent in the general praise of this work, but also the statement that "dawało się więcej czuć, niż widzieć przez podobną do okna szczelinę" [one could *feel* more than *see* through a window-like crack] will acquire new colours and meanings. "The window-like crack" is subject to symbolisation, pointing out, on the one hand, the light that brightens the external order of things, the light through which one can see their hidden nature, and, on the other hand, the reality of another dimension (after all, Delaroche's painting portrays divine reality, although it is embedded in material reality). The great artist shows an interpenetration of these two worlds; a great work of art "balances" on the border between them. Following Delaroche's death, there is no artist "looking" "through a window-like crack;" following Delaroche's death, real light in art disappeared.

THE LOCATION OF THE DWELLING PLACE

A characteristic featured in *Czarne kwiaty* is the seemingly astonishing care for topographical details; it is astonishing because the work does not even mention so many things more important than the topography that concerns the characters described. Instead, it devotes much attention to the descriptions of the location of the characters' dwellings. The location of these dwellings serves primarily to suggest greatness and individuality of the protagonists of *Czarne kwiaty*. At the same time, it is one of many death signs characteristic of the work. The artistry of *Czarne kwiaty* transforms the topography presented in a veristic, report-like manner into a method of creating characters and evoking existential and epistemological meanings.

It is no coincidence that in as many as three recollections (Chopin, Słowacki and Delaroche), Norwid clearly displays this feature of location, which we could describe using the words "w górę idąc" [going upwards] and "z wysokości patrzeć" [looking from above] taken from the work. This is precisely how the protagonists' dwellings were situated. However, we must notice the artistic use of this fact.

This is how the location of *Chopin's dwelling* is described in the work:

... *Fryderyk Chopin* mieszkał przy ulicy Chaillot, co od Pól Elizejskich w górę idąc, w lewym rzędzie domów na pierwszym piętrze, mieszkania ma z oknami na ogrody i Panteonu kupole, i cały Paryż... jedyny punkt, z którego napotyka się widoki *cokolwiek zbliżone* do tych, które w Rzymie napotykaśz. Takie też i Chopin miał mieszkanie z widokiem takim ... (DW VII, 46)

[*Fryderyk Chopin* was living in rue Chaillot which, when you walk up from the Champs Elysées, in the left-hand row of houses, on the first floor, has apartments with windows facing the gardens, the Pantheon cupola, and the whole of Paris... the only point with a collection of views *somewhat approaching* those you find in Rome. And such was the apartment that Chopin had with such a view ...]³

After all, Chopin's apartment could be reached not only from the Champs Elysées. Moreover, the motif of the Champs-Elysées itself (also used in the reminiscence about Słowacki) evokes a great wealth of associations, especially important in the thanatological context, not only with Paris, but also with antiquity. Building the impression of the high location of Chopin's apartment (although it was barely on the first floor) corresponds with showing the extent of the views from the windows, "facing the gardens, the Pantheon cupola, and the whole of

3 Trans. Czerniawski, p. 51.

Paris.” In this expansive view, we can read a subtle sign of Chopin’s perspective on beauty and greatness. Thus, it makes sense to expose the Pantheon (seemingly superfluous and “illogical,” after all, Paris is also the Pantheon) – a building housing tombstones or statues of outstanding people. As a result, Chopin himself “outgrows” the entire surrounding reality.

This topographical description is additionally subject to associative amplification; the memory of Roman views corresponds to the classical perspective of capturing the figures in the further part of the micro-novella. Chopin’s dwelling is the “only point” that brings together such extensive “views,” embracing time and space, beauty and greatness. The location of the dwelling thus becomes one of the “white” signs of Chopin’s greatness.

While in the recollection of Chopin the metaphor associated with the location of the dwelling refers to the cultural space. In the recollection of *Słowacki* the view from the windows, “from above,” exposes nature and cosmos:

Tam na najwyższym piętrze pokoik był, ..., a okna jego dawały na przestrzeń, jaką się z wysokości zawsze widuje, tym jednym tylko upiękzoną, iż czerwone słońca zachody w szyby były lunami swymi. Kilka doniczek z kwiatami na ganku przed oknami tymi stało, a ośmielone przez mieszkańca wróble zlatywały tam i szczebiotały. (DW VII, 47–48)

[There was a room on the top floor ..., and its windows overlooked the space one can always see from a height, embellished only by the fact that the red sunsets were glowing in the windowpanes. Several flowerpots stood on the porch in front of these windows, and the sparrows encouraged by the inhabitant flew down there and twittered.]

The height (“na najwyższym piętrze” [on the top floor]), from which *Słowacki* is looking at the world, allows one to see what “się z wysokości zawsze widuje” [one can always see from a height] but also much more. The description becomes a symbolic image of the artist’s personality and the character of his poetry. Things that are ordinary and modest (flowerpots, twittering sparrows) are associated with a particular kind of “embellishment;” moreover, even if the view “from above” embraces what “one can always see,” it is still the view from above, the view of someone who managed to rise up, so he can see more or differently. The “embellishment” mentioned in the narrative is very significant. The choice of words seems to be taken from the repertoire that is characteristic of *Słowacki*’s poetry, particularly his famous works, evoking an atmosphere full of light, colour and poetic charm, or cosmic, historiosophical or revolutionary horror (sunsets, fiery red, glows). By the way, the sunsets not only “nicely” describe the western location of *Słowacki*’s dwelling place, they are not only an allusion to his poetry, but also a way of construing the approaching end.

The high location of the place where the protagonist is living, is very clearly, probably most distinctly emphasised in the reminiscence about *Delaroche*:

Przy ulicy *Tour des Dames* na wzgórzu jest dom, do którego dopiero wszedłszy, rozkład schodów i fragmenta z gliny polewanej czternastowieczne, florenckie okazują, iż poważnego artysty to mieszkanie... Tam gdy niedawno wszedłem był – a potem na najwyższe piętro do atelier p. Delaroche’a, wielki artysta raczył mi pokazać ostatni obraz swój ... (DW VII, 55).

[At the *Tour des Dames*, on the hill, there is a house which only upon entering, the layout of the stairs and fragments of *fourteenth century*, *Florentine clay*, shows that it is a dwelling of a serious artist... Where I had recently entered – and then to the top floor of Mr Delaroche’s atelier, the great artist let me see his last painting ...]

This short description uses as many as four motifs related to what was previously defined by the phrase “going upwards:” the hill, stairs, ascent, top floor. This “height” is closely associated with the terms directly indicating the greatness of the hero of this reminiscence: “poważny artysta” [a serious artist] and “wielki artysta” [a great artist] (who, in a way, from his high position “raczył mi pokazać ostatni obraz swój” [let me see his last painting]).

The reminiscence about *Mickiewicz* does not introduce a single element related to height in the description of his dwelling’s location. Other devices characterise the poet’s greatness and individuality; other topographical metaphors are also used. Norwid’s diagnosis of the artist’s personality and the need to create an atmosphere of his death were connected with the display in the description of two basic elements (the library and the arsenal), which at the level of metaphorical meanings point to scholarship and fighting. The narrator talks about the Arsenal Library twice. The repetition is not motivated by the need for communicative clarity, after all, the phrase “zaszedłem doń” [I’ve come there] is clearly related to the place already mentioned. Thus, it must have served as building a “military climate,” especially since there was an earlier mention of the Place de la Bastille, although locating the library – in a familiar place – did not require the provision of any more precise details. The additional descriptions of *Mickiewicz*’s activities are also maintained in this military context; after all, the ode “Do Napoleona III” [“To Napoleon III”] was an enthusiastic reaction to the 1854 conquest of the Russian fortress, Bomarsund, by the French and English army, and the Eastern mission was related to the poet’s military plans. Thus, the red sunset in the windows conveys, not only the information about the western location of the poet’s dwelling, not only the “white” announcement of his death, but it is also metaphorically associated with the fiery ravages of war. The idea of fighting in defence of values is indicated by (in fact false) information about the refusal to

take an oath. The location of Mickiewicz's dwelling is modelled after a fortress; after all, it was "gmach ciemny, z korytarzami i kamiennymi wschodami" [a dark building, with corridors and stone rises], which becomes obvious in the context of what has already been mentioned. We can therefore legitimately claim that the stylistic description of the Arsenal Library is aimed at creating a military climate (these are the feelings evoked in the reader). This is not a statement about the real nature of this building, but a strictly literary method of constructing meanings. In such a context, at the level of literary senses, the name of the Arsenal Library itself becomes significant in terms of emotional associations, combining anti-nomic elements (even if in an external reality it had only a conventional function and the building had nothing to do with war).

Mickiewicz is interpreted in the analysed fragment as someone who tries to transpose higher values into the reality of history, politics and war. It is worth noting that out of all Mickiewicz's works, Norwid focused on such a little-known work as the ode "Do Napoleona III." However, what the narrator praises this ode for is even more significant – in his opinion, "nieskończenie z formy przystającą do urzędu i miejsca powierzonego" [its form infinitely fits the office and place entrusted to] Mickiewicz. Thus, the work is written in accordance with the position of the librarian and the place where it was written. This poem is characterised by its erudition (after all, acquired in the library), and its free use of historical, mythological and geographical knowledge. Similarly, the information that Mickiewicz wrote this poem "Horacjusza językiem" [Using Horace's Language] should be treated as an important sign; it is not some poetic signal that it is a Latin poem; it is much more than that. It is an indication of a great knowledge of Latin and an indication of the poetic art of Horace's measure. The poet "z bibliotekarstwa udał się był na Wschód" [went from librarianship to the East]; in service of values, trying to transfer higher values of culture into the reality of politics and war, trying to implement the values led to death. ("*To on tak jakby na Père Lachaise pojechał!*" [... *It was as if he went to Père Lachaise!..*]). In such a context, the then conventionally used term "misja" [mission] takes on an elevating meaning.

The ode to *the Emperor* was written by *the Librarian*. It is not Mickiewicz's role as a poet that the narrator brings out here (which would be more natural in the context of literary creation) but his role as the guardian of tradition and cultural values. The Librarian and the Emperor represent different worlds; an attempt to reconcile them, an attempt to transpose values does not find the right resonance, ends in defeat, leads to death. Earlier, the narrator recalls that Mickiewicz received from Napoleon III "miejsce szczupłe, mało nawet jako fundusz dla rodziny licznej poety przynoszące" [a small place, hardly even constituting a fund

for the large family of the poet]. This contrasts with the elevating assessment of Mickiewicz (whose memory is “święty i wiekopomny” [sacred and eternal]) and clashes with the poet’s Napoleonism. After all, Mickiewicz (for instance, in his lectures at the Collège de France which Norwid attended) was an advocate of the Napoleonic idea, seeing the future of Europe in the return to the spirit of Napoleon and in the liberation of subjugated nations under the aegis of France.

In Norwid’s view, Mickiewicz becomes a symbol of tradition and greatness of culture, which are contrasted with current political and military interests, changeable by nature, without “wielkopomności i świętości” [eternity and sanctity] that are characteristic of culture and Mickiewicz himself.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE DWELLING PLACE

Norwid describes the dwellings of his protagonists – eagerly in connection with the view from the windows – with some general remark or a few, seemingly arbitrary and randomly chosen pieces of equipment, which are nevertheless important in their function as character determinants. It is the relationship between the dwelling place and the character, and between objects and the character that determine the choice and presentation; it is the subjectivity of the narrator that determines the description. The result is an outline of a room where certain fragments are highlighted by means of chiaroscuro. These images of rooms reveal a painter’s eye – one can feel the “interplay” between the light (windows bringing brightness or red, a fireplace, a heater burning up) and the object “taken out” into the light.

In the description of *Chopin’s dwelling*, two elements particularly capture attention: the emphasis on the piano and exquisiteness, which corresponds to the overall interpretation of this character:

... mieszkania główną częścią był salon wielki o dwóch oknach, gdzie nieśmiertelny fortepian jego stał, a fortepian bynajmniej wykwintny – do szafy lub komody podobny, świetnie ozdobiony jak fortepiany modne – ale owszem trójkątny, długi, na nogach trzech, jakiego, ... już mało kto w ozdobnym używa mieszkaniu. (DW VII, 46)

[... main part consisted of a huge drawing-room with two windows, where his immortal piano stood, a piano you wouldn’t describe as exquisite – resembling a wardrobe or a chest of drawers, excellently decorated like fashionable pianos – but rather quite triangular, long, three-legged, which now... is hardly ever found in elegant apartments.]⁴

4 Trans. Czerniawski, p. 51.

It would be superfluous to describe the apartment in more detail. Information about the large living room with two windows is sufficient to indicate the aristocratic character of the artist, his tastes and surroundings; the further part of the micro-novella also points out that there was a deep bed with curtains in the adjoining room, which seems to suggest authentic exquisiteness of Chopin's tastes, not something for show.

In Norwid's description, the living room is dominated by the piano. The specific "non-completeness" of the description of the living room seems to function as an icon of a stage or a concert hall. Brightness and spaciousness (which is emphasised by the information about two windows) "koncentrują się" [are concentrated] in one dark point of the piano. The epithet "nieśmiertelny" [immortal] used in reference to the piano, is a sign of the symbolic nature of this description, which, respecting the concreteness of the description, is an evaluation and a characteristic of the great artist and his art. It must therefore be considered significant that the piano was not fashionable, but rare; its traditionalism is contrasted with pianos used in contemporary "ornamental" apartments; a comparison of "fashionable pianos" to a "wardrobe" or "chest of drawers" indicates that they have primarily decorative functions while Chopin's piano serves music. The description of the piano thus becomes a sign of the artist's music. Also, the information about the three legs and triangular shape of the piano can be read symbolically, especially since the number three seems to be emphasised here; it might be an allusion to Chopin's music, in which the triad and tremolo sound so characteristically that they can be recognised even by unskilled listeners?

Chopin's apartment is contrasted with *Słowacki's dwelling* which is described as very modest: "Tam na najwyższym piętrze pokoik był, ile można najskromniej umeblowany ... Obok drugi maleńki był pokoik – to sypialnia" (DW VII, 47–48) [There was a room on the top floor, furnished as modestly as possible ... Next to it, there was another tiny room – a bedroom]. When we link this to the image of sparrows flying to the host and the characteristic information about "doniczki z kwiatami na ganku przed oknami" (DW VII, 48) [flowerpots on the porch in front of the windows] – we will be able to recognise a portrayal of a country cottage or a poor manor house that was the model for the description of *Słowacki's dwelling* place. This rural connotation corresponds with the picture of the poet, who "stał przy kominie, fajkę na cybuchu długim paląc, jak to używa się w Polsce na wsi" (DW VII, 48) [stood by the chimney, smoking a pipe on a long stem, as it is commonly used in the Polish countryside] – the name *komin* [chimney] is functionally significant here; in another context, in the context of art, the narrator uses the word *kominek* [fireplace].

The space which Słowacki was blended into and which characterises him (the location and appearance of the dwelling) is therefore described by linking the idea of height and poetic breadth of the view with modesty, even plain ordinariness. Słowacki's remark about the room which "zupełnie byłby dla szczęścia człowieka wystarczającym, gdyby nie to, że w jednej stronie jego kąty nie są zupełnie proste, źle będąc skwadratowanym" (DW VII, 48) [would be completely sufficient for human happiness if it were not for the fact that on one side its angles are not completely right, by being wrongly squared], points implicitly to self-fulfilment in a sphere other than material wealth; it suffices if everyday life does not get in the way with its difficulties and is not disturbing. The significance of such a description of the poet's dwelling and his attitude to the material world will become clearer if we realise (as Norwid knew) that it was a choice, not a necessity, that Słowacki as one of the few emigrants, although he had a modest income, did not face constant financial problems.

In the reminiscence about *Mickiewicz*, the individual character of his dwelling place was created through the presentation of the stove and the artwork decorating it.

"Piecyk dobrze zapalony" [The well-lit oven] (PWsz 6, 184) corresponds to the red glow from the window at sunset. In this red "poświata" [glow], i.e. in the aura of twilight and fire (and from the perspective of deep, metaphorical meanings – in the aura of war and imminent death) there appears the figure of Mickiewicz, who "poprawiał nieco węgle kijem" (DW VII, 52) [adjusted the embers a little bit with a stick]. This is not only a sign of the poet's ordinariness and poverty, but also a sign of "burning," i.e. a sign of death; a stick inserted into the source of a fire to "adjust" it will, sooner or later burn, just as getting involved, even with a noble intention, in a war will be the poet's downfall.

The works of art listed in the micro-novella are thematically related to two circles: religious and military. The evocation of the works with religious themes emphasises the religious aspect of the poet's personality and biography, but also extends the interpretative context in terms of time, space and problems. As a result, the figure of Mickiewicz is seen in a reality different from that presented directly. Such a presentation of the concretum, which *expands* time and space, evokes some other reality in order to complete the image of the figure and the issue being raised is often a characteristic feature of the poetics of *Czarne kwiaty*.

"St. Michael the Archangel" knocking down Satan in a fight makes us aware of the problem of the battle between good and evil and the victory of good, victory over pride. The narrative "nie pamiętam" [I do not remember] related to this image extends the interpretive perspective, stretching it between nameless ascetism, humility and generosity of the Capuchins and the magnificence of the

Louvre. In context of the whole cycle, the reference to Michael the Archangel is a sign of care for the dying and death; after all, Słowacki called for “pomocy i opieki św. Michała Archanioła, tuszając, że mu to sił na jakiś czas użyczy” (DW VII, 49) [the help and care of St. Michael the Archangel, hoping it would lend him strength for some time].

The two remaining “images” with religious content also have extensive semantic connotations. “Ostrobramska Matka Najświętsza” [Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn] directs the thoughts towards Lithuania, the poet’s childhood and youth, which is associated with an important motif of his work and the aspect of religiousness. It is a sign of care (which gains particular importance in the context of Mickiewicz’s current situation, his expedition to the East and “w świat niewidzialny” [into the invisible world]). In turn, “Dominikina oryginalny rysunek, komuniję św. Hieronima przedstawiający” (DW VII, 52) [Domenichino’s original drawing depicting the communion of St. Jerome] recalls the figure of a man in the world who converted and became a pious ascetic, a famous author of polemics with heresies, a doctor of the Church, the patron saint of librarians; communion is a symbol of reconciliation and union with God.

Describing Mickiewicz in the context of religious matters is complemented with the context of earthly matters, also evoked by three works of art that have been recognised as significant. As a result, the poet is “zaczepony” [anchored] to two worlds which he tries to connect and reconcile. The first is presented by the narrator as obvious and clear, definitely positive, not requiring any commentary. While the second, represented by the concreta symbolising it, is surrounded by painful associations. The narrator stops at each of the “images,” presenting first the religious circle, then the “earthly” one, as if wanting to indicate that Mickiewicz’s earthly aspirations were embedded or rooted in the highest religious and cultural values.

With regard to the first thematic circle, there is “piękna rycina” [a beautiful print] and “oryginalny rysunek” [an original drawing]. The link with the original is emphasised, the names of the great artists and the context of Rome, the Capuchins, the Louvre are introduced; in the description of the second circle, there is “rycinka mała” [a small print] (although it concerns Napoleon; even Napoleon “shrinks” in the face of religious truths) and “odlew z gipsu” [a plaster cast]. There is also a comparison to the people handicapped from the war and a recollection of the Crimean War in a seemingly astonishing narrative association. Further, there is a sign of death because, how to otherwise treat this daguerreotype of an old man if not to associate it with a photograph, a keepsake of the deceased (the association with death is natural, because it is the daguerreotype of an old man, and also the context of war is related to death). It is not important

whether the character from the daguerreotype was still alive at the time or not; the literary sense of the image is important. It is also irrelevant here that it most probably was a photograph of Towiański that was hanging in Mickiewicz's dwelling. Why did Norwid not inform about it directly? After all, art is not about creating riddles for philologists. Such method of depicting it apparently serves to create literary meanings and interpret Mickiewicz's personality. And similarly, for a literary scholar, it is of secondary importance that the information about a drawing with Napoleon "przed generalstwem jego" [before his becoming a general] is true or not; it is important that Norwid considered it necessary to inform that such a print was hanging and that it was small. It is important what is the interplay of these pieces of information in an artistic context. Valuable art is always a choice, never a register; it is a choice of facts from reality and a choice of the way of communication.

Reading the work from the perspective of an individual, veristic appropriateness may lead to reductionism, making *Czarne kwiaty* a specific journalistic record to be interpreted according to the criteria of truthfulness and falsehood. It is also easy to succumb to the illusion that we are talking about the work when we are only talking about the external reality that the work uses in its own way. Here there is no place to prove that in *Czarne kwiaty*, Norwid often transformed reality because of literary needs (the story of an Irish woman may serve as the most glaring example here).

"Obrazki" [the pictures] which decorate Mickiewicz's dwelling place are themselves of no value; they are cheap reproductions and prints (because what can be expected in the poor poet's dwelling). And it is not important to the novella that they are not authentic works of art, it is not about their "cheapness;" the work makes semantic use of their topicality, treating the connotations connected with what they present as important. However, in the case of "dwu niedźwiedzi pasujących się" [two wrestling bears], should the plaster rubbish not be treated as an interpretive sign? Why does Norwid provide this information? After all, veristic reporting – without adapting any deeper function – is foreign to his art, and certainly does not concern *Czarne kwiaty*. I assume that Norwid would not mention that it was a "plaster cast" if he did not consider it artistically and semantically important.

It makes sense to link this cast to Mickiewicz's Lithuanian sentiments and to the recurring motif of the bear in his work; but, the narrative seems to primarily draw attention to something else. The information about this "plaster cast" appears in the context mentioning the war that had started recently, and the bears are "od czasu niedawnego dopiero widzialne" (DW VII, 52, 55) [*made visible only recently*] on the poet's desk (Norwid used to graphically highlight

important words). Additionally, if we consider the fact that in the ode described above, Russia is called the bear of the North; the symbolism of the cast probably becomes obvious (an allusion to the Crimean War). However, I would like to question the interpretation that the shoddiness of the plaster cast distorts evaluations of the Crimean War, a symbol of the illusive hope that emigration associated with the war.

The information on the appearance of the dwelling place in the reminiscence about *Delaroche* is brief but significant. The narrator draws attention to “rozkład schodów i fragmenta z gliny polewanej czternastowieczne, florenckie” [the layout of the stairs and fragments of the 14th century Florentine clay], which “okazują, iż poważnego artysty to mieszkanie” (DW VII, 55) [show that it is a dwelling place of a serious artist...]. This is certainly an indication of the spatial imagination and high artistic tastes of the owner of the house, but there is a clear and significant amplification of time and space here, introducing the beginnings of modern art into the field of consciousness; it is in this elevating perspective that the figure of the artist should be presented. This amplification suggests to the receiver a vision of the history of art from its rebirth to its contemporary collapse. The Trecento and Florence are the beginnings, the first rays of modern European painting, which reached perfection during the Cinquecento period in the work of Leonardo da Vinci; the Florentine school initiates the tradition of great artists and great art, whose “ostatni promyczek” [last ray] “mrokiem się okrył” (DW VII, 56) [was covered with darkness] after the death of Delaroche.

THE APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOUR OF CHARACTERS

The appearance of the protagonists of the reminiscences (face, clothing, and figure), the way they move, and their behaviour in simple life activities are described in the work with sensitivity to detail and nuance due to their significant uniqueness. Here, too, even the smallest detail is a functional particle in the artistic and semantic concept of the whole and is never based only on the idea of simple description with no additional function.

The reminiscence about *Witwicki* has an introductory function in the concept of the cycle; it focuses primarily on the problem of death, and less on the issue of the multi-faceted presentation of the character; therefore, there are no narrative generalisations that are important for capturing the greatness of the protagonist and no descriptions of the interior place of dwelling and its location. In contrast, the descriptions of the poet's appearance, behaviour, movements, and words are extensive. The presentation of Stefan Witwicki's character is characterised by the following features:

- the cadence of the images; this falling “intonation” – the icon of approaching death – is already indicated in the first sentence, the narrator “spotkał był [poetę] *zstępującego ze Schodów Hiszpańskich, pochylonego* jako starca i kijem pomagającego chodowi swemu” (DW VII, 44; emphasis – K. C.) [had met (the poet) *descending* from the Spanish Steps, *leaning down* as an old man, helping his own gait with a stick]. The next image shows Witwicki lying down, who only “podnosił się niekiedy, podając rękę komu, aby go przeprowadził po pokoju” [sometimes raised himself, giving his hand to someone to take him around the room], and he did not give the guest the orange lying by the couch, but pushed it on the ground; after all the poet “leżał zdefigurowany panującą podówczas ospą i już nic nie mógł mówić” (DW VII, 45) [was laying down disfigured by the smallpox that was common at that time and could not speak anymore];
- the contrasts (between the beauty and youthfulness of the face and the helplessness of the body; between modesty, almost loneliness of the poet’s death and the widely registered departure of the general; between “wzrok jasny” [clear sight] and “widzialny obłąd” [visible madness]; between what is visible to the eye and what is seen through the eyes of the soul);
- the use of sculptural and monumental patterns in the description, noticeable even in the choice of vocabulary (“włosy, jak z hebanu mistrzowsko wyrzeżane ornamentacje w grubych partiach na ramiona spływające” DW VII, 44 [hair, like ornaments masterfully carved from ebony, flowing onto shoulders in thick segments]).

In an attempt to further explain the functionality of these features of the poetics, it is worth pointing out the deeper sense of what seems to be just senile madness from the outside (after all, Witwicki had a clear sight and “młodości jakiejś wiecznej pełna twarz” DW VII, 44 [a face full of some eternal youth]). One should not only notice the elevation of the character in the sculptural and monumental description, but also the correspondence with the invisible speaking of art. Witwicki reveals what is not visible, art says what is not contained in the direct representation; what is “visible” in art may seem to be the “madness” of the artist. It is worthwhile reading the characteristics of the work of the protagonist presented in the description, as the presentation of his figure – in accordance with Norwid’s belief in the unity of the authentic artist and his work – is maintained in the climate of Witwicki’s poetry (which “kropkę łzy mającym w sobie” DW VII, 45 [has a drop of tear in itself], but also clarity, unpretentiousness, simplicity and ordinariness; longing for the homeland and reflection on the soil from which he picked flowers in his poems; a concrete thing which

flourishes in the invisible world, but which requires the recipient's tender attention and cooperation to "erect" it). Finally, one can see an allusion to patriotic but plain "antycudzoziemskość" [anti-foreignness] of Witwicki, who walked down the Spanish Steps leaning on an ordinary stick.

The beauty of the artist's physical form is emphasised by Norwid not only for Witwicki. *Chopin* is also beautiful; however, his beauty is shown more in the context of theatrical than sculptural art (although there are some aspects of sculptural *monumentality* in the description); his aristocratic artificiality is so perfect that it is natural. Even the sick Chopin did not walk down the stairs, but "zstępował" [descended] (an icon of dignified dying); even the sick Chopin "w salonie jadał" [would eat in the living room] at five o'clock and "do Bulońskiego Lasku jeździł" (DW VII, 46) [go to the Bois de Boulogne], although it was necessary to bring him up later; even the very sick Chopin, "w cieniu głębokiego łóżka z firankami, na poduszkach oparty i okryty szalem, piękny był bardzo" (DW VII, 47) [in the shadow of a deep bed with curtains, leaning on cushions and wrapped in a scarf, was very beautiful]. Until the very end, even "zstępując" [descending] to death, Chopin remained a man "z klasą" "with class." Chopin participates with dignity in this "chyleniu się" [leaning down] towards death; "leaning down" towards death is the only thing a dying artist can do on his own, everything else requires help (it is not without artistic legitimacy that the narrator emphasises twice that Chopin "w górę sam iść nie mógł" (DW VII, 46) [could not go up on his own]); going down and up is an interesting symbol of death in this micro-novella. The naturalness of perfect artificiality is, in Norwid's view, the essence of Chopin's personality and work; the greatness of his music is equivalent to the impressive perfection of the "forms" in which he functioned, or rather, to the impressive art of his behaviour, discernible even in the process of dying.

The motif of the physical beauty of the character also appears in the reminiscence about *Słowacki*. Although here it relates to the face of the deceased, it also serves to elevate and deepen his character: "Mało piękniejszych twarzy umarłego widzi się, jako była twarz Słowackiego, rysująca się białym swym profilem na spłowiałym dywanie ciemnym, coś z historii polskiej przedstawiającym, który łoże od ściany dzielił" (DW VII, 49) [One can only see few more beautiful faces of the deceased than that of Słowacki, with its white profile outlined against a faded dark carpet, which depicted something from Polish history and which separated the bed from the wall].

This image models Słowacki's presentation of national heroes who died on the field of honour. The "white profile" contrasts with the "faded dark carpet depicting something from Polish history." This concreteness of the representation, which corresponds to the image of Słowacki as a man who is not

interested in the exquisiteness of the things that surround him, acquires additional symbolic meanings related to the ideological aspirations of the poet's work. Słowacki's poetry, imbued with love for Poland, is actually characterised by criticism of various elements of the past and the present. In light of the high ideal, underpinned by his genestic philosophy, reality presented itself as faded and with dark colours. Thus, Słowacki's work is a struggle for the greatness of the national spirit; Słowacki was worn out by life and "spalił się" [burnt out] (an allusion to the "pipe" motif present in the micro-novella) as a result of this struggle. The "white profile" is not only a sign of death (the lack of life colours), but also an expression of sublimation, which in Słowacki's words could be called "przeanielenie" [overridealisation].

The still living Słowacki is presented through the prism poetic contradictions, indicating the diversity of his personality. In the micro-novella, the narrator "captures" those elements in the appearance and behaviour of Słowacki which seem not to fit together, but when together form a coherent and completely accepted image of the poet; the narrator "juxtaposes" antinomic facts to offer a multifaceted view so it is possible to capture the extraordinariness of the character.

The recollection of what the poet said, how he spoke, and what he looked like, "clashes" of lyricism with bravery of spirit and pre-mortem melancholy with an interest for social and revolutionary issues; this was coupled with, it would seem, a marginal (but in fact typical of Słowacki's poetic language) registration of the "antinomy" of the way of speaking, combining naturalness with artificiality, with "kolorowane słowo" [coloured word]. The narrative association of the climate of the poet's words with *Maria* – given the nature of this work about death entangled in metaphysics, history, and human passions – becomes a sign of death in *Czarne kwiaty*, simultaneously serving to expand the space and setting a perspective on Słowacki's literary origins. Other fragments of Słowacki's presentation combine "rusticity" with high art (e.g. a long-stem pipe – "brązowy medal Juliusza przedstawiający, który jest jedną z najpiękniejszych w tym rodzaju robót Oleszczyńskiego" (DW VII, 48) [depicting Juliusz's bronze medal, which is one of the most beautiful works of this kind by Oleszczyński]; of course, both the pipe, moved in pendular swings, and the medal are the signs of death).

Mickiewicz is presented in *Czarne kwiaty* as a figure who came from Polish nobility and was simultaneously emotionally connected with the lower nobility of the distant provinces (let us note the significant link between the poet's clothes and the so-called hide/petty nobility). In Słowacki's portrait, "rural" references serve to indicate the poet's democratism (while in Mickiewicz's case, it rather refers to traditionalism), corresponding to dramatic revolutionism; it is not

without reason that the narrator mentions that Słowacki highly valued *Nie-Boska komedia* [*The Un-Divine Comedy*], and *Przedświt* [*Before Dawn*] “miał za piękne dzieciństwo” (DW VII, 48) [viewed as a beautiful childhood].

CONCLUSIONS AND GENERALISATIONS

These are the basic *features of the poetics* aimed at the creation of greatness and individuality of the characters in *Czarne kwiaty*:

- 1) The use of symbolic language, on the basis of which all the elements of the work participate in artistic creation (capturing the “character-forming” sense of a given fragment is possible only by taking into account the context of the whole; relying on the literal meaning of descriptions and diagnoses must lead to interpretive simplifications, reductionism and false conclusions);
- 2) The huge role of the dialogical word (the term used here in Bakhtin’s sense), thus the image of the character is a result of *what* has been said about them, but also, and even more, *how it* has been said (this also applies to fragments that do not literally inform about the greatness and individuality of the character of the recollection);
- 3) The use of the principle of the unity of man and his work – in accordance with the conviction that great art is an expression of truth and sincerity of the artist, that there is a correlation between the artist’s personality and life and the character and value of his work (in *Czarne kwiaty* art is also described through the description of a man);
- 4) The tendency to identify art with life, both in the interpretive sense and in the way artists are described (see also the previous point); this is related to Norwid’s theory of art, expressed, for example, in *Promethidion*; in *Black Flowers* it manifests itself in the implementation of the principle that art is a result of the artist’s personality and life, and, at the same time, it finds its completion in the life and death of that artist; the life and death of artists interpret their work, adding their subsequent chapters (this is shown in all reminiscences, especially those about Słowacki and Delaroche);
- 5) Emphasising the religious factor in the lives of the described artists, which is also an expression of particular sensitivity and reliability of the commentator, or remaining in a climate of death and final matters; we must see in this, an element of a “language” through which a great artist and great art are described and the greatness of art is justified; after all, beauty is a form of love, it comes from God and is connected with the pursuit of God, and if a person keeps in his conscience a shadow of God’s beauty, they can create

great works (see *Promethidion. Bogumił*, ll. 115–136); a similar function is performed by accentuating modesty and ordinariness of artists, the lack of pride – after all, “pycha, co złoci się słońcem / Dufając, że jej słońce nie przenika; / Ta – kontemplacji i wzroku jej końcem, / Ta – zatrzymaniem Boskiego promyka” (*Wita-Stosa pamięci [In Memory of Veit Stoss]* – the poem “Piękno” [“Beauty”], 1856; PWSz III, 524) [... pride that glows in the sun / Confident that the sun does not penetrate it; / That one – is the end of contemplation and sight, / That one – stops the Divine ray];

- 6) The use of sculptural, musical, poetic and dramaturgic associations in the description of the appearance and behaviour of characters, which makes us think of these artists in terms of art; thus, in the description, they become, in a way, art itself, great art, which is significant in the context of the idea of the unity of a work and a man, indicates the identity of the artist and his work hidden under the surface of appearances; in this context, one can also interpret the emphasis on the physical beauty of the character (as a sign of spiritual beauty and the value of art), which draws particular attention in confrontation with the descriptions of pre-mortal weakness;
- 7) The individualisation of observations and the type of recorded facts, words, and objects, which correspond to the nature of the artist's work and the interpretation of his character (for example, Mickiewicz is the depth of words, Chopin – the perfection of hand movement, Witwicki – a drop of tears in his gaze, Słowacki – a coloured word, Delaroche – “showing”);
- 8) The subordination of the composition of particular reminiscences to the interpretive function; it thus produces a composition that is subordinated to the pictorial dominant (the recollection of Delaroche), a “musicological” compositional scheme (Chopin), a composition based on the irony of life (Słowacki), seeing the invisible and “descending” to death as the basis for the artistic organisation of the reminiscence (Witwicki), a model for juxtaposing the world of politics and war with culture, art and religion (Mickiewicz);
- 9) The manifestation of motifs that seem to herald the future fate (especially the death) of the protagonists; they are associated with attention to the depth and mystery of life, stemming from Norwid's interest in all manifestations of secret analogies; even if the “premonitions” of death are not made aware by the characters (it is the irony of life that shows the real meaning of words and events); they testify to the sensitivity of the artists, to the fact that they “hit” some deep truth that could be revealed on their basis. These facts seem to be connected to Norwid's conviction that great artists exist as if on the borderline between two worlds, the visible and the invisible, and that by creating beauty they reach the reality of God;

- 10) The constant use of a particular object or situation (e.g. in conversation) to expand time and space; time and space as a result of amplification allow us to see characters in a context that is important for their fuller depiction, but at the same time are a mark of condensation and artistic discipline of the work, which leaves a lot of important content in the sphere of functional understatements;
- 11) This involves the individualised use of contexts (usually not specified, but only invoked) that elevate the character or serve to indicate an important aspect of their work and personality (e.g. Chopin is interpreted only in the contexts of high culture, whereas Słowacki also in reference to the cosmos and nature, but also to the Polish countryside; Delaroché is presented in the context of the tradition of modern art, and in Mickiewicz's portrait such a significant role is played by political and military contexts; the elevating contexts are most often associated with art and religion, and sometimes also patriotic references);
- 12) The transfer of meanings as a result of intratextual references (e.g. the calling *Królu!* [King!], literally referring to Philip of Macedon, becomes a metaphorical term for Słowacki);
- 13) Treating the appearance and location of the artists' dwellings as important, probably the fundamental signs of characterisation; the view from the windows plays an equally important role; the mark of greatness lies in the metaphoricity of phrases such as "w górę idąc" [going upwards] and looking "z wysokości" [from above];
- 14) Using in the description of the dwellings patterns typically representative of other structures to point out the personality traits and fate of the characters (e.g. Słowacki's dwelling associated with a cottage or poor manor house, Chopin's apartment – with a concert hall, the location of Mickiewicz's dwelling is described as a fortress);
- 15) The description of the characters in the context of the idea of something that has ended, but at the same time continues and will further exist (in the invisible world; in the plane of objects and individual memory; in the plane of history or "świętej i wiekopomnej pamięci" [in the sacred and eternal memory]);
- 16) The richness of juxtapositions and contrasts, treated "as a condition of an elevating and expressive (e.g. Librarian–Emperor) or full and non-schematic characteristics;"
- 17) The subordination of the description of the person to the idea of specific loneliness, the loneliness of a man growing above mediocrity, existing in a higher world; this rule, nowhere directly verbalised, is nevertheless

implicitly present in all the micro-portraits contained in *Czarne kwiaty*; it is expressed in the diagnoses of social loneliness of great artists, lack of understanding and appreciation for their works (which, however, is something different from the loneliness related to greatness and the depth of existence).

As a result of using such techniques, individual characters – even though they are presented in concrete and mundane situations – acquire greatness, depth and individuality, and the “micro-portrait” approach to capturing these artists focuses on the richness of these issues, becoming not only an interesting image and interpretation of their entire personality, work and meaning, but also a sign by which Norwid expresses the philosophy, aesthetics and worldviews, and, above all, creates a feeling of “touching” upon the mystery, going beyond the visible or conventional order of things.

Bearing in mind the idea of the unity of a man and a work of art as well as the poetics of “white” speaking, speaking through the “daguerreotype,” through the externally tangible concretum, which underlie *Czarne kwiaty*, I will try to outline, in a synthetic and inevitably simplified way, Norwid’s *image of the artists*.

And thus, Stefan Witwicki is beautiful, although disfigured; he seems insane, but sees more through the eyes of his soul. His simplicity and unpretentiousness are combined with sadness and longing for the country. Being more and more closed in his world and in his suffering, he moves away from his immediate surroundings, “walking down” into loneliness and oblivion.

Fryderyk Chopin is an aristocrat of the spirit. He behaves with dignity in every moment and in every situation; even the most common and perhaps embarrassing ones. The artificiality of his gestures is so perfect that they seem completely natural. Chopin outgrows the surrounding reality. He is guided by the vision of greatness. His impressive perfection forms a sign of the perfection of his music. Chopin’s music perfectly combines what is ordinary and artificial, it contains beauty and greatness, transcends time and space, and is situated at the heights of culture.

Juliusz Słowacki is an internally rich character, not subject to simple classifications. Słowacki harmoniously combines the seemingly contradictory elements. He is very ordinary and simple but, at the same time, unusual and complicated. His greatness is associated with modesty and democratism, plain ordinariness – with the vastness of horizons. The implementation in the sphere of higher values corresponds to minimal needs in everyday life. Słowacki’s world is a world of mundane everyday life combined with the values of art and religion, a world of Polish affairs, high culture, cosmic and spiritual perspectives, but also a world of social problems and revolutions. The poet’s language combines

naturalness with colourful embellishments and artificiality, is characterised by “niespodziewane obroty” [unexpected turns], which corresponds with rich emotionality (sadness, criticism, irony, resignation, passion, wistfulness). Słowacki is a lyricist and a man of struggle, a heroic figure in the history of Poland. He is a man affected by the irony of life. And he will have his victory in the afterlife. Norwid’s characterisation of Słowacki, what is puzzling is the lack of any reference to the dandyish component of the artist’s personality, which should probably be associated with the recollection of the poet’s last years.

Adam Mickiewicz is an artist gifted with a special talent for word, a deep and memorable word; he is a poet of Horace’s calibre. The depth of inner life created in him “świadomość prawdy” [an awareness of truth] and serenity. Mickiewicz is a guardian of the values and traditions of culture, which he ineffectively tries to transpose into the reality of politics and war. He is a figure stretched between the values of culture, art and religion and a world of immediate political interests, which he would like to shape according to the highest ideals. Religion, art, cultural heritage, history, Poland, aristocratic provincialism, the situation of the contemporary artist, politics and war are all contexts that Norwid evokes to sketch Mickiewicz’s micro-portrait.

Paul Delaroche is a great artist, and he is the last artist in modern Europe according to Norwid. He is a lonely artist, reluctant to show his works, which apparently go far beyond the tastes, habits and perceptual capability of contemporary audiences; engaging in social relations is a form of distinction for the painter. Delaroche is a painter capable of showing what is not shown but only suggested, a painter looking into the “crevices” of existence, observing the contact of the visible and invisible world, and revealing the psychological secrets of man. Norwid’s Delaroche is characterised by a religious attitude toward art; its practice became himself, hence, in relation to this artist, one can think of art as a sacrifice of one’s own life; life and art become the same. This fact particularly elevates the artist, whose greatness can be compared to the greatness of the most eminent artists, and can be captured through a royal, prophetic context and in relation to the figure of Christ.

Krzysztof Trybuś

The Mask of Lord Singelworth¹

Abstract: The interpretation focuses on a reading deepening the polysemy of the story. In the work, irony is accompanied by humour that liberates the text from over-allegory, which is actually a feature of Norwid's poetics. Yet his programmatic commitment, often weighting heavily on his earlier works, does not have any clear continuation in the story about the adventures of the lord. Humour and ridicule are often from a different world than that of allegory, as the author of the article indicates; they reverse the traditional order, introducing the element of freedom. The story is also a literary journey for the poet, an equivalent of a real journey which Norwid wanted to take by the end of his life (he wished to visit Italy). Hence his last story is mainly a "painting of Venice:" there is room for a British eccentric and his weird balloon flights, for an improviser (a modern Harlequin), for a crowd of spectators, and for a strange deputation. In the view of the interpreter, the entire presented world is shrouded in the shadow of ambiguity. The author of the article attempts to uncover, recognise, and understand its elements – understand a world suspended between tragedy and comedy. In that perspective, Venice becomes a space of apparent movement and senses, a world of apparent freedom offered by the time of the carnival, the time of swirling masks. It is an illusion and a contradiction thereof, a serious and yet a buffo spectacle. On the other hand, the parable of cleanliness and dirt refers straight to the sensitivity of the era, as best evidenced by similarities to a fragment of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* titled *The Intestine of the Leviathan*. The motifs perfectly fit the paradigm of uncertainty and ambiguity.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, Venice, short story, balloon, polysemy, irony, Francesco Guardi, Victor Hugo

Be it irony or just an old poet's joke? Perhaps both. Stefan Kołaczkowski described "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth" [Lord Singelworth's Secret] as a "facetious-ironic allegory."² In any case, it has been noticed that this work holds a distinct kind of irony, different from that found in Norwid from an earlier period. The irony is accompanied by humour, which frees the work from excessive allegorism and the

1 This article was written within research supported by the Research Support Scheme of the Higher Education Support Programme, grant No: 397/1995.

2 See "Głosy w pismach prozą Cypriana Norwida," in: Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, selected and critically annotated by Juliusz W. Gomulicki, Vol. 4 (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1968), p. 535.

programmatic commitment, which often weighed on the earlier works, and does not find a clear continuation in the story of the Lord's exploits. The humour and ridicule are often from a different world than the one of allegory; they reverse the traditional order, bringing a sense of freedom to the work. That should invite readings that deepen the ambiguity of Norwid's short story.

Meanwhile, the existing interpretations mostly view the secret from the title as if it were a riddle typical of Enlightenment literature. The interpretations resemble solving a charade – it is enough to find that unknown “value,” substitute Norwid at best,³ otherwise Byron⁴ for lord Singelworth, and at other times – “serio fałszywe”⁵ [false serious]; that is all. An equation with one unknown – as if there was no complex of metaphorical senses in the presented world of the story. One might ask, what the *genius loci*,⁶ so immensely and continuously important for Norwid's writing, would say to that.

The last short stories are related to the plan of going to Italy. It is known that Norwid thought about that trip in very concrete terms. In early 1877 he even sent some of his property to Florence, planning to settle there.

Instead of Italy, the poet ended up at an English penal colony for that was what the St Casimir House (Œuvre de Saint Casimir) was for him at the beginning. The luggage sent to Florence was to be sent back to France; Norwid's luggage. There is something amazing in the story of packages with the most personal books and canvases of a forgotten artist wandering across Europe. Something of an ironic allegory of life. A topic worthy of an essay, or perhaps the theme of the next book by Tomasz Łubieński.

Yet, Norwid returned to Italy, not to Florence as were his earlier plans, but to Venice. It was the last literary journey in his life. It is difficult not to connect the memory of Venice in that last short story with the last letter containing the words “muszę się ratować”⁷ [I must save myself]. Years later, another writer staying in

3 See “Głosy w pismach prozą Cypriana Norwida,” p. 534.

4 Grażyna Halkiewicz-Sojak, *Byron w twórczości Norwida* (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 1994), pp. 112–117. When identifying the title protagonist with Byron, the author also signals the possibility of other associations and indicates the ambiguity of the figure of lord Singelworth.

5 Marek Adamiec, “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth albo metafizyka balonu,” *Studia Norwidiana* Vol. 3–4 (1985–1986), pp. 201–215.

6 See Zofia Szmydtowa, “Nowele weneckie Norwida. Genius loci,” in: Zofia Szmydtowa, *Studia i portrety* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1969), pp. 276–307.

7 See the letter to Zofia Radwanowa of [16th] March 1883, PWSz X, 202.

Paris, Marcel Proust, in his escape from death would discover what the time found in Venice meant – Venice prevails over Paris.

One may choose not to read Norwid's short story within a series of works (starting with Hoffmann, Goethe, Byron, through Proust and Mann, up to Brodski) whose topic is Venice. Yet when reading "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth," one question cannot be avoided: Why Venice? Why was this city so important on the route of the imagination of the poet yearning for Italy? His memories did include other Italian cities, present in his works and forever tied to them: the previously Florence, where he walked the route of Dante, Rome, where he crossed the proverbial swords with Mickiewicz, and Verona... Those cities are absent from the last stories. In "Ad leones!," the entirety of Rome shrank to the size of Caffè-Greco. In "Stygmata" [Stigma], the Italian landscape is more important than a specific location, and one can only assume the author recalls the area of the famous spa, Bagni di Lucca. A city which is specified and at the same time defined in its urbanistic shape is Venice, the place of action in "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth," and according to some, the source from which sprang the idea for the work. Przesmycki wrote:

... in that short story, there lives and vibrates the whole soul of the florid fable of the golden and marble city of the Doges [...], and it lives such an independent life, such a necessary one, that – perhaps it may have been the main and first impulse to write the work.⁸

One guess might be that in recalling Venice, Norwid wished to recall his journey to Italy 40 years prior. Like many others, he arrived in Italy through the golden gate of Venice. Beyond the broad lagoon, sunny Italy opened, and yet the route of that repeated journey does not lead any further; it is airy and rises to disappear up in the clouds.

Notably, the Venetian world is presented by Norwid on a line dividing the lagoon from the sky – just as in the paintings of the Venetian masters. They were surely those who the poet missed the most. He must have recalled one of them briefly before writing "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth" – Tintoretto. Szyndler wrote to Norwid from Venice in December 1882 on the copying of the *Miracle of the Slave*.⁹

Both Tintoretto and Veronese, and primarily Canaletto and Guardi – were all artists of the sky, brightness, and the element of light.¹⁰

8 "Głosy w pismach prozą Cypriana Norwida," pp. 534–535.

9 Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki, "Kalendarz biograficzny," PWsz XI, 146.

10 See Paweł Muratow, *Obrazy Włoch*, Vol. 2, trans. and ed. Paweł Hertz (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1988), pp. 338–343.

The allegorical presentation of Venice in Norwid's short story resembles Veronese's sunsets to a degree. Here, Venice is a "dziwne miasto" [strange city], which does not part with the element of light even at night, immersed in the starry firmament:

Miastem – które zaiste że przeżyło *idyllę*, *dramę*, nadużyło *tragedii* i *komedii* i które jako znudzona już wszystkim wielka dama pozostało piękne i czarowne: pochylając się co noc ku lagunom, gdzie przepadają kręgami złotymi gwiazdy drżące, jak dożów szlubne pierścienie. A dla których jednakże podziwu się ma więcej niż żywego spółczucia człowieczego!... (DW VII, 224)

[A City which has truly lived through the *eclogue* and the *drama*, which abused both *comedy* and *tragedy* and, like a grand lady, bored by everything, remained beautiful and fascinating, leaning nightly over the lagoons into which shivering stars sink in golden circles after the manner of Doges' wedding rings. Yet all this inspires more admiration than real human sympathy.]¹¹

Upon reading the fragment it is truly difficult to trust the assurance of one of the modern researchers that the Venice from this story "może być wszędzie"¹² [can be everywhere]. Hence when looking for parabolic senses, one should not leave this place prematurely.

The "czarowne miasto" [charming city], as Norwid describes it, is a city of painters which lives in their works, but also a city which preserves the truth of those paintings.

"Tam, o południowym świetle, widzisz tajemnice kolorów *Veronesa*, *Tintoretta*, *Tycjana*" (DW VII, 35) [There, with the noon's light, you see the secrets of the colours of *Veronese*, *Tintoretto*, *Titian*...] – wrote Norwid on Venice in an earlier short story "Menego." And indeed the colouring of that work, that characteristic mix of golden tones with green, is the colour of Venice, perhaps known best from Tintoretto's paintings.

Can one touch by looking? That is undoubtedly done by Cyprian Norwid and Tytus Byczkowski – two painters walking down Riva degli Schiavoni in "Menego." They see Venice from inside; they take a "detailed" look, as the narrator puts it. "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth" gives a different look, one which aims to take in the entirety of that strange phenomenon which is Venice.¹³ Such a look is helped by the perspective of balloon flights.

11 Trans. Olga Scherer-Virski, *The Modern Polish Short Story* (Hague: Mouton, 1955), pp. 57–58.

12 See Adamiec, "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth," p. 215.

13 The spatial composition of the city, "seeing from up close" and "seeing from afar" in Norwid's poetry were discussed by Zdzisław Łapiński: "Gdy myśl łączy się z

The “masy atmosferyczne” [atmospheric masses], in which the lord’s balloon is carried, also have an impact on the colouring of the work. Here the alternation of colours is not as intense as it is in “Menego.” Dominant are the silvery white and a silky sky translucent with sunlight.

For Kazimierz Wyka, that last story by Norwid was primarily “a painting of Venice.”¹⁴ It was no coincidence that the author of the essays on “poeta i sztukmistrz” [the poet and magician] used the word “painting.” What was also important for Wyka was the fact that the poet recreated that “painting” of the city from his memory many years after seeing it, just as he once reproduced the colour and aura of Rome in the poem *Quidam*, and like he replicated the colour of many other places and landscapes from the past. That accumulation of recalled reality is characteristic of Norwid’s later works.¹⁵ The Polish countryside returns in digressive poems like *Emil na Gozdawiu* [Emil in Gozdawie] and “*A Dorio ad Phrygium*.” Sometimes, e.g. in *Assunta*, home landscapes peer out from behind the curtain of Mediterranean ones. Yet they are absent from Norwid’s last short story. One may wonder if the waters of the city on the lagoon were actually Lethean waters.¹⁶

Whatever that return to Venice may be to Norwid, it is justified in the work. Without yielding to the charm of the city, one would be like Piotr Chmielowski who wrote in caustic tones about “cabotism dressing in hieratic garments.”¹⁷ Indeed, it is much about donning costumes. It is a world of the mask. That much is known from the very first sentences of the story which provide what may be called an anti-representation of the main protagonist. A modern Don Quixote exchanged Rocinante for a balloon, and he himself is like Il Capitano from *com-media dell’arte* – a person from the old times and drawing general attention.

It is never revealed who he truly is. The secret of the piece of paper dropped from the balloon basket is never revealed either. Perhaps its worth was that of the paper in the comedy of masks which hung behind the curtain to inform the actors in what order they were to appear on stage. Far more important were the actors themselves, their dialogues and jokes, and the purest improvisation of acting.¹⁸ It is not accidental that Norwid calls a street improviser a Harlequin.

przestrzenią. Uwagi o przypowieści *Quidam*,” *Roczniki Humanistyczne* Vol. 24, No. 1 (1976), pp. 225–231.

14 Kazimierz Wyka, “Starość Norwida,” in: Kazimierz Wyka, *Cyprian Norwid. Studia, artykuły, recenzje* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1989), pp. 181–192.

15 Wyka, *Cyprian Norwid*, p. 184.

16 On the Lethean waters of Venice see Muratow, *Obrazy Włoch*, Vol. 1, pp. 7–14.

17 See “Głosy w pismach prozą Cypriana Norwida,” p. 534.

18 On the “age of mask” in Venice, see Muratow, *Obrazy Włoch*, Vol. 1, pp. 22–55.

And it is not the only character in the story to give voice to the spirit of the “czarowne miasto” [charming city], the spirit of stage. That stage is walked on by the “wielka dama” [grand lady], the embodiment of Venice in the amphitheatre of times.

Irena Sławińska was so correct to write that Norwid’s prose spoke with the voice of a theatre commentator;¹⁹ however, there is also the voice of a history researcher, or a culture historian. The literary forms mentioned – idyll, drama, comedy, and tragedy – Norwid identified with stages of the development of humanity, and they become elements of historiosophy romantic in spirit. An interpretation of such thinking can be found in the treatise *Milczenie* [Silence] of 1883.

The city “which abused both *comedy* and *tragedy*,” is still a “charming city” (DW VII, 224), like in Gozzi’s dramas so dear to the romantics. Perhaps in that circle of tradition Norwid found the conviction that “Wenecja ma misję świadczenia człowiekowi, że jest fantastyczna sfera życia” [Venice has a mission of showing the human that there is the fantastic sphere of life] (DW VII, 228). In fact, the “wielka dama” [grand lady] from the story, who is taking and walks in golden sandals which are “nieco na azjacki lub wschodni sposób szpiczastym i w górę podkrzywionym” [Oriental-looking, turned-up]²⁰ (DW VII, 224), resembles a character from an eastern comedy-tale of Gozzi.

But the lady, like everything in that work, is shrouded in the shadow of ambiguity and fades into the night. That is quite in line with the element of the “carnival in Venice,” and in line with the history of the “living allegory” (*l'allegorie vivante*) which were the female representations of the Republic, the Revolution, and Freedom in the nineteenth century.²¹ The clash of the images, their mutual struggle, and the related exchange of meanings were companions of the history of modern Europe.

That allegory with Norwid usually concerned conquered countries, to mention Zofia of Knidos, the personification of Greece in the poem *Quidam*, or the personification of Poland in the poem *Rozebrana* [Disrobed] of 1881.²² Just like

19 Irena Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1971), p. 316.

20 Trans. Scherer-Virski, *The Modern Polish Short Story*, p. 57.

21 See Maria Janion, “Dlaczego rewolucja jest kobietą?” in: *Historia i wyobraźnia. Studia ofiarowane Bronisławowi Baczce*, ed. Piotr Łukasiewicz (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991), pp. 103–115.

22 See Zofia Stefanowska, “O niewoli narodowej,” in: Zofia Stefanowska, *Strona romantyków. Studia o Norwidzie* (Lublin: TN KUL, 1993), pp. 105–118.

Poland in said poem in “Tajemnica lorda Singelworth,” Venice is a weary lady at the end of the day whose clothing seems to be a costume; in both cases, the clothing is “zachodnio-wschodnio-pstre odzieże” [in Western-Eastern-motley style.]²³

A similar way of personifying the history of Venice was not new to the era. Here is how Chateaubriand acknowledged the act of surrender from the Venetian Republic forced by Bonaparte in 1797:

From then on, the haggard Venice with her hair like bell-towers, marble forehead and golden wrinkles was sold and traded like some crate of her old merchandise: finally she became the property of Austria, the last and highest bidder. Now she languishes in chains at the foot of the Friuli Alps, like the Queen of Palmyra once at the foot of the Sabine Mountains ...²⁴

From the time when Chateaubriand wrote those words in 1833 to the moment when Norwid decided to return to his memory of Venice, i.e. for half a century, no major change occurred in the position of the lady in question. Venice froze in a world of mock movement and meanings; in a world of apparent freedom offered by the carnival time. In a swirling world of masks.

The world of masks is a world as unreal as lord Singelworth. The lord's love for the art of masquerading can be proven by his luggage. The said art and his extraordinary care for personal hygiene make him similar to nineteenth-century dandies. Like them, he is filled with the wish to dominate and always builds his relations with others on an asymmetrical basis, subordinating the company to himself.²⁵ He plays endless games with others, creating his own self in conversation. As Elżbieta Dąbrowicz rightly noted, his element is interpretation, and one which allows him to remain ambiguous.²⁶

Lord Singelworth resembles dandies, not only in being a man of the world who contacts the world through a butler, but his character bears resemblance to them mainly in his fondness for an empty gesture. He could be one of the “dandies” from Byron's Venetian poem *Beppo*. Yet who is he in his “istnienie poszczególne”

23 Trans. Danuta Borhardt in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), p. 133.

24 François-René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, Vol. 4 (Paris: Flammarion, 1948), p. 395.

25 See Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn, *Mała historia dandyzmu* (Poznań: Obserwator, 1995), p. 15 f.

26 Elżbieta Dąbrowicz, “‘Tajemnica lorda Singelworth’ Cypriana Norwida: strategia publicznego mówienia,” *Studia Norwidiana* Vol. 3–4 (1985–1986), pp. 217–229.

[individual existence]? In Norwid's story, he is mainly Sior Maschera – Mr Mask, although an *exul*, intimate with Venice:

... przyplłynął nareszcie gondolą osobną lord Singelworth, wstał, wystąpił ze smukłego i czarnego statku na lizany słoń woda kamień progu i obojętnie wszedł do siebie, nie jak się gdzie przybywa, lecz jak się wraca. (DW VII, 220)

[... a separate gondola finally brought Lord Singelworth himself. He stood up, stepped from the graceful black ship onto the wave-lapped stone threshold and entered his hotel-suite with that air of indifference usually demonstrated by people who return, not by people who arrive.²⁷]

In his “wertykalne wycieczki” [vertical tours] shines the spirit of nineteenth-century escapism. “N'importe où! Pourvu que ce soit hors de ce monde” [Anywhere! As long as it is out of this world], Baudelaire called in *Le spleen de Paris*.²⁸ That resentment against the shape of the world, expressed so often in nineteenth-century literature, could not be invalidated even by Venice. Quite the opposite, the crumbling of the city, “ruina własnej historii” [ruin of own history], seem to manifest the incompatibility of beauty with the world.²⁹ That Neoplatonic formula of beauty formed the basis of the romantic ethos of irony.³⁰ It might be said that in Norwid's story ethos saw its reflection in the matte surface of Venetian mirrors.

That whole parable of impurities is, after all, nothing other than the restoration of the necessary shadow of existence. Without that, there is no truth in Norwid's understanding – the truth of chiaroscuro; truth of the human and civilisation; hence also truth of the world of masks.

The nature of the parables of impurities is to reveal the secret of masks. Victor Hugo wrote:

The sewer is the conscience of the city. Everything there converges and confronts everything else. In that livid spot there are shades, but there are no longer any secrets. Each

27 Trans. Scherer-Virski, *The Modern Polish Short Story*, p. 54.

28 An interesting interpretation of that quotation from Baudelaire is suggested by Ryszard Przybylski in his book *Pustelnicy i demony* (Kraków: Znak, 1994), p. 31 f. nineteenth-century escapism is here a secular form of anachoresis.

29 See Zygmunt Kubiak, “Baron Corvo w Wenecji,” *Zeszyty Literackie* Vol. 39, No. 3 (1992), p. 92.

30 See Maria Żmigrodzka, “Etos ironii romantycznej – po polsku,” in: *Problemy wiedzy o kulturze. Prace dedykowane Stefanowi Żółkiewskiemu*, eds. Maryla Hopfinger and Janusz Lalewicz (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1986), pp. 521–533.

thing bears its true form, or at least, its definitive form. The mass of filth has this in its favor, that it is not a liar. Ingenuousness has taken refuge there. The mask of Basil is to be found there, but one beholds its cardboard and its strings and the inside as well as the outside, and it is accentuated by honest mud. Scapin's false nose is its next-door neighbor. All the uncleannesses of civilization, once past their use, fall into this trench of truth, where the immense social sliding ends. They are there engulfed, but they display themselves there. This mixture is a confession.³¹

That analogy between Norwid's work and the fragment of *Les Misérables* titled *The Intestine of the Leviathan*³² is amazing. With both writers, human history is reflected in the history of sewers. The difference lies in how that foul issue was handled.

The story of the sewers of Paris in Victor Hugo's novel is fascinating. The author writes with wonder of that "sort of mysterious polyp with a thousand antennae, which expands below as the city expands above."³³ Hugo's novel provides detailed knowledge on the city's everyday life. The reader learns e.g. that the belt sewer in Paris was called the Grand Canal, like in Venice, and history is not all that is contained in the work. The story of sewers contains the utopian project of transforming the Paris sewage into a gold-bearing fertiliser. "A sewer is a mistake,"³⁴ writes the author of *Les Misérables* and further indicates the symptoms of the utopia materialising:

Today the sewer is clean, cold, straight, correct. It almost realizes the ideal of what is understood in England by the word "respectable." ... The present sewer is a beautiful sewer; the pure style reigns there ...³⁵

Maybe in his last story Norwid wanted to take the opportunity again to ridicule the ideology of progress, which was so tirelessly promoted by Mr le Sénateur Comte Victor Hugo.

An object of ridicule in the story is definitely the balloon show of the lord, who speaks of himself: "za wysoko ja się podnoszę, ażeby dotyczyła mię nieczystość!" [I rise too high even to be concerned with uncleanness!..³⁶.] The

31 Victor Hugo, *Jean Valjean. Vol 5. Les Misérables*, trans. Isabel F. Hapgood (New York: T.Y. Crowell & Company, 1887), p. 88.

32 J.W. Gomulicki's comment, PWSz VII, 543.

33 Hugo, *Jean Valjean*, p. 97.

34 Hugo, *Jean Valjean*, p. 85.

35 Hugo, *Jean Valjean*, p. 96.

36 Trans. Scherer-Virski, *The Modern Polish Short Story*, p. 61.

show and other rebellious grimaces of the end of the century are worthy of ridicule. Although, like everything else with Norwid, mockery also retains the seriousness of its ridiculousness.

The one who tells the story of the lord's secret remains immersed in Venice in a "wir archeologicznego szału" [whirl of archaeological folly]. Tearing his eyes away from the "maskaradowe okręty" [masquerade ships] of the magnificent regatta, he raises "spojrzenia swoje ku górze, gdzie wzniesionymi wiosłymi gondolierowie pokazywali maleńki i mdły punkcik, znikający w przestworzu" (DW VII, 233) [a glance above, where the gondoliers' oars pointed to a tiny, distinct dot, disappearing in the air...³⁷]. That "upward look" had a liberating power in the earlier *Assunta*³⁸ – what is its sense in "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth?"

The topic of the balloon flight was literally hanging in the air in France in 1883. It was the anniversary of the Montgolfier brothers' first flight. It is possible that on that occasion the Venetian painting by Francesco Guardi, *The Balloon Flight of Count Zambecari*, was recalled. The painting, created in 1784, commemorated the launch of a balloon in Venice on the first anniversary of the Montgolfier brothers' feat. It was later frequently copied and forged. Jean Starobinski thus wrote about it:

The marvelous painting by Guardi heralds, under the emblem of the balloonist, an advent of the style of the will, seen from the shore where the people of Rococo throb under their masks and capes, dedicated to the pursuit of scattered moments. The scene summarises the entire century with melancholic discretion. Do they know, those elegant men resembling agile insects, that this last sensation marks the end of their world, and that this sign in the sky prophesies an endless upheaval, more than the ancient comets did? The little sphere perilously floating in the distance, in the blue, is the risky shape of the future. ... What comes next is a never-ending confrontation of will and infinity; it is the imperative to transcend; it is becoming what our destiny is heading towards.³⁹

37 Trans. Scherer-Virski, *The Modern Polish Short Story*, p. 62.

38 See Krzysztof Trybuś, "Assunta' jako poemat metafizyczny," *Studia Norwidiana* Vol. 11 (1993), p. 95. Like in *Assunta*, in *Tajemnica lorda Singelworth* Norwid used the opposition of top (up) and bottom (down). The issue of such an approach to space in the poem *Idee i prawda* [Ideas and Truth] was discussed by Michał Głowiński, "Przestrzenne tematy i wariacje," in: *Poetyka i okolice* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1992), pp. 209–215.

39 Jean Starobinski, *L'invention de la liberté, 1700–1789* (Geneva: Skira, 1964), p. 209.

May that comment on Guardi's painting also be also about Norwid's Venetian story. May it reveal the secret of the "charming city" to the reader, even if just for a moment.

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Włodzimierz Szturc

The Symbolism of Initiation in *Krakus* by Cyprian K. Norwid

Abstract: The article points to traces and tropes related to the rite of initiation in Norwidian *Krakus*. It assumes that the central elements and symbols shaping the drama are: threshold, spring of water, emerald cave, aurora, golden apple tree (symbol of full power), and snake. The spring draws particular research attention, which leads to finding inspiration in texts by Virgil, Dante, Greek mythology, the Christian tradition, as well as Romantic literature. The protagonist, after drinking water from a spring, experiences a dream of forgetting, but at the same time overcomes it and returns to reality. Above the immovable eternity he places history, which, as the progenitor of future Poland, he is to create: the resurrection over death, the hope of performing the deed over being asleep. For this reason, he will defeat the dragon while playing the harp, Apollo's instrument of wakefulness and awareness, not the flute – a Dionysian symbol of forgetting. After leaving the Land of Forgetting, Krakus awakens as the Saviour and becomes inscribed into the heroic and solar myths, as exponents of the drama of death and rebirth. According to the author, another central symbol of initiation in *Krakus* is the golden tree, joining the end with the beginning and bringing the light of wisdom and glory. Learning about this world while the world is simultaneously illuminated by this light may only take place along the path of initiation which is also a passage (protagonist's personal experience) and comprehension; both lead to the truth. Initially, it is revealed by the Hermit-Old Man, then by the already mentioned spring that awakens the memory of the calling inside Krakus, next the Aurora which raises the hero to set out on his journey, the song and Harp that kill the dragon, and finally the erected *tumulus*, which transfers the legend of Krakus into history. It triggers thoughts related to death, but also paints a joyful vision of eternity.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, drama, symbols, Greek mythology, Christian tradition, Romantic literature

Let us briefly recall the plot of the drama.

Krakus and Rakuz, two brothers travelling on one horse, arrive at a hermit's cabin in Carpathia to learn how to kill a dragon, which, since it is an "odwylęgana" [rehabbed] beast, threatens the town and its citizens. The Old Man advises them to go beyond the seventh mountain, beyond the seventh rock (DW V, 178, 179) towards the spring; whoever drinks from it gains insight. The brothers leave the cabin. Rakuz, stronger and more courageous, is the first to mount the horse. He wants to be quicker than his brother. He cuts Krakus' lips with his

spurs. Rakuz leaves his brother alone in the forest. Krakus, sad but accepting the situation, does not call for help; his cries would disturb the peace of nature and its tutelary deities. It is night-time. Krakus stumbles over a rock. It moves, comes closer to the prince's feet and becomes a threshold that leads him to a place of rest. Krakus lays down on the forest moss. Suddenly, he has a vision of the emerald Cave and the Spring within it. The prince is dreaming, but he knows what the spring reveals. There is also a table in the cave.

Mleko, owoce i miodowy plaster
Podaje cisza, przyjaciółka człeka.

(DW V, 184)

[Milk, fruit and a honeycomb
Are given by silence, a man's friend.]

Krakus eats his supper. The Spring reminds him of the past and determines the future. Suddenly, it falls silent. The Aurora awakens and calls the prince to the road.

The story described above, outlying the time between the separation with Rakuz and Krakus's awakening, is the path of the prince's awakening. Its structure is organised by the appearance of symbols which form further circles of initiation. The first one is the Threshold – a sign of passing, a phenomenon of the drama of space. It is not Krakus who crosses the Threshold, but the Threshold puts itself under the protagonist's feet, transports him to the mysterious forest and gives him a new home. The Threshold, once a rock at the castle doors that was also used to sharpen knives, becomes a gateway leading to a new world. Therefore, it is a central symbol of the rite of passage¹ as it creates a home as a space, a centre of initiation.

The Threshold separates the daytime part of the drama from night, making the symbols appear after stepping over it speak a different language, which serves as the border of consciousness and dreaming. It is a sign of a change in the world, a key to another reality, as it becomes clear that the threshold symbolises the Gates of Heaven, and the Keys of St. Peter. It refers to the symbol of *clavicula*

1 The rite of passage as a structure of initiation entails moving from the sphere of ignorance and darkness to cognition. In the case of the protagonist of the drama, this passing is at the same time real and symbolic. See Joseph Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949). From a different point of view related to the initiation in religions, see: Mircea Eliade, *Naissances Mystiques. Essai sur quelques types d'initiation*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1959).

Salomonis, finally to the symbolism of limbo and doors to a well. The Threshold indicates the transcendence of being.²

In relation to the symbol of the threshold, *Krakus* includes symbols of a more feminine nature: cave, forest, and night. *Tellus Mater* also appears in the sanctity of the moss bed, which becomes a place of rest and the womb of the earth. The cave is presented as an Adyton, the night as the light of mystic darkness, the forest as a protected sphere that guards and shelters the Centre.³

The table laid full is a table that gives life. Milk, honey, and fruit are chthonic symbols that forecast rebirth and eternity, and their consummation, as a transposed rite of the Last Supper, is a reminder of the necessity of dying to be born again. Time stops in the gesture of putting one's lips to the water or fruit and becomes a mystical sacred moment. The laid table and the rite of eating supper are signs of a unique communion of *Krakus* with being, a communion leading to death-birth.

The Cave is emerald. Why not a different colour? Why emeralds and not azures and crystals often used in myths?

The Holy Grail was made of emeralds. In early the Christian legends in Wales, the word *grail* simply means a sacred emerald chalice. The Holy Grail, sought by the Knights of the Round Table, in particular Lancelot, Percival, and Galahad, with the latter having a vision of the Grail, in later versions of the legend, e.g., in Robert de Boron's works, was the same chalice that was used by the Saviour during the Last Supper. Therefore, it was a cup of plenty that heralds death, but also life which symbolises overcoming the power of darkness and evil and is redemptive for the world.⁴

2 See Mircea Eliade, *Traktat o historii religii*, trans. Jan Wierusz Kowalski (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1966). Same author: "Mefistofeles i androgyne," in: *Sacrum, mit, historia*, trans. Anna Tatarkiewicz (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970), pp. 203–246. The motif of a "guardian of the threshold" in occultism: Rudolf Steiner, *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?* (Berlin, 1909).

3 The archetypes of the Great Mother in the chthonic aspect are analysed by Mary Esther Harding, *The Way of All Woman* (New York: Shambhala Publications, 1932). See also the same author: *Woman's Mysteries* (New York-London: Shambhala Publications, 1935). Cf. Carl Gustav Jung, *Anima i Animus*, in: Carl Gustav Jung, *Archetypy i symbole. Pisma wybrane*, trans. Jerzy Prokopiuk (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1976), pp. 72–87.

4 On the topic of Holy Grail, see: Jerzy Gąssowski, *Mitologia Celtów* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1978); Rudolf Meyer, *Die Graal und seine Hüter* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1957); Emma Jung, Marie-Louise von Franz, *Die Gralslegende in psychologischer Sicht* (Zürich: Zürich Rascher, 1960).

The symbol of redemption inscribed into the emerald chalice is also related to a myth according to which emeralds symbolise fallen humanity. They used to adorn the head of Lucifer, who, when falling from the sky, hit a stone with his head so strongly that one of the emeralds fell off and remained on earth forever. When found, it was used as the material for the sacred chalice. The destiny of the cup redeemed the Luciferic power of the stone and became the sign of the victory of light over darkness. The transformation of an emerald from a satanic stone into this attribute of the Grail was, consequently, a transmutation of substance and phenomena in nature.

The emerald cave is also a place of transformation, of the Last Supper, and a place as sacred as the inside of the Grail. Water in this cave is Eucharistic wine, the spring – a sign of renewal of being.⁵ In the emerald Cave, in the centre of the forest and of the cosmos, the initiation will take place.

However, it is essential to have a master and a period of learning to make the initiation happen. It will explain to Krakus the sense of history as history; in a Christian drama it is in the essence of cognition.

In *Krakus*, the Spring is the master. It is the source of revelation, wisdom, and the source of living water. From its words, Krakus will learn of his path and the method of defeating the dragon. For this dragon is evil reborn, bruised once with the “Virgin’s heel,” incarnated later in history as a recollection of the first act of disobedience in Paradise, and evolving with the changing societies and nations. The serpent, appearing in Paradise as temptation, threatens man on the moral plane; currently, as the dragon, it affects the social order and triggers fear, leading to unrest. It is difficult to fight it with conventional weapons. The Spring orders the prince to use the song of goodness and love; it knows the methods of protecting beings against evil without disturbing the structure of these beings.

The motif of a talking spring of wisdom is as old as European civilisation. The words of springs have always explained secret powers hidden in nature, and composed a text made of nature’s alphabet.

Pythia was looking for prophetic powers in a spring at the feet of Mount Parnassus, the same one which a young Delphi girl jumped into to escape Apollo, who was chasing her. That Castalian spring was the place of her purification, her ritual bath; it started in a cave and was the centre of the Adyton, the most sacred

5 Related to this rite, the alchemic symbol of turning water in to wine in Cana of Galilee as a sign of the mystery of mystic nuptials is worth noticing. See Carl Gustav Jung, *Mysterium coniunctionis. An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy* (London: Pantheon Books, 1970).

place in the world. Although it has not been found to date, it survived in legends and became a source of poetic inspiration and the Muses in Hellenic times. Ovid was also leading to the springs. He often mentions one that originated in basalt rocks. It was protected by the nymph Egeria and Diana that ruled her.

Many legends speak of a cave with a sacred spring of Vesta from where her priestesses took water to clean the temple. The sick also came to this spring for healing, just like the Pool of Bethesda. There were many processions to the spring of St. Gervasius, at the Cammagny monastery, to ask for rain. Crowds wanted to reach the waters of Lourdes and the spring in Caesia Silva. Its water was supposed to bring great change and renew a dying man into a new person.⁶

A spring using its secret powers to perform grand transformations is related to the symbolism of a Pelican, being a figurative presentation of Christ according to St. Chrysostom. The Pelican-Christ as a source of living water appears in Norwid's poem entitled „Źródło“ [Source] (in *Vade-mecum*) and entails a centre that gives life. This thought is also embedded in *Wanda* since her flowing down the Vistula river symbolises the great baptism of the people, the origins of the homeland, and the figurative identification of Wanda and Christ as those that can make everything new in their death.

The moment of baptism as co-crucifixion is a time of total immersion of the human being in the waters of life, so also in the waters of death. The exegesis of this statement of St. Paul appears in Tertullian's writings from the period of his ties to Montanism; the essence is to understand baptism as crucifying the old man (*ho palaios anthropos*), Adam, alongside Christ by the simultaneously symbolic and real immersion in the waters.⁷ As a result, human existence becomes co-existence, and the change becomes the centre of a personalist vision of existence; from Tertullian, to Norwid, to St. Paul, to Marcellus, it was a source of a new bond between people, a new meeting of co-sacrificed.

Let us return to the motif of a spring and its symbolic meaning in myths, fables, and literature. Out of necessity, the scope has to be limited to Romantic literature.

There are springs of love, understood as wisdom (alchemic identity) and a source that constantly bears fruit. Poets drink from its waters and begin building

6 Cf. James George Frazer, *Złota gałąź*, trans. Henryk Krzeczkowski, introduction by Jan Lutyński (Warszawa: Vis-à-Vis/Etiuda, 1978), p. 30.

7 See Pierre de Labriolle, *La crise Montaniste* (Paris: Kessinger Publishing, 1913); Emil Stanula, "Elementy montanistyczne w eklezjologii Tertuliana," *Studia Theologica Varsaviensia*, No. 1 (1971), pp. 105–145.

a new world, as Wackenroder⁸ stated. Görres⁹ considered that springs are the sources of the arts and E. T. A. Hoffmann¹⁰ claimed that inspiration murmurs there. Springs originate in the land of poetry, somewhere in space, then they come to earth and uplift the man who can reach the heavens. The pre-spring shown as a sign that the entirety of being becomes a magical gift of nature and a renewing force, shown by, e.g., Görres as a blooming flower of beady waters.¹¹

For all of those springs, the fables and myths become parts of the ontological lecture on the grand unity of the world. It employs solutions such as making past and present equal, crossing the border of personal identity and the co-transpiring of reality and imagination. It is easily noticeable in the poem *Karlekens Kalla* by P.D.A. Atterbom, where memory and fantasy, yesterday and tomorrow, meet at the spring.¹² In Atterbom, as in many other myths, this meeting is based on the symbolic reconciliation of Lethe and Mnemosyne.

Every version of the initiation at the spring has two possible variations; the source is governed by either Lethe or Mnemosyne. The first one is known from *Tannhäuser*, where the protagonist falls asleep at a spring and forgets the past; similar circumstances are presented by Hoffman, Tieck, Heine, and Wagner. This variation of initiation is described in *Jerusalem Delivered* by Tasso, where the water of forgetfulness is given to the hero by the witch Armida. In a way, Kirke is another counterpart of Armida as she leads Odysseus to a state of sleep.

The spring governed by Mnemosyne does not necessarily dilute the awareness of the protagonist in the eternal identity of being but rather reminds him in the dreams about his duties, expressed intentions; the spring induces the dreams showing the path of life. Scenes located at the spring in *Kaiser Octavianus* by Tieck, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* by Novalis as well as the ones in *Krakus* may serve as examples.

Obviously, after both versions of the initiation, via water, the hero is ready to act. Otherwise, the initiation would be purposeless. Krakus is dreaming at the spring. He is having a dream within a dream that is impossible to wake up from.

8 Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, "Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst," in: *Sämtliche Schriften* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1968), p. 161.

9 Johann Joseph von Görres, "Des Knaben Wunderhorn. Alte deutsche Lieder," in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, (Köln: Gilde-Verlag, 1926), Vol. IV, p. 25.

10 Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, "Die goldene Topf," in: *Sämtliche Werke* (München: Winkler, 1960), *Fantasie und Nachtstücke*, p. 254.

11 Johann Joseph von Görres, "Die deutschen Volksbücher," in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. III, p. 180.

12 Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom, *Karlekens Kalla*, Phosphoros 1812.

He drank the water drawn with a copper helmet and found himself under Lethe's spell. However, he soon starts to recall the words heard at the hermit's cabin, the command of the Old Man, the duties of the son of Krak, the separation with his brother, and even one of the rings in the spur. He returns to reality thanks to Mnemosyne.

The sign of this reality is Aurora, the light of day. Because of her, Krakus overcomes the forgetfulness, puts the history he is to create over the eternal "now," salvation over death and over the dream state – his hope of acting. Therefore, he will slay the dragon by playing the harp, the instrument of Apollo's awakening, of vigilance, and not the pipe, a Dionysian instrument of forgetfulness, returning to the dark womb of chaos. He will sing poetry and goodness¹³ as a rhyme "dla ciosu miecza" [for the strike of the sword]. The spring "falujące w eterze pomiędzy gwiazdami" [floating in the aether among the stars] – to recall Görres¹⁴ – did not bring forgetfulness but understanding.

Aurora in *Krakus* is a symbol of history opening, the road that uses the knowledge gained during the initiation. For Krakus, this road will be poetic and illuminated by the memory of the events of that mystical night. Novalis wrote "the spirit of poetry is the morning light, which makes the statue of Memnon sound."¹⁵ This monument, to the poet's mind, entails sleeping still life, forgetfulness, and mythical time. The Aurora becomes the sign of poetry, a spirit that revitalises the world. She orders the mighty current of life to flow through all places in the universe.¹⁶ Aurora makes Krakus see the future as a great opportunity for the deed he is destined to do. This awakened feeling of power makes him cry out: I can.

The beauty he experienced during the night at the cave, beauty belonging to Aphrodite Anadyomene, becomes the beautiful deed, hope, and the wisdom of Athena. This change marks the path towards freedom, and Aurora is the one leading from adoring Aphrodite to admiring Athena. Therefore:

13 Allusion to a phrase used by Norwid in the poem "Do Bronisława Z." "Of the things of this world only two will remain, / two only: poetry and goodness... and nothing else" [Trans. Adam Czerniawski in: Cyprian Kamil Norwid, *Selected Poems*, (London: Anville Press, 2004), p. 92].

14 Johann Joseph von Görres, "Über Jean Paul Friedrich Richters sämtliche Schriften," in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. IV, p. 51.

15 Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), *Dichtungen und Prosa* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1975), p. 87.

16 See Krzysztof Bak, "Prolog P.D.A. Atterboma jako główny manifest romantyzmu szwedzkiego. Warsztat," *Studenckie Zeszyty Polonistyczne*, Vol. I (1982), p. 152.

Przepadają ściany niewidzialnej groty i zamku. – Krakus na mchu w lesie śpiący zostaje jak pierwiej. – Zorza poranna świtać zaczyna. (DW V, 195)

[The walls of the invisible cave and castle fall down. – Krakus stays sleeping on the moss in the forest as he was before. – Aurora begins to shine.]

The cave is obvious, but where did the castle come from? Was it here before? Its presence might have only been suggested by the Threshold. But Norwid had to introduce the castle here to present the opposition of symbols, which is important in mythologies.

The Cave as a chthonic symbol in all myths of initiation and always belongs to Lethe, to forgetfulness. When Krakus awoke, he was in the power of Mnemosyne. She coexists in the myths with the symbols of castles and palaces tied to Athena, just as the cave relates to Aphrodite Anadyomene. Norwid's mythographic intent was forced to include a castle as a sign of recognising the revealed and remembered destiny.

An excellent poetic image built on the template of initiation and the rite of passage was probably seen by Norwid in his beloved publication, *The Divine Comedy* by Dante. It is there, between the last terrace of the Mountain of Purgatory and Heaven, that the purification ritual, essential for travelling through Paradise, takes place.

Dante and Virgil slowly approached the border between the worlds. Dante will travel alone from now on; the Master turned out to be no longer needed. Between the worlds flows the river Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. Dante is called to the other side by the singing of Matilda. The area at the shore is similar to the Chiassi forest. All of nature seems to speak. Matilda immersed the poet in the waters of Lethe and dragged him to the rivulet as strongly as a team of horses. In this way, the sins of his past have been erased from his memory. The mistress who sanctified this ritual was Beatrice. It was not the end, since after bathing in Lethe, Dante is led to the river Eunoe. Its waters were a reminder of all that was good and determined a person's further path. Those two ritual baths made the poet:

Tak odrodzony jak rośliny nowe,
Okryte szatą zielonego maju –
Czysty i gotów wylecieć na gwiazdy.¹⁷

17 Dante Alighieri, *Boska Komedia*, selection and trans. Edward Porębowicz (Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1977), p. 303.

[From the most holy waters
I came away remade, as are new plants
renewed with new-sprung leaves,
pure and prepared to rise up to the stars.]¹⁸

The green robe, similar to the green fields in Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and the green moss in *Krakus*, has a symbolic meaning here; it entails hope and ensures that the direction to be followed is known. The mystical white of the initiate, the white that marks the spacelessness and timelessness of the vision becomes the reflection of internal purity and readiness.

Bathing in Lethe brought sleep to Dante and with it began the ecstatic contemplation of Beatrice as the incarnation of the beauty of Aphrodite Anadyomene. He is woken up by Matilda. This awakening also shows another function of Beatrice, that of the guide and the revelator of Divine Wisdom. The ecstasy is replaced with the power of the mind gaining insight, the advocate of which is Beatrice-Athena.

This two-part bathing of the poet, built on the template of two elements of initiation – forgetting the past and evoking hope for the future – is a counterpart of the diarchy of Lethe and Mnemosyne, as well as that of Lethe and Eunoe and, according to Greek beliefs, Tigris, and Euphrates rivers. It is a constant mythical structure appearing in Novalis' as two springs and two immersions. The first one opens the reality of dreams, forgetfulness, wonder, and contemplation; the other stimulates the memory and recollection of the calling.

Remembering and forgetting start within the same spring, the pre-spring, as stated Schlegel, whose waters flow as if it were two angel wings onto the arm of the poetic contemplation of the irrational current of images and the arm of inspiration based on knowledge.¹⁹ Dante claims that Lethe and Eunoe also start as one spring; according to the Bible, Tigris and Euphrates share the same source. Memory and ecstasy in *Karlekens Kalla* by Atterbom arise from the same place and the waters in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* have the same origin.

Let us see if a similar situation happens in *Krakus*. When Krakus drinks the water from the copper helmet and falls asleep inside his dream, the spring responds to the moonlight. Its waters are like “pearly threads” hitting the coral of

18 Trans. Robert and Jean Hollander, *The Divine Comedy, Purgatorio* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004); [https://dante.princeton.edu/pdp/](https://dante.princeton.edu/pdp/Canto%20XXXIII) Canto XXXIII, v. 142–145.

19 Friedrich Schlegel, “Philosophische Vorlesungen insbesondere über Philosophie der Sprache und des Wortes,” in: *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe* (München Padeborn-Wien: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1958), Vol. X, p. 399.

the rocks. Later, the spring tells its story; it is born in the heavens, but it is here, where Krakus sleeps and in that place where Rakuz set off to, beyond the seventh mountain and beyond the seventh rock. At the same time, the spring shows itself to Krakus in two forms, as the spring of waters of dreams and forgetfulness and as the spring of remembering. It is suggested not only by the changes in the words spoken by the Spring, but also in a different manner of speaking: from the swaying rhythm of a poem, which enforces contemplation and giving into the metre, to words broken down in cadences.

One Spring is shown to Krakus in two forms; so it may be interpreted as the water of initiation. Rakuz may only encounter the real spring in the Carpathia, so he shall not be cleansed in the water of forgetfulness. Therefore, the memory of the path and fatigue will delay the proper moment for his deed. In turn, Krakus will be reborn full of strength and initiative after travelling through the Land of Forgetting. He passed the path from the spring of the heart of the night to the spring of the sun, from the sphere of silver and moonlight to the Aurora and the sun. Krakus, a prince put to sleep at night, will awaken as the Saviour; his existence will be written into the heroic myth and the solar myth as the two basic constituents of the drama of death and rebirth.²⁰ Rakuz will enter the dream sphere too late. He did not understand the knowledge gained at the spring as the unanimous and urgent moral obligation towards the mystery, which led to his pride. When he tries to move undetectably through the night accompanied by Szolom, the crowd erects a *tumulus* of the prince to the Heavens, the Saviour-unknown, turning his story into that of a hero of the Sun.

Nevertheless, Rakuz has been given the opportunity cross the threshold of initiation. The Old Man metaphorically called it “the seventh rock” when the princes left his cabin and he stated that he measured them with that rock. This rock will be a criterion of moral attitude and a touchstone for the readiness of the initiates. In this drama, the Old Man sets the tasks, the scope, and the character of the trial upon which the completion of the initiation rite depends. Therefore, his role is remarkably similar to that of Virgil in *Divine Comedy* and serves as the seed of the mythical plot of *Krakus*.

20 On the topic, see: Carl Gustav Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedenken*. Ausg. und hrsg. von A. Jaffé (Stuttgart-Zürich: Rascher, 1962), p. 176. On the motif of “Sons of the Sun” in a different literary system, see: Jerzy Kwiatkowski, “Od katastrofizmu solarnego do synów słońca,” in: *Młodopolski świat wyobraźni. Studia i eseje*, ed. by Maria Podraza-Kwiatkowska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1977), pp. 231–325. See also a foundation dissertation on the topic: Leo Frobenius, *Das Zeitalter des Sonnengottes* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1904).

The Old Man does not belong to the human world. He is suspended in an unusual moment of pre-leaving. The day pushes him away and the night calls him. He has his student, Lilian, to whom he will leave his inheritance of only the signs of symbolic secret powers (candle, rebeck, herbs), but the boy will not receive his final words. They will have to be discovered by the student. The Old Man neither instructs nor overwhelms with his teachings, on the contrary, he releases his student from imperfections, inabilities, and inadequacies. To Norwid, freedom was not about breaking free from the master's grasp, it is a release from the immaturity that enslaves. Lilian does not know it now, but he will at some point. According to the poet, a master does not show the way but, as Socrates, shapes the way by walking it with the student for some time. The motto *vademecum* does not mean "follow me" but "come with me," which determines *eo ipso* the dialectic sense of the path in Norwid's works. Such a master was Dante's most admired poet, Arnaut Daniel, who used to say: *Ieu sui Arnaut que plore vau cantan*. The Champion of Provence, but also Christ, Socrates, and Raphael – they walked with the student singing and crying.²¹

Why was the name Lilian selected? It triggers associations with lilies. Does this flower have any connection with the master? Some, although sparse suggestions are provided by *Aeneid* and its fragment in the world of the dead. Here, Anchises cries and sings while worshipping the grandson of Octavian, Marcellus, and states that the man was a paragon of wisdom, virtue, and steadfastness. Anchises orders that lilies should be Marcellus' flowers, a symbol of the tribute paid to the master.²² It should also be mentioned that lilies also appear in *Divine Comedy* and serve, as flowers of tribute, to highlight Christ's arrival to Jerusalem and simultaneously remind of Marcellus in *Aeneid*. A lily is, therefore, the company of two great men and a sign of the reverence they receive. In *Krakus*, the presence of Lilian would entail the presence of a person thanks to whom the Old Man may gain the status of a master; Lilian was given to him like lilies to Marcellus and it shapes him into the archetypical image of a Teacher. Lilies are also sacred flowers, which is expressed in their modesty, silence, and white innocence.

The Old Man presents to Krakus, Rakuz, and Lilian the mysteries of time. Out of them all, only Krakus is predestined to fully experience these secrets. Rakuz will learn of wasted time, more specifically, its two kinds: anticipation and delay.

21 Cf. Dante Alighieri, *Boska Komedia, Czyściciec*, canto XXVI, verse 139–147.

22 Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro), *Eneida. Epopeja w dwunastu księgach*, trans. Ignacy Wieniewski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1978), p. 181. Cf. Dante Alighieri, *Czyściciec*, canto XXX, verse 19–21.

Lilian will learn of time in the mystery of the last words that he will one day speak to his pupil. Krakus embraces the entirety of time at the spring, where the appearing memory will remind him of the words heard in the hermit's cabin, that some miss their time, others barely manage in their rush, and only the "wczesni" [early] ones find just the right time.

How does the Old Man know these things? What is his source of the teachings on nature with its secret powers, the spring, and the magical seventh rock? A lot of information may be drawn from the story he tells: among other persons seeking wisdom in his cabin, a guest from across a distant sea arrived and knew by heart "sprawę W ę ż a" [the case of the Serpent] and knew what God is doing for the people. His teachings opened the Old Man's eyes to the story of humanity. The traveler planted a perpetually young and beautiful Golden Apple Tree near the cabin which bears fruit all the time. It brightens the path of the Old Man and teaches him to accept fate. It explains to him the world of the living and the dead. It is the centre of the sacral world which is known by the forest, birds, and animals.

The Golden Apple Tree indicates full knowledge. It is a symbol of the whole; it grew from a golden seed and is a mandala. The branch of this golden tree is the key to the mystery of both sides of existence as it belongs to a cosmic tree.²³ Therefore, the Golden Apple Tree opened the doors to Paradise. This version of the myth was present in Greek and Celtic legends. According to *Scholiae* on *Iliad* by Pausanias, the Golden Apple Tree was given by the ancestral mother Gaia to Zeus and Hera on their wedding day. This gift was related to the symbol of a rejuvenating world, illustrated by Hera's regular baths in the Canchos spring, which was to ensure her happy life.²⁴ The Golden Apple Tree was also present in later myths and one of them has had a great influence on the symbolism in *Krakus*. According to Pollux, the fruit from this tree gave full knowledge. But this wisdom only comes at the moment of death as the last words.²⁵ Going to the Garden of the Hesperides, equivalent to the Celtic paradise about which teaches the Irish *Tochmarc Étaine*,²⁶ was, in fact, the travel to the border of life which gave

23 On the Mandala, see: Jung, *Archetypy i symbole*; Carl Gustav Jung, "Zur Psychologie östlicher Meditation," in: *Symbolik des Geistes* (Zürich: Rascher, 1918); Giuseppe Tucci, *Teoria e pratica del mandala* (Rome: Astrolabio, 1949).

24 Robert Graves, *Mity greckie*, trans. Henryk Krzeczkowski, introduction by Aleksander Krawczuk (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1982), p. 61.

25 Graves, *Mity greckie*, p. 403.

26 *Tochmarc Étaine*, in: Stefan Czarnowski, *Dzieła* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1934), Vol. III, pp. 123–124.

the ultimate wisdom accessible only in dreams or illuminations that cannot be expressed in words. It is possible to survive them, but then the person must cross the border of life and enter the kingdom of the dead or experience the wonders of this land. The Golden Apple Tree is also a symbol of initiation, completed for the Old Man and in progress for Krakus when he dreams about dying after the mystical dinner of fruit, milk, and honey.

To confirm the truth of his words, the Pilgrim who visited the Old Man planted the golden tree near the cabin – a tree that joins the ending and the beginning; the end does not torment the beginning but, as Norwid writes, “uwydatnia” [highlights] the beginning which is the perpetual “today.” This experience was once felt by Aeneas when he descended into the land of the dead with a shining branch of golden mistletoe. Thanks to it, he passed through the forest, the Styx, and death to learn of the entirety of being. The Golden Bough brought light as a *doxa* was sleeping in it. Its mysterious glow was described as *lumen gloriae*, the light of wisdom and glory. Comprehending this light and, at the same time, the world it illuminates may happen only on the path of initiation.

The teachings gathered during the initiations must see the light of day. They are passed on in legends, especially parables and the beauty of attitudes towards life. The most impressive descriptions of initiation, known from Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*, end with this exact command. As Zatchlas the Egyptian teaches, whoever wants to stay in Lethe forever deserves the wrath of the Furies who will arrive to torment the poor soul.²⁷ The truth has to be revealed as it is a light that cannot be covered. This is revealed first by the Hermit-Old-Man, then by the Spring which awakens the memory of the calling in Krakus, later by Aurora, who inspires the hero to move forward. It is also revealed by the song and Harp that kill the dragon, and finally by the *tumulus* which preserves the legend of Krakus in history, makes the prince a hero, and assigns the attributes of the Sun to him. The *tumulus* for Krakus becomes the pyre for Hercules, a mythographic counterpart of the Golden Apple Tree. Obviously, it is tied directly to death, but it is a joyful vision.

Krakus by Norwid is a drama of initiation. It is difficult to determine the ideas that inspired this work, which was in fact written twice. The fascination with Dante and Virgil is evident, as is folklore knowledge, especially Polish.²⁸

27 Apuleius, *Metamorfozy albo złoty osioł*, trans. Edwin Jędrkiewicz (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1976), p. 45.

28 On the connections between *Krakus* and folklore, see: Julian Krzyżanowski, “Bajka ludowa w misteriach Norwida,” in: *Paralele* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo

However, it is not the most important. If it were expected of a text to evidence only what its author read, it would be inappropriate towards the truth which not only transpires through this drama, but also elevates it, along with other writings, from other times and spaces and marks its own presence on their pages.

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Alina Kowalczykova

Reinterpretation of the Romantic Dramatic Form in *Zwolon*

Abstract: *Zwolon*, Norwid's first full drama, is an important text both because of its critique of Romantic drama and because it shows the subsequent development of the poet's dramatic works. With impressive audacity, the debutant playwright questions his great predecessors' historical and philosophical ideas and makes proposals for crucial changes to the conventions of the genre. In its composition and particularly its theatrical form, *Zwolon* retains many features of Romantic drama. It is not yet a "white tragedy" or even a tragedy of contemplation whose perfect embodiment was soon to come in "Słodycz" [Sweetness]. It is an imperfect work, but certainly one that marks a breakthrough and opens the prospect of a new understanding of the functions of the theatre.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, drama, theatrical form, Romantic drama, historical and philosophical ideas

Zwolon, completed in 1849 and published two years later, is the first dramatic work by Norwid that has been preserved in its entirety. It outlines the attitude of a poet towards drama at the time and theatre conventions. Therefore, although his later stage works are held in higher regard by researchers, this particular creation is truly fascinating because of the boldness of formulating and introducing new concepts.

The original character of *Zwolon* may be noticed in at least three areas. First, the ethical and historiosophic concepts discussed in the drama are set in modern times and relate to the events of the Spring of Nations, which goes against the aesthetics of the time. Second, Norwid used *Zwolon* to question both the intellectual concepts and drama composition rules that were inherited from the Romantic bards. Finally, he presented his own idea of a modern tragedy. *Zwolon* already features its basic elements that are to be developed and updated in his further scenic works.

It should be pointed out that the modern political subjects were not a novelty in Polish dramas. The origins of *Dziady część III* [Forefathers' Eve part III], later *Kordian* and *Nie-Boska Komedia* [The Un-Divine Comedy], lie in the reflection on the course and failure of the November Uprising. When *Dziady* was being written, the Uprising was already a closed issue and a monument of history. Norwid wrote his *Zwolon* under the direct pressure of the unfolding

Spring of Nations. He was in the centre of those events and in close proximity to Polish Romantic bards. He began his “monologia” in 1848 in Italy where he was influenced by Krasiński. He was in Rome when Mickiewicz arrived there, and he was finishing his drama in Paris where he conversed with the dying Słowacki (whose last grand deed was an escapade to the Poznań lands to join the Polish Spring of Nations); Mickiewicz was publishing “Trybuna Ludów” in Paris at that moment. The history presented in *Zwolon* was happening right in front of Norwid’s eyes and his efforts to publish the drama as soon as possible suggests that, just like Słowacki during the November Uprising, he aspired to the role of a bard who would illuminate the path to the future. The biography of the author inspired that “bard-like” aspect of the drama, as suggested by Stanisław Pigoń.¹

In the 1840s, before *Zwolon* was published, both Słowacki and Krasiński attempted yet again to introduce modern times into their dramas – Słowacki in *Fantazy*, Krasiński in the unfinished [*Rok 1846*] [Year 1846]. Both writers did not see their works as important enough to try to publish them. Norwid surely did not know them and, most importantly, recent events presented in *Zwolon* played a completely different role than in those two dramas. Słowacki masterfully set the plot of *Fantazy* in the political and social realities of his contemporary times; while Krasiński wanted to precisely document the events and moods. They both wrote excellent modern dramas. Even though all thoughts and ideas included in *Zwolon* stem from the situations and atmosphere of 1848–1849, this drama cannot be called a modern piece. It was supposed to be something else, something more. The terrors of modernity were immediately transformed into generalisations where the reality of the text does not allow for a determination of time and space of the plot.

Modernity was closely tied with the past and the thought of the future. The unclear temporal framework and the deepened impression of intermingling epochs was strengthened by the numerous anachronisms in *Zwolon*. For instance, Norwid mentions that the crowd was enjoying the invention of gas while stylising the palace chambers according to literary descriptions of castles of the past.² Waclaw’s wife goes by popular ancient name at the time of Porcja

1 Stanisław Pigoń, “Krasiński w *Zwolonie*,” *Mysł Narodowa*, No. 6–8 (1937).

2 Sławomir Świontek clearly writes that “modern events (more specifically, the events of 1848–1849 in Poland and Europe), or rather their interpretations, are a starting point for placing the plot – which is worth noticing – in an indefinite historical period, some kind of mythical Middle Ages” (Sławomir Świontek, *Norwidowski teatr świata*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1983, p. 37). While it is true that the historical time in *Zwolon* cannot be determined because of its author’s decisions, it does not seem that this “mythical Middle Ages” is a time period pointed to by Norwid. Time here is rather

[Porcia], known because of the famous wife of Marcus Junius Brutus; Stylec seems to be someone between a chronicler of the past and a modern bureaucrat. When crocodile tears are mentioned in *Zwolon*, they are accompanied with a comment “jak Wężyk pisze” [as Wężyk writes] (and he wrote about them in a text published in 1841). Such clashes of the ancient with the current are spotted also in other parts of the drama.

Similar functions were assigned to anachronisms in Romantic works. Their usefulness was discussed by, among others, a French critic Jules Janin. Słowacki mentioned the role of anachronisms in his dedication letter to *Balladyna*; within the drama, the anachronisms disturb and confuse the order of the presented history to seemingly blur the lines between epochs (e.g. mentioning an asylum set in a prehistoric era, or the Widow’s hut which resembled a nineteenth-century manor).

In *Zwolon*, the anachronisms disrupt the flow of time and do not allow for a precise identification of any epoch. Something might have existed or occurred a long time ago, perhaps it still does now – the timeless value of the ideas in the text is strongly highlighted.

The historical situation, which became the starting point for ideas presented in *Zwolon*, made Norwid introduce two parallel currents of historiosophic reflection. First, this drama already develops the basis for his later works ethical concept of the progress of history which, how romantically, would lead to permeating the darkness of the past. *Zwolon* shows the evident foundations of Norwid’s concept of history where the ethical attitude of single individuals set the course of history, which would be soon clearly explained in “*Słodycz*” [Sweetness], as was accurately pointed out by Irena Sławińska. This was accompanied by the idea of the undeserved tragedy of young Poles; the drama was interpreted by Zofia Trojanowiczowa³ as a “monologia” on the terrible fate of Norwid’s generation. It is a similar connection (although the concepts are developed differently) to that in *Dziady część III* by Mickiewicz.⁴ Norwid, however, did not limit the intellectual capacity of this text to the area suggested by modern events – the polemic with the spiritual inheritance of Romanticism is of key importance in *Zwolon*.

“universal” and the plot can be embedded in any epoch – that is the universal character of this historiosophic reflection.

3 Zofia Trojanowicz, *Rzecz o młodości Norwida*, chapter “Monologia o losach pokolenia” (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1968), pp. 117–167.

4 On the polemic between *Zwolon* and *Dziady część III*, see: Anna Kubale in: “Dziecięca metafora pokolenia. O *Zwolonie* Norwida,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (1983), pp. 51–66.

The relations between this drama and the ideas and specific texts of Romantic writers are clearly exposed. Norwid's work is woven with so many literary references as if they were meant to be signs unanimously directing the reader to the works of his grand predecessors. Those references not only point to their poetic roots, but also highlight the ideological argument with his predecessors. They allude to texts written by Mickiewicz, Malczewski, Ujejski, but the chief role is played by references pointing towards *Nie-Boska Komedia* and *Kordian*.⁵ This polemic was quite unusual because of its scale and versatility. Norwid positioned himself in opposition to prominent Romantic poets regarding concepts and style; it might be said that the opposition was towards Romanticism as such. It is as if he believed that after the experience of the Spring of Nations it was not enough to start again and decisively form the foundations of historiosophy in a manner different to that of his predecessors, but that it should also entail shaping the dramatic form along a dissimilar path. All of that should be explained to his contemporaries and changed as well.

For this reason, Norwid wrote in his opening words *Do Czytelnika* that “za powinność dlatego sobie uważamy, ażeby tym prawdziwiej, wedle myśli pisarza, zrozumiane być mogło pismo jego” (DW V, 29) [for this reason, we see it as our duty to ensure that the writing may be truly understood, according to the thoughts of the writer]. However, against this clearly stated intent, the work turned out to be difficult and not equivocal⁶ in meaning. Both individual fragments and the overall message expressed at the finale of the drama may be interpreted in various, even contradicting, ways. They may show deep pessimism and the senselessness of all actions based on violence; perhaps it is a text full of the hope that

5 In some places, *Zwolon* seems to be woven of literary references. Since the main area of allusions encompasses the very same works of Romantic writers that were used during Norwid's literary education, the issue of possible overinterpretation is visible more clearly here than in other works. What is already a reference, what is still just a natural continuation, adoption of motifs, ideas or style characteristics that are typical to the texts of his grand and highly admired predecessors? The boundaries seem to be impossible to determine in many cases.

6 Both the intellectual intricacies and the complex style make it difficult to decipher *Zwolon*. It might be assumed that it is a constant and typical feature of Norwid's writing. Here, this ambiguity does not seem fully intentional as researchers pointed out. The drama lacks clarity not only as a result of Norwid's decisions, but also because of his education. He attended a low-level school in Paskevich's Warsaw for a few years, later on casually attended art studies. He was self-taught when it comes to literature and the discussions (did he take part in them?) among young Warsaw writers were conducted at a different level than those during the meetings of the Philomath Society.

foretells “zwolenie” [being freed from captivity because of agreeing with God’s will] in the near future. Pacholę rushes into the scene “on a kingly horse,” leading the victorious crowd. The trenches were overtaken, the castle burnt down, and the shells of falling grenades light up the city’s square. Some researchers consider that Pacholę followed the satanic whispers, opposed in *Zwolon*’s testament, and led the crowd into the depths of a new revolution filled with hatred. In this interpretation of the denouement, the tragic meaning of the drama and Norwid’s intellectual message seems obvious. It is deeply pessimistic and stems from the spiritual struggle of young emigrants, Norwid, and his peers.

The denouement, and, consequently, the drama itself, has been interpreted differently by Stanisław Pigoń. He claimed that “the theory, foundational for the monologue, of ‘zwolenie’ of the nation, agreeing with God’s will that leads to true and ultimate freedom, is, or at least may be more or less clear.” Pigoń also adds that “*Zwolon* is a drama on the Polish struggle to shake off the yoke of slavery,” that it is “a ‘seer’ drama, foretelling that moment that will happen soon enough, promising – via its triumphant finale – the victory of the first properly prepared revolution.”⁷ In light of this interpretation, the seer-like character of the drama may be treated as the starting point for understanding Norwid’s polemic, one that is recurring in *Zwolon*, addresses the Romantic tradition, as well as the search for a new form of theatricality and drama mentioned previously in the introductory part to the dramatic work.

Norwid combined the image of the revolution with Apocalyptic visions – the trumpets, a beast, and fire are the symbols of the avengers in the finale – but the annihilation is shown as a just punishment that touches only the sinners, which contrasts with Romanticism. The castle and the royal court are destroyed, but the rushing crowd brings freedom to the noble Waclaw, while the blind and majestic Old Man leaves in peace and even blesses the young to whom “dobrze czasem posłuchać i jęku” [it may be good to sometimes listen also to moaning]. It is an important reinterpretation of the Apocalyptic motif which was so crucial in Romantic literature. The picturesque and terrifying image of annihilation is set in the background while the peace in the foreground and the fact that a noble hero is saved challenge the unanimous negative assessment of the actions of the revolting crowd.

Norwid engaged in the polemic with other Romantic writers through numerous and often expanded literary references. He assigned them roles different to those previously used by his predecessors. Romantic writers mainly

7 Stanisław Pigoń, “Kraśński w *Zwolonie*,” p. 87.

included references to signal a clear relation to the tradition and the choices made within it as well as creative continuation. Typically, their references took the form of mottos. Norwid did it differently: he did not allude to another author's writings to manifest his personal literary tastes but used the polemic to, for instance, improve the shape of the drama. For this reason, *Zwolon* often transposes the writings (fragments or even entire scenes) of Norwid's predecessors, such as *Dziady*, *Nie-Boska Komedia*, *Kordian*. Embracing and continuing the Romantic heritage becomes its deep revision.

For this reason, the function of the references in this new context is more important than the very fact that they exist in *Zwolon*. Norwid sometimes imposed on them different meanings than those in the original text. He pointed the reader's attention to this in the foreword *Do Czytelnika* [To the Reader]. He wrote that "dwa wiersze 'zemsta, zemsta na wroga etc.'" [two verses 'vengeance, vengeance on our enemies, etc.']]⁸ were "użyte w charakterze, jakiego wielki pisarz w swoim nie dał im dziele" (DW V, 29) [used in a sense that was not given to them by the great writer in his work]. So, the 'character' of the borrowed fragment was changed for a new context, but Norwid clearly suggested here that he introduced similar modifications with regard to other references.

This happened indeed. For instance the motif of vengeance, apart from the allusion to *Dziady*, mentioned by the poet, was expanded in the conspiracy scene in *Zwolon* which is a new and parodistic version of a fragment of *Kordian*. The scenography is similar: the underground, the conspirators, an urn in the central place, the Prezes next to it, and a similar atmosphere of empty words and a growing desire for vengeance. The situation is the same as in Słowacki's work, but what was pompously serious in *Kordian* becomes twisted ironically in *Zwolon*, so Norwid could use it as a background for his own views on the ethics of revenge and crowd mentality.⁹ The staffage from *Kordian* recalled the Romantic moral dilemma and also allowed Norwid to impressively question the ideas of Słowacki and other Romantic writers.

The moral uneasiness that filled *Kordian* was replaced by Norwid in the entire "monologia" with well thought-out and unquestionable concepts. This is the core of the different manner of introducing the dramatic effect; it saturates the words

8 Trans. Charles S. Kraszewski, in: Adam Mickiewicz, *Forefathers' Eve* (London: Glagoslav Publications, 2016), p. 202.

9 Irena Sławińska drew attention to the comedy character of the gestures of the conspirators in this scene (e.g. in the "Ciąg scenicznych gestów w teatrze Norwida," in: Irena Sławińska, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1971, pp. 90–145, on *Zwolon* pp. 97–104).

of the characters rather than the action itself. It is obviously reflected in the composition of the drama and the distribution of emotional emphasis. For instance, the final scene is not as tense as a similar scene at the end of *Kordian* – in *Zwolon*, Waclaw, who is awaiting execution, regains freedom while Pacholę leads the crowd along the path of righteous punishment and “zwolenie.”

Some fragments of *Zwolon* shape the impression of the poet joining the conceptual discussions of the Romantics in the 1840s. When the eponymous character says “co jest pieśń narodu, / Czy na korze drzew ją pisał nóż?” (DW III, 50) what is the song of a nation, / Has a knife written it down in tree bark?], it immediately triggers the associations with Słowacki’s *Do autora “Trzech Psalmów”* [To the Author of the “Three Psalms”], which was published without its author’s permission in November 1848, when *Zwolon* was still in preparation. Norwid clearly positioned himself against Słowacki and in line with Krasiński’s perspective. For this reason, Pigoń observed the Pacholę-Zwolon relationship, this student-master connection, as the literary transposition of the relation between Norwid and Krasiński. It would also outline the plans of the author of *Zwolon*: a younger poet (by merely 9 years!) is to inherit the mission which his predecessor cannot complete (although, at the time, he was still alive and working!).

Krasiński’s patronage as well as the polemic way he is treated by Norwid is revealed in the opening scene. Initial stage directions describe the place as a garden on the ramparts (surrounding the Castle), with the King and Zabór walking “along the trenches;” just like Count Henry in *Nie-Boska Komedia*. The text of another author was used according to the literary rules previously explained by Norwid; the words were introduced “w charakterze, jakiego wielki pisarz w swoim nie dał im dziele” [in a manner which was not used by the author of the text]. In Krasiński’s work, the trenches entailed a redoubt, a facility preparing for defence on its own; this now outdated meaning of the word “okop” [trench] was then known to everyone. In *Zwolon*, there is only “okop na wałach” [trenches on the ramparts], so a fortification. The castle and the trenches are ruled over by the King, just as Count Henry held power over the Holy Trinity trenches in *Nie-Boska Komedia*.

The place and characters are reiterated here, and if reading the first scene still makes the reader doubt whether calling it an obvious allusion is not overinterpretation, this uncertainty is resolved later on. The King, just as Count Henry, disguised and accompanied by a corrupt guide (Szołom replaces Przechrzta) visits the enemy camp and investigates the character of the opponent, similar to what Henry did. However, Norwid’s King is a cruel despot and lacking the romantic grandeur of Count Henry. Even Krasiński is treated in *Zwolon* with

slight detachment; Norwid recalled the Romantic tradition not to naturally cultivate it, but to treat it as a bastion of already formed ideas he faced on behalf of the younger generation. It explains the abundance of irony which weakens the intellectual prestige of the Romantic texts alluded to in *Zwolon*, and undermines the motivations of those characters. For this reason, the King (which also reflects on Count Henry) turns out to be both a despot and a jester in light of associations with the character Grabiec. The King is not called the King of Diamonds, like the drunk from *Balladyna*, and yet he is referred to as the King of Clubs¹⁰ which also utilises card game analogies.

Apart from literary allusions expanded polemically, *Zwolon* features many smaller, easily noticeable borrowings from Romantic works, e.g. a character walled up alive resembles a similar scene from *Mazepa*; just as other Romantic dramas, *Zwolon* shows a visible sign from God – it is not a thunderbolt or an exploding cannon, but a grand maple tree, a symbol of kingly power, which unexpectedly falls down.

The images of the crowd, especially important in *Zwolon*, are inspired by *Kordian* and the dramas written by Victor Hugo – but probably most closely resemble the executions from Słowacki's *Beatrix Cenci*, a drama still unpublished at the time. *Zwolon* features curious analogies to both texts that Norwid knew and those that he could not have read, the then unpublished works of his great predecessors. It seems as if there was a unique ambience of a "Romantic spirit." For instance, it is visible in the character of Pacholę. It owes its name to *Maria* by Malczewski, but its role in *Zwolon* is far from the original one. This character combines the mystery of Malczewski's poem with the features of all unique and inspired children in Romanticism, along with those of a young and pure leader who heads the holy battle for "zwolenie" [being freed from captivity because of agreeing with God's will]. The "unconscious" child talking about the terrors of the world resembles *Godzina myśli* and *Nie-Boska Komedia*, but is even more similar to the words of the sleeping Eolion in *Samuel Zborowski*, or the prophetic vision of a dying girls in the unpublished [*Rok 1846*] by Krasiński.

Norwid constantly reminds the reader that *Zwolon* is embedded in the Romantic tradition which is strongly and decisively reinterpreted. It is not only about the ideas, but also about the attempt to renew the genre and the theatrical shape of drama as directly stated in the introductory *Wstęp* to *Zwolon*. The very act of breaking rules was nothing new (it has been done before), contrary

10 Roles of ironic stylisation and grotesque in the ideological polemic with the Romantic writers presented in *Zwolon* is discussed by Anna Kubale (as above).

to the scale and type of changes introduced by Norwid which made the form of *Zwolon* the opposite of both the “stilted performance” of tragedies and the shape of Romantic dramas. Although the work is rooted in the Romantic form, it exceeds it at the same time.

In the *Wstęp* to *Zwolon*, Norwid explained the roles of a “monologia” (a term previously unseen) and of silence. This “monologia” is not supposed to be “monologu ... czarną grotą” [a dark cave of a monologue], but a “różno-głosy” [multi-voice] monologue and the silence is to be like a “tłum-pustek – cisza wrzawy samotniczej” [crowd-emptiness – hubbub of solitary silence...]. These two concepts are a novelty. Although they are rooted in the formal search by the Romantics, they finalise it. The idea of a “monologia” may resemble the expanded monologues in Słowacki’s works, e.g. *Kordian*. The historiosophic vision is made of numerous multi-voice monologues in *Sen Srebrny Salomei* [The Silver Dream of Salome]. Norwid, however, takes a different approach; the very monologue is multi-voice, as if those ‘voices’ within a single monologue are to shape a coherent whole.

Irena Sławińska has claimed that silence notoriously demands attention in dramas written by Norwid in his youth. The “silent” hero (such as *Zwolon*) arises from contemplative life, “the paradoxical combinations speak of loneliness in a crowd, of such a loss of human contact that a conversation becomes a *multi-voice* monologue, of a hubbub which communicates nothing.”¹¹ The concept of the “multi-voice monologue” was not precisely defined by Norwid, and the author of this article considers that it may also be understood in a slightly different manner. Not as breaking contact, a monologue that communicates nothing, but as a text that is composed of voices complementing each other, a “multi-voice” discourse where everything “roars,” where the contemplation and hubbub lead to a coherent, monologue reflection.

Silence created by Norwid, one in which all action stops for a moment from time to time, may only be fully presented on stage since when reading (which by nature is a silent process that progresses independently of the author’s wishes) this literary device is not necessarily emphasised (even though the poet stressed the nuances of punctuation in *Wstęp*). It is a manoeuvre seemingly alien to Romantic theatre where something was happening all the time and the effects of the changing scenography drew the attention of the viewers. However, when

11 “Reżyserska ręka Norwida,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, No. 4 (1964), p. 23 [published in the first volume of this edition as: “Norwid’s Producing Hand,” pp. 153–176, here p. 160 – editor’s notes].

writing on the immobility of the silent hero, Irena Sławińska highlights Norwid's acute awareness of the semantics of gestures and his signalling to the actors the manner of showing this silence. This calls to mind the staging of a historical saga entitled *Les Burgraves* by Victor Hugo in Comédie-Française (March 1843 – the play was a flop after which Hugo stopped writing for theatre). In the extensive staging directions of *Les Burgraves*, the author thoroughly explained the role of on-stage silence and the manner of modelling effects that is to boost its meaning.

Hugo removed crimes and passions from the stage and tried to make up for the insufficient dramatic tension with staging innovation; particular scenes were interrupted by moments of silence during which the viewers could see the meticulously draped live images. Actors in marvellous poses were characters frozen in motion; this impressive image was highlighted by silence and drew attention and embedded itself in the memory of its viewers for some time after the plot was terminated. The purely visual effect was supposed to take over the task of evoking high emotions, a role which is usually performed by words in theatres. Words and movements were replaced by gestures, a carefully directed static arrangement of a group of actors, silence on the stage, and the audience which should contemplate this effect in silence.

In *Zwolon*, the effect of silence was enhanced by the fact that it could be repeated several times within a single scene. For instance, stage directions in beat VI state: “muzyka, wrzawa i wiwaty – niekiedy milczenie krótkie – głuche” [music, hubbub and toasts – sometimes short silence – deafening]. From the viewpoint of further development of Norwid's dramas, the stage role of silence, and the “silent nature” of the hero is the most important novelty in *Zwolon*.

Despite certain parallels with Victor Hugo's historical saga (Norwid probably read *Les Burgraves*), the origins of Norwid's concept of silence on stage should not be sought there. Earlier non-dramatic works he wrote provide a better context. Silence was exposed by the poet in, e.g., the poem *Wieczór w pustkach* [An Evening in Wilderness] – “Która wtedy się zjawia, kiedy męczennika / Na śmierć wloką” [Which appears when a martyr / Is being dragged to his death]. The importance of this effect is additionally appreciated in juxtaposition with the motif of noise, party music, and of careless Warsaw, and is repeated in many poems of that time and standing in opposition to the silence that accompanies the death of a martyr. It is a clear indication of using the clash between the hubbub of the rambunctious crowd and the silence in *Zwolon*.

Here, it is a good moment to ask about Norwid's theatrical experience. To what extent did his imagination affect the shape of the theatre and drama concepts he developed in his youth? What was the role of the books or theatre performances in this process? Unfortunately, very little is known about Norwid's literary

interests at that time and even less about his theatre attendance. Hypotheses on the latter may only be inferred from the knowledge about where he was at a given moment, what was happening in local theatres, and if he could afford to go.

The relatively recent article by Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki entitled “Norwid w Warszawie 1825–1842. Wybrane partie biograficzne” (1990) does not mention theatres at all. Let us recall that while in Warsaw, Norwid may have visited Teatr Wielki [Grand Theatre], an opera and ballet located in a new building erected in 1833, and the Teatr Rozmaitości [Variety Theatre] that was moved to the same building. The first could hold an audience of 1200 people and had the greatest stage equipment in all of Europe. The imagination of poets might have been stimulated by excellent decorations made by the Italian artist Antonio Sacchetti. There, Norwid could have seen spectacles such as the famous *Robert le diable* by Meyerbeer (premiered in 1838, the opera was staged several times in the next years). Unfortunately, he could have not attended the performances of the famous Italian opera as it arrived to Warsaw after the November Uprising in 1843, when Norwid had already left the country.

The level of acting in the Variety Theatre was adequate, but the repertoire was heavily restricted due to censorship. Both dangerous novelties and grand masterpieces (Shakespeare, Schiller, etc.) were banned from the stage to protect the audience from rebellious concepts therein. Works that mentioned, for instance, regicide or the dream of freedom were also prohibited; the Theatre could stage only light content: comedies, melodramas, and vaudeville.

Concerning great theatres, Norwid only knew the opera in Warsaw and Italy (in a letter dated 2 November 1844 written in Florence, he mentioned “Bywałem czasem na teatrze” [I went to the theatre from time to time], meaning obviously an opera theatre). Irena Sławińska pointed out that the reflections of those contemporary opera performances are the clearest in the dramatic form of Norwid's early dramas.¹² He could not know Romantic theatre – Norwid arrived to Paris in 1849, and the staging Hugo's *Les Burgraves* in 1843 is believed to be the last grand Romantic performance. Later on, even the dramas by Alexandre Dumas the father and the classics of Romanic theatre suddenly lost popularity. Dumas' attempts to revive the Romantic spirit in the Théâtre Historique he opened (1846) was also a complete failure. It is unlikely that Norwid became a frequent

12 Sławińska also sees the symmetry of decorations as an opera influence (*Reżyserska ręka Norwida*). Further discussion on the semantics of movement and gesture may be found in: Irena Sławińska, “Ciąg scenicznych gestów w teatrze Norwida,” in: Irena Sławińska, *Sceniczny gest poety* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1960), pp. 41–51.

theatre-goer, as he could not afford it, as well as suffered from acute depression which started after his arrival to Paris and worsened throughout 1849. Nevertheless, if he were to attend the theatre, perhaps a more impressive performance context for his works than the dying Romantic drama, would be the reborn tragedy with the famous “sculpted” roles of Rachel, an actress who was then on the highest waves of fame.

The numerous suggestions in the text of *Zwolon* (starting with the “stilted scene” in *Wstęp*) suggest that the drama, although without hopes for staging it soon, just like Słowacki’s works, were written with theatre in mind. Norwid carefully prepared staging directions. Just like the Romantics, he paid a lot of attention to the lighting. Hugo fascinated his audience with turning the lights visible in the windows of remote houses on and off (he used holes in painted backgrounds). Norwid had even more innovative ideas for *Zwolon*. “The main square” (beat X) is lit with the glow of a burning castle; as the fire is dying out, “mrok coraz to gęściejszy” [the darkness growing thicker] it is illuminated by the grenade shells and blades carried by running people. In Waclaw’s rooms (beat X), the lamp is slowly going out and the darkness outside is lighting up as the dawn comes (it was an excellent idea, but it might not have a similarly large effect in a theatre; it is a slow process, one that would not draw the audience’s attention). A typical element of dramas written by Romantics, Victor Hugo, Słowacki, Alexandre Dumas, was the city landscape: houses, streets, crowds. This is also found in *Zwolon* next to the Castle space. From the viewpoint of reimagining the Romantic tradition, the manner of presenting the Market seems particularly interesting. The plot is located there throughout three beats.

First (beat III) the staging directions state the following:

RYNEK NA PRZEDMIEŚCIU

W głębi kościół gotycki – opuszczony. Na placu tłumy ludu potrząsającego wszelką bronią, podzielonego na oddziały różnobarwnymi sztandarami. Przy każdym sztandarze wódz i mówca – gwar – szczełk – zamęt. Kobiety i dziatwa kończą obraz. Szołom stroju powstańca tu i owdzie przebiega – każąc głośno. (DW V, 42, 43)

[MARKET IN THE SUBURBS

Further in the background, a Gothic church – abandoned. On the square, crowds shaking various weapons, divided into units by colourful banners. Near each banner a leader and an orator – hustle – chatter – disorder. Women and children complete the image. Szołom dressed as an insurgent runs here and there – loudly giving orders.]

Second image (beat III):

INNA CZĘŚĆ PLACU. PRZED KOŚCIOŁEM

Po jednej stronie widać Rynek i wychodzące zeń ulice, po drugiej cmentarz i okopy.
(DW V, 48)

[ANOTHER PART OF THE SQUARE. IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH

On one side, the Market and streets leading away from it, on the other side, a cemetery and trenches.]

Third image (beat V):

RYNEK NA PRZEDMIEŚCIU

W głębi kościół gotycki – podwoje na rozcież utworzone – wnoszą rannych – wynoszą trupy, których wiele wkoło wchodów kościoła i na placu spoczywa. Po prawej stronie stos spaleniżn i popioły rozwiane – po lewej ulica ku zamkowi. – Różni ludzie przechodzą pojedynczo. (DW V, 57)

[MARKET IN THE SUBURBS

Further in the background, a Gothic church – doors open wide – they bring in the sick – carry out the dead who lie in large numbers on church steps and the square. On the right side, piles of burnt things and ashes blown away by the wind – on the left side, a street leading to the castle. – Various individual people walk by.]

These stage directions, and information further found in the text, reveal a very Romantic view of a large space – a city landscape with crowds of people, diverse and gathered around banners and leaders. The constantly present background gives the space a monumental feel; from the castle, it is possible to see the city below (picturesque, on a hill), the streets leading to the palace (like in Victor Hugo and Słowacki), and the decorations are set in a way that allows a lot of people to enter and exit at the same time. The illusion of a larger space is reinforced by the nearly constant movement of people and acoustic effects coming from backstage. The crowd gathers around *Zwolon* or *Szołom*, rambunctiously runs and marches in with the sounds of clashing swords, neighing horses, and various pipes.

The same square appears three times. The Market is filled with crowds and foregrounded in beats II and V; in beat III, “inną część placu” [another part of the square] is shown, the church which actually outlines the symmetry of the entire arrangement and the decorations surrounding it move from a place “w głębi” [in the background] towards the centre of the stage. It is possible to notice the cemetery and trenches while the Market is pushed to the side. On one side of the church is the Market, on the other hand, a cemetery: opposites, like life and death. In *Zwolon*’s monologue, a similar duality may be noticed, two flames, bloody and white, one like “sina piekiel skra” [livid spark of hell], the

other “z truny” [from a coffin], in its light the Pacholę “drugiego świata” [of the other world] appears. The decorations constitute an emotional background for Zwolon’s words and have a clearly instrumental character. In beat V, this after-life motif will be seen more strongly – there will be “stos spaleniżn i popioły rozwiane” [a pile of burnt items and ashes blown away] – as if a far echo of *Lilla Weneda*. It is a Romantic landscape, yet Norwid arranged and functionalised it differently to Hugo or Słowacki. When a similar city view appeared in *Lucrezia Borgia* or *Kordian*, the author and the script were interested in the crowd and its reactions to the unfolding events. The crowds of people are even the sole protagonist of three scenes in *Kordian* located in Warsaw on the Castle Square.

Concerning *Zwolon*, the contemplative character of the drama was also expressed in the direction and style of transforming typically Romantic scenography. The group scenes mentioned earlier may serve as an example since the role of the crowd there is limited to merely existing in relation to Zwolon (highlighted by introducing choirs) and to animating his thoughts. This concept governed the lynch scene which precedes the process of walling up the silent hero alive. The spectacular aspect of the performance is obviously subordinate to verbal reflection. This idea of a theatre play is dissimilar to that employed in dramas composed by Romantic writers.

Zwolon, the first completed drama written by Norwid, is a text of great importance both because of the criticism embedded within it and the reinterpretation of Romantic drama conventions, as well as further creative development of the poet. It is possible to admire the boldness of the debuting dramatic writer with which he questions the historiosophic ideas of his grand predecessors and proposed deep changes in genre conventions. For this reason, even though *Zwolon* is not yet a “white tragedy” or contemplative theatre (a splendid example of which will be *Słodycz*) and even though it is still very Romantic, it opens a perspective of a new, post-Romantic perception of drama and its theatrical shape.

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Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska

The Semantic Strategy of Poetic Silence: Cyprian Norwid's Lyric "Just As"

Abstract: The article attempts to interpret the poetic miniature entitled "Jak" ["Just As"]. The text appears in the autograph as part of the poem *A Dorio ad Phrygium*. Following various philological clues, Juliusz W. Gomułicki recognised this fragment as the missing link of the *Vade-mecum* cycle. The text thus occupies two literary spaces, which entails different reading possibilities. Sometimes it is read as a separate poetic whole, at other times as a lyrical fragment included in the narrative plot. In the first model of reading, the text "Jak" is an incomplete lyrical utterance, interrupted in mid-sentence, but at the same time well-thought-out and expressive. Its structure is based on an unfinished comparison, in which the comparing clauses are repeated four times while the object of comparison remains unsaid. In the second model, considering the context of *A Dorio ad Phrygium*, the lyric is treated as an element of a portrait of the heroine (the niece of Chamberlain Serionicky) or as an exemplification of an unfulfilled desire to be able to praise the beauty and charm of a woman. The fragmentary nature of the poem is a symbolic of the personal cognitive failure of the subject, who is unable to assemble the heroine's features into a portrait or his own impressions into an utterance.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum* cycle, poetic miniature, literary context, convention of expression

Norwid's idea of silence as an ingredient and stimulus of speech has often attracted the attention of researchers of his poetry and ideas. Sharing this interest, I intend to reflect on how the text of a small lyrical work, one could call it a poetic miniature, embodies this idea, or more precisely, how silent and unspoken contents are made present through words. Therefore, I treat what is unspoken and unspeakable in the work as an intriguing and integral part of the semantics of the text; it is within these boundaries that I offer my reflections below.

The poetic miniature "Jak" ["Just As"] appears in Norwid's autographs as a part of the poem *A Dorio ad Phrygium*. Guided by various philological circumstantial evidence, Juliusz W. Gomułicki recognised in it the missing LIV element of the *Vade-mecum* cycle. This is also where he placed it in his editions of Norwid's works.¹ Thus, the text of "Jak" currently functions in two different

1 Gomułicki explained the motives of his decision in an extensive commentary to the work, in C. Norwid, *Dziela zebrane* [Collected Works], compiled by J. W. Gomułicki,

literary contexts, as a lyrical part of an epic digressive poem known from the initial fragment, and as a separate lyrical work in a hundred-element poetic cycle, or more cautiously, an original poetic collection.

This dual affiliation, irrespective of the historical and literary circumstances or editorial decisions surrounding it, is a fact with undoubted consequences for its reading. One reads the same text differently as a poetic whole or as a lyrical fragment included in the narrative. When reading the text as a whole, one does not make judgements about the completeness of its structure, but only about its reception; i.e. even if it consists of shreds of utterances, the available sense of the text is determined within the semantic space outlined by it, within its structural interdependencies, and the linear sequence from the initial to the final sign.

In its assumption, Norwid's work is an incomplete statement, initiated and abandoned, and interrupted in mid-sentence. At the same time, in such a form, it is a statement with a well-thought-out and expressive structure. Based on the scheme of an unrealised comparison, in which the comparing elements are repeated four times and the compared element is concealed, the work ends with a one-verse confession of the decision and the reason for the interruption of the utterance.

Jak gdy kto ciśnie w oczy człowiekowi
Garścią fijołków i nic mu nie powie...

*

Jak gdy akacją z wolna zakolysze,
By woń, podobna jutrzennemu ranu,
Z kwiaty białymi na białe klawisze
Otworzonego padła fortepianu...

*

Jak gdy osobie stojącej na ganku
Daleki księżyc wpląta się we włosy,
Na pałającym układając wianku
Czoło – lub w srebrne ubiera je kłosy...

*

Jak z nią rozmowa, gdy nic nie znacząca,
Bywa podobną do jaskółek lotu,
Który ma cel swój, acz o wszystko trąca,
Przyjście letniego prorokując grzmotu,

Nim błyskawica uprzędziła tętno –
 Tak...
 ...lecz nie rzeknę nic – bo mi jest smętno.
 (PWsz II, 82, 83)

[Just as one throws a bunch of violets
 Into another's eyes without a word...
 *

Just as one slowly sways an acacia,
 So its aroma falls like an early dawn
 With its white bloom, onto the white keys
 Of an opened piano...
 *

Just as the distant moon weaves
 Through her hair, as she stands on the porch,
 Arranging into its glowing wreath
 Her brow – or adorning it with silver sheaf...
 *

Just as a talk with her – devoid of meaning,
 Is like the swallows' flight,
 Which has an aim, but collides into all,
 Foretells the arrival of the thunder
 Before the lightning forestalls its beat –
 So...

...yet I'll say nothing – for I'm full of grief.]²

What has been said here, and what has been left unsaid? The answer to this question requires reflection upon the interplay of the different meanings of the work. This issue is openly addressed by the direct declaration of the speaking subject conveying the poet's textual expression. His final "nie rzeknę nic" [I'll say nothing] is only seemingly obvious. The grammatical form of the verb refers to the future and can be understood as the announcement, "I will say *nothing more* beyond what I have said." However, such an interpretation would weaken the drama of the decision to remain silent, which is to demonstrably cancel and overturn what has been said so far. A different interpretation therefore seems more appropriate, "I wanted to say something, but I give up and I will say nothing." "Nothing," in such an interpretation, refers not only to what is expected and to be done, but also to what has been said which, when interrupted, means *nothing*.

2 Trans. Danuta Borhardt in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), p. 49.

The interruption occurred at the climax of the utterance, at the moment when the subject of the comparison was to be revealed, the reason for creating a chain of comparative statements.

The semantic gesture of the speaker, who, through a verbal declaration and a final abandonment of the intention to speak, cancels his communication efforts and chooses silence and remains in a paradoxical relation to the importance of everything that has been said so far. The more determined the speaker is in withdrawing from it, the more he inevitably, knowingly or not, directs the attention of the witness of his gesture towards the words that precede this decision and the more strongly he encourages considering them and analysing their implicit meanings and motivations. The inner tension resulting from the interruption of the speech becomes the basis of a purposeful and conscious poetic strategy of silence, which underlies the meaning of the work.

The gesture of silence functions simultaneously, though unevenly, in two intertwined layers of the semantics of the text. It has a different value in the layer of an intimate confession, where it documents the personal failure of a man who wishes to verbally express his experiences, but who, discouraged or estranged, departs from this intention. Another value is found in this layer of the poem, which is directed towards its external reception by presenting inexpressible drama the poem evokes the interpretative curiosity.

From the point of view of the receiver, any work subjected to the strategy of silence, understatement, and, as a result, being semantically incomplete and not fully understandable, turns out to be a cognitive provocation, a kind of a puzzle which hides, although it may also reveal, the secret of the absent sense. Various poems allow for its solution to a different extent. There are also those that assume maximum impenetrability of meaning, do not give in to the recipient's efforts, and leave him outside. There are also those which do not conceal anything, but only lure with apparent concealment. In principle, all conventional rhetorical tricks referring to the strategy of silence are content with such a guise. The speaker then takes advantage of his situational advantage over the audience whom he can tell that he is silent, although actually he is speaking. For example, "I will not say anything bad about that commander who quietly escaped from the battlefield and then spread the word about his own heroism." A lyrical piece assuming a compassionate reaction of the recipient cannot afford such an open pretence.

For Norwid, agreement with others, both in the sphere of personal life and in the sphere of creativity, was a matter of desire and anguish; he often resorted to the gesture of remaining silent, treating it extremely seriously, although not without hope of opening up a new chance for understanding. While remaining

silent, he used to leave a substantial number of circumstantial semantic prompts for receivers.

In the lyric “Jak,” these prompts allow the reader to navigate in the space of an abandoned confession, stretching between the announcement and the ostentatious non-implementation of an extensive comparison project. Only subsequent links of comparisons remained from that project, and it is through these that the speaker tried to come closer to explaining his thoughts. By unexpectedly interrupting his utterance at the very moment when he was about to reveal them, he suspended all his attempts at making a comparison in a vacuum, over the precipice of his “I will say nothing.”

The concealment of the object of comparison makes it impossible to carry out the simple operation of its understanding, to carry out this classic search for a *tertium comparationis*, the basis of comparison, i.e. a set of common features of the phenomenon being compared (*comparandum*) and the phenomenon to which sb/sth is compared (*comparans*). The whole operation is always aimed at enriching the semantic image of the first object which is the subject of comparison; while the second object serves as a vehicle to highlight features of interest present in the first object.

In Norwid’s case, the two-partite structure of comparison is mutilated; the subject of comparison is not stated explicitly, while the *tertium comparationis* is not reproducible. Nevertheless, the work remains not only somehow understandable, but even full of content. Its meaning has therefore not been dispersed but has clearly been subjected to the merging impulses of another form of order. This form turned out to be the order of *repetition* of functionally identical parts of the statement, based on the ruins of the order of comparison.

Thus, what meaning can be generated by the semantics of repetition rooted in the semantics of a comparison that is compromised by concealment? The whole work, apart from the last verse, is filled with four repetitions starting with the anaphoric “jak” [just as / like] but not syntactically completed, the parts of the utterances which constitute subsequent attempts to find the verbal equivalent of an experience that remains unrevealed. The mere persistence rather than the successful repetition of these attempts has a significant impact on the semantics in various layers of the work. On the one hand, it testifies to the speaker’s stubborn desire to express in words the nature of his experience and, as a result, it increases the drama of the decision to abandon this desire. On the other hand, it instigates the reader’s expectation for the moment of revealing this experience and the idea behind the whole utterance; but when this is interrupted, it strengthens the effect of disappointment of waiting for this reveal, along with all the semantic consequences of this poetic device.

However, the semantic effect of the repetition has not yet been exhausted. The repeated attempts to comparatively express the hidden subject are arranged in a series of images, situations, certain micromoments, and microevents. Their expansion becomes an indicator of the complexity of the subject itself, and at the same time it gives rise to some clues which may relate to it. This can apply to the features common with the whole series of introduced representations, everything that unites them, what is repeated in them, and what saturates them with similar emotions and values. It seems that the source of these similarities and relationships is likely this hidden subject which is the only element that motivates and connects all comparisons. The multiplication of the number of these elements of comparison, i.e. the repetition, opens up a chance to indicate their common field of reference and to guess what the concealed *comparandum* is.

The multi-threaded process of creating meaning in the work, reconstructed here in a general outline, has its fulfilment, phases and temporal dynamics, which develop and change as the text unfolds. This process takes place from the first to the final word, and when it reaches that word, it turns to the earlier phases, transforming, and structuring them anew. To some extent the process of understanding the text follows it, but the question remains, to what extent.

The first stanza of Norwid's work shows its senses in a state of half-suspension, depending on themselves only:

Jak gdy kto ciśnie w oczy człowiekowi
Garścią fijołków i nic mu nie powie...

[Just as one throws a bunch of violets
Into another's eyes without a word...]

Not only is it not clear what comparison this passage is trying to build, but its internal meaning remains undefined and tense. It is permeated by the uncertainty of the speaker himself about the meaning of the event evoked here. Throwing violets at somebody is a provocative gesture full of charm, but here this refers to throwing *a bunch of violets into someone's eyes* which is already a more violent, taunting, and perhaps not an entirely friendly and mischievous act; so we do not know what it is aimed at, especially since it is not accompanied with any verbal explanation. The speaker does not make it clear that he himself was the object of this provocation. Enigmatically, and at the same time generally, he speaks about the participants of the incident as if formulating a general law of behaviours in which they participate: "one" acting and the "another" that is recipient of this action. Anybody could be meant by both protagonists. However, apart from the general sense (each one), the word "człowiek" [man / one] can

refer to the personal aspect (me), and it is often used to generalise the speaker's experiences and give them importance.

In the next stanza, the indefinite and generalised form of presentation of the perpetrator is maintained, without mentioning him again, and thus allowing the impression that he is the same person as before. The thematic link between the two stanzas, which are no longer bound together only by virtue of their functional identity in the intended comparison, is thus strengthened:

Jak gdy akacją z wolna zakolysze,
By woń, podobna jutrzennemu ranu,
Z kwiaty białymi na białe klawisze
Otworzonego padła fortepianu...

[Just as one slowly sways an acacia,
So its aroma falls like an early dawn
With its white bloom, onto the white keys
Of an opened piano...]

The speaker, being the object of no actions this time, remains in the field of their hypnotic radiation, the stronger, the more delicate and the less tangible they are. He surrenders to the magic of the moment; so calm that the slow swinging of the acacia causes the world to move, and so saturated that everything that participates in it intensifies its sensual form and measure in the desire to be truly expressed. This moment, probably in the morning, is (almost as in Leśmian) "spragniona przemian" [thirsty/yearning for a change].³ The scent of acacia falls on the piano keys as if searching for a tonal expression of its captivating but silent power. The white of the flowers is combined with the white of the keys, intensifying the infinite achromatic colourlessness. The silence of the piano is filled with hidden musicality...

The incidental intensity of the expression of the weakest qualities, of what is light, quiet, incorporeal, colourless, silent, insignificant, and creates an extreme tension leading to the revelation of senses whose inaccessible existence suddenly becomes intensely felt.⁴ The examined stanza is a pictorial record of such a way of feeling, but the whole work is also permeated with it.

3 Bolesław Leśmian, "Przemiany," from the volume *Łąka*, in: Bolesław Leśmian, *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1957), p. 188.

4 Similarly, Norwid also noticed instantaneous and situational flashes of sensory potency in stylistic neutrality and verbal dullness. His reflections on this subject can be found in *Białe kwiaty* [*White Flowers*]: "Jakoż – słysząc dopiero natury *cichości* rozmaitych, przychodzi się potem do usłyszenia dramy i głębokości wyrazów bezmyślnych, bezkolorowych, *białych* ... Jeżeli mówię: *cisze różne*, to i *wyrazy* one białe, bezmyślne,

The third stanza, which is the next link in the comparison, is filled with an epiphanic vision of another kind of transformation. The focus here is on someone called “osoba” [a “person”], who is still not explicitly defined, without mentioning whether this person was previously the causer of the magical movements of nature. Now, the person in question is subject to transformation due to lunar shine:

Jak gdy osobie stojącej na ganku
Daleki księżyc wpląta się we włosy,
Na pałającym układając wianku
Czoło – lub w srebrne ubiera je kłosy...

[Just as the distant moon weaves
Through her hair, as she stands on the porch,
Arranging into its glowing wreath
Her brow – or adorning it with silver sheaf...]

The fascination of the speaker, the observer of this scene, is expressed not only in contemplating it as a magical game of chiaroscuro, similar to the scenes that sometimes occupied Norwid,⁵ but in experiencing it as an effect of the interference of planetary forces. Such an attitude is evidenced by the personification of the moon's actions which engages itself and works hard – it entwines itself with the hair and adorns the brow. Illuminated by a lunar halo, the figure on the porch turns into a distant and inaccessible creature not from this earth, becoming in the eyes of the observer someone like Artemis-Diana, the goddess of the moon in a burning garland, or Demeter, the goddess of fertile nature adorned with sheaf.

The distance created through such a perspective regains the earthly dimension in the last stanza. It is marked by “z nią rozmowa” [a conversation with her], i.e. direct verbal contact between both partners. However, from the account of the male participant of the conversation we do not get that he had had any sense

nieopowiadające nic, a których kilka tu i owdzie słyszałem, albo którym raczej świadkiem byłem, bo od tła, na którym miejsca swe znajdowały, nieodłącznymi są” (DW VII, 63, 64) [How can it be that only when one hears the nature of *silence* of various kinds, one comes to hear the drama and the depth of thoughtless, colourless, *white* words ... If I say: *silence of various kind*, I also mean those words – white, thoughtless, not telling anything, and a few of which I have heard here and there, or rather I have witnessed, because they are inseparable from the background on which they found their places].

5 K. Wyka wrote about Norwid's “decorating people and phenomena with brightness,” not mentioning, however, the case analysed here; cf. Kazimierz Wyka, *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1948), p. 128.

of influence on its course and character. He is rather surprised and enchanted by its turns and uncertain of its meaning and purpose. He does not explicitly name any of these mixed sensations but finds for them an indirect expression in the impersonal comparison of the conversation to the storm-announcing flitting flight of swallows:

Jak z nią rozmowa, gdy nic nie znacząca,
Bywa podobną do jaskółek lotu,
Który ma cel swój, acz o wszystko trąca,
Przyjście letniego prorokując grzmotu,
Nim błyskawica uprzędziła tętno –

[Just as a talk with her – devoid of meaning,
Is like the swallows' flight,
Which has an aim, but collides into all,
Foretells the arrival of the thunder
Before the lightning forestalls its beat –]

It is not only through the motif of the conversation that the nature of the bond between the speaker and the person of concealed identity, who has appeared in various scenes since the beginning of the work, is more clearly defined. Still, not mentioned by name or surname, this time she turns out to be distinguished and indicated due to the special contextless application of the pronoun “nią” [her]. In principle, the pronoun adopts a concrete meaning when it is used anaphorically to represent a word of feminine gender previously used earlier in the utterance. Devoid of such a contextual or situational connection, it can acquire its meaning on the assumption that, under given circumstances, only one concrete reference to it is possible, to a person that the speaker may have in mind, and the one that does not need to be called because it is the only one the speaker thinks of. A decontextualised introduction of a personal pronoun (both feminine and masculine) as a sign of emotional commitment is prevalent in love lyricism. Its use in Norwid's work seems to serve a similar purpose.

The emotional use of the pronoun “her” does not mean it is fully semantically specified, it does not eliminate its enigmatic or occasional nature, typical of general and “empty” forms. Therefore, it does not violate the strategy adopted in the work of presenting personal experiences in a generalised, impersonal, and exemplary form (“*jak gdy kto*” [*just as one...*]), which gives the intimate, unique, and incomprehensible sensations the appearance of a more widely available occurrence. Such a lyrical presentation, which has complex psychological motivations in the language of feelings, seems to appeal to a common opinion and assume some kind of agreement with it, thus alleviating the feeling of alienation

and loneliness. The resignation from open confession and personal camouflage is the price paid for this.

The slight lifting of this veil in the last stanza impacts the understanding of the previous stanzas, ultimately lending credence to the already initial guess that they are filled with situational variants relating to the same partners and are presented from the perspective of a man who is focused on the woman with whom he is pre-occupied. Various momentary revelations and blurred outlines make up her flickering image with an idyllic house in the background, united by the constant efforts of the man who tries to outline and establish this image.

His own emotional portrait is much clearer. Absolutely captivated by the woman's charm and unable to control it, not even verbally; convinced of the hidden meaning of her faintest gesture and behaviour, but unable to decipher it and uncertain of her intentions; waiting in vain for some kind of explanation, while she remains "*nic mu nie powie*" [*without a word*] both when she does not speak to him or when she has a conversation with him; the piano is also silent, also the lunar mystery unfolds in silence.

The attitude of the speaker is marked by his inability to close-in on the finite formula on both his own feelings and the signals received from the world. For him, everything is filled with meanings that cannot be understood and expressed. At the same time, he is the under pressure of the unfeasible imperative to express the inexpressible.

His speech is in fact governed by an unmet need to recognise one's own situation, and formally, by the need to gather sufficiently expressive material for the great comparison intended from the beginning. As this material expands, the statement, built as a sequence of separate comparisons, begins to grow together as a whole, independent of the original construction design. Its individual parts develop into full content representations and become more complex to such an extent that they themselves take the form of a comparison within a comparison (Stanzas 2 and 4). Internal relations are becoming more and more visible between the successive parts, and the sequence of representations filling them up acquires its own motivation, harmonized situational colouring, and emotional tension, forming an image of the world represented in the work that is subject to a unifying lyrical perspective.

It is the focal point, and although the work retains to the end the form of a series of syntactically dependent and constantly re-initiated comparative sentences, their subordinate role recedes in the background, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to imagine their external reference. Still, for the first stanza,

it could be assumed with some probability, as suggested by J.W. Gomulicki,⁶ that the comparison concerns the effect of the woman's gaze. Further speculations, however, are increasingly less legitimate and even impossible. The consecutive stanzas, instead of, as the logic of the comparison suggests, clearly showing the property, the existence of which is to be revealed in the phenomenon being compared, are so puzzling and semantically dense that they themselves require interpretation and lose the ability to refer to the external object of the comparison. Everything seems to indicate that this object, as a thematic stimulus that initiates and prompts the utterance, is hidden not outside but inside the utterance, and the subsequent links are variant attempts to put it into words.

We may wonder then what the closing gesture of silence, the only open form of confession expressed in the first person, means when the speaker directly informs about his decision and reveals the reason for it.

Tak...

...lecz nie rzeknę nic – bo mi jest smętno.

[So...

...yet I'll say nothing – for I'm full of grief.]

Was the speaker silent then, or was he not? The broken statement and an unrealised comparison leaves no doubt; he remained silent, resigned, and withdrew. But what did he leave unsaid? Well, it is not what he seemed to be leading to, postponing only the moment of naming it, and which he finally abandoned so ostentatiously. The course of his own speech made him realise that what was supposed to be embraced and explained turned out to be unattainable. Even if he multiplied the successive links, he would still remain at the same point of indeterminacy, just as far removed from the essence of what he intended to capture comparatively. So, he had to give up. But it is precisely this failure of inexpressiveness that he remains silent about, claiming that being discouraged, he gave up his will and cause – because he is full of grief. He uses the word “smętno” [wistful / full of grief], not “smutno” [sad]. In this wordplay we can perhaps hear (it is hard to say for sure without conducting decent dictionary analyses) a melancholic tone of self-distance, a resigned sigh, and not just pure and deep sadness itself. This is how Norwid-the poet usually reacted to the suffering he experienced while socialising.

The internal mismatch between the speaker's direct declaration and the statement he produced did not remain unnoticed. It was perfectly registered by

6 Commentary No. 241, in: Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, Vol. 2, p. 805.

Danuta Zamącińska who drew attention to the semantic self-sufficiency of the (formally) broken construction. At the same time, however, she was too hasty in her evaluation of the confession which ends the work:

Meanwhile, ... having said all that is necessary from the poet's perspective, Norwid adds: "yet I'll say nothing – for I'm full of grief." The reader asks: how comes that he "will say nothing" since he has said so much and from the first line it can be clearly seen that he is "wistful!"⁷

The point is that the task faced by the speaker was not to persist in expressing one's own sadness, but to seek a way to express inexpressible sensations. I cannot agree with such an understanding of the work, especially since it is a particularly pronounced case of the "addition mechanism" which is overlooked by researchers; however, in Norwid's poetics it serves as important counterbalance to the mechanism of "concealments and approximations" invariably attributed to him. This general observation made by Zamącińska seems worth remembering to me.

I treated this lyrical miniature by Norwid as a closed and independent text. It has all the data to function this way and to complete the *Vade-mecum* cycle. At the same time, however, its context, indicated by the author, is a digressive poem, *A Dorio ad Phrygium*. Within it, it constitutes a separate addition, preceded by an epic introduction binding it to the content of the poem. In this introduction, while mentioning the niece of Chamberlain Sionicki, the narrator confesses:

Tej ja postać i urok wiewnej postaci
Opiewałbym, gdybym był poetą –
Opiewałbym rymem Virgiliusa,
Danta rymem jej oczy – Hafiza zwrotką
Drżący jej włos na czole...
 ...zwano ją Różą –
Iż trzeba było nazwać...
 ... byłaż nazwana?
(*A Dorio ad Phrygium*, DW III, 379)

[That figure and the charm of a floating figure
I would extol if I were a poet –
I would extol it with Virgil's rhyme,
Her eyes with Dante's rhyme – the trembling hair on her forehead

7 Danuta Zamącińska, *Słynne – nieznanne. Wiersze późne Mickiewicza, Słowackiego, Norwida* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1985), p. 81.

With Hafiz's stanza...
 ...she was called Rose –
 Since she had to be named...
 ... was she named?]

The text of the poem “Jak” begins after this introduction, and when it is finished the story continues but along a different path. How does the context of the poem influence the understanding of Norwid's lyric? First of all, it immediately draws attention to the female character and the task of describing her. It thus imposes the treatment of the poem as a portrait of the heroine. This is how Zdzisław Łapiński captures it in his seminal book:

It should be noted that the whole series of comparisons presented here draw their imagery from certain characteristics and the backgrounds of the very girl described. ... Each of the individual stages of the comparison can be perceived as a literal description of Rose and, at the same time, ... it serves here as a tool to capture some further content. What is this content? We may only guess, because this great sequence of comparisons breaks off, as if it were leading to nowhere. The suggestion is obvious. The girl's charm evades poetic expressions. However, the artistry and accuracy of this whole construction deliberately undermines the apparent helplessness of the author. It is a surrender, but at the moment of fulfilling certain poetic tasks.⁸

Łapiński's descriptive remark focuses on this semantic thread and subordinates his interpretation to it (inter alia, the issue of the “apparent helplessness of the creator”), but it does not impose any foreign senses on the work and does not preclude further possible readings.

It is difficult to attribute this kind of restraint to the commentaries made by J. W. Gomulicki, who transferred the descriptive suggestions from the poem directly onto the lyric itself, without explaining the resulting temporal complication. Owing to his findings, we know that “Jak” was written before 1862, and it was included in *A Dorio ad Phrygium* in 1871, i.e. in the year this text was completed. Therefore, *A Dorio* could not have had influence on the content of the lyric, but itself would have to be adapted to the poem. However, I think that the semantic relationships between the two texts are not as simple as the commentator suggests:

The first three parts of the lyric comprise a strangely crafted description of the beauty and charm of the Stranger, accompanied by an authoritative commentary by the poet himself in *A Dorio ad Phrygium* ... Thus, the initial two verses present an image of the Stranger's violet eyes, whose gaze was compared to that of a “handful of violets”

8 Zdzisław Łapiński, *Norwid* (Kraków: Znak, 1984), pp. 91–92.

thrown into the eyes of the poet looking at her (“I would extol ... her eyes at with Dante’s rhymes”). The first four-liner is, in turn, an image of her entire *figure* (“That figure and the charm of a floating figure / I would extol if I were a poet – / I would extol it with Virgil’s rhyme”), while the second presents an image of her hair (“I would extol ... the trembling hair on her forehead / With Hafiz’s stanza”).⁹

The continuation of this interpretation is, in turn, forced by other contextual adaptations of the work justifying its inclusion in the *Vade-mecum* cycle through its content relationships with adjacent works, i.e. LIII. “Zagadka” [“Riddle”] and LV. “Kółko” [“Circle”]. Due to a certain difficulty in indicating these relations, the commentator assumed that they are hidden behind the poet’s remaining silence about the “invisible shackles” of the convention. Gomulicki therefore deciphered them by referring to the contrast between the poet’s sadness and “a vision of a lover full of true poetry,” which:

combined with the unambiguous meaning of both adjacent poems clearly shows that the poet’s sadness is a reaction to the concealed falsehood of a lover who apparently belongs to the circle of these pathetic slaves of the dead social conventions, bound by the “invisible shackles” of their community.¹⁰

Such an interpretation of the work, which is dependent on contextual impulses, has completely broken down its internal coherence as evidenced by referring to the heroine sometimes as a Stranger and sometimes as a false lover, even though these are not reconcilable roles and neither of them is justified in the textual meanings.

The context of the poem not only encourages the descriptive interpretation, but also gives rise to other impulses which can somewhat change the isolated reading of the work. The lyric “Jak,” when read together with the preceding confession of the narrator of the poem, becomes an exemplification of an unfulfillable desire to be able to extol the beauty and charm of a woman on par with the old masters’ descriptions. This makes it clear that it is impossible for a contemporary poet to find an appropriate expression for this subject. Because of that, it acquires more general meanings becoming something more than an individual lyrical case of personal surrender in the face of the unspeakable. In this way, it even more clearly becomes part of Norwid’s series of opinions expressed poetically or declaratively that contemporary literature is not mature enough for a true representation of the woman, while poetry may try to describe her

9 Commentary No. 241, in Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, Vol. 2, p. 805.

10 Metrics [metryki] 241, in Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, Vol. 2, p. 202.

unrecognizable essence and mesmerising nature only indirectly, partially, and approximately.

It is not only impossible to describe the woman, but she can also not be truly named, “zwano ją Różą – / Iż trzeba było nazwać” [...she was called Rose – / Since she had to be named...]. The words of the poem reverberate with a tone of doubt as to whether the conventional action of giving a name is truly naming in the deep sense, i.e. naming that establishes a real relationship between the person and the word that refers to him or her: “byłaż nazwana?” [...was she named?]. The meaning of the lyric reinforces these doubts. There is no simple personal identity between Rose and the nameless heroine of the lyric “Jak” However, certain textual cues allow for the overlap of the images of both characters, for interpreting one of them through the other, and as a result, to deal with the womanhood that is even more multifaceted and elusive. The image of Rose is barely outlined and marked by duality, just as everything in the poem is dual, though also inseparable: Doric and Phrygian, lofty and common, ideal and real, serious and ironic... Apollo mentioned in the invocation and Muses are also dual. There is a dualistic image of a Polish village, where the protagonists live, “społeczności, będącej niby idyllą, / Niby wykwintnego świata kaprysem” (DW VII, 383) [a world half idyll / And half a caprice of the *monde*].¹¹

The context of the poem in a slightly different light presents this seriousness, which almost completely sets the tone for the lyric. Some lyrical motifs appear in the poem in a different intensity. For example, the altered motif of the potential musicality of the world, the unawakened piano and the surprisingly non-musical utterance made by Rose:

– Przy otworzonym zamyślona fortepianie
Stojąc, z palcem jednym na klawiszu,
Róża rzecze: “Kanonik z wujem zapewne
W szachy zagra”¹²
(*A Dorio ad Phrygium*, DW VII, 385, 386)

[– Thoughtful, standing at the open piano
With one finger on the key,
Rose says: “The canon will probably
play chess with uncle”]

11 Trans. Jerzy Peterkiewicz (Pietrkiewicz) and Burns Singer, in *Five Centuries of Polish Poetry* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1960), p. 84.

12 Emphasis added – A. O. S.

The contextual changeability of meaning characterises, not only the motifs of the poetic world in the work, but also the ideas behind its construction, such as its fragmentariness and the idea of silence.

The multiple fragmentariness in the lyric is a sign of the subject's personal cognitive failure, who is unable to put together a complete portrait of the heroine or express his experiences in full utterances. Fragmentariness in the digressive poem narrative, although not devoid of ideological subtexts, is realised as a stylistic principle, ostentatiously, in many ways and often jokingly. A characteristic example illustrating how it differs from the assumptions of a lyrical monologue could be the following, after a longer historiosophic argument, the narrator reports on the situation of the plot capturing his relationship with Rose in a provocative synecdoche:

To mawiałem, gdym podawał strzemię
Lewej stopie Róży – – jeździliśmy...
(*A Dorio ad Phrygium*, DW VII, 381)

[That is what I used to say when I gave the stirrup
To the left foot of the Rose – – we were riding...]

Similar changes of perspective apply to the idea of silence, one aspect of which is precisely fragmentariness. Becoming silent in a lyrical work, which reflects the drama and sincerity of a personal confession, is something different from silence in the digressive poem, where fragmentariness, breaking off, understatement, and abandonment of initiated threads and switching to others are primarily literary conventions of speech ascribed to a given genre rather than a direct linguistic expression of the speaker's dilemmas and emotions.

The poem *A Dorio ad Phrygium*, subjected to this second strategy, clearly exposes the literary play with the conventions of expression. The poetic miniature "Jak" pursues the strategy of lyrical spontaneity, crowned with the final gesture of silence. Without erasing the semantic, psychological, or personal significance of this gesture, the context of the poem is a reminder of its literary nature.

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Elżbieta Feliksiak

Interpretation as a Meeting Place at the Source of the Poem: Cyprian Norwid: “Moralities”

Abstract: The interpretation of Norwid’s poem “Moralności,” the central point of *Vade-mecum*, arises from questions about the source and sense of the axiological experience in which the reader participates. The text draws attention with its topic of duality, visible in the choice of lexis and motifs: “moralności” [moralities] and “dwie tablice” [two tablets]. The poetic imaging refers to motifs from the Book of Genesis – the words of the Decalogue given by God and the breaking of the stone tablets by Moses, who is angry with his people. The poem focuses on the maturation of “moralność-zbiorowych-ciał” [morality-of-collective-bodies], the maturation of responsible and creative morality. The interpretation aims to show that work by Norwid speaks of passing from a Law which oppresses and inspires fear (a Law closed in commandments and written in stone) to a Law which gives freedom, from the Old Testament Law to the Gospel. The main point of reference to understanding the images and situations presented in the poem seems to be the epistles of St Paul (Rom 7–13, 2 Cor 3–4 and Gal 3–5), which speak of a Law written “not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor 3: 3). That evangelical context is entirely new and has so far been entirely unnoticed in research. The last image of the poem combines the hope to have the split morality (personal and collective) united in the reviving Law with the duty of collective work on maturing towards full humanity through the toil of both individuals and nations.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, Bible, evangelical context, axiology, morality

1

The interpretation of Norwid’s “Moralności” [“Moralities”] presented here has its roots in the question about the source and sense of axiological experience the reader who intuitively accepts the truth of the poem¹ as his own. It is obviously not immediately clear what we are called to by the poem and by the poet when he says: *We*. Everything that happens in this text indicates a world of values where truth, beauty, and goodness meet, but also where human (each man’s) will and the possibility of fulfilling it in one’s lifespan are of equal importance. It is not on

1 See Cecil Day Lewis, *The Poetic Image* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947), p. 140, when he speaks of the poem’s topic as of “a general truth interpreting itself through the language of poetic experience.”

the surface of the poem, nor in its rhetorical layer, that my Self meets the speech of the Other and the axiological community, which are not known to me at first. I know not whether they may be imposed or may perhaps obscure my way to what lies beyond me. Yet that initial *response to value*² enhances my readiness to accept the truth hidden deep in the poem, opens a way for interpretation which helps to understand, and construct the realised truth in myself. The axiological experience of reading that poem reveals the truth waiting for me to reach it.³ Hope tells me the truth is not just mine.

This paper is both a testimonial and a record of such a journey towards understanding the poem. It attests (hopes to attest) an attempt to cope with a truth impossible to comprehend. Yet in that context, it is impossible to strive, in the manner of philological hermeneutics, to keep a clear division between the interpreted text and its reference to my (or our) today. Hence these considerations of Norwid's poem come closer to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, who broadened the romantic unity of understanding and interpretation to include the co-creating horizon of the Self to the reader immersed in common history and seeking the same "truth on the way"⁴ along with the poem. I would also like to closely follow Tischner's thinking about values. What is presented here is certainly just one of the many possible readings of "Moralności." However, from the perspective of what may be called my axiological state, it is a necessary interpretation. The poem is quoted below:

MORALNOŚCI

I

Kochający – koniecznie bywa artystą,
Choćby nago jak Herkules stał;
I *moralność* nie tylko jest osobistą:

-
- 2 The concept is used here in its broadest sense, including both aesthetic and moral values, thus differently than Roman Ingarden does in *Studia z estetyki*, Vol. 3 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1970), p. 101, and closer to the German "Wertantwort" in Dietrich von Hildebrand's *Idee der sittlichen Handlung* ("Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung" Vol. 3).
 - 3 Quite in accordance with Norwid's idea of the way to the truth which "się r a z e m dochodzi i czeka!" [one both reaches it and awaits it] (see e.g. the poem from *Vade-mecum*, XLII, "Idee i Prawda" [Ideas and Truth] PWSz II, 66). With Norwid, such understanding of cognition is closely related to his ethos of a pilgrim, of which I write more in the study *Norwidowski pielgrzym*, to be published in the collection of papers from the session on Norwid in Rzeszów (WSP, 23–24 V 1983).
 - 4 See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965).

Jest i wtóra – *moralność-zbiorowych-ciał*.

II

Dwie było tablic – dwie! – prawowitego cudu:⁵
 Jedna – władnie do dziś wszech-sumieniem,
 Druga – całym pękła kamieniem
 O twardość ludu.

III

Z pierwszej? – mamy zarys i siłę mamy
 Od niesienia rąk w dzieło zaczęte,
 Ale – *drugiej* odłamy
 Między Ludów Ludami
 Jak menhiry* sterczą rozpierzchnięte!

IV

Wobec *pierwszej*?... każdy a każdy – *rzeszą*!
 Lecz – by *drugą* od-calić,
 Czoła się nam mojąszą
 I zaczynają się lica blaskiem palić.
 – Wiatr ogromny, jak na Synai szczycie,
 Tętnią echa i gromy z błyskawicami;
 Dłonią czujesz, że tknąłeś *życie*...
 Podejmując Prawa odłamy.

V

Aż przyjdzie dzień... gdy *gniew*, co zbił *tablice*,
 Stanie się *zapalem*, który tworzy:
 Rozniepodziane złoży
 I pogodne odkryje lice.

**Menhir* – wysoki głaz druidyczny

(PWsz II, 78–79)

[MORALITIES

I

A Lover – an artist sometimes he must be,
 May he stand naked like Hercules;
 And *morality* is not just personal:
 There is the other – *morality-of-collective-bodies*.

5 The autograph of *Vade-mecum* has a different version: “Dwie było tablic – dwie! prawowitego cudu” [Two were the tablets – two! of lawful miracle]. The version quoted here according PWsz II modifies the original version, fully understandable in the light of this interpretation, without justification. The same occurs with earlier publications of the poem prepared by the same editor.

II

Two were the tablets – two! – of lawful miracle:
 One – still rules the omni-conscience,
 The other – broke in stone
 Against the hardness of the people.

III

Of the former?... – we have shape and strength
 From carrying hands into the started task,
 But – the chipped blocks of the *other*
 Between the People of the People
 Stand scattered like menhirs*!

IV

Towards the *first*?... each and every one – a *throng*!
 But – to re-whole the *other*,
 Our foreheads turn Moses
 And the countenance starts to glow.
 – Great wind, like on the Sinai summit,
 Echoes and thunder throbs with lightning;
 You feel you have touched *life* with your hand...
 Collecting the fragments of Law.

V

Till the day comes... when the *anger which broke the tablets*
 Becomes a *zeal which creates*:
 It shall put the scattered together
 And show a serene face.

**Menhir* – a tall druidic stone]

Let us record the process of understanding as a course of a meeting's development. Let us try and describe the poem according to how it meets us, how it moves our world.

2

The poem first throws you off balance because of the apparent obviousness of the words read by the letter. First, in the very title, “morality,” which in Norwid’s texts is a term so categorically tying human activity to the sphere of absolute Good, appears in an unusual grammatical form: in the Plural; and throughout Norwid’s work, one can hardly find any analogy helpful in understanding. True, there are many one-word titles naming key values (to name a few poems within the *Vademecum* cycle: “Miłość,” “Wielkość,” “Harmonia,” “Szczęście,” “Litość,” “Czułość” [“Love,” “Greatness,” “Harmony,” “Happiness,” “Mercy,” “Tenderness”]). Yet, not once can you see a Plural of the word that is the title of the poem, even if the text

uncovers a real or apparent complexity of the concept, even if it is ironic (as it is in “Szczęście” [“Happiness”] or “Litość” [“Mercy”]). On the other hand, titles of such poems such as “Specjalności” [“Specialities”] or “Naturalia” are in the Plural, the number is not consolidated in the poem’s truth by a quite obvious principle; the titles do not so much name a high value as they signal the sphere of appearances and occurrences.

Thus, an already comparative analysis of the title confirms the uniqueness of the central piece of *Vade-mecum*, as poem LI lies exactly in the middle thereof, which the reader senses intuitively. The reader is informed at the very start of the poem that there are various moralities. The title alone does not provide any explanation for the difference. It moves you into a state of amazement, the first step of poetry.

Perhaps it is then relativism – but with Norwid? The first stanza does not dispel such a possibility; yet upon reading you learn more. The wording of the third and the fourth lines hint at the principle of inner differentiation (or duality) of the word: “moralność nie tylko jest osobistą,” “Jest i wtóra” (PWSz II, 78) [morality is not just personal; there is the other]. That differentiating principle turns out to be a categorical otherness of the entities exercising moral values, not only rooted in the individual (personal) sphere, but also in the communal one (which might concern a community, a nation, or perhaps another collective body, such as any small group, or the Church). It is likely not a matter of different moral codes, but rather different grounds for the commitment, and perhaps even different manners of exercising value. Thus, the moral side, called by Norwid in the foreword to *Vade-mecum* “strona obowiązków” [the side of duties], calls upon the man to engage in analytical reflection and to ponder on the essence of one’s own role within it.

Still, it remains unclear how deep that distinction reaches. Various questions arise: is the distinction important at every time and place? If the ambiguity of the word is constant, where to look for the uniting value? Is that ambiguity perhaps related to the duality of the “letter” which sheds much light on the inner unity of the “word?”⁶ The questions are very difficult, but they touch upon the very essence of the poem. In order to understand “Moralności,” those are the questions to which answers ought to be sought. So far, the reader knows as little as (or as much as?) – through graphic distinction, and intonation difference when reciting – the fact that morality itself seems to appear in two shapes.

6 There are very close and deeply important connections between the topic of “Moralności” and the treatise from a few years later, *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On the Freedom of Speech], yet they are too complex to discuss here.

One is simply “morality,” the other is “moralność-zbiorowych-ciał” [morality-of-collective-bodies]. One wonders if the distinction includes the very reality of the idea. The poem’s beginning puts you at the crossroads of sense.

Before stepping deeper into the poem, there is no occasion to go beyond the plan of reflection. The image of a naked Hercules is a simile, the role of which is not clear at this point in the poem. The image seems almost unnecessary, not rising above the enveloping discursiveness of the first stanza. The reader senses that the most important is yet to come with clarifying evidence.

Indeed, as soon as the second stanza, you are struck with amazing force by the image of two tablets of equal legal power (“dwie! – prawowitego cudu” [two! – of lawful miracle]), but of such different fates. The manifestation and hidden changes of their situation throughout the course of the poem become an increasingly powerful centre crystallising the whole.⁷ One of them lasts until today, unshakable and irresistible, the other seems to be tied in its entire essence to the destructive or creative (“od-calający” [re-wholing]) impact of human will. Through the constant presence of the tablets in the word and in the uncommonly manifesting appearances, the poem’s world is built and transformed before your eyes (or with you?) in lively dynamics of duality and unity, breaking and consolidating, the “lawful miracle” of the beginning and the toil of completing, when “czoła się nam mojąszą” [our foreheads turn Moses]. That world is permeated with the spirit of difference, yet your encounter with the poem, the whole poem, does not leave you internally split. That meeting is not a source of a dilemma, but of strength: *if you want to, you can do it...*⁸ It is a world which *happens and* at the same time *lasts*. Its strength is not imposed by force on the reader – quite the opposite. It becomes your strength when you consciously, at the level of interpretation, make an axiological choice allowing yourself to be appropriated by the “We” (not the seeming “you” of structural dialoguing) of Norwid’s poem. It is as if the work of “re-wholing,” the work of foretelling *recollection*, which is in fact the work of preparation and hope for the final serenity of sense (when you face the “uncovered” face of the Other), happened *through you*.

It is through you and for you, but *not due to you*. The reader is not immediately able to notice the source (*dojrzeć do źródła* [see/reach/mature to the source]) of

7 Ingarden (*Studia z estetyki*, Vol. 1, 1966, p. 60) believes a clear and only one crystallising centre of the whole, with others subordinated to it and completing the quality, to be an important determinant of a masterpiece.

8 See Józef Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości* (Kraków: Znak, 1982), p. 490: “axiological experience, the core of which is: If you wish to, you can... Only now do I try to see what I should do, how to behave, whom to save, what to pursue and what to abandon.”

that strength. The pains of discovering it are your effort, not fully completed, to understand and to be with the poem, to *be*. It seems that everything that happens in the poem happens due to the poet. It was him who chose the words and images in such a way that their intensity strikes you and seizes you at the same time.

Those are words, such as “tablice” [tablets] and “Prawo” [Law], “od-calić” [re-whole] and “życie” [life], “odłamy” [chipped blocks] and “moralność-zbiorowychciał” [morality-of-collective-bodies], words like “menhiry” [menhirs], those are the images such as “Z pierwszej?... – mamy zarys i siłę mamy / Od niesienia rąk w dzieło zaczęte” [Of the former?... – we have shape and strength / From carrying hands into the started task], such as “Druga – całym pękła kamieniem / O twardość ludu” [The other – broke in stone / Against the hardness of the people] and “drugiej odłamy / Między Ludów Ludami / Jak menhiry sterczą rozpięzchnięte!” [the chipped blocks of the *other* / Between the People of the People / Stand scattered like menhirs!], such as “by drugą od-calić, / Czola się nam mojąszą / I zaczynają się lica blaskiem palić” [to re-whole the *other*, / Our foreheads turn Moses / And the countenance starts to glow] and “Dłonią czujesz, że tknąłeś życie... / Podejmując Prawa odłamy” [You feel you have touched *life* with your hand... / Collecting the fragments of Law]. Those are also images significantly different from the previously quoted ones, appearing as if beyond the historic time of the two tablets, but still entangled in the background of the situation and mediating between the spatiotemporal “now” and that which does not appear in the poem: “Wiatr ogromny, jak na Synai szczyście” [Great wind, like on the Sinai summit] and the *summa* of the last stanza, building over the irresistible dynamics of the verbs – “przyjdzie” [comes], “stanie się” [becomes], “złoży” [shall put together], “I pogodne odkryje lice” [And show a serene face].

True, it was the poet who chose the words and images. But when you listen to his speech, which may sometimes be directed openly towards You (“dłonią czujesz” [you feel you have been touched]), you find in it the echo of his way towards expressing that which escapes words because it is itself on its way⁹ and

9 See Is 55: 9: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” See also John 14: 6: “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Quoted (here and elsewhere) after the New International Version (NIV). There are three exceptions to this rule, the quotations (2 Cor 4: 18; 2 Cor 3: 4–8; 2 Cor 3: 14–18) coming from the King James Version (further as KJV). The three quotations are treated as direct interpretational context of the poem’s symbolic presentation, and hence quoting a translation well-known in the poet’s time helps reach the Biblical source of his imagery. I do believe that if I wish to transcend objective-historical exegesis and consistently

is the sense which happens always and everywhere, open to everything, like light and the wind.

In Norwid's poem "Moralności," that echoing way, that work in "pot-czoła"¹⁰ [sweat-of-the-brow] to find the right expression might even be the most important of all. It is thanks to that way that the following postulate, so close to the experiences of *Vade-mecum*, comes true in this poem like in just a few other ones by Norwid:

W doskonałej liryce powinno być jak w odlewie gipsowym: zachowane powinny być i nie zgładzone nożem te kresy, gdzie forma z formą mija się i pozostawia szpary. (Letter to B. Zaleski, ca. 15 XI 1867; PWsz IX, 328)¹¹

[Perfect lyric poetry should be like a plaster cast: those rough edges where forms cross one another and leave gaps should be left intact and not smoothed over with a knife.]¹²

In the poem's world, those rough edges are the clearance (Heidegger's *Lichtung*) revealing the life of the Word untamed with any form.¹³ They are a sign of

structure the interpretation as a meeting at the source of the poem (as a m e e t i n g, hence as a mutual e x c h a n g e), there is no reason to impose on myself the rule of non-anachronistic translator context followed by rigorous philosophers. First, the thought in the Biblical text is dictated not with one or the other currently popular translation, but with the fundamental event of the Word and with the history of tradition. It is known that Norwid was familiar with various translations of the Bible, and sometimes visited the common sources of poetry and the Revelation himself. He would have likely given an ironic look at people closing his Biblical thinking within one or another translation. Second, having introduced two temporal horizons of understanding – the King James Version known in Norwid's times and the New International Version of ours – I may be able to present the open horizon of the Biblical Word and the poet's Word in a clearer manner. As the title of these considerations suggests, the objective is not to research the objects of poetic reference (e.g. "Research on the Bible in Norwid's works"), but to follow the routes leading to common sources of Norwid's poem and my understanding.

- 10 The motif often appears in Norwid's works as a key motif for his philosophy of man in all three perspectives: historical, social and final. In *Vade-mecum* see in particular LXIII. "Prac-czoła" [Work in Brow's Sweat].
- 11 Norwidologists (among them Waclaw Borowy, foreword in: Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum. Podobizna autografu*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego, 1947, p. VIII; published in the second volume of this edition as: "Foreword to the Facsimile of Vade-mecum's Autograph," p. 53 – editor's notes) usually interpret the sentence in the context of the poet's metrical innovation, yet I believe that the poet meant matters of far more importance.
- 12 Trans. Adam Czerniawski, in: *Modern Poetry in Translation*, Nos. 23/24 (1975), p. 3.
- 13 See the thoughts in *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On the Freedom of Speech] on various forms of Word constraints, when the "inner word" suffers.

trust in the speech which comes to us when the poet falls silent, but it comes because he first spoke. They are the place of opening to “wygłos-pierwszy” [first-expression], the hidden quality of speech revealed by Norwid in the poem (*Vade-mecum*, LXXXI) titled “Kolebka pieśni” [“The Cradle of Songs”] and in the essay “Milczenie” [“Silence”].

In “Moralności,” that *inbetweenness* of the forms crossing each other can be discovered, in particular, when the rhythmically shaped story of the two tablets, constructed on parallelisms and contrasts, is to be reconciled with the symbolic value of their parallel and coexistent fates. It is also discovered when the reader thinks of the qualitative harmonisation of the work, which is so difficult to unite due to the title, and yet intuitively obvious – despite the “niezglądzony kres” [rough edges not smoothed out] between the rhetoric utterance carrying the abstract “morality” and the highly metaphorized context of the words “tablets” and “Law.” It is the contemplation of the sensed (through the distinct intentionality of the poem’s structure, based on opalescent duality) although unclear correspondence of the first and the second tablet; and it is consideration of something far deeper, the hidden relationship of the poem’s opening (and thus structurally important) word “Kochający” [a Lover] (and that in the context of being an “artist” and “Hercules”) and the closing image of the one who “pogodne odkryje lice” [shall show a serene face], that lead to the first *risky step to what is unexpressed* in the poem.

First, the reader thinks “within” the poem, seeking its secret within its text. Now that they want to transcend it, called by its unsung desire,¹⁴ the readers move from the present to what is coming,¹⁵ and in doing so they are even more faithful to the text, for the poem also looks to the future, expecting a coming; it prophesies: “Aż przyjdzie dzień” [Till the day comes...]. And you suddenly realise that in trusting the poem, you trust not only the poet’s word, but also the *source of that word*.

14 Here and in various other places in the paper, other poems of *Vade-mecum* are either quoted or referenced in order to prove at least in such a “symbolic,” abridged form the deep and versatile connections of “Moralności” within the entire cycle, symmetrically constructed on both sides of the poem. The thesis of the symmetry of *Vade-mecum* and its compositional and axiological connections with the symbolism of the Cross and the “way of life” are discussed in a separate study of mine.

15 See Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” in: *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York and London: Garland Pub., 1977).

3

When one listens carefully to what is silence among the speech in “Moralności,” two words draw particular attention: “tablice” [tablets] and “Prawo” [Law], and one specific image: “Czoła się nam mojżeszą” (PWSz II, 79) [Our foreheads turn Moses]. They radiate a creative power towards the poetic world of the work, and a transforming power towards the one who listens and understands. That power finds its roots in the Biblical Word.

The tablets truly participate in the “language in festive mode,”¹⁶ open to every possible concretisation and restoring assimilations. They appear twice directly, in key moments of the created world, marking its beginning and ending, while – when metonymically concealed (or maybe actually made real?) with a numeral – they are a symbolically amplified tenor of clarity. In that world, the tablets are clearly related to the sphere of sacred. And, although they both were “prawowitego cudu” [of lawful miracle], the diverse manner in which they are presented is matched by a no less diverse manner of manifestation of sacredness.

The tablet called “first” never shows as materially as the “other” one. Of the “other,” it is known that it was made of stone and that it broke; the circumstances of what caused the tablet to be broken are also known (“o twardość ludu” [against the hardness of the people]). The sacred revealed in a material shape has boundaries here (for “ma granice Nieskończony” [the Infinite One has boundaries]) and its form is destroyed, although the essence is indestructible (the poem further speaks of the life of the Law in chipped blocks which, although “rozpierzchnięte” [scattered], remain mysteriously a whole). The breaking of the tablet, caused by people’s reluctance towards the miracle of a covenant with God, bears the sense of an act of martyrdom; therefore, the poem seems to concentrate on both the mystery of the Old and New Testament. But there is still the “first” tablet, with attributes of duration and power. Over the turbulent fate of the “other,” so very fatigued with the tempers of people, it invariably (“do dziś” [still]!) rules consciences. It is always and everywhere an indivisible whole, the triumphant sacred. But what does it truly mean that towards it, “każdy a każdy – rzeszą!” [each and every one – a *throng*]?

When you reach to the Books of Moses with the description of the story of the tablets of the Covenant with the *Decalogue* (moral Law), the inadequacy of Norwid’s numeration against a superficially read “order” of the biblical tablets is

16 See Paul Ricoeur, *Philosophy, Ethics, and Politics*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), p. 15.

easily noticeable. Yet, it is worth trusting the poet and, instead of speaking of apparent misconstruction, considering the sense of that difference.¹⁷ To summarise the interpretation which has just been presented: the tablet called the “other” by Norwid is related to the dramatic history of the sacred revealed in the historical reality of humanity, and the “first” tablet exists unchanged in ideal space. The word “Law,” used only once in the poem, has a uniting function and signals the identity of essence of the tablets and two moralities. So, what is that “first” tablet?

When the motif of the tablets, the Decalogue in the Book of Exodus, and the Book of Deuteronomy are traced with care and understanding (and not “nominal” literalness), the conclusion appears that the tablet called “first” in “Moralności” symbolises the indestructible Word of God (Ex 20: 2–17; Deut 5: 6–21), unaffected despite the stone tablets being broken angrily by Moses (that is the “other” tablet with Norwid), always one and always first: “the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (KJV, 2 Cor 4: 18). Although repeated and recorded again (Ex 34: 1–28), which is the second (double) stone tablet in the Bible and still the “other” in Norwid’s terms, once expressed it always remains unchanged. Invariably consubstantial with its revealed form, it remains in unity with the Spirit and the Letter; although in historical reality (the human one, thus imperfect, which takes revenge on perfection with “deficiency”) it is seen as dual: the letter of the commandment and the spirit “turning foreheads Moses.” As the Letter, it obliges obedience for each and every individual personally and equally (“każdy a każdy – rzeszq” [each and every one – a *throng*]), and it is not damaged in any manner even if the letter turns into ruin (“pękla kamieniem” [broke in stone]). As the Spirit, it is the source of “zarys” [shape] and “siła” [strength] for man. Being always itself, and being in its revealed duality a Trinity, it is a unity which speaks but whose face is covered. The voice of the angry, covered God from the Old Testament, speaks to the throng with a compelling command; it does not require humanity to have Moses’ responsibility for the spirit’s reception. It does not enforce priesthood

17 It is difficult to agree with J.W. Gomulicki when he writes (in the comment to the poem “Moralności,” in: Cyprian Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, Vol. 2, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1966, p. 801) of the story of the two tablets in “Moralności” being “somewhat modified by the poet” in order to “better show the “hardness of the people” against which the first tablet (and more precisely: the first tablets) broke.” It is not a modification to fit pragmatic purposes of the poem, but a deep interpretation of the Bible reaching beneath the surface of the text in a Christian spirit, and a reason for the apparent discrepancy between the biblical numeration of the tablets and the one in Norwid’s poem.

but demands personal morality. It reveals the natural law and calls upon human nature – not the social one. For the gift of the Word expects the gift of “niesienie rąk w dzieło zaczęte” [carrying hands into the started task].¹⁸

Yet, if the tablet of Law was “całym pękła kamieniem” [broke in stone], it means that the started work of revelation of the unity of the Letter and the Spirit is, at the same time, a fractured work (although, being “whole,” it never stopped being the Work, it is cracked and living at the same time). The indestructible whole still judges humanity, but the “throng” lives in a passive fear of the oppressive command of the tablet, not having internalised it and not having “re-wholed” it personally. That much is known: it was Moses who, with great fortitude and with sweaty brow, “re-wholed” the broken testament of the started covenant – only him: “The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was” (Ex 20: 21). But then Norwid says: “Czoła się nam moją” [Our foreheads turn Moses]; and earlier “by *drugą* od-calić” [to re-whole the *other*]. Does that mean that the indestructible existence of the “first” tablet is imperfect without human participation? It seems that there might be more meaning to that, namely: the Law is always and constantly a gift to us. And as a gift, it is both love and obligation. It is not a gift if not accepted – “re-wholed.” And yet it still *is*, and thus *lives on hope*.

Norwid’s vision of morality is not passive but active, a vision of a great, collective duty of “re-wholing” the Law betrayed by people whom it entrusted hope for perfect fulfilment; the vision of heartfelt communion with the sacred cannot be realised fully in the world of the Old Testament. And when one listens carefully to the message of “Moralności,” there is no doubt that such a vision is the true and main topic of the poem,¹⁹ full of concern for the mystically living

18 In Polish, the image of “carrying hands” has a clear and quite obvious analogy to the image of “carrying gifts” and I never considered it doubtful: we carry hands like a gift to the started task, in a completing effort. Thus the proposed (and quite categorically so, yet without a justifying interpretation) correction of: “Odniesienie rąk w dzieło zaczęte” [re-carrying/referring hands into the started task] (whatever it may mean) in an otherwise very valuable book by Józef Franciszek Fert, *Norwid poeta dialogu* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1982), p. 138, should be firmly opposed.

19 Again, it is difficult to agree with Gomulicki when, in his comment to “Moralności” (Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, Vol. 2, pp. 801–802), that eminent norwidologist considers the main topic of the poem to be simply “falsehood of the ‘outer world’” and “hardness of society which makes it difficult for them to understand, evaluate and adopt higher values.” This essay attempts to present also other thematic layers of the poem.

“odłamy” [chipped blocks] of the Law, which show human fall and weakness, and yet wake humanity to a rebirth, giving it even now “shape and strength.” But now (how to define “now” – the question remains to be answered: what is the temporal turning point in Norwid’s poem when “Czoła się nam mojąszą” [Our foreheads turn Moses]) it seems a different strength, amplified and new. It manifests itself not only through the Word of the “first” tablet, but also appears as a direct response to the caring touch of the “dłoń” [hand] – as “life” hidden and enriching those who *remember* in the “re-wholing” endeavour. The poem states outright: “Dłonią czujesz, że tknąłeś życie... / Podejmując Prawa odłamy” [You feel you have touched *life* with your hand... / Collecting the fragments of Law]. The stone letter of the Law breaks against human sin (“twardość” [hardness]), but the Word is still living among us, although in a different manner now (again, when is the “now?”). Mystically scattered “Między Ludów Ludami” [between the People of the People], it is the leaven of transformation for us. Its martyrdom has become a redeeming sacrifice to transform us, and so the poem states: “Kochający – koniecznie bywa artystą” [A Lover – an artist sometimes he must be]. Such understanding moves the reading from the Old Testament to the New one, from the old covenant of Law, to the new covenant of the Gospel, which is the covenant of the Spirit:

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? [KJV, 2 Cor 3: 4–8]

That is where the boundary of time stands in the poem “Moralności,” that boundary so often forgotten by the “cywilizacja zakrywająca” [covering civilisation].²⁰ The event of the Cross is not named openly in “Moralności,” yet it participates in the deepest measure in the poem’s hidden sense.²¹ The Law does

20 Significant here is poem XXIV from *Vade-mecum*, “Sieroctwo” [Orphanhood], but also many other works of Norwid.

21 Ricoeur defined the basic task of hermeneutic interpretation as “the work of thought which consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning” (“Existence and Hermeneutics,” in: Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations. Essays in Hermeneutics*, London-New York: Continuum, 2004, p. xiv). As concerns Norwid’s connection of the symbolism of the tablets and the Law with the space of the Cross hidden in the deepest layers of the poem’s sense, one can indicate a very interesting

not just “rule” conscience, but it becomes life for each human You which, through sharing the feeling (“feeling” *life* in the “chipped blocks,” *stronger than death*), undertakes the collective (all-human “us”) work of redemptive “re-wholing.” Only “now,” after the beneficial experience of the limit of the temporal fall, the Law uncovers its true promising sense and thus humanity is called to the creative toil of following Him who *overcomes deficiency*. Norwid’s poem seems to be a prophesy akin to the Sermon on the Mount, concentrating its words into a poetic image: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Mt 5: 17).

The work on “re-wholing” the Law is presented in “Moralności” as maturing life which overcomes normal human condition; it is the toil of maturing conscious priesthood, the uncovering of the man’s true being is revealed in the martyrdom of the Perfect Priest. It is stated in another poem from *Vademecum* (XV): in “Sfinks [II]” [“The Sphinx” [II]]: “Człowiek?... – jest to kapłan bezwiedny / I niedojrzały” (PWsz II, 33) [*Man?... – he is a highpriest unaware, / And unformed..*²²]. And now, today, if there is only a will “by drugą od-calić” [to re-whole the other], one can enter the dynamic state of mediation: “Czoła się nam mojąszą / I zaczynają się lica blaskiem palić” [Our foreheads turn Moses / And the countenance starts to glow] like with Moses after he talked to God on Mount Sinai, and all that occurs in the aura of the revealing the sacerd (for us, here and now), the great wind. Only now, the fear of the masses struck with the letter of the Law is gone – fear is replaced with the responsibility of spiritual work, Norwid’s work “z potem twego czoła” [with the sweat of your brow]. The

analogy in sacred art. A similar symbolically presented connection between the Old and the New Testament is found in the case of a tabernacle built in the shape of the Arc of the Covenant. And when the double door of the tabernacle (hiding the Host) are shaped like the double tablet of the Decalogue – as it is done e.g. in the altar of the Chapel of Christ Crucified in the parish church in Białystok – the poetic vision of “Moralności” is particularly close. In such a synthetic and tangibly concrete imaging, you face the truth that the hidden sense of the expressed Law is awaiting “the Lord’s glory” (2 Cor 3: 18), yet first you have to reach it, “carrying hands into the started task” and opening with a priest’s gesture the curtain of the door, as if passing through the Law and in its temporal letter, susceptible to destruction, and yet necessary (thus worthy of “re-wholing”) as a visible sign of constant importance. It is worth considering research on where in his European journeys Norwid might have met with the motif and to what extent such a meeting might have inspired his sculptural, poetic (and emblematic!) imagination.

22 Trans. Danuta Borchardt in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), p. 33.

responsibility is a response to the fear,²³ and the hope that time will come when “personal morality” and the “moralność-zbiorowych-ciał” [morality of collective bodies] become a simply indivisible life in the Law.

Thus, the poem on the maturing of the “*moralność-zbiorowych-ciał*” [morality-of-collective-bodies] is a poem on maturing responsible morality, conscious and creative, when each person is revealed to be valuable. It is a poem on shifting from oppressive and fearsome Law to a Law which gives freedom: from the Old-Testament Law to the Gospel. The poetic vision of the dual situation of the Law, and at the same time situation of the oppressed Word,²⁴ proves a remarkable achievement from Norwid: penetrating “*błyskawicowym gestem*” [with a lightning’s gesture] the Bible read in a Christian manner. It likely also proves his close reading of St Paul’s letters (in particular Romans 7–13; 2 Corinthians 3–4; Galatians 3–5), numerous traces of which can be found in Norwid’s poetic works and letters.

With this, the true greatness of Norwid’s reflection is revealed. Having understood the depth of difference between the completeness of the expressed beginning and the imperfection of the human attempt to repeat that expression, the poet in his work did not stop with the situation of battered values, but became a trustee of our hope, allowing the reader to help carry hands into the started task (“Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come,” 2 Cor 5: 5). For the stone letters “re-wholed” by Moses only restored the punitive Law, and only our creative participation in the redemptive work of the Incarnate Word (which survived the fall “*jak wszystko, co zbudzi*” [like everything it shall wake], and now lives in the chipped “blocks” of Law as the truth which “*się razem dochodzi i czeka*” [one both reaches it and awaits it]) can have the power to restore us to the whole. And that is our collective task, “collective duty” even in contemporary times, so lost, “*w Epoce, w której jest więcej / Rozłamań – niżli Dokończeń*” (PWsz II, 148) [in an Epoch where there are more / Breaks-apart – than Completions...] – as Norwid puts it in the last poem of *Vade-mecum* (C. “*Na zgon śp. Józefa Z., oficera Wielkiej-Armii, rannego pod Paryżem, jednego z naczelników powstania w Polsce*” [“On the Death of the Late Józef Z., Officer of the Great-Army, Injured near Paris, One of the Leaders of the Insurrection in Poland”]), and in the most

23 Paraphrasing the words of Józef Tischner in *Świat ludzkiej nadziei* (Kraków: Znak, 1975), p. 279.

24 Again, noteworthy are the deep connections of the philosophical thought in “Moralności” (and – due to the poem’s significant role in the whole cycle – the entire *Vade-mecum*) with *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On the Freedom of Speech].

central poem of the cycle which divides *Vade-mecum* in two symmetrical parts like a cross crowning the architecture of a rood beam in a Gothic church. In “Moralności,” the reader experiences an exceptionally intense and strong vision, because – with riveting power of poetic clarity – the poet uncovers the clearance in which the Word unexpressed in the poem reveals the Law written “not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor 3: 3). The poem opens with the word “Kochający” [A Lover], and the closing image is the image of an uncovered face, so alike the letters of St Paul:

But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. [KJV, 2 Cor 3: 14–18]

The last image of Norwid’s poem uses hope to untie the dual morality in the reviving Law with a duty of collective (“our”) work on maturing to complete humanity through toil of people (“personal”) and nations (“collective-bodies”). And it is not only in “Moralności” that “Kochający” [A Lover] is identified with an artist. The highest sense of art as the most creative form of work is no less intensively expressed in “Fortepian Szopena” [Chopin’s Grand Piano], as well as in *Promethidion*, and actually – with all its painful and sacrificial drama – in all Norwid’s poetic work, experienced with such a deep “fall” and such strong hope. The visions of the expected fulfilment in “Moralności” are visions of a doubly fulfilled gift – in response to the effort of the forming community of people. Tis a difficult faith, but it is also an exceptional poem which leads you through thunder and lightning into the light.

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Sławomir Rzepczyński

Norwid's Melancholy Lyricism: Between the "Black Suite" and the Litograph Solo

Abstract: The article aims to investigate the category of melancholy in Norwid's work. The point of departure is the lithograph *Solo*, made in 1861, which the author of the article puts in the context of visual representations of melancholy, from Dürer's celebrated *Melencolia I* to the Romantic images of the melancholy of the world according to Caspar David Friedrich. The author then goes on to compare these motifs with Norwid's lyrical poems, such as the sonnet "Samotność" ["Loneliness"], the two poems called "Moja piosnka" ["My song"] I and II, "Epos-nasza" ["Our Epic"], and other elements of the so-called "black suite." The author demonstrates common features between Norwid's representations of melancholy and its Romantic understanding (solitude, sadness, impression of a disintegrating world, urge for self-destruction, predilection for *vanitas* motifs, and abandonment of the allegorical representation of melancholy in favour of symbolic presentations of its effects).

Taking into consideration its biographical context, the author argues that the melancholy reflected in Norwid's work accompanied the poet throughout his life. What saved the poet from melancholic nihilism (and was recognized by Norwid himself as a chance for salvation) was his faith rooted in hope. At this point, the author invokes S. Kierkegaard's reflections in *Either/Or* and identifies the expression of such hope in the phrase "the third word" (i.e. faith) in the poem "To rzecz ludzka!" ["It is a Human Matter!"] and in the motif of the birds in the lithograph *Solo*.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, melancholy, lithography, allegory, biographical context

In this article, I treat melancholy not as a mental illness, already known to Hippocrates, nor as – according to Aristotle's classification – a distinguishing feature of brilliant people, but as a cultural phenomenon connected with a certain vision of the world in a state of decay, and recognisable by its characteristic motifs, the post-ancient history of which was characterised by Wojciech Bałus in his book *Mundus melancholicus* as follows:

In the Middle Ages [the notion of melancholy – S. Rz.], close to acedia that was recognised among the main sins – and thus negatively valued – was brought out again in the Renaissance, mainly as a propensity of great intellectuals born under the sign of Saturn (*melancholia generosa*). Modern times brought an explosion of varieties of melancholy and states similar to it. *Spleen, ennui, Weltschmerz, taedium vitae*, [Słowacki's] "jaskółczy niepokój" [swallow's anxiety], frowning, nausea – these are just some of the numerous *états d'âme* presented in art, recognised and described in fiction and scientific

treatises ... These states were no longer valued negatively. Not to mention that since the Romantic era, a type of melancholy that is not a mental illness started to be conceived as a philosophical experience. As a matter of principle – wistful, it appeared in places where the image of man and all beings was perceived in barely optimistic categories.¹

Mental melancholy could easily be attributed to Norwid. Some lyrics can be interpreted in such a context, for example “Moja piosnka I” [“My song I”] and “Moja piosnka II” [“My song II”], in which the melancholic “self” of the subject can be recognised. Also among the characters created by the poet it is easy to find melancholics, such as Mak-Yks from *Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy* [The Noble Lady’s Ring] or the protagonist of *Assunta*.

However, it would be difficult to say that Norwid has succumbed to the “disease of the century,” or that he has made it, like Krasiński, a fundamental subject of self-reflection. The fact that he was familiar with the ailments of melancholy is evidenced by the letter he sent on 14 July 1854 to Michał Kleczkowski from London, after his return from America. In the letter he wrote:

Tobie zaś piszę, że jestem w Londynie i że tu przebywam od dni kilku, lubo słaby, jednakże dużo zdrowszy od tego, jak byłem w ostatnie czasy w Ameryce, skąd też i dlatego wyjechać musiałem, iż w taką popadłem melancholię, która mało mię od obłąkanego odróżniała. (DW X, 514)

[I am writing to you that I am in London and that I have been here for a few days, though I’m weak, I am much healthier than when I was in America in the recent time, which is also why I had to leave because I fell into such a melancholy which made me little different from a lunatic.]

Although Norwid lived in melancholic times and in a melancholic world, although the “czarna nić” [black thread] of melancholy followed him “zawsze i wszędzie” [always and everywhere], he resisted it in his life and his work. The melancholy he experienced and lived through became a source of knowledge for him, and it can be said that he used it in the way he postulated in his poem “Fatum:” “odejrzał mu, jak gdy artysta / Mierzy swojego kształt modelu” (PWsz I, 49) [... he gazed back steadily like an artist / Who sizes up his model’s form].²

This study, which does not claim to fully describe Norwid’s *mundus melancholicus*, will be guided by the lithograph titled *Solo*, created in 1861, and

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- 1 Wojciech Bałus, *Mundus melancholicus. Melancholiczny świat w zwierciadle sztuki* (Kraków: Universitas, 1996), p. 11.
 - 2 Trans. Adam Czerniawski, Cyprian Norwid, *Selected Poems* (London: Anvil Press, 2004), p. 67.

poems included in the so-called “czarna suita” [black suite]. Although these works are separated by more than ten years, and Norwid as the author of the earlier “black suite” is to some extent somebody different from the author of the lithograph *Solo*, the motifs characteristic of melancholy can also be found in both his poetic works and in his artworks. The juxtaposition of these motifs is not meant to prove a genetic link between them (the lithograph is not a simple consequence of the poet's biographical experiences in the 1840s). Rather, I would like to treat this lithograph as a specific vision of the world created by a forty-year-old artist who has experienced a lot in his life and who presents this vision in a mature artistic form.

SOLO



Figure 2. C. Norwid, *Solo*, 1861, lithograph, paper, National Library in Poland. Photo National Library in Poland.

Melancholia [*Melancholy*] is the subtitle of the famous and one of Norwid's most beautiful lithographs.³ In the foreground we see a figure, probably female, wrapped in a draped robe, leaning slightly to the right (from the viewer's perspective), sitting or supporting herself on a growing (or fallen) tree behind her, and her head slightly tilted to the left. The right hand, bent at the elbow, is reaching her left cheek; the left hand is resting on her head, above the forehead. The place around the central female figure, on the left, right, and probably also behind her is filled with musical instruments: two cellos (or contrabasses) with vertically sticking griffins, percussion instruments (drums, kettledrums, cymbals, triangle), music stands and chairs, on which – in disorder – lie scattered music cards and scrolls. Everything looks as if the musicians have left their instruments. The tree on which the woman is leaning is withered, similar to the row of trees growing above the water and filling the background – probably conifers, maybe spruces, devoid of vital signs as if they had lost their life-giving juices – their branches sinisterly protrude in all directions. Two bulky masses are sticking out of the water, resembling the roofs of cottages, as if the area has been flooded. The shore is probably sandy as can be seen from the lines characteristic of dunes. In the upper left corner, above the water, there are two birds, and behind them in the furthest background, a large oval disk of the rising or (more likely) setting sun.

Hanna Widacka, presenting this lithograph in the article entitled “Grafika Cypriana Norwida”⁴ [“Cyprian Norwid as a Graphic Artist”], juxtaposes it with the famous copperplate *Melencolia I* by Albrecht Dürer, which Norwid mentioned several times (e.g. in a letter to Marian Sokołowski of January 1865). At the same time, she points to obvious differences, “Contrary to Dürer's *Melancholy*, she [the woman – S. Rz.] is accompanied by no living creature, neither putto nor dog.”⁵ Given that Dürer's copperplate stems from 1514, these differences should

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- 3 It is not certain that this lithograph is indeed subtitled as *Melancholia*. Such a suggestion was made by J.W. Gomulicki: “The starting point of this composition, which Norwid supposedly called his ‘Melancholy’ ..., was a drawing from 1860, which the artist promised to Magdalena Łuszczewska” (PWsz XI, 363). Without deciding whether the lithograph *Solo* has a subtitle, I accept Gomulicki's suggestion as probable.
 - 4 Hanna Widacka, “Grafika Cypriana Norwida,” *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 3–4 (1985–1986), pp. 153–180 [published in the second volume of this edition as: “Cyprian Norwid as a Graphic Artist,” pp. 263–312 – editor's notes].
 - 5 Widacka, “Cyprian Norwid as a Graphic Artist,” p. 293.

not be surprising. After all, melancholy as an artistic motif went through many transformations before Norwid's time.

Above all, in the presentation of melancholic motifs, there was a break with the allegory which was so characteristic of the former masters of melancholy motifs: Dürer, Castiglione, or Salvator Rosa. Therefore, it is not Dürer's copperplate that should be evoked as the context in which Norwid's lithograph should be interpreted but, for instance, the works of Caspar David Friedrich, whose drawings, woodcuts, and paintings reflect the artistic images of melancholy already from the nineteenth century (e.g. *Wanderer at the Milestone Column*, 1802; *Melancholy*, ca. 1804; *Monk by the Sea*, 1809–1810). In the already quoted book, while showing the novelty in the treatment of melancholy themes in the early nineteenth-century art on the example of Friedrich's work, Wojciech Bałus notes, "what the artist *only* begins to show is incarnate melancholy, melancholy in action or melancholy seen through the effects it produces."⁶ Thus, Norwid does not present an allegorical cipher in his lithograph; rather, it is a melancholic vision of the world in a state of decay in which the presented motifs have lost their purpose.

LONELINESS

If we look at Norwid's plastic works of art, we get the impression that Norwid knew two ways of presenting eyes. They are either stone-like, dead, as if turned inwards, remembering some inner pain, and often not seeing the outside world, or – crazy, as if seeing the madness of the surrounding world and responding to this world with a crazy "odejrzenie" [gaze back]. In the lithograph *Solo* we are dealing with the first case. The woman's eyes are closed or half-closed, they do not reveal any contact with the surrounding world, and they seem to express total isolation from everything that surrounds them, which was signalled in the title.

The motif of solitude and loneliness is present in all of Norwid's works. It is significant that the poet's first known sonnet (probably from 1839) is titled "Samotność" ["Loneliness"], while the theme of solitude and loneliness permeates the entire lyricism of the Warsaw period. However, this should not be referred to as melancholy, but rather "melancholising," which is the result of following a certain convention of "sweet" solitude, when "lekko oddychać, słodko marzyć duszy" [the soul is breathing lightly, dreaming sweetly] and contemplates "wdzięk i urok milczenia" (PWsz I, 3) [the grace and charm of silence]. Solitude

6 Bałus, *Mundus melancholicus*, p. 12.

is not suffering here; it is at most a temporary ailment which can bring certain benefits – it can transfer us into the space of dreams, allow our imagination to play freely, and trigger creative possibilities. Such solitude is accepted, sometimes even expected.

However, the 1840s already brought a different taste of solitude, which filled the poems from the so-called “black suite” (the name is accurate to the extent that it evokes “black melancholy,” associated with depression, despair, leading to suicidal thoughts): “Moja piosnka I” [“My song I”] with its motif of the ubiquitous “black thread” or “Epos-nasza” [“Our Epic”] from the end of the same decade, where the lyrical subject identified himself with Cervantes’ “knight-errant,” whose memory “smutek budzi, co się wężem zżyma” (PWsz I, 159) [evokes sadness, which bridles like a snake]. This encompasses the loneliness of seeking the truth, the loneliness of being rejected by society, and the loneliness of being lost in time. It is no longer the conventionalised melancholy of loneliness, but the poetic image of lonely existence, acute and desperate, for which the poet sought justification and found it in the tragic regularity of rejecting outstanding individuals by their contemporaries, which he presented in his poem [“Coś ty Atenom zrobił, Sokratesie”] [“What Have You Done to Athens, Socrates”] of 1856, and in the poem [“Klaskaniem mając obrzękłe prawice”] [“Their Hands Swollen from Clapping”], which begins the *Vade-mecum* cycle. There, probably thinking of himself, he wrote about God’s commandment to live in “żywota pustyni” [in life’s desert]. In this, in a sense, ironic anointing, he saw a vocation to fulfil a mission, but also a condemnation to wander alone on “ziemia, kłatwą spalona” [earth scorched with curses], on roads “zarosłych w piołun, mech i szalej” [overrun with wormwood, lichen, and cowbane], and in a space of “nuda” [tedium] inherited from “wielkoludy” (PWsz II, 15) [giants].⁷ In the same poem, while announcing the main themes of *Vade-mecum*, he completed his “Don Quixotesque” late existence with the image of premature existence, appreciated only by his “późny wnuk” [late grandson]. It is the loneliness of seeking understanding with the world and the bitterness of being rejected by the world, and, as a consequence, a failure to reject the world.

This feeling of loneliness intensified during the poet’s stay in America, to where he set off, as he called himself in his poem [“Pierwszy list, co mnie doszedł z Europy”] [“The First Letter I Received from Europe”], as “nad-kompletowy aktor” [a superfluous actor], with a sense of “samego siebie ruin” [the ruins

7 Trans. Danuta Borhardt in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2012), p. 15.

of his own self] and where hope for a change of fate soon gave way to melancholy, about which he wrote in the already quoted letter to Kleczkowski that it “*mało go do obłąkanego odróżniała*” (DW X, 514) [*made him little different from a lunatic*]. In “Moja piosnka [II],” loneliness resounded with a longing “do kraju tego” [for that country] which he did not find in his long journey and knew he would not find. It was the loneliness of feeling the need to search for the ideal which one cannot find, which “być musi, choć się tak nie stanie” (PWsz I, 224) [must be, though it will not happen].

The Woman-Melancholy from the lithograph *Solo*, has turned away from the world as if bent by the weight of a withered tree-world, with a sore and petrified face, as if the experienced suffering made it impossible to see in her either the reflection of the external world or inner feelings; she seems to be a monument of loneliness, and it is as if she were the sculpture of her own tombstone. The world around her has ceased to exist for her. However, it does exist for the viewer.

THE WORLD IN DECAY

Not only does Norwid's lithograph *Solo* feature a lone woman, but every motif here is “lonely,” has lost its connection with other elements, has been separated from them, deprived of connections with them, and detached from the functions it once had to perform but now has lost them. The trees wither, the water that could supply them is a destructive force, the music does not fill the space because the instruments have been abandoned by the musicians and the woman will not play them *alone*. She can only plunge into despair because this world is without a source, and she cannot be its source. This is how the double title of the lithograph could be interpreted – to be a soloist in a withering world in which the whole orchestra should play, is to be melancholic.

Another poetic picture of the decaying world in Norwid's poetry can be found in the previously mentioned “black suite.” The poem “To rzecz ludzka!” [“It is a Human Matter!”], biographically linked to the poet's stay in the ruins of Pompeii in the summer of 1844, in this – as he calls it – “Miasto cieniów” [City of shadows], attracts particular attention.

Melancholy motifs are evoked already at the beginning of the poem:

Wszystko mi tu łamkie, kruche,
Gdzie obróć dłoń, ruina.
Wieją wiatry na posuchę,
Na posuchę iłknie ślina.
We mnie, w świecie – grób: ...

(PWsz I, 61)

[Everything here is brittle, fragile,
Wherever I turn my hand, there's a ruin.
The winds are blowing for drought,
Saliva runs empty in drought.
In me, in the world – a grave: ...]

The ruin is a melancholy motif older than Romanticism, but it was in Romanticism that the parallel between the ruin and the world, and between a disintegrating building and a man underwent particular intensification.⁸ The ruin as a metaphor of the world evokes *vanitas* reflections and in Norwid's poem these focus primarily on the desperate question posed to the former inhabitants of the volcano-damaged city: "Czy byli?!" [Were they?!] – as if the ruins of Pompeii were at the same time the ruins of their material and spiritual world, and what is left, some "łamkie" [brittle] and "kruche" [fragile] "zlepki" [fragments] falling apart when touched, makes us think about the insignificance, passing, and futility of desires and dreams. Pompeii is also a testimony to the victory (although, as it turns out, only apparent) of nature over history:

... a w dwa roki
Kwiat się rzuci modrooki,
A w pięć roków dąbek, potem...

(PWsz I, 61–62)

[... and in two years' time
A blue-eyed flower will appear,
And in five years an oak tree, then...]

Even the material objects left by the inhabitants of the city, although for Norwid – an artist, an art lover – they are masterpieces, are juxtaposed by the poet with insignificance.

At the end of the poem, the title "rzecz ludzka" [a human thing] acquires a new dimension, but in the "observational" or "representational" layer, in direct view, Pompeii evokes the image of the world as a space of melancholy, where elements of the natural world are also annihilated:

Dziecię, młodzian, starzec – zdrzewiał
I rozesnął się do czysta,
By ów niegdyś rdzeń żywiczny,
Co był drzewem, potem statkiem,

8 See Grażyna Królikiewicz, *Terytorium ruin. Ruina jako obraz i temat romantyczny* (Kraków: Universitas, 1993).

I zgnilizną; ta ostatkiem
Przewionęła w mgłę ulicznój.

(PWsz I, 62)

[A child, a young man, an old man – all turned into a tree
And dissolved entirely,
So that the once resinous core,
Which was a tree, then a ship,
Then decay; which in the end
Was blown away in a street fog.]

In the lithograph *Solo*, the woman with that “wzrok pusty, jak Nijobe” (PWsz I, 64) [blank stare, like Niobe] seems to be integrating with the withering tree she is leaning against as if she herself were to “zdrzewieć” [turn into a tree] over time (the draping of her robe may be associated with the bark of a tree), while the whole depicted landscape is surrounded by coniferous trees that are already withered, thus deprived of “rdzeń żywiczny” [a resinous core] and rotting under the influence of water that has flooded them.

Another link of the “black suite,” the poem [“Do mego brata Ludwika”] [“To My Brother Ludwik”], brings an almost model vision of the world that is typical of melancholy:

Jak mało rzeczy pewnych jest na ziemi:
Na każdą słodycz można rzucić prochy,
Na boleść trudniej – lecz się złączy z niemi,
Obiedwie córy z jedneje macochy,
I obie ku nam lecą z uściśnieniem,
Jak pokrewieństwo – czym? – niezrozumieniem.

(PWsz I, 72)

[How few things are certain on earth:
You can throw ashes at every sweetness,
It is harder to throw it at pain – but ashes will combine with both,
Both daughters from the same stepmother,
And they both fly towards us with embrace,
Like kinship – in what? – misunderstanding.]

In this poem, Norwid also notices the melancholy of nature and its illusory perversity which is then made into an analogy to the human world:

... sny kochałem ciemne;
Z tych jedne były mdłe i nic do rzeczy;
Jak kwiaty drugie, lekkie i nadziemne,

O trzon łodygi wyższe kału. Z mleczy,
Co po urwaniu perłą wzeszły białą,
Mniemałem słodczy wyssać – jakże mało!

A jam się otruił... wiesz, że byłem struty?
(Wspomnienie równą ma trucizny siłę.)

(PWsz I, 69)

[... I loved dark dreams;
Some of these were insipid and absurd;
Like second flowers, light and above the ground,
With the stems higher than faeces. From dandelions,
Which, after being plucked, rose in a white pearl,
I believed to have sucked the sweetness – how little!

But I got poisoned... you know I was drugged?
(The power of memory is equal to poison.)]

At the same time, this fragment can be regarded as an attempt to draw a line between the old, “white” melancholy of dreams, dark dreams, as in the poem “Samotność,” and “black” melancholy, the melancholy of wistfulness, despair.

The poem “Pamiętka” [“Memento”] presents an image of the world, in which what may herald joy is mixed with sadness. This confusion evokes irony, the ringing of bells resounds with both wedding and mourning tones, the obituary appears as a sensational spectacle, a leaf plucked in the cemetery is used to play “w zielone” [the green game]. In this section of Norwid’s reflection on the melancholy of the world, one can recognise Kochanowski’s influence, especially the similarity to a fragment of “Pieśń IX” [“Song IX”] from *Księgi pierwsze*:

Wszystko się dziwnie plecie
Na tym tu biednym świecie
A kto by chciał rozumem wszystkiego dochodzić,
I zginie, a nie będzie umiał w to ugodzić.⁹

[How strange are the twists of fate
In this wretched world,
And whoever would like to inquire everything with his reason,
Will die and comprehend nothing.]

Perhaps this very context, exploited already at the dawn of Polish Romanticism by Antoni Malczewski as an epigraph for his poetic novel *Maria*, is the interpretive

9 Jan Kochanowski, *Dzieła polskie*, Vol. I, 6th ed. (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1967), p. 252.

key to the ending of another poem from the “black suite” – “Moja piosnka [I],” in which the poet links hope with “złotostrunna lutnia” [the gold-stringed lute] to “wywalczenie się” [vanquish] his entanglement in the black thread:

Lecz, nie kwiląc jak dziecko,
Raz wywalczę się przecie;
Złotostrunna, nie opuść mię, lutni!
Czarnoleskiej ja rzeczy
Chcę – ta serce uleczy!
I zagrałem...
... i jeszcze mi smutniéj.

(PWSz I, 66)

[But, enough of child's wail,
I shall vanquish someday;
Lute's gold string, leave me not, I implore!
I want the Czarnolas matter
To heal my heart's flutter!
So I played...
...yet I grieved even more.]¹⁰

Admittedly, this poem about the black (and thus melancholic) thread of evil fate does not evoke the image of the world falling apart. The ubiquitous thread is rather a component of this world, it rises from everywhere, it “rozmdlewa” [swoons] and “ujednia się na nowo” [unities again], it entangles like a cobweb, restraining and enslaving, thus making any activity impossible, ultimately enforcing passivity which threatens with boredom and weariness, turning away from the world, a sinful medieval acedia. Norwid showed its consequence in his lithograph. There is no contact between the woman and the presented motifs. Crushed by the weight of the decaying world, she is closing up, her body resembling an embryo. There is no staring into the indefinite emptiness of space in her gaze, as Dürer presented it in his *Melencolia*, but she is rather staring into her inner nothingness. Thus, the essence of Norwid's vision of melancholy is closer to Friedrich's representation of melancholy (*The Wanderer at the Milestone Column*). There is loneliness, inner sadness, withdrawal from all activity and, finally, desperate resignation.

10 Trans. Borchardt, p. 83.

THE “THIRD WORD”

Up to this point, I have only quoted those motifs from the poems included in the “black suite” that directly pointed to the melancholy of the world. This could have created the wrong idea that Norwid, having recognised the melancholy in himself and in the world, accepted it. However, in the poem quoted already “To rzecz ludzka!” [“It is a Human Matter!”] the first stanza ends with these two lines:

We mnie, w świecie – grób: dwa słowa!
Umieć trzecie...

(PWSz I, 61)

[In me, in the world, a grave: two words!
I know the third...]

What is this “third word?” In *Either/Or*, Søren Kierkegaard asked:

What, then, is melancholy? It is hysteria of the spirit. There comes a moment in a man's life when immediacy is as though ripened and when the spirit demands a higher form in which it will apprehend itself in spirit. The directness of the spirit binds the human being to the whole worldly life, and now the spirit wants to get out of this state of dispersion in order to understand itself; the personality strives to achieve self-awareness of its eternal meaning. If this is not achieved, stagnation follows, the spirit is suppressed and then melancholy comes to the fore.¹¹

Therefore, according to the philosopher, the condition for getting out of melancholy is to rise above the earthly life and find oneself in the perspective of eternity, to bind oneself with the absolute. Hence, melancholy would be determined by a modern, and above all Romantic definition of the central place of man in the cosmos; the condition for getting out of it would be to find transcendence, a higher principle which brings hope that the world is not nothingness, and that apart from the “self” and the “world” there is also the “third word.”

In the lithograph *Solo*, the material world is dying, it is losing its “żywczy rdzeń” [resinous core]; it is disintegrating, decaying, and rotting. In this world, the centrally placed man remains “solo” and seems to be losing his ability to even reflect upon the emptiness of his interior. However, in his representation, Norwid placed a motif which, in a way, is not linked to others and through its dynamics it dissociates itself from the static nature of the represented world. It appears to herald not death but its opposite – life. In the upper left corner, the poet presented two birds hovering just above the water. It is not known

11 Søren Kierkegaard, *Albo, albo*, Polish trans. Karol Toeplitz, Vol. II, pp. 253–254.

what kind of birds they are, nor do we know for sure which way they are flying, although one can have the impression that they are heading towards the viewer. There is, as is usually the case in the representations of melancholy, something inexplicable about them. However, the very fact that they are included in the lithograph seems significant. In his *Melencolia*, in roughly the same place, Dürer placed a demonic bat. If Norwid indeed deliberately refers to that copperplate, not only is there some correspondence to it, but also a polemic about it. The enigmatic character of the birds' motif makes it impossible to interpret them allegorically. We should be rather speaking of a symbol, the possible meanings of which are determined by oppositions: stillness-dynamism, dying-life, and resignation-activity. Of course, birds can be related to the theme of loneliness or solitude suggested in the title. But it is not a single bird. And regardless of whether they are flying away from the dying world or flying towards it, they herald life and some hope of searching for a place for themselves, and thus the possibility (albeit unspecified) of renewing the world. It is as if Norwid added a motif to the melancholy of the world that brings some element of faith in the possibility of renewal and rebirth, modest and remaining only a suggestion, but at the same time carrying some hope. It seems important that birds float above the world, and their domain is the space they seize with their wings. In the spatial sense, the lithograph seems to be a fully-filled composition, only in its upper left corner the space is open towards the horizon over which the sun is depicted. This openness to the sun also seems to be significant and seems to indicate some kind of world order that is different from the foreground, some kind of order of nature that can be reborn. So, there is a suggestion in the lithograph that there is a possibility of an order in the world, some kind of self-awareness of nature which overrides the human order. The impossibility to explicate the motif of the sun does not destroy this order. On the contrary, it seems to support this suggestion that it can be renewed with the constant rhythm of sunrises and sunsets. In addition, the withered branch above the woman's head is pointing towards the sun and its bifurcated tips seem to indicate the flying birds.

In the poem "To rzecz ludzka!" Norwid describes his perspective on the "human matter" as looking "z wysokości dziejów" [from the heights of history], i.e. not from inside the melancholy world, but from the perspective of the passing of time. From this point of view, he adds point to the poem in the following stanza:

Byt – a wielkie bytów morze,
Oceanów źródł żywotnych,
Gdzie myśl kąpie się, i z błotnych

Dróg ku Tobie wraca, Boże!
To rzecz ludzka...

(PWsz I, 64)

[Being – and a great sea of beings,
A spring of vital oceans,
Where the thought bathes, and from the mud
Roads it returns to you, God!
It is a human matter...]

He describes his private melancholy, resulting from personal disasters, in a poetic letter [“Do mego brata Ludwika”] as “strucie” [poisoning] and uses this as an explanation for the presence of the motif of melancholy in the poem: (“Co teraz powiem, będzie złe i zgniłe” [“What I will say now will be evil and rotten”]), but in this lyric there appears also the “third word:”

Lecz jeszcze upaść nie jest czas – i dnieje –
I widzę obłok z runem bardzo białym,
Jeżeli ten *jest* – Bracie! – będę stałym.

(PWsz I, 71)

[But it is not yet time to fall – tis dawning –
And I can see a cloud with snow white fleece,
If He exists – Brother! – I shall endure.]

*

The remarks above, made based on the analysis of the lithograph *Solo* and selected motifs from the “black suite,” obviously need to be completed and supplemented. However, they seem to provide sufficient grounds for stating that melancholy has become a cognitive category for Norwid, and the “work of melancholy,” as Freud put it, has borne fruit.¹² The personal experiences, as well as experiencing the world which seemed to be heading towards nothingness and evoking nihilistic attitudes,¹³ became an experience that revealed the need for transcendence

12 Zygmunt Freud “Żałoba i melancholia,” in Kazimierz Pospiszyl, *Zygmunt Freud. Człowiek i dzieło* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991), pp. 295–308.

13 An interesting discussion on the relationship between melancholy and nihilism is presented by Wojciech Bałus (“Melancholia a nihilizm,” *Znak*, Vol. 6, 1994, pp. 67–75). After writing this sketch, I read an interesting article dealing with a similar topic by Slavoj Žižek, “Melancholia i akt etyczny,” *ResPublica Nowa*, Vol. 10 (2001).

and laid the foundations for a hope-based faith. Norwid responded in at least two ways to the melancholy that he recognised in the world: through irony towards the world closing itself in a tight earthly life (as in “Nerwy” [“Nerves”] or “Marionetki” [“Marionettes”]) and through the search of transcendence (as in *Assunta*).

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Marian Płachecki
“Nerves” 16/17

Abstract: The paper interprets the poem “Nerwy” [Nerves] included in the poetic cycle *Vade-mecum*. The starting point of the poem is a visit paid by the poet to a single mother raising her child in a place where “people die of hunger,” as reported in the first three stanzas. Further parts of the poem regard a future visit to a salon of the “Baroness.” The crucial moment of the first visit is when the protagonist trips in the dark and tries to grab a rotten plank – only a nail stuck there as if in the arm of a cross allows him to “ujść cało” [escape with [his] life]. The author of this article believes that the key to understanding the text is the broken verse 16 or verses 16 and 17, the meaning of which seems to be indecipherable: “Cóż? powiem jej” [But? Tell her what], because of the shift in the position of the question mark, typical of Norwid. If the sentence were to be read as a simple question, it would suggest that the lyrical “I” is of the opinion that there is no need to tell the Baroness about such issues – it is the opportunist variant (A). The second option (B), in line with the location of the question mark, is of a more heroic character: “well, I will tell her!” The choice of (A) or (B) changes the status of the last two stanzas. If the speaker turns out to be an opportunist, the past tense of the penultimate stanza assumes the function of a conditional mood formulating a purely theoretical condition. In the last stanza, in this approach, we return to a believable story maintained in the modality of the future tense as an expansion or realisation of the decision already made: the future perfect tense. The heroic variant of verses 16/17 re-composes the entire poem, which turns out to be an internally broken story about two scandals: conscience in the first three stanzas and familiarity with conventions in the last two. The protagonist is leaning towards becoming a salon hero, towards “telling her” because of his pure intransigence and the need to atone for the embarrassing fall on the stairs and its reason: viewing the “place where people die of hunger” with nearly a tourist-like attitude; It would be an optimistic variant of interpreting the text. A pessimistic option would lead to understanding this poetic narration as an attempt to cover one’s own sin against loving thy brethren.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, poetic cycle, poetic narration, epistolography, epistolography and poetry

Piszę do Ciebie jak do mężczyzny, to jest myślę, iż nie jesteś jak panna lub telegraf i że masz nerwy swoje w ręku swym.¹

1 Letter from Paris to Marian Sokołowski, dated by the publisher on early March 1861 (DW XI, 479).

[I am writing to you as to a man, as I believe you are not like a maiden or a telegraph and hold your nerves in your hand.]

On 13 November 1862 in a letter to Michalina Zaleska, neé Dziekońska, Cyprian Norwid reported a visit paid to “pani Glaubert, aux Batignolles rue Truffaut 70. – Jest to rodzona siostra Bolesława Wielogłowskiego, pozostająca w tej chwili z *dzieckiem małym w nieopalonym i niezapłaconym mieszkaniu*” (DW XII, 125) [“Mrs Glaubert, aux Batignolles rue Truffaut 70. She is Bolesław Wielogłowski’s sister and stays *with a small child in an apartment without heating, her rent is not paid*”]. He returned to this issue in a letter sent the next day, warning in advance that: “Mam czasem tak skłopotaną głowę, że niekoniecznie za zupełną logiczność pisań moich poufnych odpowiadać mogę i winienem” (DW XII, 127) [“I have such a troubled mind that sometimes I cannot and should not be fully responsible for the logic of my personal writings”]. This time, the fate of the single mother, forgotten by all in a district of Paris full of Poles, was another proof of a much more grave issue. “Jesteśmy żadnym *społeczeństwem*. Jesteśmy wielkim *sztandarem narodowym*” (DW XII, 127) [“We are not a *society*. We are a huge *national flag*”].

These two short, soldier-like sentences were written by Norwid at a time when news of tensions in the Duchy arrived to Paris. News that, piece by piece, destroyed all hopes of securing an archbishopric in Warsaw by Zygmunt Szczyński Feliński, who arrived from Petersburg, and of opening churches in the capital, which had been closed in the previous year after brutally suppressed religious-patriotic manifestations. For several months, the Duchy was in a state of martial law. There were attempts to assassinate Aleksander Wielopolski in August 1862. They took place soon after the margrave brought from the Russian Tzar’s consent to conduct administrative reforms. The attackers were hanged. The head of government, unable to see a more efficient way of taming the moods triggered by the communist sympathisers, announced on 6 August 1862 a plan of military conscriptions that would result in 10 thousand young inhabitants of cities joining the occupant’s armies and depriving the conspirators of such support.

During a time so tumultuous for Polish dreams, Cyprian Norwid focused his attention and thoughts on the poverty of a virtually unknown person or two: Jadwiga Glaubert vel Glaubrecht with her child, aux Batignolles rue Truffaut 70. He apparently also engaged Joanna Kuczyńska in his own hustles in the name of civil – not national, private – and not patriotic “I should,” because a month later, he mediated between her and Maria Bolewska, known for her open heart towards those in need and living *nota bene* at the same address as the single mother a floor lower. After receiving assurances that the information entrusted

to him will be forwarded, the poet tells Marshall Kuczyński’s wife a rich story on the participation of a fourth Polish lady: Ms Konstancja Górka, in his efforts to alleviate the ill fate of Mrs Glaubert. A contemporary reader gets two completely different, and yet written by the same hand, reports on the November visit at Jadwiga Glaubert’s.

In his letter to Michalina Zaleska, where he “fotograficznie-wierną kreśląc prawdę” [“tells the photographically-faithful truth”], Norwid downplays the engagement and participation of Ms Górka by saying that “w tych dniach byłem z jedną Damą u pani Glaubert” (DW XII, 125) [“these days I visited Mrs Glaubert with one of the Ladies”]. While in a letter dated a month later addressed to Joanna Kuczyńska, containing not a “photographic” story, but a story stylised to be a moral lesson; we read: “Panna Konstancja mówi do mnie: ‘Siadaj ze mną do powozu i jedźmy do pani Glaube[r]t, a stamtąd powróciwszy, będziemy w sam czas na obiad u mnie’” (DW XII, 137) [“Ms Konstancja tells me: ‘Get to the carriage with me and let us go to Mrs Glaube[r]t, and once we get back from there, it will be a perfect timing for dinner at my place’”]. We may then safely assume that Konstancja – aged 54 at that time – not only took him to aux Batignolles, but actually informed him about the existence and fate of the poor woman. Soon, a few sentences after the quoted fragment, he explained to Kuczyńska that it was his effort, and not the activity of high-born ladies, including the well-versed in the lively tectonics of social ambitions and grudges Ms Górka, that actually directed help to Truffaut 70, where arrived “pani Z. i na teraz zaspokoiała wszystko” (DW XII, 139) [“Mrs Z. for now also satisfied all needs”]. The November report had its effect.

The third version of the story is found under XCV in the *Vade-mecum* cycle, edited by the poet in the years 1865–1866 as a response to the offer of a Leipzig publisher Brockhaus and bearing in mind the second volume of *Poezje* [Poems]. The first volume, at the same time as the twenty-first volume of the Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskich [Library of Polish Writers] initiative, was printed there a few months before the described story.

XCV. “Nerwy” [Nerves]

[a.]

Byłem wczora w miejscu, gdzie mrą z głodu –
Trumienne izb oglądałem wnętrze;
Noga powinęła mi się u schodu,
Na nieobrachowanym piętrze!

[b.] *

Musiał to być cud – cud to był,
Że chwyciłem się belki spróchniałej...

(A gwóźdz w niej tkwił,
Jak w ramionach *krzyża!*...) – uszedłem cały!

[c.] *

Lecz uniosłem – pół serca – nie więcój:

Wesołości?... zaledwo ślad!

Pomiąłem tłum, jak targ bydłęcy;

Obmierzył mi świat...

[d.] *

Muszę dziś pójść do Pani Baronowej,

Która przyjmuje bardzo pięknie,

Siedząc na kanapce atlasowej –

Cóż? powiem jej...

[e.]

... Zwierciadło pięknie,

Kandelabry się skrzywią na r e a l i z m,

I wymalowane papugi

Na plafonie – jak długi –

Z dzioba w dziób zawołają: “S o c j a l i z m!”

[f.] *

Dlatego: usiądę z kapeluszem

W ręku – – a potem go postawię

I wrócę milczącym faryzeuszem

– Po zabawie.²

[Yesterday I went to a place

Where people die of hunger –

Inspecting tomb-like rooms,

I slipped on an uncalculated stair!

/*/

It must have been a miracle – surely it was,

That I clutched at a rotten plank...

(In it a nail as in the arms of a *cross!*...)

– I escaped with my life!

/*/

2 Gomulicki's version is provided here, with changes in the numbering of stanzas and corrections in the numbering of verses for convenience. Cf. PWSz II, 135–136. The lesson suggested by Józef Fert, publisher of the 1990 version of *Vade-mecum*, differs in one place in terms of spelling and in a few – punctuation. Cf. C. Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. J. Fert (Wrocław: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1990), series I, No, 271, p. 168. I changed the numbering of verses because both editors assume that the “mirror” will not break – if “Cóż? powiem jej” [“But tell her what?”] and “Zwierciadło pięknie” [“Mirrors will crack”] are to be read as one verse – of which I am not sure.

But carried – only half my heart:
 Of mirth?... barely a trace!
 I bypassed the crowd like a cattle mart;
 I was sick of the world...

/*/

Today I must call on the Baroness
 Who, sitting on a satin couch,
 Entertains with largesse – –
 But tell her what?...

... Mirrors will crack,
 Candelabra shudder at the *realism*
 And painted parrots
 From beak to beak cry “*Socialism!*”
 Along the length of the ceiling.

/*/

So: I will take a seat
 Hat in hand – – then put it down,
 And when the party’s done,
 Go home – a silent hypocrite.]³

It is obvious that nothing adds up! In November: “These days I went with one of the Ladies to” In December: “A few weeks ago, I was leaving with Ms Konstancja after visiting Prince M. ... Ms Konstancja says ... Sit ... and let us go” In the version number XCV: “Yesterday I went to a place, where people die of hunger.” And: “Today I must call on the Baroness.” It seems that the lady throwing the party does not know about those dying of hunger. She will learn about them, if she learns, only from this acquaintance who goes his own ways and visited them yesterday.

The first thing that draws the attention of the reader is the change in the text initially mentioning an “*apartment without heating, her rent is not paid*”⁴ in the first two letters to Mrs Michalina into “tomb-like rooms” and “place, where people die of hunger.”⁵

3 Trans. Adam Czerniawski, C. Norwid, *Selected Poems* (London: Anvil Press, 2004), pp. 78–79.

4 Highlighted as in the original. Cf. DW XII, 125.

5 Obviously – if it is assumed that those three reports regard the same event in Norwid’s biography. I believe that a contradictory thesis would require us to cancel any biographical referentiality of a poetic statement. Referentiality which is unique and needs to be carefully interpreted at all times but still – real.

The incipit in “Nerwy” is an excellent example of masterful usage of semantics in plural form. A single mother “*with a small child*” (DW XII, 125) became diluted in an undefined group of those that “die” there. The fact that they “die of hunger” is their only attribute provided by the poet. Even their home is not a home but a nameless “place where” The statement that they “die of hunger” is a constation of expressive, hasty, and final nature – they are not “starving;” they literally and irrevocably “die!” – and it generates such a high number of casualties⁶ that their very humanity is almost entirely covered by the manner of their death. They die in poverty, without asking, without complaining in an inhuman silence. It is only possible to see them, almost explore along with the rooms in which they live...?/lie...? No one is able to have a conversation. We are almost ready to accept, to say to ourselves or someone else, *some (people) are dying there*. Or perhaps even, *some (creatures)* and not, people are dying in there. What matters is the very fact that it is no longer important: who? because they are so starved they no longer seem human. The simultaneously extreme selectivity and eccentric radicalism of such a view (especially if contrasted with the letters that mention only a mother and her child that suffer from certain deficiencies) shows its deeply subjective and unique character in our consciousness. The less clear it is who actually dies, the clearer it becomes who, how, and with which disclosed emotions observes them.⁷

A similar, although less dramatic, situation occurs with the background of the chain of events in “Nerwy.” The letter to Mrs Michalina mentions one “apartment” and here we see more, although it is probably not important how many, “rooms.” However, the entire architecture of the cramped rooms (cages?) for immediate rent is merged in the narrator’s mind as a unity, and also an identity. They all occupy a single space that is referred to as that “place.”⁸ Moreover, due to

6 They “die” and not “are dying;” not only now, but moment after moment and constantly, probably also in large numbers.

7 It is different to the state of matters in the epitaph “Do Zeszłej” [To the Deceased]. Death does not take away the personality: “Sieni tej drzwi – otworem – poza sobą / Zostaw – – wzięmy już dalej!... / Tam, gdzie jest Nikt, i jest Osobą: / – Podzielni wszyscy, a cali!” [Leave this door to the vestibule open / Behind you – – let us fly up higher!... / There, where *No-body* is, lingers a Person: / All divisible, yet whole!...]. Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, p. 150. Trans. Danuta Borhardt, in: Cyprian Norwid, *Poems* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), p. 59.

8 Similarly, the word “schody” [stairs] evokes the association with many steps and here is transformed into a gerundial “u schodu” [at the stair], which may indicate both a single step and the entire action of walking up the stairs. *Słownik języka polskiego* by Adam Kryński, Jan Karłowicz, Władysław Niedźwiedzki (Warszawa: Gazeta Handlowa) in

the power of the retrospective imagination of the person reporting these events, they are combined into one “tomb-like room.” The “coffin” qualification finally closes the scene with death. Whatever happens to the literary protagonist later on, successful or not, we already know that is it too late for any help.⁹

the years 1900–1927 provides as the first, already archaic use of the word “schód” – walking down, descending. Linde’s dictionary in the volume issued in 1812 defines “schód, zchód” as “slope, inclination, *de loco et tempore*, ... towards the exit or down,” illustrating it with the quote “Przybliżył się już Jezus ku schodowi Góry Oliwnej” [Jesus approached the stair of Mount Olivet]. Cf. Samuel Bogumił Linde, *Słownik języka polskiego* (Warszawa: Drukarnia XX. Pijarów, 1812), pt. 3 (Vol. V), R-T, p. 200. Józef Fert also approves of the interpretation of “u schodu” as “while walking down.” Cf. Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, p. 169.

- 9 It is difficult to rule out the possibility that exclusion of the ones dying of hunger is for the protagonist – considering whether to go to the Baroness and how to act there – a kind of a trauma and the narration in the letter is supposed to free him of it. *Nota bene*, in Norwid’s early poem entitled “Sieroty” [Orphans], printed in 1840 in *Przegląd Warszawski*, shutting the coffins finally severs any direct bonds of the eponymous orphans with their fathers (and mothers). At the same time, it takes away and shatters their entire emotional life, changing the orphans into devastated and passive beings, dead while still alive: “Do was biegnę, wam prawdy przynoszę kaganiec, / Wam, biednym bladym dzieciom z nabrzmiąłą powieką, / Co samotne jesteście w tłumach pogrzebowych, / I samotne musicie patrzeć na to wieko, / Które tak silnie serca wasze przyskrzypnęło, / Które przed wami wszystko na świecie zamknęło!” (PWSz I, 8) [I run to you, I bring you the light of truth, / To you, poor, pale kids with swollen eyelids / That stand lonely among funeral crowds / And must lonely watch that lid / Which creaked in your hearts so painfully / Which shut everything in the world in front of you!]. Having said that, it is necessary to add that Cyprian Norwid actually visited Mrs Jadwiga aux Batignolles several times in real life and even later, truly interested in her wellbeing. Similar attitude was adopted by the “Baroness” from the poem, meaning Ms Górka. Even on 1 December 1866, he wrote to Konstancja: “Byłem u pani Glaubrecht, która była konająca, I wątpiono o jej życiu. Teraz jest troszkę lepiej. Zastałem tam księżnę Białopiotrowiczową, szanownie przy łożu pani Glaubrecht siedzącą na piątym piętrze i w jej wieku. Donoszę więc Pani, że pani Glaubrecht ma się cokolwiek lepiej, a donoszę osobie, o której Pani zwykła częstotliwie wspominać. Więcej nic miłego lub pociesającego nie wiem i donieść nie umiem” (DW XII, 555) “I was at Mrs Glaubrecht, who was on her deathbed and it was doubted she will live. It is a little better now. I met there Duchess Białopiotrowiczowa, gracefully sitting at Mrs Glaubrecht’s bed on the fifth floor and at the same age as her. I report to you that Mrs Glaubrecht is feeling better, and it is a report about a person you used to mention often. I am not able to report on anything else pleasant or comforting.”

Next, we touch upon probably the most significant difference between the epistolary and poetic versions. The first reports about a tragedy of a woman and her child who are starving. The second discusses the tragedy of a witness who was at “a place where people die of hunger.” He went in, observed the situation, then left.

Discovering exactly what Norwid’s Parisian pilgrim saw in the “tomb-like rooms” and what made him withdraw in panic is not really difficult, especially if a poem from twelve years before is recalled, one in which another lady is told about a cruise through the Atlantic in 1853:

Dnie były głodu, pragnienia i inne,
 Dnie moru, dzieci konały niewinne
 Dla mleka matek, które niewczas psowa.
 Widziałem także okręta rozbite
 I twarze majtków wątpiących o naszym;
 Widziałem marność ludzką tak, jak nigdy!
 Ale – bez kłamstwa – ale w prawdzie nagiej;
 Ale widziałem ludzi, choć tak marnych;
 Ale widziałem naiwność-nicości
 Bez dekoracji cnót, wiary, mądrości.
 Kto na tej lichej łupinie dał komu
 Lepszego chleba złamek lub “jak się masz,”
 To był odłamek chleba lub “jak się masz.”
 Zaiste, warto zbiec trzecią część świata,
 Aby się taką uraczyć rzadkością!

(“Pierwszy list, co mnie doszedł z Europy” [The First Letter I Received from Europe],
 PWsz I, 217–218)

[There were days of hunger, thirst, and other,
 Days of demise, innocent children died
 For the milk of mothers that goes sour too soon
 I saw ships wrecked
 And faces of sailors doubting about ours;
 I saw human vanity as never before!
 But – without lies – but in naked truth
 But I saw people, though so weak;
 But I saw naivety-nothingness
 Without decorations of virtue, faith, wisdom.
 I saw who on this despicable shell gave anyone
 A better piece of bread or “how are you,”
 This was a piece of bread or “how are you.”
 Indeed, it was worth to experience the third world
 To see such rarities!]

Cyprian Norwid’s tale from a transatlantic voyage enables the understanding of more than one mystery of the transformation of the report from the visit at Jadwiga G. in the letters to a completely different poetic version, both the last and the first touch upon the inhumane, dehumanised existence of those that “die of hunger.” Those that cannot leave their ship on the ocean and those from the “tomb-like rooms” that cannot leave their “place” or count on any help from the outside are actually in a similar situation. It might even be assumed that the intuitive juxtaposition of reality and the several-week-long cruise are still embedded in the memory resulted in the somewhat unrealistic semantics of the plural: moving from a single apartment to many “rooms,” from one two-person family to a crowd of those that “die.” Perhaps this juxtaposition made the wanderer visit, instead of any other location, the dying in a house, and climbing up to a high floor in the unnamed “place,” without evoking any associations with the warmth of human bonds.

What are the reasons for the differences in first-person reactions, presented to the reader in first person singular, of the protagonists set in these two “places?” Why does the first one embrace the naked truth of human vanity as if it were bread during the Holy Communion? why does he feel strengthened and seasoned in his humanity, while his Parisian *alter ego* resorts to a shameful escape after which he is not able to sort himself out?

It is not possible to back away on a ship. There is no one to “go to.” On a starving ship, there is only one “place” that cannot be left. An irrevocable, final community of fate is created and binds all present.

“Pierwszy list, co mnie doszedł z Europy” [The First Letter I Received from Europe...] indirectly suggests the nature of the scandal that would break if the Baroness and her guests were told about those that are dying. Such a story would break the strongly rooted taboo that falsified the relation between the salon and the real world. It would brutally wake the present, absent from their waking dream, by showing a glimpse of the thought “Widziałem marność ludzką tak, jak nigdy! / Ale – bez kłamstwa – ale w prawdzie nagiej” (PWsz I, 217–218) “I saw human vanity as never before! / But – without lies – but in naked truth / ... / Without decorations of virtue, faith, wisdom.”

But then the mirror that confirms the illusion breaks. “Candelabra [will] shudder at the *realism*” The last term, similarly to “socialism,” was used by Norwid as a means of quoting the arguments of aggressive speech of others. “Realism” denotes only the breach of silently approved standards of conversation. In this

sense, realism is a felony against the rule of being proper; taking off the *decorum* from the sentences, from the world – its decorations.¹⁰

In the poem “Nerwy,” only one word is used to denote real time, not the iterative present. It is, however, strong enough and placed so strategically between the two tales (on the visit already completed and the one still planned) that this single word is enough to present the real time of speaking to the reader.¹¹ The word “muszę” [I must] in line 12, as it is the obvious word of interest, clearly explains that the report of the first visit does not affect us personally, free from all possible distortions and complications. What reaches us untouched is this “muszę.” Everything that preceded it chronologically is *incorporated* in this reality of decision-making or reassuring oneself about the decision already made; it is recalled and analysed by the first-person protagonist of the poem.¹² What happened to him yesterday is digested today in light of the visit before him. While reading this, it is possible to notice that the experiences of the previous day are now recalled, which means that they are imperceptibly disarmed, put into familiar categories of language and thought, and transferred from the fresh memory of the senses into a subjective world of values.

The verbal form of further parts of the poem spread between a simple future tense and a future tense with a rather undetermined function of the conditional mood, demonstrate that, even though the choice was his own, the protagonist of the poem is not really able to decide whether he truly should approach the *baronowa* [baroness] *dziś* [today] and forget about that visit since he was *wczora* [yesterday] at a place where some people *mrą z głodu* [die of hunger].

After a closer inspection, the memory of visiting the building with “piętra” [floors] covered in darkness are disturbed by similar dilemmas. The report from

10 In the rhetorical tradition, *decorum* norms allow for a certain shape of the relation between the statement and its external circumstances: place of occurrence, the persona of the speaker, the audience, time and issue discussed.

11 A similar, though considerably weaker, effect is exercised by the adverbs “wczora” [yesterday] and “dziś” [today]. The present moment is also evoked by the pronoun “dlatego” [so] in verse 22.

12 Instead of saying “protagonist of the poem,” we should consistently write “protagonist-subject of the poem.” Presenting the “hero” as simply the protagonist of the narration and the “lyrical subject” or (“subject speaking”) when it comes to “Nerwy” – fails. The hero is also the protagonist of the movement of thoughts, including retrospective. The attitude of the author, or the author’s intent articulated in the text, might be understood only after confronting the three versions of the story about the same event: two epistolary and one versed.

that visit is dominated by an interplay of contrasts: dark interiors and a crowded street, silence and rumour, frozen time of death and, in a moment of sudden danger and swift and lucky salvation at the price of a hurt hand,¹³ time that rapidly gains momentum, which is even quicker as the saved narrator falls down the stairs. He cannot withhold his cry: “uszedłem cały!” [I escaped with my life!].

The temporal distance separating this event from the moment of making a decision and including it in a story is not, as in the case of the December letter to Kuczyńska, introducing the optics of an ordering, timeless moral reflection; it is weakening the inhuman pressure of that moment: visiting a place where people “die of hunger.” The passing of time makes it possible to at least partially mute, thanks to the mechanism of verbalizing, the naked shock of the very event. However, Norwid does not allow his lyrical I to experience a full success in the matter. The epic, pompous diction that opens the story is careless and trivialised in the third stanza, moving to an animated and jagged colloquial anecdote.

It cannot be casually accepted that the story of the yesterday’s visit was distorted because of memory loss (went, saw, left...). This shock, more specifically, the situation of the protagonist embedded in it, irrevocably made the choice the main issue of the poem.

During the first reading, readers might get deluded into thinking that those problems are someone else’s, and they do not concern them personally. After more attempts, if the readers are intrigued enough to find the patience, they discover for themselves that they too stand before the decision: to tell or not? What

13 This is how I interpret the second stanza of the poem. The first-person protagonist regains his balance not thanks to a plank, as it is rotten, but thanks to the nail “co w niej tkwił, / Jak w ramionach krzyża” [In it a nail as in the arms of a cross]. (I return to this scene later on in the text) Historical and biblical traditions leave no doubts as to the reference to the nail hammered into Christ’s wrist, and not, for instance, the nail in the centre that gives two planks shape of a cross. Christ was tortured on a *crux commissa* cross, T-shaped, with one horizontal plank called *patibulum* fixed into the cut-out portion at the top of the vertical plank called *stipes*. Józef Ignacy Kraszewski describes another cross left by Christ while reporting a visit in Norwid’s apartment in 1858: “Over the bed, there was a white wooden cross, without the Christ’s silhouette, but with very diligently painted, with certain calculations for the facts, splatters of blood where the hands, legs and wounded head were. I have never seen a similar crucifix.” Quoted after: *Norwid. Z dziejów recepcji twórczości*, ed. Mieczysław Inglot (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1983), p. 53. Incidentally, in a letter to Joanna Kuczyńska dated 1866 Norwid happened to describe God as *Nie Obrachowany* [Uncounted / Uncalculated]: “gdybym nie rachował na *Nie Obrachowanego* na *niebiesiech*” [“if I didn’t count on the *Uncounted in the heavens*”] (DW XII, 534).

is worse, in contrast to Norwid's protagonist, the readers cannot complicate and postpone the choice already made by the protagonist who was there, saw, and left. The readers have to unambiguously, *in actu* support one of the decisions.

Let us imagine that a television station announces an open competition to commemorate another anniversary of Norwid's death. The participants are to choose one of the poems from the *Vade-mecum* cycle and write a scenario of a 7-minute film revealing the secrets of the poet's imagination. If the scenario concerned "Nerwy," which instructions should we give to the director and the actor as to the events of the first and second stanzas?

"Tomb-like" and "interior" evoke obvious associations with the grave. The scenographer should arrange "rooms" and "place" in a semi-basement in a poor district. When descending there, the actor steps down a dark staircase. Then he trips over "nieobrachowane piętro" [uncounted / uncalculated / unpredicted stair].¹⁴ He thought, as the director explained to him, that in the shadows he would step on another step but fell down blindly. Therefore, the actor concludes that his slight mishap must have happened when going to the rooms with the dying people. Miraculously saved, instead of the silent and dark "tomb-like rooms," he ends up on a crowded street of a large city!

In this case, the actor and the director are both dissatisfied and go back to the text; let us now assume that the actor was seeing the dying people somewhere in the attic, in usual small rooms for handmaidens in Paris.¹⁵ However, then there

14 Incidentally, anyone who tries to say this verse out loud during the first read must trip as well. The word "nieobrachowanym" (or even "nie obrachowanym," as Józef Fert prefers) is an exceptionally long for the Polish language sequence of syllables with only one main stress, so the word has to be broken down with an auxiliary stress. This gives rise to doubts as to their hierarchy. How to read it: closer to a daily intonation or the iambic rhythm dramatically contrasted with trochaic rhythm of the previous verse – which is how Norwid's versification highlights the act of tripping over. Similarly, in verses 7–8 the clash of iambs with an amphibrach makes the culmination point more visible or better audible. Marking the iamb as "I," amphibrach as "A" and the trochee as "T," we get the pattern I-I/A-T-A-T, or rather (I-I/A-T) A-T, as the brackets introduce the unique, because of its punctuation-based nature, censored rhythm: "(A gwóźdz w niej tkwił, /Jak w ramionach krzyża!...) – uszedłem cały!" Thanks to these tricks, the poet evokes the effect much stronger than with a simple enjambment. Returning to the ill-fated "step," how are we to read it – na nieobrachowanym, na **nieobrachowanym**, na **nieobrachowanym piętrze**? How to count it...? How to count it during an ongoing and public (as contracted with private, silent) reading aloud, under the pressure of maintaining a unified intonation of speech? An impossible task.

15 As we already know, Jadwiga Glaubrecht lives in an unheated apartment on the fifth floor (see: footnote 9).

is no reason to metaphorically associate the “room” with the dying with a tomb! This contradiction between metaphor and the direction of movement cannot be shown and cannot be solved. “The place where people die of hunger” is here simultaneously elevated to the heavens and thrown into the abyss.¹⁶ For it is also not a place where one can enter via a staircase. It is a place available through death reversed by a miracle. “It must have been a miracle – surely it was/That I clutched at a rotten plank.../(In it a nail as in the arms of a *cross!*...) – I escaped with my life!”¹⁷ To disturb the perception of the scene, provided to us only in a retrospect of a first-person protagonist, doubling the image of the event is meaningful. In the cited fragment, the moment of tripping is shown twice. First, in a short glimpse in verse 5 (“It must have been a miracle – surely it was”). Then in an expanded three-fold, not two-fold, version although no less dramatic: “That I clutched at a rotten plank... / (In it a nail as in the arms of a *cross!*...) – I escaped with my life!”

After what Norwid’s poem revealed, we are not surprised that the cry of relief is immediately, in the next stanza, limited, withdrawn, turned into a list of lacks and phobias. It turns out that the “cały” [whole] does not necessarily mean more than just – “with my life.” With life, but without the joy of life.

16 Marian Śliwiński sees in this poem by Norwid the execution of the catabasis topos: descending to the underworld, to hell – and also to the depths of the subjective “I;” a descent showing the absolute truth about the world. Cf. Marian Śliwiński, “Katabaza w ‘Nerwach,’” in: *Szkice o Norwidzie* (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich, 1998). The reviewer disagreed with this polemic: “‘Nerwy’ are not a report on a visit in hell, they are not a record of travelling through the reality until descending to hell, and he protagonist – *homo viator*, is not the poet-Christ nor John the Baptist” Piotr Sobotka believes that “both the miraculous rescue of the protagonist and the awareness of own imperfection may be tied to some form of hope: this hope is Christ – *olbrzymia perspektywa ocalenia* [immense perspective of rescue], (here the author refers to interpretations presented by Stefan Sawicki, “Ku świadomej ocenie w badaniach literackich,” in: *Wartość – sacrum – Norwid. Studia i szkice aksjologiczno-literackie* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1994), pp. 61–62). Perhaps the hope is in the human being who breaks off with own hypocrisy. Piotr Sobotka, “Antynomia, katabaza i morskie wędrówki” in: *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 20–21 (2002–2003), p. 215.

17 Doubling the image of the event is typical of the blurred perception of the scene, provided to us only in retrospect of the first-person protagonist. In the cited fragment, the moment of tripping is shown twice. First, in a short glimpse in verse 5 (“It must have been a miracle – surely it was”). Then in an expanded, three-, not two-fold, version, although no less dramatic: “That I clutched at a rotten plank... / (In it a nail as in the arms of a *cross!*...) – I escaped with my life!”

Let us return for a moment to the scenario of the competition. How should the actor play the scene with the rotten plank? He trips in the dark, falls blindly, and catches a plank. Rotten! It will not hold the weight of a body, but the nail! A nail is “in it.”¹⁸ The author’s instructions seem precise and thought-out. Obviously, the nail also did not stop the body from falling. It was, however, enough that it wounded the hand and stopped the fall momentarily, which allowed the man, almost breaking his neck, to regain his balance. The rescued person fell out onto the street. He fell out, and threw himself out; hence the words denoting escape and contempt.¹⁹ “Escaped,” “carried away,” “bypassed the crowd like a cattle mart.” Saved his life. But also ran, avoided making a choice during the trial.

Our actor is prepared for the role. The director asks him to grab the plank as if it was a cross. But... with both hands or just one? After a moment, the director says: both. You should look for a moment like Christ on his cross. See, this is how our protagonist recalls it later during his visit to the Baroness. Our actor responds calmly: should I be crucified with my face to the cross? And why does my text say “in it a nail” and not “two nails?” The director says: because the nail was there “as in the arms of a cross!,” not “in the arm.” Who is right? Both.²⁰ This is another question that cannot be answered straightforwardly.

- 18 In contemporary use, the verb “tkwić” [be in/linger/be stuck in] is slowly losing the connotation with “causing trouble, pain, stubborn opposition.” Therefore, it is possible to image today the “nail” of verse 7 in “Nerwy” as hammered in such a way that it gives no hitch. The recalled associations are, however, notes in dictionaries devoted to the older version of the language. Linde defines “TKWIC,” “being stuck into something,” as a part of the record for “TKNAŹĆ” (among others): “feel, investigate, examine, search, experience.” Cf. Linde, *Słownik języka polskiego*, pp. 625–626. J.S. Bandtkie: “Tkwie, tkwi rana, tkwi się rana ..., tkwił ... a) ... tyczka b) strzała w ciele; c) co w pamięci, w sercu, ... zatkwiał, utkwiał” [Stuck in, a wound sticks in ..., stuck ... a) ... a spear b) an arrow in the body; c) sth in the memory, in the heart, ... stuck in, lingered] Cf. Jerzy Samuel Bandtkie, *Słownik dokładny języka polskiego i niemieckiego do podręcznego użycia dla Polaków i Niemców*, Vol. 2: *Od słowa Przełocę aż do końca* (Wrocław: W. B. Korn, 1806), p. 1479.
- 19 Zofia Szmydtowa sees in the “tomb-like” a clear expression of contempt towards “the world” and “social structure, where some die of hunger and others live lavishly” This contempt first embraces the poet’s immediate surroundings and then transforms into an “acute, incorruptible sarcasm directed in the last words of the poem against the poet himself.” Cf. Zofia Szmydtowa, “Wstęp,” in: *Liryka romantyczna. Część pierwsza. Mickiewicz – Słowacki – Krasiński – Norwid* (Warszawa: Trzaska Evert i Michalski, 1947), pp. 42, 43.
- 20 As mentioned above, Norwid’s poem is a remarkable show of mastery in the use of the semantics of the plural form.

The tense coexistence of mutually exclusive variants of the situation or visualization are reinforced further by the peculiarly grotesque semi-crucifixion. Acting as both the executioner and the victim in this retrospective monodrama, the protagonist, for a moment, hangs by one hand on a nail in the horizontal plank of the cross.

It would be a mistake to perceive this scene as a buffo grotesque. It is certainly true that this “miracle,” from the anecdotal point of view, was merely luck, a happy coincidence, and a smile from fate. At the same time, falling down the dark staircase right after leaving those that “die of hunger” is an actual miracle, although bitter as wormwood. It is both a degrading and uplifting human experience of the fall and resurrection – and also the experience of a humiliating panic towards the sacred that each person holds by being created in the image of God.²¹ It is the experience of resurrection at the price of banishment to the noisy “cattle mart.” He could react as a Christian. He backed away and succumbed to fear. Does it look like buffo grotesque? It does. With a tint of existential grotesque.²²

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- 21 In “Początek broszury politycznej” [Beginning of a Political Pamphlet], another poem of the cycle, the poet accuses the propaganda writer of assuming that this similarity is something given or directly dependent on the political choice to be made and encouraged by the pamphlet. “Lecz jeśli mniemasz, że Ty – tworzysz człowieka, / Jak Bóg, na obraz Twój?... to rad bym wiedział, / Czemu jest Czasów i pokoleń przedział?... / Skąd postęp? czemu? się go w dali czeka” (PWsz II, 98) [But if you assume that You – create a man / Like God, on Your image?... I would like to know / Why is there a gap between time and generations?... / Where does the progress come from? what for? You wait for it from a distance...]. In short: In the view of subjective experience, resemblance to God is not given, but assigned; found in pain, not granted once and for all. Towards such an interpretation – although in a compromising way and not without limitations – leans Zofia Trojanowiczowa in her polemic with the lessons of Jacek Trznadel (*Czytanie Norwida. Próby*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1978, p. 82) and Jadwiga Puzynina and Barbara Subko (“Interpretacja wiersza ‘Początek broszury politycznej,’” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, No. 2, 1976). Cf. Zofia Trojanowiczowa, “O wierszu Norwida ‘Początek broszury politycznej,’” *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 5–6 (1987–1988), pp. 108–110.
- 22 It is worth remembering that in Norwid’s world the general values are not given once and for all irrespective of circumstances. Neglected or even discarded by a person they turn into ash. Just as “krzyż sam, waląc się na grobie, zgniły, / Razem traci kształt i wagę!” (PWsz II, 75) [a cross alone, falling over the grave, rotten, / Loses both the shape and weight!]. Cf. “Bliscy” [Loved Ones]. One of Norwid’s concerns is the growing laicisation of modern culture. He sees it as a return to paganism, which does not annihilate various forms of God’s presence in the world.

If the poem ended here, after the third stanza, it would be ambivalent, concise, and closed. It would tell of a visit in “tomb-like rooms” and the shock it triggered, also in a literal, physical sense. However, Norwid’s poem does not end with the third stanza. On the contrary, the narration enters a second, symmetrical portion of the text. In the first one, discussing yesterday’s visit, the idea focused around an extreme experience of humanity. The second part, analysing the possible visit to the Baroness, concentrates on the possibility of sharing this experience with others, and the possibility of absorbing it oneself.

This symmetry also proved to be illusory and shallow. Let us start with the most elementary, the graphic layout of the poem. Within the first twelve verses, there are no doubts concerning the structure and division of the text: twelve verses, three stanzas, in print divided with an original asterisk. As for the second part, there is no certainty! There is also a question on how to treat stanzas four and five. If they are separate. Is the passage:

Cóż? Powiem jej...
... Zwierciadło pęknie,

[But tell her what?...
...Mirrors will crack]

to be treated as one verse broken into two lines by the graphic layout only, as decided upon by both publishers of *Vade-mecum*, or as *two separate broken verses*? If modern scholars are to be believed, after three four-verse stanzas, there is suddenly an eight-verse stanza which returns to the original four-verse format in the next, final stanza.²³ Such a reading is supported by the fact that the two lines above were not separated by Norwid using the asterisk, as was the case with the other stanzas. However, he separated them using a rhyming pattern and layout space. Most importantly, the short passage quoted above holds such a sudden accumulation of emotions and decisions that it would be difficult to keep them within one concise stanza at the price of arbitrarily favouring one option over the other. A fragment of a footnote in Józef Fert’s edition, one that

23 Stanza four could be treated as a stanza with “coda,” frequently used by Norwid, meaning “an end poem shorter than the other ones, convenient for ... concluding motifs.” Cf. Lucylla Pszczołowska, *Wiersz polski. Zarys historyczny* (Wrocław: Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, 2001), p. 223. However, it is not a satisfactory solution as the broken verse 16 does not end anything, there is no conclusion, on the contrary – it opens and dramatizes. Moreover, with such a solution, we would get stanza 5 with the “coda” moved from the back to the beginning and encompassing five verses instead of four.

explains the expression “kapelusz postawię” [put it (hat) down] shows how this interpretation works in practice: “the protagonist goes to the Baroness’s salon to cool down, but he is sitting *hat in hand*, knows how the salon might respond to his *story* – which is why he will escape from this hell as well.”²⁴

Nieobradowany or *nie obradowany*, verse 16 or 16/17 are more problematic to the reader than the clerking problem. It is not known how to count this verse. It is not clear what to do with this unique, twice as large, uncounted / uncalculated (un counted?, un calculated?) stanza to which the problematic part belongs, and it is not known what it actually does to the stanza – tears it apart or merges together. Furthermore, it is even impossible to decide *how to pronounce it*. What? are we to do with a question mark in the middle of a sentence.

It is true that this dilemma could be avoided if we follow the publisher of *Vade-mecum*? It is just enough to develop a cordial tolerance towards Norwidian punctuation and assume that the poet got carried away and lost while trying to highlight and uplift his rhymes with those commas, brackets, full stops, exclamation marks, question marks... and whatever our punctuation system has to offer. So instead of worrying about the poet’s original punctuation, it should be “modernised” according to one’s likes, so the unclear sense of the poem may become more accessible to the rushing, or even neurotic contemporary reader.²⁵ However, there is a significant price to be paid for this downplaying in the interpretation of the poem’s freely selected “ellipses” and “commas” of the original text. It would have to be silently accepted that the poet assumes that anything can be expressed in isolation from the sound and writing that people use; and this would be in complete opposition to Norwidian philosophy of language. For

24 Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, p. 170. The words “ochłonać” [cool down] and “przypowieść” [parable] are put in brackets by the researcher himself, others – marked in the same way – were taken from Norwid’s poem.

25 In Józef Fert’s edition, it says: “This publication of VM ... is the result of a high-degree consensus between the author’s intentions and the expectations of a contemporary reader” (Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, p. CXXVI–CXXVII). Two pages later, the editor admits, not refraining from parodying Norwid’s punctuation idiom in which he “corrected” the poet: “only in a few places did I move the ellipsis: to my mind, it was to precede an important issue, halting the attention before the word, not after it” (Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, p. CXXVIII–CXXIV). While voicing my reservations to the scale of this compromise, I believe that the punctuation of the original should be a subject of historical interpretation, not editorial adaptation influenced by the benefit (or its lack) of a contemporary reader. Barbara Subko in her article *O podkreśleniach Norwidowskich* favours “editing that leaves the original punctuation and graphics, even if it hinders contemporary reading” (*Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 9–10, 1991–1992, p. 64).

him, “mowa-piękna zawsze i wszędzie polega / *Na wygłoszeniu słowa zarazem ponętnie / I tak zarazem, że się pisownię postrzega*”²⁶ [beautiful-speech always and everywhere is about / *Expressing words both gracefully / And in a way observing the rules of spelling ...*]. That transparency of plans, textures, unfulfilled intentions and chiseling are also an inescapable necessity of each creative endeavour. “Nic nie poradzisz!... każde twoje dzieło, / Choćby się z trudów herkulejskich wszczęło, / Niedopełnionem będzie i kalekiem”²⁷ [Nothing can be done!... each work, / Even if originating from Herculean efforts, / Will be incomplete and crippled...]. “Incomplete” not necessarily meaning: unfinished, not full enough or not yet a whole, as he refers to “a work,” so something already made. “Incomplete” means rather: destined to be textured with indirect thoughts or ideas caused by the tangible resistance of the material processed by the artist – a stone, a line and colour or the uttered word.²⁸

Cyprian Norwid’s poems are bursting with punctuation marks for the dead sheet of paper to be able to express a vivid, subjectively singular, unusual melody of sentences that are, due to the current intention of a particular person, the center of his or her current universe.

Such a strategy has its bitter price. It cannot be combined with the sculpture-stable creation of the authority of the speaker. It is also affected by an element of negation being close to self-destruction. At the time, when so many modern poems or the ones that are currently praised are oriented towards providing the reader with a ready-made script of the cult of the poet,²⁹ Norwid’s poem is a vivid proof of identity crisis. In almost every stanza of *Vade-mecum*, that is so halting when it comes to intonation, one may come across a credo that also closed [“Pierwszy list, co mnie doszedł z Europy...”] [The First Letter I Received from Europe] (PWsz I, 219):

26 “Dwa guziki” [Two Buttons], PWsz II, 127.

27 “Prac złoło” [Work in Brow’s Sweat], PWsz II, 91.

28 In a separate article devoted to Norwidian hyphenation, Barbara Subko quoted the opinion of Józef Trypućko on “the stance of the poet that literary texts should be designed to be read. Trypućko believes that Norwid, aware of the fall of the art of reading, introduced many innovations to his texts (e.g., underlining, punctuation), which were to elevate the art of reading.” “O funkcjach łącznika w poezji Cypriana Norwida,” *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 5–6 (1987–1988), pp. 98–99. Quote taken from Trypućko’s manuscript “obtained after his death from Sweden” (p. 86).

29 See also: “Klaskaniem mając obrzękle prawice” [Their Hands Swollen from Clapping], PWsz II, 15.

... Wam ja, z góry
Samego siebie ruin, mówię tylko,
 Że z głębi serca błogosławić chciałbym –
 Chciałbym... to tyle mogę... resztę nie ja,
 Bo ja tam kończę się, gdzie możliwość moja.

[... To you, *from the heights of*
My own ruins, I say,
 that I would like to wholeheartedly bless you –
 I would like... that is all I can do.. the rest is beyond me,
 My end is where my potential ends.]

As it is commonly known, the poets of romanticism broke a rigid versification canon that was characteristic of classicism, diving deep into the waters of irregular poems. Due to the elegy-related tradition of the post-partition sentimental poetry and thanks to *Ballady i Romanse* [Ballads and Romances] by Mickiewicz and his several national and emigree epigones, in nineteenth century Poland the quintessence of poetic mastery was seen in the smooth rhythm of a poem especially if it was based on the song-related tradition of folklore. The smooth idiom was supposed to be utilized for the entire topical spectrum of the poetic universe. It was not only to praise the internal order of the universe, but also to complain about its chaos and dissolution. Therefore, the turbulent, windswept, but not emotionally hysterical intonation of Norwid's poem could make him be rejected by a much larger extent than we can even imagine after taking a closer look at all the excesses of the avant-garde poetry of the twentieth century that was not afraid to flirt with prose. By marginalizing Norwid's intonation-based experiments, we fail to pay proper homage to the poet. We express our willingness to finally accept and understand him if only he got rid of everything that was of such importance to him first.

The important issue for Cyprian Norwid was not only intonation-based, or even the personal credibility of recorded speech; this matter is much deeper, as it is strictly connected with almost the entire worldview of the poet. While making a bold judgment, we, out of necessity, reproduce an opinion that was once made may not even be our own. In the world of Norwid's moral imagination, while judging something or someone, you do not stand in the middle of an open bracket of the present as you should, but rather you confirm, communicate to others, or enforce within yourself your identification with a given value by opting for speech-based mechanisms.

When asked about my opinion, I am just like the passenger of *Marguerita* departing from London to New York in December 1852:

Ja nie wiem... *końca*, nigdy nie wiem może,
Lecz...

(tu mi przerwał sternik)
... *szczęść wam* Boże...³⁰

[I – don't know... the end, I perhaps never do,
But...
(here the helmsman cried)
...Adieu!...]³¹

It is rather symptomatic that the final “*szczęść Boże*” [Adieu, God bless] is addressed to people staying in Europe not by the protagonist of the poem, but rather, by the helmsman. The poet's *alter ego* only states “Ja nie wiem... *końca*” [I – don't know... the end ...]. On the other hand, the easiest definition of the current position of an individual typically places him or her at the crossroads of values, faiths, ideologies, and mutually exclusive opportunities.

Ludzie, choć kształtem *ras* napiętnowani,
Z wykrzywianymi *różną mową* wargi,
Głoszą: że oto *źli już i wybrani*,
Że już *hosanna* tylko, albo skargi...
– Że Python-stary zrzucon do otchłani:
Grosz? – że symbolem już; harmonią?... – targi!
 (“Socjalizm” [Socialism], PWSz II, 19)

[People, though stigmatized because of *race*,
Whose lips are twisted by *many tongues*, declare:
They are *condemned already*, or *embraced*,
There are *hosannas* only, or despair...
- Old Python's cast to his infernal place:
Penny? – a Symbol; harmony?... – a Fair!]³²

30 “Z pokładu *Marguerity* wypływającej dziś do New-York,” PWSz I, 215. Tomasz Korpysz considers the final “*szczęść w a m Boże*” [Adieu, God bless] to be said not by the helmsman, but rather – by the protagonist. See also: “Jakie pożegnanie? O wierszu Norwida ‘Z pokładu *Marguerity* wypływającej dziś do New-York,’” in: *Liryka Cypriana Norwida*, ed. Piotr Chlebowski, Włodzimierz Toruń (Lublin: TN KUL, 2003), pp. 301–338.

31 Trans. Czerniawski: Norwid, *Selected Poems*, p. 37.

32 Trans. Tymoteusz Karpowicz, *The Polish Review*, New York, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2 (1983), p. 78.

Indicative, typical for commerce that requires quoting prices and tender in a concise and accurate manner and fails as a method to search for and experience values.

– O! nie skończona jeszcze Dziejów praca,
Nie-prze-palony jeszcze glob, Sumieniem!

(PWsz II, 19)

[O, nay! History’s work is still not done,
The world not-all-consumed by conscience yet!]³³

The art of using words properly, since it does not need to be narrowed down to the art of writing poems, gives a poet the opportunity of conveying, through utilizing words, the factual act of speaking as an act of opting for certain values. Therefore, the non-consistent intonation of Norwid’s verses is not only an idea allowing for ostentatiously showcasing the individual nature of speech. The intonation-oriented tectonics of Norwid’s verses almost always eliminates the possibility of treating his utterances as authoritative judgments in the logical sense. Their halting or meandering syntax, the distribution of accents, and melody are oriented towards dramatically highlighting the very act of making a particular choice. It is dramatic in character as it clearly shows how unavoidable, yet not determined by anything from the past in particular, the decision to follow a certain truth present is in the current moment that can be defined as a quandary.³⁴ There is no escaping freedom. One may just create an illusion of escaping from it, for oneself or for others.

Norwid’s philosophy of speech in the author’s work not only occurs from time to time but also continues. Sometimes it has the form of a single-sentence credo, but it is never the subject of a complex, exhaustive elaboration. The case is similar when it comes to verses 16 and 17.

After reading the poem several times, we will not succeed in performing this experiment. Let us then ask someone else to record his or her reading of “Nerwy.” Then, let us do the same for several other individuals. Afterwards, we should meticulously juxtapose recordings of verses 16/17. Ultimately, it will turn out that we will have two variants at our disposal, depending on the seriousness with which the reader treated the question mark in the middle of the sentence.

33 Trans. Karpowicz, p. 78.

34 It has to be mentioned that reference to the past, i.e.: to tradition, allows for identifying a proper sense and subject of a given decision.

Some will neglect Norwid's way of writing and will put the question mark at the end of the sentence

(A) *Cóż powiem jej?* etc. [But **tell** her what? etc.]

others will do their best to be in line with the original text and recite

(B) **Cóż?** *powiem jej* etc. [**But?** **tell** her what, etc.]

What does it add to our considerations? Quite a lot in fact! The (A) version turns out to be one of the possible modes of articulating the opinion that there is no point, no sense, and no incentive to telling the Baroness about such things.³⁵ It will result in nothing noteworthy.

The variant loyal to (B) is heroic in nature: “no *cóż*, *powiem jej!*” [Well, I will tell her!]. “No *cóż*” [well] can be replaced in this context by “*a niech tam!*” [Let it be!] or “*zależy mi?*” [Why not?]. The attitude of the Baroness towards such a statement is her problem. He did what he had to do.

The decision of whether to opt for (A) or (B) completely changes the status or the character of the two final stanzas. If the speaker is an opportunist, then the future tense of the [e] stanza will serve the role of a conditional formulating a strictly hypothetical condition. The grotesque and fantastic deformation of the vivid and noisy setting of the living room will additionally highlight the unreal nature of said condition, as well as point to its strictly mental nature. In such a scenario, in the last stanza we will return to a believable story maintained in the future tense to expand on or realize the already made decision; it is then the future perfect tense.³⁶

To console himself, he still has some sarcastic *bon mots* limiting the perplexity of his conscience to a nervous condition that can easily be treated, “– bo, końcem końców, wszystko to niczym innym nie jest, jedno *sprawą-nerwową*, uważaną niesłusznie za *sprawę-sumienia i umysłu*. Nareszcie przecież znajdzie się ku temu narkotyk stosowny, kąpiele jakie mineralne lub proszek jaki po prostu na natury do tyła nerwom podległe działający i takowe oczyszczający z humoru – a wtedy uspokoi się to wszystko” [“– all in all, it is nothing more than *a nervous issue* that is senselessly considered to be *an issue of the conscience and the mind*. There is surely a proper medication or a type of either a mineral bath or a natural

35 “*Cóż*” [Well] cannot refer to considerations on what and how to tell the Baroness, as the poem offers a single-element set to choose from: it is a tale on the yesterday's visit in a “w miejscu, gdzie mrą z głodu” [place where people die of hunger].

36 Such a modal framework is introduced by the opening conjunction “Dlatego:” [So].

powder that will soothe the nerves and cleanse them from all the badness – it will all calm down then”].³⁷

On the other hand, the strongly hypothetical feature of the penultimate stanza makes the next one seem a bit suspicious as well. It is rather safe to assume that the protagonist truly visited people starving to death yesterday, but it is not clear whether or not he will visit the Baroness today. It may be that he just considers such a possibility in the two final stanzas of the poem. Why visit her if there is no possibility of speaking about touching and important matters? The importance of maintaining the social position achieved is not highlighted unequivocally in the poem.

As it can be noted, the (A) variant assumes a separate speech-related philosophy. The mastery of speaking is acquired to be able to persuade oneself that saying something in the world “gdzie mrą z głodu” [where people die of hunger] will not change such a world. Saying something will not put food on these people’s plates. Norwid’s opportunist is a realist who is aware of what is possible here and now and what is simply not. He knows that speech is used, especially in a public setting, to clearly show all the gathered individuals that the speaker is one of them. In his personal dictionary, the key term is “wrócić” [to go back / to return]. The key assumption here is not to do or say something after which “wrócić” [to go back] would turn out to be impossible. He might have been homeless and may know how it is not to have a place to return to. He might have been forcefully removed from a particular place. Now, he is much more cautious.

Let us assume that someone says the following:

(B) *Cóż? powiem jej*, etc. [**But? tell** her what, etc.]

Such a person shows how valuable a word is when it comes to the domain of values. The world around a person and the world of other people does not change due to the act of saying something or purposefully refraining from stating something; such people may not stop dying from hunger. Nevertheless, the observing person’s world, values, and the things that are important to him or her will surely change. It will be an irreversible change, as saying something is never the end.

After the ironic and mischievous reduction of “sprawy – sumienia i umysłu” [the matter – of conscience and mind] to mere “sprawy-nerwowej” [the matter-of nerves] that does not interfere with “życia pobieżnego” [everyday life], on 8 September 1862, Norwid wrote to Joanna Kuczyńska:

37 Sentences taken from the aforementioned letter to Joanna Kuczyńska of 8 September, 1862 (DW XII, 106).

“Co trudniejszą jest rzeczą – co charakter świętej ma dramy? – to poruszenia już nie z nerwów, ale z sumienia głębokości i z istotnej wiedzy pochodzące. *Te wszelako aby od owych odróżnić*, zaiste że nie wystarcza na to przez kogo innego zrobionej naprzód rutyny, ale samemu należy w tej mierze cokolwiek popracować! Wyraz ten: *popracować*, każe mi przerwać pisanie niniejsze i rękawy zawinąć.” (DW XII, 106)

[“What is more difficult – what has the nature of a sacred drama? – those are no longer sensations caused by nerves, but by the depth of conscience and relevant knowledge. To distinguish them from others, however, it is not enough to follow someone else’s routine, but one has to work on that! The “work” word urges me to stop writing this and roll up my sleeves.”]

Everything you say to others may pose some threat to you. Everything you say may grant you something or deprive you of something. The keywords here turn out to be “być” [to be], but in the context of “być w miejscu” [to be somewhere], rather than “u kogoś” [to visit someone], as well as “pójść do” [to go to/to visit], so verbs pertaining to the virtues of persistence and courage while exploring the world.

Someone may say:

Cóż? powiem jej [But? tell her what]

He will tell her. What is there to tell, however? He will tell her about the matters the reader, who has familiarized himself with the contents of verses 16 and 17, already knows. Then, the deeply hypothetical, mental feature of the future tense used in the stanza pertaining to parrots will make room for its narrative character. In this case, the stanza will turn out to be a mischievously exaggerated story about the sheer grandeur of scandal caused by the report on yesterday’s visit. Then, the last stanza should be completely erased from one’s memory!

The heroic variant of verse 16/17 results in the recomposition of the entire poem. The order of the stanzas, if one is to follow the markings discussed above, should then be as follows:

a – b – c – d – (a¹ – b¹ – c¹) – e

The entire poem turns out to be an internally broken story of two scandals: one of the conscience in the initial three stanzas, and one of social norms in the final two. The hidden analogy connecting these experiences is revealed by the preferred rhythmic pattern – the iambic pattern of verses 4 and 19.³⁸ If the analogy of the two grotesque scenes on the “nieobrachowanym piętrze” [uncalculated

38 Namely: “na nieobrachowanym” [on the uncounted / uncalculated] and “i wymalowane” [and painted].

stair] and under the “plafon” [plafond] in the Baroness’ living room is noticed and maintained through the manner of declamation of the poem, then it turns out that the willingness to “jej powiedzieć” [tell her] is not only the result of the sheer intransigence of the protagonist, but also the need to expiate for the pathetic fall from the gloomy stairs and its cause – namely an almost tourist-like observation “w miejscu, gdzie mrą z głodu” [in the place where people die of hunger]. A person who failed to meet the challenge of Christ may not also want to find himself or herself being a Pharisee, freely discussing the topic of helping people in need – as long as it is not threatening to him or her.

It is a rather optimistic variant, not to say that it is simply naïve in nature. The pessimistic variant of the interpretation requires the recipient to see the attempt to mask the protagonist’s sin of being devoid of love towards a fellow man in the narration of the poem. It is, from the perspective of the reader, a well-thought-out staging of a moral choice, an open choice. For the protagonist, it is a complex, meandering psychomachia, the aim of which is to cover the fact that yesterday he actually made a choice against his faith. He failed to see fellow men in the starving people; he perceived them as some unidentified creatures. Therefore, it will not be a choice for him to be a Pharisee or not while visiting the Baroness. He had already started being one yesterday!

The heroic choice made by the reader, namely: “**Cóż? powiem jej**” [But? tell her what...] fulfilled by the protagonist of the poem would be an unimaginable Pharisaism. When it comes to the cunctative option that is: “**Cóż powiem jej?**” [But tell her what?...], it would be proof of a relative decency in his position. It would be relative as it would be aimed towards himself only. It would be relative as it would be devoid of any and all external outcomes that would, however, not protect him against the multiplication of internal machinations, self-justifications, and inner torments, nor against factual pangs of conscience. The title of the poem, “Nerwy,” refers directly to the drama of Pharisaical consciousness.

The ambition of the poet is not to convert the fallen souls, providing the fallen with some uplifting exemplifications, nor scolding virtue-deficient ones. “Nerwy” is not the beginning of a political brochure. On the contrary, the poet, serving the role of a poet, the master of the written word, the virtuoso of both grammar and intonation, showcases a dramatic and almost ultimate choice-making scenario in the two seemingly trivial events. Afterwards, he throws his reader in the very middle of a vortex of contradictions, as if he wanted to say: here is the rose, here you can dance. What is more, he also makes any retreat possibilities unavailable.

The reader of the poem cannot take a step back at the last moment. The reader is intended to know and to feel that every choice is the ultimate one, without the opportunity of reverting his or her decision. When the reader reaches verses 16 and 17, being the culmination of “Nerwy,” the reader has to choose one of two options, and not able to find comfort in an alternative, third option. Afterwards, the reader can start perceiving himself or herself as a coward and procrastinator or as a bold individual. The reader can make a choice that the protagonist of the poem has made simply unavailable for himself.³⁹

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39 I would like to thank Professor Zofia Stefanowska and Tomasz Korpysz, PhD, for a meticulous and critical examination of the text. Thanks to their feedback and conversations with them, I could fix many a mistake, as well as to understand numerous hidden rationales of the material.

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Elżbieta Feliksiak

Norwid's *Quidam* or a Parable About People and Stones

Abstract: A reinterpretation of the title of the poem based on the analysis of the semantic context of the uninflected word *quidam* as an indefinite pronoun is the starting point of the study. The author proves that the title *Quidam* is not restricted to a particular nameless protagonist, but a condensed sign of indeterminateness (not only personal) as a structural dominant of the poem. Hence it can only have an uninflected form. This is how Norwid always treated it.

Over the course of further argument, the author justifies the proposition that the main subject of *Quidam* is Rome as the Eternal City, ever built anew on its ruins, maintaining the continuity of life for ages and being a sign of hope. The poem is a picture of the mature Empire in the epoch of Hadrian during a slowly ripening coup, when in the multicultural environment for Christianity grew, even if it was mysterious for many people and persecuted by the authorities. Interpreted in the context of F. R. Chateaubriand's *Les Martyrs* the parable is an equivocal reflection on the tragic character of history and on the role that heroic and often nameless sacrifice of people and stones of the city plays in building its meaning. It is also a reflection on how intolerance and weakness resulting from selfish conceit makes coexistence of various religions and cultures in mutual respect impossible.

Keywords: Norwid, Chateaubriand, Rome, Greece, Christians, Jews, city, stones, conversation, parable, history

*To Helena Liberowa
remembering of our long conversations and the joint
travels over the imagined roads of the ancient world*

1

Among Norwid's poems, *Quidam* occupies a special place. The relatively numerous, albeit brief, own interpretations and mentions of the manuscript sent by him to some friends testify to the great importance the author attached to his work. The mentions appear particularly in the letters of 1856–1858 to Teofil Lenartowicz, Władysław Bentkowski, Ludwik Nabelak, August Cieszkowski, Józef Bohdan Zaleski and Zygmunt Krasiński, when Norwid sought (in vain) the help of influential friends in publishing the work, still hoping to have it printed in a separate edition. For *Quidam* was conceived, as was repeatedly stated by the

poet, as a poetic synthesis of history and an example of fate unprecedented in Polish literature as an important and innovative work from the point of view of aesthetics, historiosophy, and philosophy of man.

There also exist two extensive commentaries from the author. They accompanied the first edition of *Quidam* in volume XXI of the Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskich (Library of Polish Writers) series. Both commentaries have defined addressees. The first is a preface to *Quidam* in the form of a letter to Krasieński of 1859: *Do Z. K. Wyjątek z listu* [To Z. K. Excerpt from a Letter]. The second is a fragment of the poetic letter “Do Walentego Pomiana Z.” [To Walenty Pomian Z.], which serves as an epilogue to *Vade-mecum*. Their subject is the presentation of the main idea of the poem in the context of Norwid’s views on the state of human self-awareness in contemporary society and on the changes in European culture against the background of its ancient and Judeo-Christian roots.

Years later, Norwid returns to his already published *Quidam* many times, e.g. in a letter to Marian Sokołowski – here, with a distinctly bitter note in the face of lack of response from the readers:

– Czy czytałeś piękną rzecz Ampère’a o starożytnym Rzymie w bieżącym “Revue des Deux Mondes?”

Czytając te piękne i wierne karty, zadziwiony byłem ... obrazem Romy, kobiet, ludzi, towarzystwa, powietrza, obyczaju... zdawało mi się, że na grobie własnym usiadłszy przewracam karty mojego “Quidam” i pytam, czy się gdzie nie omyliłem? Zobacz Ampère’a – ale ja to *trochę dawniej i głębiej* określiłem w “Quidam” – i jeden głos ojczysty nie zrozumiał, nie pojął i nie ocenił. ... Zadziwiony byłem z Ampère’a, że też nigdzie a nigdzie nie zmyliłem się w “Quidam” moim ... lubo gdybym tę rzecz bliżej, nie o sto mil wydawał, poprawiłbym – ale u nas i to za wiele.¹

[– Have you read the beautiful piece by Ampère about ancient Rome in the current “Revue des Deux Mondes?”

Reading those beautiful and faithful pages, I was amazed ... with the image of Rome, the women, people, society, air, custom... it seemed to me I was sitting on my own grave, turning the pages of my “Quidam” and asking, *have I made no mistake in there?* See Ampère – but I have described it *a bit earlier and deeper* in “Quidam” – and not one Polish voice understood, grasped or valued it. ... I was amazed from [reading] Ampère that I have made no mistake at any place in my “Quidam” ... although if I were publishing it closer, not a hundred miles away, I would have corrected it – but at home it is still too much.]

1 This quotation comes from a letter to Marian Sokołowski [of 8th November 1866], DW XII, 543.

Quidam is one of those poems by Norwid in which the title itself bears the mark of indeterminateness, so that even before reading, one feels the need to interpret it in the context of the main text of the work. Interestingly, those are usually foreign-language titles, predominantly Latin with two exceptions: *Promethidion* and *Salem*. Most of them (except *Promethidion* and *Assunta*) remain uninflected due to their grammatical form in the original language.

As in the case of *Salem* or “A Dorio ad Phrygium,” Norwid always gives the title *Quidam* the same form, regardless of the context of the Polish sentence – due to the indeclinable nature of the indefinite Latin pronoun of semantically varied syntax functions. The title cannot be seen as synonymous with the protagonist's name, unlike e.g. *Szczesna* or *Emil na Gozdawiu* [Emil in Gozdawie]. Admittedly, the *quidam* from the title is sometimes used in the poem also with respect to a specific person, or even as a substitute name. However, such uses are obviously metaphorical in nature and, importantly for this argument, they do not appear once in the narrator's discourse; thus, they do not receive an objectifying sanction. The surrogate reductive nature of such use of the word is mentioned in several scenes in *Quidam*.²

The word *quidam* is analysed many times by the characters in the poem; it is sometimes the subject of jokes and official serious comments; it also happens that the dispute around it moves the discourse into areas of philosophical or even religious reflection. Yet, it never appears, even as a substitute name, in an inflected nominal form – because, in fact, it is not a noun.

Things are different with *Assunta*. Here, not only does the Latin participle in the title allow for an obvious equivalence in the name; in the main text that equivalence becomes an object of interpretation and, due to its symbolic character, is used to construct meaning. The word *Assunta* as a name is also significant in a biblical context, as it is directly related to the official name of the protagonist “Maria” (Maria – Assunta, i.e. taken up, taken to heaven). Unlike *quidam*, which is an indefinite pronoun, in the latter poem a substantiation of the title form is grammatically natural.

2 See the fragment of the official charge: “Mąż, co tu stoi tak, jak go ujęto, ... Nazwiskiem *Quidam*, że nie miał nazwiska, / Potem zaś przezwan *Gwido*” (DW III, 155,156) [The man standing here just the way he was captured, ... by the name of *Quidam*, for he had no name, / Later called *Gwido* ...]. See also the detailed, half-funny, half-dramatic *qui pro quo* (“Gdzie wyraz “*quidam*,” ład pomięszzał cały” (DW III, 181) [Where the word: “*quidam*,” confused all order]) during the unexpected meeting of Artemidor and Zofia with Barchob and the son of Aleksander (DW III, 180, 181).

It is also worth noting that Norwid signalled to the reader the complex situation of the title *Quidam* through mottoes. Due to the vastly fragmentary nature of the quotes used, the mottoes seem to be a testimony to Norwid's care to give the reader clear examples of the fundamental duality of using the word *quidam* in a Latin sentence: either as an attribute or as a noun – rather than be carriers of Gospel content. The mottoes are quoted below for their role in understanding the title:

“Adolescentulus *quidam* sequebatur – S. Marc. XIV, 51” and “Sunt *quidam* de hic stantibus qui – S. Matth. XVI, 28” (DW III, 117).

In order to make it possible to use the quotations more fully in the hermeneutic field of Norwid's parable, it is necessary to quote their immediate context³ in the Gospel (verse completion or even an adjacent verse) for both cases, in Latin and in English. Below are the mottoes for *Quidam* thus extended together with their immediate surroundings:

Tunc discipuli eius, relinquentes eum, omnes fugerunt. Adolescens autem *quidam* sequebatur eum amictus sindone super nudo: et tenuerunt eum: at ille reiecta sindone, nudus prefugit ab eis. (Mc. 14. 50–52) and Amen dico vobis, sunt *quidam* de hic stantibus, qui non gustabunt mortem, donec videant Filium hominis venientem in regno suo (Mt. 16. 28).⁴

Then they all forsook Him and fled. Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked. (Mark 14: 50–51) and assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. (Matthew 16: 28).⁵

In a thus broadened semantic field, opened by the poem's mottoes, the hidden lines connecting the individual uses of the word *quidam* become noticeable. The chiaroscuro of their network, like *sfumato*, reveals the value of those who change the state of the world, not due to their famous name or position, but because they fulfil themselves as part of the mainstream of life and because they attempt a

3 On the role played by the hidden context of the motto in the interpretation of the title and the main text, see Elżbieta Feliksiak, “Mowa i milczenie motta,” in: *Semantyka milczenia 2. Zbiór studiów*, ed. Kwiryna Handke (Warszawa: Slawistyczny Ośrodek Wydawniczy, 2002), pp. 87–103.

4 Both quoted after: *Novum Testamentum Latine* secundum editionem sancti Hieronymi ad codicum manuscriptorum fidem recensuerunt I. Wordsworth S. T. P., Episcopus Sarisburiensis et H. I. White ... editio minor curante H. I. White, London 1980.

5 Both quoted after the New King James Version.

challenge which surpasses them. They remain themselves, having left their unrecognizable mark on the path. The challenge has at its source strength and a voice associated with the name, but is followed not only by those who have the name and fame of “przeklęty” [the damned] or “święty” [saints] (DW III, 181), but also those who know only about “cienie zmarłych i nazwisk ich siła” [shadows of the dead and the powers of their names], living for the “nazwa cienia” [name of the shadow] (DW III, 181). Their “ciche osoby” [silent persons] wander the streets of Norwid's Rome, and “niejasne powieści o Chrześcijanach” [obscure stories about Christians] (DW III, 181) are created around them. Together with Norwid, one refers to them using the word *quidam* – “ktoś,” “pewien” and “niektórzy” [someone, one, some]. One knows them not, but believes that such people co-create history, build, and form the stones of the road. Also today, in their (our) faces, we try to recognize the unrecognizable Face on the Turin shroud.⁶

In such chiaroscuro, the word *quidam* appears in an unusual scene at the top of the stairs on the Capitol; the scene may be said to be one of the most moving scenes in Norwid's poem – appealing to the imagination and at the same time mystical:

Gwido: “Bóg zapłać” – rzekł, gdy współ-skarżeni
 Poczęli chleb jeść, a tak cicho było,
 Że i najwięcej środka oddaleni
 Słyszeli dziękę, jakby się im śniło,
 Że tuż przy *Quidam* stali w onej dobie;
 Bo ciszej było tam, niż bywa w grobie.

(DW III, 163)

[Gwido said: “God bless” – when his co-accused
 Started to eat their bread, and it was so quiet,
 That even those from the centre furthest
 Heard the thanks as if dreaming
 That they stood next to *Quidam* in that time;
 For it was quieter there than in a grave.]

Earlier (DW III, 148–149), the instability of the semantically open nature of the word *quidam* is first seen in a solemn and menacing scene, when at the sight of a praetor's armed retinue, coming “ulicą krzywą, pod stopami skały” [along the

6 When I visited the Turin cathedral in 2004, the copy of the shroud (in Italian and Latin: *sindone*) was accompanied e.g. in the French prayer by the words: “Aide nous à Le reconnaître en chaque personne.” Looking into the faces of *homo-quidam*, Norwid put himself to such a test.

curve of the street, under the foot of the rock] (DW III, 147), an excited and gossiping crowd gathered, waiting for further developments concerning the three defendants. The image of that crowd, described mainly through short dialogues of people of various professions, opinions, and attitudes, is an extremely lively genre scene, sparkling with many meanings and basically devoid of any narrative commentary.

The identity of the main defendant is the subject of conversations and incidental remarks. Recognised first as a concrete gardener, to those who knew less he is still clearly a disturbing and puzzling persona, both because of his obscure Christian status and because of the peculiar name of Gwido. The exchange of indirectly acquired, unclear and largely unreliable information, showed that in this case all knowledge is accompanied by uncertainty, and the nature of the name is shrouded in mystery most deeply. It is most often associated⁷ (“jak wykłada szkoła” [as the school teaches]) with a modified attribute *quidam*, once assigned to an nameless orphan. Some also mention names such as “apostle” and “inne” – “wszakże nie wiedząc, skąd idą” [others – yet not knowing where they are from]. Despite all the ambiguity, and even allusiveness of the conversations, their subject does fit within the time and space of a realistic narrative.

On the other hand, when one reads the passage quoted earlier, which refers to a slightly later situation, time and space seem to lose their unambiguity. The indeclinable pronoun *Quidam* used there, capitalised and graphically highlighted, is used not only to indicate – in light of said conversations and in accordance with the official document read by the court writer – the gardener Gwidon, “nazwiskiem *Quidam*, że nie miał nazwiska” [by the name of *Quidam*, for he had no surname] (DW III, 156). First, one is inclined to see it as a reference to another unnamed person, namely a man who had already been introduced with the same word in Polish: “ktoś” [someone]:

Gdy ktoś, co dotąd o głaz się opierał
Przy jednej z kolumn, rzucił trzos i skinął,
Wołając: “Chleba! – hej – po trzykroć płacę!” –
Co rzekłszy, tak się w togi zwój owinął,

7 See the words of one of the crowd under the Capitol: “«Gwido» wulgarne powieści go zwały, / Ze bez nazwiska był, bez nazwy – zgoła / Sierota, *quidam*, zwana dalej *quido*, / I nieuczona gawiedz, która woła «Gwido», lub nazwę łączy *apostoła*, / I inne – wszakże nie wiedząc, skąd idą!” (DW III, 148, 149) [«Gwido» vulgar stories called him, / For he was without a name – simply / An orphan, *quidam*, further called *quido*, / And the unlearned mob, who call: «Gwido», or connect the name to an *apostle* / and other – not really knowing whence they come!].

Że wraz skoczyli ludzie i na tacę
 Włożywszy chleby, ponieśli mu w górę,
 Bacząc szlachetną postać i naturę.

(DW III, 160, 163)

[– When someone who had been leaning against a boulder
 At one of the columns, threw his purse and gestured,
 Calling: “Bread! – hey – I pay three times the price!” –
 And having said it, he wrapped himself in his toga
 So people moved at once and, putting
 The bread on a tray, they brought it up to him,
 Noting the noble figure and nature.]

That someone who spontaneously and consciously became an active subject of a new episode in the action was probably *Quidam*, known to the reader from the first line, a young man from Epirus, who introduced himself as Aleksander's son. The word “probably” must be used here because nothing is said directly on the matter. Yet, it is clear that the indeterminacy and peculiar potentiality of a person acting selflessly for the highest values is – following the title – the fundamental principle of the whole poem. There are also at least two signs in the text which indicate Aleksander's son is likely meant here. First (DW III, 163), he is the one who speaks publicly on the condition of the three starved defendants, and then it is him whom the three rescue from trouble by calling “Doctor,” ending the spy's interest in him. Second, it is the son of Aleksander who has been sitting at the column before the “Capitoline” scene:

Syn Aleksandra poczuł tuż przy sobie
 Kolumny ocios i wsparł ręce obie –
 I blisko rdzeni będąc, słuchał sprawy. –

(DW III, 155)

[The son of Aleksander felt right beside him
 The shape of a column, and rested both hands there –
 And standing close to the centre, he listened to the matter. –]

It has already been said here that in the interpreted fragment of the “Capitoline” scene at the top of the stairs, the word *Quidam* plays a special role. It not only enriches the imagination so that one transfers the reference from Gwidon to additionally include the “someone” standing at the column. There is more: it implicitly extends the scope of its obscure references to *nomina tanta*, oscillating as a value within all possible experience. Stretched above the two: Gwidon and

“someone” at the column, due to its linguistic nature indicating no one clearly (although the sphere of potentiality almost obviously includes Aleksander’s son), the word *Quidam*, capitalised and graphically marked, exceeds tangible concreteness, even if the scope of references is extended to include the two companions of Gwidon, as nameless as himself. It seems to be less and yet more than just an indefinite pronoun; than a pronoun indicating the referent so that, for various reasons, it appears specific and yet not fully independent, as it is an example – just as an indeterminate analogy, in close connection with the greater totality of the meaning.

In the scene on the Capitoline Hill, when the three defendants come to stand in front of the tribune with signs of imperial power in the peristyle of Jupiter’s temple, a countless crowd at their feet, down the steps and in the street, the word *Quidam* as an indefinite pronoun becomes pure openness. It enters the state of rising beyond the *hic et nunc* of the Capitol’s Rock in Hadrian’s time, parabolically sketched (“jakby się im śniło” [as if they were dreaming]) by the narrator. The crowd, presented before (DW III, 154) as a “ciało zbiorowe” [collective body], a multi-coloured “mass,” located on the stairs and “do wietrzonego podobna dywana” [similar to a carpet being aired,] now becomes a collection of people. Many of the members could be the “someone” who stood at one of the columns. And perhaps more than one could stand where the three defendants stand.

There is also another way which opens *Quidam* – as a word, concept and deeply real “shadow of a name” – to the horizons of time and space in the scene. In the poetic world created here, the crowd, suddenly engulfed in silence, transforms mystically in the eyes of the narrator into witnesses of “ony czas” [that time,] as if they were potential witnesses of the prototype of that sacrifice once, ages ago, completed unto the end which became the beginning. And so, perhaps in its most hidden symbolic layer, it is as if they were dreaming – and at the same time, appreciating and judging – a sacrifice, from the depths of which man, treated by the persecutors as *homo quidam*, revealed himself in time and beyond time as *ecce Homo*. Thus, the word *Quidam* rises to be, not only an indication of one unnamed, not only a sign of indeterminateness as a condition, but also, and above all, a sign of mystery. It is under that sign in the question “*Quidam?*,” asked by a girl passing the gardener with a basket of flowers in the market square, Gwido – “sądom wyższym odroczonej” [adjourned to higher courts] (DW III, 165) along with two companions and not sentenced to death back on the Capitol – meets Aleksander’s son again, in the latter’s last hour.

The word *Quidam* in Norwid’s poem, indeterminate by its nature, and meaningful only when combined with the name of the whole which exceeds it, thus seems to bear a metaphysical factor, a migrant element of creative change, and

a universal announcement of an outline which integrates ruins. And it is that property which makes *Quidam* as a poetic text a parable.

In his literary texts (“Do Walentego Pomiana Z.”) and letters, Norwid wrote about *homo-quidam* and *homo-novus*, combining⁸ their vagueness with the potential simplicity and loneliness of anyone who decides to have a creative life as their own responsibility. Beside the *homo-quidam* formula, indicating a risky and potentially tragic synthesis of randomness (as an *exemplum*) and destiny (as the connection to a being), the philosophy of man within Norwid's *Quidam* also includes such notions as: universal man, general man, and collective man.⁹

In that context, the expression *homo quidam*, which could be translated as “a (certain) man,” actually signals the participation of an individual in the value of humanity, and the inalienable subjectivity of those who remain anonymous (voluntarily or by someone else's will), while not necessarily being truly nameless.

Thus, in Norwid's poem, the pronoun *quidam* is not simply a shadow of a general concept, useful for distinguishing its individual, vague concretisations. Norwid made the word as a means of revealing the richness of human nature, a sign of humanity with many faces, meant to testify the dignity of a person regardless of the quality or form of their rooting in the social hierarchy, as well as of their roots in history. Placed in the work's internal world, it is subject to constant reinterpretation by both participants of the developing story and by the reader who, however, has incomparably more at their disposal.

The reader also actually has the word from the title and can therefore build a field of sense, not only through the prism of narration, which multiplies the contexts of the journeys of Norwid's characters across imperial Rome in the early second century. Readers may also refer to comparative contexts in general literature.

The issues raised so far return throughout the considerations below. At this point, which is the very beginning of the hermeneutical argumentation, the point was largely to substantively justify the decision taken by the author of this paper fully consciously against the hitherto practice¹⁰ of Norwid scholars (a

8 See in particular the discussion of those concepts in the letter to Teofil Lenartowicz of 23rd January 1856 (DW XI, 45).

9 In his letter to Józef Bohdan Zaleski of [20th February 1858], Norwid termed *Quidam* as “dzieje chrześcijańskiego człowieka zbiorowego” (DW XI, 210) [the story of the Christian collective man]. In the actual text of the poem (DW III, 201), the son of Aleksander develops e.g. the topic of “całości człeka-zbiorowego w czasie” [the entirety of the collective-man in time] in his conversation with Zofia.

10 The invaluable Zenon Przesmycki (Miriam) always left it uninflected. Zbigniew Zaniewicki, a doctoral student of Józef Ujejski, did similarly in the title of his study

practice actually followed by the author hereof before.) The decision is to always treat the title of Norwid's *Quidam* as an indeclinable indefinite pronoun, with all its wealth of possible usage and forms of its variation in the semantic field of the work. The author hereof is fully convinced that only with such an approach, consistent both with the rules of linguistical correctness in Latin and with the documented intention of the author of the work, scholastic discussions on "how many *Quidams* are there in *Quidam*" can be avoided.

2

The title word *quidam* turns out to be a symbol of the presence of a deeply hidden and indeterminate element of potential change in Norwid's poem, a vague announcement of the domination of a new trend in history – a hallmark of those who, in the name of truths so far little-spread, gradually discover a new community of "całości człowieka-zbiorowego w czasie" [the entirety of the collective-man in time] (DW III, 201) for themselves and others.

The word *quidam*, as the main thematic directive and main theme of the work, also organises the matter of the poetic world and actually poses a question for the aesthetic principle to a question of a hermeneutist, i.e. a question for sense. It is related to both the historiosophical principle of Norwid's concept of history and his aesthetic principle. The function of the latter in *Quidam* is to create a horizon embracing the scattered plots, while allowing them to construct a work on the fabric conducive to understanding the indeterminateness of individual steps along the path, one with a beginning and an end. And the individual plots are undoubtedly scattered here, cut and retied again and again, often confusing the reader with the changing background.

This interpretative argumentation aimed towards a multifaceted understanding of *Quidam* should start with the question of how to reach the layer which forms the basis for the whole. It does not appear to be an easy question, as the fabric of the created world is sometimes barely visible, and yet it is that fabric which outlines the semantic field for various threads, weaves and knots. However, if one first asks about the space and time of that world, about the *hic et nunc* of the poem, it is easy to reach the conclusion that the work is based on

(1939) issued by the Centre for the Study of Cyprian Norwid's Literature at the JPII Catholic University of Lublin: Zbigniew Zaniewicki, *Rzecz o "Quidam" Cypriana Norwida*, ed. Piotr Chlebowski (Lublin–Rzym: Instytut Badań nad Twórczością Cypriana Norwida KUL, 2007).

the daily life in Rome in the first half of the second century during the reign of Emperor Hadrian. It is not only created by the metropolitan urban space¹¹ with its suburbs, more or less open to the neighbouring areas of Campania. An equal and obviously necessary factor in the development of the plot and the image of diverse life is a network of complicated and sometimes unstable social relationships with high inner dynamics.

The poet apparently realised that, in the picture of ancient Rome he sketched, the framework for those dynamics must be social or even administrative conditions established by law and custom.¹² The characters appearing in his story usually have specific professions or jobs, often precisely described places of residence or work, although their real passions, their world of values and goals which define their lives sometimes remain completely secret.

Based on available sources, Norwid undoubtedly knew that the Roman state, even during the republic, system differed significantly from Greek democracy – all the more so in the times of the empire. Inequality before the law affected not only slaves, but also foreigners settling in Rome, who could sometimes be exiled under any pretext. It is significant whose houses the author chose to be the centres of social life for the main characters of *Quidam*: a Greek “poetessa” [poetess], a Jewish “mag” [magus] (doctor and philosopher) and a Greek “mistrz” [master] (philosopher “własnej szkoły” [of his own school]). They are regularly visited by people who are relatively at home in the city and probably citizens. Some of them

11 We are unlikely to learn about more than just part of the scope and sources of Norwid's knowledge on the history and topography of ancient Rome. He definitely collected it both by reading ancient authors, in particular Livius, Cicero, Pliny, Tacitus or Suetonius, and through popular-scientific and encyclopaedic studies contemporary to him. It is known that he regularly read *Revue des deux mondes*; it is almost certain that he knew the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, illustrated by numerous engravings on wood, ed. William Smith (London: Walton and Maberly, 1854), which combines a topographic description with an outline of social, cultural and demographic changes in a historical order (see in particular the part on Rome (p. 719 ff)). Also, he must have known the monumental work by Edward Gibbon (somewhat less revolutionary by mid-nineteenth century): *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. I–VI (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776–1788). The literary sources and contexts of *Quidam*, such as (mainly) the works by F.-R. Chateaubriand, will be further referenced in this paper.

12 He might have found the extensive and comprehensive study “Roma. IV. Progress of the City till the Time of Augustus” in: William Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, particularly useful. The principles of urban structure and administration remained long unchanged.

maintain contacts with the houses of the Roman elite and are sometimes even invited to the emperor's residence. Yet the contacts are not quite on equal terms, which is best shown by the final scene of the poem, where Pomponius distances himself from his previous acquaintances. The author's competence is also evidenced by the various repressive actions of the imperial officials presented in *Quidam*: strict and at the same time consistent with the letter of the law enforced. It may even be said that the particular scenes and episodes of the plot created by Norwid are not contradicted by the most up-to-date knowledge; for example, the following theses about the simultaneous variability and continuity of Roman law are presented below:

L'originalité de Rome fut dans la conception qu'elle se fit de la cité. Alors que la reflexion politique grecque voit avant tout dans la cité une communauté d'hommes (la cité athénienne est désignée officiellement par l'expression 'les Athéniens'), Cicéron, en bon romain, tient la cité pour fondée par le droit. La notion de « res publica », qui n'est pas la forme républicaine du gouvernement, car le terme demeure employé sous l'empire, répond à la même conception. ... Mais, si la République n'est pas égalitaire, du moins entend-elle protéger la liberté des citoyens contre les abus du pouvoir. ... La monarchie administrative d'Hadrien dans la première moitié du IIe siècle, celle de la dynastie militaire des Sévères au début du IIIe siècle préparent la voie à la monarchie du Bas-Empire, qui se veut absolue, bien qu'elle soit souvent faible ... Respectueux du passé, même lorsqu'ils l'abandonnent, les Romains n'ont pas abrogé les XII Tables. Ils s'en sont détournés pour le droit plus moderne que requérait une nouvelle société. La conquête du bassin méditerranéen a fait du village une grande puissance.¹³

[The originality of Rome lay in its conception of the city. While the Greek political thought identified the city above all as a community of people (the city of Athens was officially called "the Athenians"), Cicero, like a good Roman, understood the city as legal organism. The notion of "res publica," which does not stand for the republican form of government, since the term was used in the times of the Empire, corresponds to the same concept. ... But, if the Republic is not egalitarian, at least it wants to protect the freedom of citizens against an abuse of power. ... The administrative monarchy of Hadrian in the first half of the 2nd century, or that of the military dynasty of the Sévères at the beginning of the 3rd century paved the way for the monarchy of the Lower Empire, which was considered absolute, although it was often weak ... Respectful of the past, even when taking a new path, the Romans did not abrogate the law of the XII Tables. They turned away from it in favour of a more modern law required by a new society. The conquest of the Mediterranean basin gave greater power to the place.]

13 Jean Gaudemet, "Le miracle romain," in: Fernand Braudel, dir., *La Méditerranée. Les hommes et l'héritage*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1986 [1978]), pp. 45–79.

The manner of the image of a big city unfolding against the relationship of the presented people, objects and matters with what transcends the concreteness of space and time, establishes the dialectic of closure and openness in *Quidam*. That mutual relationship between the concrete and the generalised is not uniform. Its openness draws attention to both historicity and the dialogue of ideas. It must thus be admitted in the beginning that *Quidam* presents something more than just a world intentionally created in a literary work. It is also, if not mainly, a proposal to co-create an outline projecting an understanding of real history.

The image of the ancient world, sketched more and more thoroughly by Norwid from the earliest years of his emigration, is a testament to his deeply entrenched belief in the continuity of Western culture despite the traumatic catastrophes that marked its history. Rome, including the times of the Empire, was not an object of hatred in Norwid's work. Also, *Quidam* is far from the resentments of Zygmunt Krasiński as expressed in *Irydion*. The past is not an antagonist of the future in either Norwid's thoughts or imagination. The author of *Quidam* did not use the past as an argument to petrify it in any historiosophical identity disputes in the light of contemporary political goals.

The past is understood by him primarily as a necessary foundation for changes, both destructive and creative, which design the value of continuity even when it reaches posterity as a ruin:

W ruinach, w nocy, mówią się i takie słowa,
Które gdzie indziej dziwnym brzmiałyby sposobem;
Nie tylko bowiem z myśli jest *myśli osnowa*:

...

Przyszłość ocala,
Co jej potrzebne – naród żaden nie umiera,
Tak jako człowiek – ciało tylko się otwiera
Niby trumna – następnie duch, wedle zasługi,
Zstępuje lub wstępuje wyżej, albo niżej;

...

A figury kamienne płaczą – płaczą z rana
I wieczór – jak najęte. –

O! ty ukochana
Ludzkości chrześcijańska – czy tać ci o tem,
Że jesteś nieskończenie szanowne *nic-potem?* –
Osiemnaście więc wieków trwasz? a taka próżnia
We wszystkim – mało gdzie cię myśl wyższa odróżnia
Od pogan, z których żyjesz –

Czyście nie widzieli,
Że mieszkacie w świątyniach starożytnych bogów

I w bohaterów grobach? – że ani by śmieli
 Stworzyć co architekci – prócz stodół a stogów –
 Bez świątyń tych i grobów, z których nasze domy –
 – Cóż zaś zostanie po nas?

(*Pięć zarysów. III. Ruiny* [Five Sketches. III. Ruins], DW IV, 157, 158, 164)

[In ruins, at night, such words may be spoken
 Which would have been strange to hear elsewhere;
 For it is not just from thought that *thought's fabric* is made:

...

The future saves

What it needs – no nation ever dies
 Like a man – only the body opens
 Like a coffin – then the spirit, according to merit,
 Descends or ascends higher, or lower – –

...

And stone figures cry – they cry in the morn
 And evening – their heart and soul.

Oh! you beloved

Christian humanity – should I the words avoid
 That you are an infinitely esteemed *ne'er-do-well*? –
 So you are eighteen centuries old? and such a void
 In everything – rarely differentiated by a higher thought
 From the heathens on whom you live –

Have you not seen

That you inhabit temples of the gods of old
 And the tombs of heroes? – that architects would not have dared
 Create anything – except barns and stacks –
 Without those temples and tombs, of which our houses are made –
 – And what shall remain after us?]

That is one of his early emigration works, and yet one can clearly see the motif, so important for Norwid, of multiple historical horizons which in his belief should not only meet in generalising thought but also in differentiating practice. The cyclical poem *Pięć zarysów* [Five Sketches], written in 1849, was born from deeply felt and intellectually processed experiences resulting from visiting the historical monuments and relics of the ancient world, of which could be said – following the poet – that it passes but does not end.

In the artistic work of the future author of *Quidam*, those experiences were already processed in two equally important aspects: historiosophical and ethical.

A particular role in the development of Norwid's cultural self-consciousness belonged to his sightseeing tours in Rome and its vicinity, including the legendary roads, the adjoining extensive plains and hills of Campania, as well as further south, up to the region of Pompeii and Vesuvius. The strength of the experiences and reflections seem to be most visible in the trauma radiating within him until the end of his life, experienced (1844–1845–1848) among the ashes and excavations of Pompeii.¹⁴ The poet made many horse-riding trips following ancient routes in the 1840s with Maria Kalergis. He was sometimes also accompanied by e.g. Zygmunt Krasiński.

The poet was particularly fascinated with the Appian tract.¹⁵ “Regina viarum,” later surrounded with catacombs and tombs of various religions, was initiated by the censor, Claudius Appius, in 312 BC. At first, it was built by unifying and straightening old routes (in 292 BC it was 11 miles long, reaching from Porta Capena in Rome to Bovillae); then it was reinforced and extended gradually, often as was dictated by war needs, to reach Capua after about half a century. During the first Punic War in mid-3rd century BC, it was further extended to the port of Brindisium and after another half-century it functioned perfectly along its entire length.¹⁶ Rome was only a day's journey from its first “post,” the Tres Tabernae post station¹⁷ by the Pontine marches, and from the Appian Forum by

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- 14 I discuss it in a separate study “Czy Norwid był poetą pustyni?” in: *Strona Norwida. Studia i szkice ofiarowane profesorowi Stefanowi Sawickiemu*, eds. Piotr Chlebowski, Włodzimierz Toruń, Elżbieta Żwirkowska, Edyta Chlebowska (Lublin: TN KUL, 2008), pp. 109–122.
- 15 See e.g.: *Notizie su Municipio Roma IX, Caffarella, Appia Antica e Tang. Est. Scheda: la via Appia* (<http://www.romacivica.net/tarcaf/storarc/app.htm>.); Samuel Ball Platner, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, as completed and revised by Thomas Ashby (London: OUP, 1929); Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, here: *Roma*.
- 16 See *Via Appia ieri. Età Antica. Tracciato* ([http://www.sirio.regione.lazio.it/School Corner/...](http://www.sirio.regione.lazio.it/SchoolCorner/...)): “Esso funzionava perfettamente nel 200 a.C., quando ‘P. Sulpicius... paludatus lictoribus, profectus ab Urbe, Brindisium venit’ (Liv. XXXI, 14, 2; Liv. XLII, 27, 8).”
- 17 See e.g.: *Tres Tabernae* (<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/...>); *Cennistorici Cisterna. La storia* (<http://www.museipontini.it>): “L'origine di Cisterna si fa risalire alla stazione sulla via Appia denominata Trestabernae. Tale nome deriva dalla presenza in loco di tre taberne, che oggi chiameremo locande o osterie, ma che avevano in piu di quelle odierne una ben fornita scuderia per il cambio dei cavalli. La prima citazione storica di Tres Tabernae si trova negli Atti dei SS. Apostoli, dove si narra che San Paulo ... staziona alle Tres Tabernae. Questa ... fu eretta a sede vescovile ... ed. i vescovi si intitularono ‘Episcopi Trium Tabernarum.’ ... L'ultima citazione di Tres Tabernae risale all'anno 868, anno nel quale la borgata fu invasa dai Saraceni ... Questa nuova borgata ricostruita a partire dal X secolo prese il nome di Cisterna Neronis ... nel 1165 Cisterna fu distrutta di nuovo dall'esercito di Federico Barbarossa”.

the canal. Due to the customs inspection held there, it could have been seen by travellers as a kind of initial gate to the city (Norwid accurately captured that fact and described it in *Quidam*, although he used his own wording: “wstępny Rynek” [preliminary Market] and “Trastubernae;” DW III, 122).

For centuries, Via Appia had served as the main road connecting the City with the Mediterranean south. Often it was also a figure of fate and a symbolic sign. As it was a route for everyone, at times it served as the road of triumphal entries (or returns after a defeat) of consuls and emperors with their army, the road of saints and martyrs (including St. Peter and St. Paul, already as a prisoner), and the road of merchants and travellers heading for the City in hopes of changing their lives. Via Appia Antica has thus witnessed the complex and changing nature of Rome’s ties with the world.

The ambiguity of its symbolic meaning could be illustrated, for example, with the expressiveness of very different, sometimes contradictory images. Thus, in 71 BC, it witnessed the terrifying sight of 6 000 prisoners from Spartacus’ defeated insurgent army stretched on crosses on both sides of the road from Capua to Rome.¹⁸ In 46 BC,¹⁹ on the 1st September, it saw the four-fold triumph of Julius Caesar entering Rome through Porta Capena on a chariot drawn by white horses to begin the forty-day festival passed by the Senate to celebrate his victories in Gaul, Egypt, Asia and over Juba, the king of Numidia; and in late fall, the entry of Cleopatra as a guest of Julius Caesar, with her husband-brother Ptolemy and, although this is not entirely certain, with baby Caesarion. And finally, one more example: the symbolism of that great road is enhanced by the legend of St. Peter meeting Christ on the latter’s way to Rome (at the end of the 60s, where later the Quo vadis Domine church was built), after which meeting the apostle who had been leaving Rome returned to face a martyr’s death.²⁰

Obviously, Norwid travelled only through the oldest section eleven-mile long and probably already partially renovated fragment of the route at the most. Yet, Via Appia also opened to him, as depicted on the pages of historical works and recorded life testimonies – in the books by Livius and Tacitus, and particularly in Cicero’s letters or in the Acts of the Apostles. A more or less important context for

18 See Norman Davies, *Europe. A History* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), p. 166; *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN*, Vol. X (Warszawa: PWN, 1967), p. 690 (entry: *Spartakus*).

19 See Adrian Galsworthy, *Caesar. Life of a Colossus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 468–490.

20 See Davies, *Europe*, p. 204.

perceiving the Roman topography in *Quidam* is also the novel by Chateaubriand *Les Martyrs*, thematically related, repeatedly reprinted, and undoubtedly well-known to Norwid (although the book depicts Rome in the 3rd and 4th century from the times of Diocletian, when the city had already absorbed the initial section of the Appian road and Porta Capena of the Servian Wall ceased to be the main gate at that road, replaced by a new toll-gate: Porta Appia in the Aurelian wall).²¹ But, it is a multidimensional and largely polemical context, and will later often be a reference point for this interpretation.

Undoubtedly, the author of *Quidam* found significant support for his thoughts and imagination in his ever richer and more mature experience of the historical dimension of touching ancient culture. But his fascination with the paradoxical “life” of the ancient ruins is evidenced by the motifs related to that sphere of the European landscape, which is dominating in all his works. It shows equally strongly his tendency to combine aesthetics with ever-renewed ethical reflection on the impressions experienced in person; yet, it is always subjected to an attempted objectification.

Norwid considered the negation of the continuity of the history of civilisation, so frequently among his contemporaries, to be a significant error in understanding history and a careless ethical omission towards the ruins. Hence, he was neither a supporter of Hegelianism (this is another argument for the validity of such a thesis), nor could he accept the views of early Chateaubriand in his *L'essai des révolutions* (1797), for in both cases there occurs the conviction of a necessary destructive confrontation of opposites as an essentially tragic factor in the development of civilisation. But, as the author of *Génie du christianisme* (1802) with his idea of inter-epochs, soothing the drama of civilisation breakthroughs and preparing the ground at least for the deceptive memory, and later as the author of *Mémoires d'outre tombe* (written in 1809–1841 and published after his

21 The history of the Servian (Republican) and the Aurelian walls, their role and condition in particular epochs, with a list of gates – from a historical view and the perspective of later excavations – are described in detail in e.g.: W. Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography* (here: *Roma*. Part II. *Topography*. I. *Walls and Gates of Servius Tullius*, II. *Walls and Gates of Aurelian and Honorius*); Lucus Curtius, “Murus Servii Tullii,” in: Platner, *A Topographical Dictionary...*; Mario Leigheb, *The Wall of Aurelian* (<http://www.Romacivica.net>). See also the wonderfully transparent miniature map of ancient Rome with both the walls and aqueducts marked in colour in: *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna*, Vol. X (Warszawa: PWN, 1967), pp. 264–277 (entry: *Rzym starożytny*).

death in 1848–1850), Chateaubriand makes one thought of Norwid’s “shadows” – voices from the past whose presence, oftentimes only potential and silent, was revealed by the Polish poet in many of his works, such as “To rzecz ludzka!” [It is a Human Matter], “Pompeja” [Pompeii], *Krakus*, “Bema pamięci żałobny-rapsod” [A Funeral Rhapsody in Memory of General Bem], “Garstka piasku” [A Handful of Sand] or *Quidam*.

Therefore, it could not be a coincidence that in the short preface to *Quidam*, the author placed such strong emphasis on the difference or even divergence of views and experiences in that respect between himself and the author of *Irydion*. There is a hint of irony in his dignified and carefully balanced words. The author of *Quidam* knew well – because he came to realise that truth – the ruins were not meant to be “seen” and “praised,” but to be accepted, understood as an element of the past, and then creatively incorporated into a new outline.

It would seem that Norwid’s clearly formulated position distinctly corresponds with the words of Chateaubriand, who from the point of view of an heir (a participant and connoisseur of European art), thus wrote about the role of Christianity in saving the fragments of substance and spirit of ancient culture from destruction:

Christian Rome might be considered as a capacious harbour in which all the wrecks of the arts were collected and preserved. ... The successors of Leo X did not permit this noble ardor for the productions of genius to die away. The peaceful bishops of Rome collected in their *villa* the precious relics of ages. In the Borghese and Farnese palaces the traveller admired the masterpieces of Praxiteles and Phidias. It was the popes that purchased at an enormous price the statues of Hercules and Apollo, that preserved the too-much-slighted ruins of antiquity, and covered them with the sacred mantle of religion. Who can help admiring the pious labor of that pontiff who placed Christian images on the beautiful remains of the palace of Adrian? The Pantheon would not now exist, had it not been hallowed by the veneration of the twelve apostles; neither would Trajan’s pillar be still standing, had it not been crowned with the statue of St. Peter.

This conservative spirit was manifested in all the orders of the Church. While the ruins collected to adorn the Vatican surpassed the wealth of the ancient temples, a few poor monks protected within the precincts of their convents the ruins of the houses of Tibur and Tusculum, and conducted the stranger through the gardens of Cicero and Horace. A Carthusian pointed out the laurel which grew on Virgil’s grave, and a pope was seen crowning Tasso in the Capitol. ...

After all, the progress of letters was inseparable from the progress of religion, since it was in the language of Homer and Virgil that the fathers explained the principles of the faith. The blood of martyrs, which was the seed of Christians, likewise caused the laurel of the orator and the poet to flourish.

Christian Rome has been to the modern what pagan Rome was to the ancient world – the common centre of union. This capital of nations fulfils all the conditions of its destiny, and seems in reality to be the *eternal* city.²²

One must agree with those words, concisely and aptly expressing the attitude of modern patronage which tried to preserve both people and stones, so to say, in its memory. Thanks to that patronage, the Renaissance became possible, as a restoration of European culture shaped at that time mainly by Christianity, to its ancient foundations. Nevertheless, it is also hard to resist the impression that Norwid might have felt a certain dissatisfaction with the captivating synthesis of the author of *Génie du Christianisme*. The attitude of the author of *Quidam* was more open to the community of axiological experiences of various subjects in historical time, the principle of continuity was not supposed to be limited to the issue of cultivating old patterns, carefully selected in order to mitigate the image of a civilisation breakthrough. It was also meant to refer to analogies due to the motivation of actions being rooted in individual human lives. Norwid considered respect for other people's subjectivity by analogy with one's own self to be necessary for a mature self-evaluation of those who acquire the inheritance. Sometimes, the conclusions of such analogies might be difficult to bear. One of them is the analogy between the relation of Christian civilisation to the monuments of antiquity, as described in *Génie du Christianisme*, and the relation of Roman civilisation to the elements of the Greek culture it assimilated, presented in *Quidam* on the example of the strongly philo-Hellenic era of Hadrian.²³ In the sphere of history, both cases include both protection and destruction. What differentiates the two writers is their approach to an extremely complex problem: with Chateaubriand it is idealisation; with Norwid, critical judgment.

The tendency to idealise led Chateaubriand to a paradoxical agreement with sins he decided not to mention. He must have known e.g. about the barbarity of thousands of Lutheran landsknechts of the Christian and "Roman" emperor Charles V of Habsburg during the plunder (*Sacco di Roma*, 1527) which decreased the population of the Eternal City to one fifth (Pope Clement VII took refuge in Castel Sant'Angelo, i.e. in the former mausoleum of Hadrian), and countless cultural treasures were plundered or destroyed. That *Sacco di Roma*

22 François-René Chateaubriand, *The genius of Christianity*, transl. by Charles I. White (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co., 1871), pp. 639–642.

23 See e.g. Anthony R. Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor* (London and New York: Routledge 2013).

“położyło kres świetności renesansowego Rzymu”²⁴ [put an end to the splendour of Renaissance Rome]. The well-equipped armies of the Italian dukes did not come to the rescue of the City. Chateaubriand treated such occurrences not so much as disturbances in the functioning of ethical norms, but rather, in accordance with his concept of the three epochs²⁵ in human history, as catastrophes directly related to the psychosocial and mental condition of man in the transition era. Here, it would be a transition from the ancient era (“natural” man – a physical man, barbarian) to the Christian era (“moral” man). Chateaubriand, who knew the Great Revolution from up close, did carry some fatalism in him – some of the melancholic conviction about the irreversible direction of change marked one way or another by the prospect of an end. Perhaps that is why he viewed ruins, tombs, and statues essentially as objects of death, and he saw a source of hope in the final triumph of Christianity over the one-sidedness of the age of materialism – not through processing tradition, but through work at the will of entities designing their own visions of the future.

It is different with Norwid. In his *Quidam*, that poetic and philosophical parable of people and stones and the subject of relations between philo-Hellenic Rome and Hellenistic Greece becomes the focus, not only due to the role of Greek culture in the shaping of Rome’s civilisational identity, and not only due to the zeal of Hadrian in getting to know Greek lands and organising work to either renovate historic monuments or construct new buildings. The matter is particularly focused on in *Quidam* also, or perhaps mainly, due to the actual status of Greek culture in the empire at a time when the gradual conquest of Greece was long over. For it was largely an annexed inheritance. There were attempts to deprive that inheritance of what was always so important for Norwid: the link to its origins, the creative subjectivism rooted in individual lives of the famous

24 See Józef A. Gierowski, *Historia Włoch*, ed. 2, corrected and supplemented (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1999), pp. 176–180: *Sacco di Roma i kongres w Bolonii* (quotation from p. 177); *Sacco di Roma (1527)*. *Da Wikipedia, l’enciclopedia libera*, from <http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/...>

25 To each of the epochs he ascribed a poetic model which could be turned into an allegory. The concept is thus described by Jean-Christophe Cavallin in *Chateaubriand mythographe. Autobiographie et allégorie dans les “Mémoires d’Outre-Tombe”* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000), pp. 18–19: “Dans le chapitre du *Génie* intitulé *Le Guerrier – Définition du beau idéal*, l’apologiste distingue trois âges successifs de l’homme: *l’homme barbare ou physique ou naturel*, dont le modèle poétique est *l’homme anti- que* d’Homère; *l’homme moral* dont le parfait modèle est le chevalier chrétien du Tasse, et enfin *l’homme moderne* ou homme de la civilisation matérielle.”

and the nameless and unknown, but who were in fact evicted into oblivion. In the Roman environment described by the author of *Quidam*, it is a painful current matter which is discussed much and pulsates with a subcutaneous rhythm in the narrative layer of the poem, signalling its time of action: "To już dwa wieki od Grecji pogrzebu" (DW III, 182) [It has been two centuries since the funeral of Greece]. The matter is of key importance for constructing a sense of whole, much like the matter of Jews and Christians – the latter often mistaken for Jews, but increasingly visible and discreetly present throughout the City. When stating that Rome is the canvas of *Quidam* and its actual, true protagonist, it must be also added that the historical time of action has been chosen so as to allow the presentation of the exceptional intersection of many tendencies at the turn of epochs, when matters still deeply hidden, and so dramatic, were occurring.

In light of the arguments presented here, the relationship between the role played in the world of the poem by the basic idea of *Quidam*, vagueness as an element of creative change and as an opening of a supra-personal perspective and the role of the idea in the real world of Norwid's thoughts and activities becomes clearly visible. Critical self-awareness and responsibility for the professed set of values are of key importance for that.

In Norwid's conviction, quite obvious in his letters and in *Quidam*, the new Christian civilisation is obliged to be a "powszechny łącznik" [universal link] for its time, based on the ancient ruins it has subordinated; but, it should also see the splendour of truth shining from inside the shapes created with a different pattern. In his concept of history, ruin is understood as a value in a long dynamic progression of culture, a trace of fruitful and self-conscious creative work, whose authors are not always famous or celebrated; sometimes their services for their contemporaries and for posterity are those of *homines quidam*, people on the move – rooted in a world of spirit beyond all borders. Their achievements survive in the form of material traces, but that does not equal objectification of their personal testimony. Respecting another person's dignity does not allow the consideration if an acquired work to be unconditionally one's own. A civilisation which has not matured enough for such an attitude cannot develop fully. One of the final sentences of the above-discussed preface to *Quidam* is thus somewhat polemical:

Cywilizacja składa się z nabytków wiedzy *izraelskiej – greckiej – rzymskiej*, a łono Jej – chrześcijańskie – czy myślisz, że w świadomej sobie rzeczywistości już tryumfalnie rozbłysło? (DW III, 120)

[Civilisation is composed of the acquired *Israeli – Greek – Roman* knowledge, and Its bosom is Christian; do you think [the bosom] has already come to shine in triumph in a reality which is aware of itself?]

The polemical nature of the statement seems to be directed both to those who, like e.g. Zygmunt Krasiński, treat traditions other than their own with uncritical superiority and self-satisfaction, and to those who tend to treat other people's traditions in a paternalistic and sentimental manner, as dead antiquities worthy of conservation.

One might assume that Norwid would have included the author of *Génie du christianisme* and *Mémoires d'outre tombe* among the latter. In fact, that would be quite right, because for all his understanding of the importance of continuity in history despite rapid civilisational changes, Chateaubriand made the experience of passing away the experience of vanity of the world against dreams and faith on the basis for that continuity. It is significant that one of the motifs that gives the monumental and compositionally complex *Mémoires d'outre tombe* the character of a coherent whole is a motto from the biblical Book of Job, preceding the preface from 1846: "Sicut nubes... quasi naves... velut umbra. Job" (XXX, 15; IX, 26; XIV, 2).²⁶ The most recent research on the work of that remarkable thinker and master of French prose more and more often uncovers both interpretations indicating the visionary nature of his autobiographical narratives inextricably linked with the telling of history,²⁷ as well as interpretations which concern the search for hermeneutic analysis of thematic dominants, which either organise the story directly or those encrypted in the structures of myth, symbol, or allegory. Particularly noteworthy is the insightful study by Agnes Verlet, who believes the theme of death and the vanity of the world to be dominant with Chateaubriand, especially in *Mémoires d'outre tombe* and in *Les Martyrs*.²⁸

Norwid's concept of culture is different. Often opening to tradition, he designs a future seen as a task, as a sphere of personal responsibility for the good of others in a social reality. The author of *Quidam* treats culture as a sequence of values which take a specific shape in history in a manner which should inspire not only imitation, but above all, creative continuation, involving dialogue, critical modification, and assimilation. The role of man in a, thus, understood exchange

26 Jean-Christophe Cavallin, *Mémoires d'outre tombe*, Vol. I–II, avant-propos de J. d'Ormesson de l'Académie Française, introduction, notes et variantes par Jean-Paul Clément, Vol. I. Quarto Gallimard Paris p. 1997 63 (the fragmentary motto was located by Clément).

27 See in particular: *Chateaubriand Visionnaire*, recueil d'études publié sous la direction de Jean-Paul Clément (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 2001); Jean-Paul Clément, *Chateaubriand. "Des illusions contre des souvenirs,"* découvertes Gallimard Littératures (Paris: Gallimard, 2003).

28 See Agnès Verlet, *Les Vanités de Chateaubriand* (Genève: Droz, 2001).

of goods over and through time is of particular importance for Norwid. One may safely quote Gadamer's words²⁹ that, in that concept, the poet emphasises "experiencing one's own historicity."

The anticipation of Gadamer's hermeneutics is quite striking when noting the dialogue of series of testimonies and interpretations, which in turn become a testimony themselves, in Norwid's work. If in that culture-building process tradition actually turns out to be the language of the encounter, then it must follow that it is a timeless cooperation of people as milestones leading into the future on paths of self-discovery. It would also be a collaboration of people as source entities thanks to which the traces left in history are potential speech.

The traces are sometimes a question for the main road – also about the one leading to the Eternal City, where a nameless person, a someone, a *homo-quidam* co-creates the sense of the world with their life's deeds on a par with Caesar or with any saint well-known by name. Then the question about the meaning of life in the world must be asked in the context of a question about the dynamics of the distribution of their potential roles.

With his typical contrariness, Norwid gives a specific term to the potential subsidiarity of historical people whose thoughts and vital achievements are well known and therefore could be recalled from common memory and ascribed

29 It seems that Norwid's attitude towards the evidence and relics of the past is close to Gadamer's philosophy of culture, together with its key concept of hermeneutical experience as discussed in his book *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1960). See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, transl. by Joel Weinsheimer, Donald G. Marshall (London–New Delhi–New York–Sidney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp. 355, 364–366, 369: "This is precisely what we have to keep in mind in analysing historically effected consciousness: it has the structure of *experience* (Erfahrung). ... Experience in this sense belongs to the historical nature of man. ... Real experience is that whereby man becomes aware of his finiteness. ... To acknowledge what is does not just mean to recognize what is at this moment, but to have insight into the limited degree to which the future is still open to expectation and planning or, even more fundamentally, to have the insight that all the expectation and planning of finite beings is finite and limited. Genuine experience is experience of one's own historicity. ... Hermeneutical experience is concerned with *tradition*. This is what is to be experienced. But tradition is not simply a process that experience teaches us to know and govern; it is a *language* – i.e., it expresses itself like a Thou. ... For tradition is a genuine partner in dialogue, and we belong to it, as does the I with a Thou. ... To be situated within a tradition does not limit the freedom of knowledge but makes it possible. ... I must allow tradition's claim to validity, not in the sense of simply acknowledging the past in its otherness, but in such a way that it has something to say to me."

the role of valuable partners in historical dialogue – “kwatremistrzostwo” [quarterage]. He thus wrote of it in one of his letters to Jadwiga Łuszczewska “Deotyma,” who styled herself as a Warsaw poetess at first in her family salon, and later in her own:

Pani błędzisz mniemając, że w dialogu moim Rafaela i Byrona jednym lub drugim z tych biegunów ducha być należy, aby w tej rzeczy i mierze stworzyć – bałwochwalstwo to w Kursie mym zbijałem. *Każdy albowiem z nas jest więcej niż wszyscy, co przed nami byli...* dopóki jest mocen być *mniej* jako ciąg wykreślonego toru i dopóki wszelako jest *sobą*.

Cóż mi Cezar, kiedy ja go nie jako ciąg i jako kwatremistrza w sztabie moim uważam? – Co mi on jest, jeżeli i dopóki to nie jest mój kwatremistrzowy generał? – Tak i Sokrates, i dyktator Kamil, i Ulpianus, i Cezar, i Sobieski, i Kopernik, i Rafael, i Byron, i Kościuszko, i ktokolwiek bądź on jest.³⁰

[Ma'am, you are mistaken in thinking that in my dialogue between Raphael and Byron you must be one or the other of these poles of the spirit in order to create in that matter and measure – such idolatry I censured in my Course. *For each one of us is more than all those who came before us...* as long as we are able to be *less* as a continuation of a set course, and still *ourselves*.

What do I care for Caesar if I do not consider him a continuation and a quartermaster in my staff? – what is he to me if and until he is my quartermaster general? It is the same with Socrates, and the dictator Kamil, and Ulpianus, and Caesar, and Sobieski, and Copernicus, and Raphael, and Byron, and Kościuszko, and whoever one may be.]

Undoubtedly, such dialogue concept of cultural continuity, both open and personal, meant opposition to disregard for tradition and unacceptance of a revolutionary break with a multifaceted and multivariate past. However, it could become the foundation of both criticism and shaping attitudes among contemporaries. The influence of Norwid in that respect is well-known to have been practically non-existent in relation to his own era. From the perspective of “późni wnukowie” [grandsons yet to come], however, his views were already within one of the main intellectual channels back then.

3

The image of ancient Rome as a living space, presented both from the point of view of the narrator and the characters, is never static in *Quidam*. The already

30 Letter to Jadwiga Łuszczewska of [March 1862], DW XII, 18.

mentioned variety of plots in the poem is only an apparent dispersion because, in fact, the compositional principle of that space is movement.

It might seem that regarding urban space, which is inherently frozen among stone³¹ structures and among islands³² of evergreen vegetation, immobilized by its rootedness, such a thesis is at least paradoxical. And yet, Norwid created the presented world in such a way that the description of its objective elements is usually closely related to either the reported action or, for example, to the narrator's thoughts, making it dynamic. That poetic technique covers both the open space of the city and the variously presented homes or workshops. Significant examples thereof may be found in the fragment of the scene from "Capitoline" analysed above, as well as in this presentation of the house of Jazon the Magus giving a general idea of the dwelling:

Jak przez *czasowe* gdy kto *wieczne* słyszy
I folgę daje obecności gwarnej,
...
Tak Jazon, wieścią choroby okryty,
Samotnie wschody liczył i zachody –
To przed domostwem siadując jak wryty,
Niewiele baczny na wieczorne chłody –
To od przysionka przechodząc wzdłuż sali,
Gdzie drży fontanna i lampa się pali.

(DW III, 167)

[Like when one hears the *eternal* through the *temporary*
And gives relief of noisy presence,
...
So did Jazon, cloaked with the news of illness,

31 Already at the time of the late republic (late 2nd and 1st century BC) builders started to depart from wooden constructions in favour of stone: at first it was tuff, then burned brick; only the early Augustinian empire (31–14 BC) introduced also hard limestone, travertine and marble. In the 1st and 2nd centuries, numerous monumental structures and villas were built, while the conditions in the degrading apartment buildings (*insulae*) worsened. See Kazimierz Kumaniecki, *Historia kultury starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu*, ed. 2 revised and extended (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1965), pp. 426–432, 450–459, 478–493; see also: Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*.

32 See as above and e.g. in: *Gardens Guide. Rome's gardens...* (<http://www.gardenvisit.com/...>); *Roman villa*. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_villa).

Count his sunrises and sunsets alone –
 Either sitting in front of the house like a statue –
 Mindless of the evening chill,
 Or walking down the hall from the vestibule,
 Where the fountain trembles and the lamp burns.]

Both examples (additional ones could have easily been found) also have a significant and differently manifested feature, present in *Quidam* not so much due to the poetic technique itself, but rather due to the method of weakening the temporal obviousness of the narrator's position in relation to the world being described, which is based on that technique. That feature is the striving to exceed the limits of the historical time of the plot, situated in a specific era. That occurs mostly through the narration – either through anticipating the future (as in the case of anticipating the modern Greek struggle for freedom, DW III, 182) or turning into a reflexive generalisation (e.g. at the beginning of the above quotation). Those specific “escapes” of the narrator, who in *Quidam* usually accompanies the characters and their affairs from the position of a direct observer, are not a realistically motivated consequence of the plot's events. Rather, they move the reader from the time of linear action to the “czas górą się niosący”³³ [time passing above] of a symbol and universal values.³⁴

What links all the protagonists of *Quidam* is an overwhelming network of expected and unexpected encounters. Simultaneously, the instability of their mutual contacts and the superficiality of ties in this world are striking. A specific attempt to gain permanent orientation is constant movement and constant travelling. And that movement is real, as shown by the fact that, despite the multitude of themes, one sees the intentionality of the sketched silhouettes and of the often peculiar behaviours of the characters, and even of the unexpected meetings. Already at first glance, one can see the diversity of both the social status and the fate of individual characters. The degree to which they feel at home in Rome is

33 See the poem “To rzecz ludzka!...” [It is a Human Matter!...] written in Pompeii in 1844, line 65, PWSz I, 64.

34 Those were likely the features observed in the poem which made Wiesław Rzońca draw a tentative conclusion that “*Quidam* may be the first work of Polish literature written in the poetics of symbolism.” Another captivating and interestingly justified thesis of the author is also linking Norwid's poetics and attitude with the category of post-romanticism, defined on the basis of twentieth-century literature. See Wiesław Rzońca, *Norwid a romantyzm polski* (Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2005).

different, they have different roots, as well as different goals and motivations for action.

And yet, in spite of their differences, something seems to link them, as if apart from the formal nature of social life and social roles played, there was a hidden meaning – one not easily revealed, but essential. As they each walk their separate paths, they strangely appear to all be partakers of some long march. If the reader notices that, and at the same time decides to adopt an attitude of understanding, they must investigate the meanings beyond the self-awareness of the characters in dialogue with the author on the level of the entire work. That is, at a level where horizons of symbolic meanings and myth open, which make the story told in the poem a true parable, as the poet announces in the subtitle.

The most important contexts of Norwid's historiosophical thought, shaped based on Christian civilisation with (as mentioned above) particular awareness of its multicultural roots, most definitely include almost the entire oeuvre of François-René Chateaubriand. Beside works already mentioned and compared here, one must consider, in particular, such works as *Études ou Discours historiques sur la chute de l'empire romain* (1831), *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1811), and above all the novel *Les Martyrs* (1809).

It is highly unlikely that Norwid, who was so interested in contemporary French literature, the history of ancient culture, the history of Christianity, and planning to write the poem *Quidam*, would not have read the repeatedly reissued³⁵ novel *Les Martyrs* many times. A detailed comparison of the two works would definitely go beyond the scope of this article, so they shall be left for a separate study, with only some basic issues addressed here.

35 By the time the *Oeuvres Complètes* (1826–1827) were published, the novel *Les Martyrs ou le triomphe de la Religion Chrétienne*, first published in 1809, had had five successive editions, changed and corrected by the author (not counting two reprints). All the following editions (e.g. 1849, 1852, 1859) contain the final version from the complete works. It is also worth mentioning the fantastic issue of the first version, titled *Les Martyrs de Dioclétien*. ... éd. critique par B. d'Andlau, ... "Cahiers Chateaubriand" ... 1951, No. 3, on the basis of a manuscript donated (1932) to the Société Chateaubriand by the author's relative. It is an unfinished, abandoned version, very different from the one sent to print as concerns concept, composition and has many details. It is not considered here, as it could obviously not be known to Norwid, although it would have likely been much closer to him. All information in this note is cited after the foreword by B. d'Andlau. This analysis refers to the following edition of the work: *Les Martyrs, suivis des remarques par M. Le Vicomte de Chateaubriand* (Paris, 1859), containing two forewords by the author.

Importantly, *Les Martyrs* was the first epic panorama of ancient Rome of such extent and on the wide scale of the empire. There is the City along with Campania, Naples and Vesuvius; there are the lands of the Gauls and the Franks (the area of military service and battles of the main character, and at the same time the cradle of the homeland of Chateaubriand), there is also the Greek homeland of two main protagonists, the martyrs: Eudore's Arcadia and Cymodocea's Thebaid. There is Judea, where Jérôme (the future Saint Jerome) is heading, and Egypt (where Augustine, the future Saint Augustine, is returning).³⁶ There are Jerusalem, Memphis and Athens. Also, one of the main characters is Constantine (the future emperor Constantine the Great), along with his family (his father, emperor Constantius, mother Prisca and sister Valérie, both are Christian). There are also the emperor Diocletian and the cruel Galerius, Marcellinus the bishop of Rome, and many others. Except Eudore and Cymodocea, all of the protagonists are famous historical figures; the two fictional characters are depicted at the beginning of the novel as descendants of ancient families (Cymodocea was a Homeridaj priestess, and Eudore grew up in a Christian family distinguished in the struggle for freedom in Greece). The novel ends with the martyr's death of the two protagonists who were thrown to the lions. It was meant to be a Christian epic. The indispensable element of the miraculous was added with occasional chapters with "heavenly" or "hellish" scenes, and direct interference of Providence also happens in "normal" action. It is hard to take for today's reader; it was probably also so in the time of Norwid. Incidentally, the (regrettably) abandoned version did not have such wonders.

The brief presentation above, seen in the context of the considerations of this paper, allows the reader to easily obtain an idea of the extent and aspects of Norwid's polemics with the work of Chateaubriand which inspired him. He chose the era of peace, creative multiculturalism and self-confident strengthening of borders, but also an era of a quietly evolving change, full of tensions around the issues and people who favoured intellectual, political, and religious freedom. Like the author of *Les Martyrs*, he chose the fate of a certain group to be the axis of action, but while Chateaubriand initially had a group of friends from the highest Roman elite at the centre, *Quidam* has a social group with rather loose

36 In the foreword to the 2nd issue of his novel, Chateaubriand eloquently explains his anachronisms and other historical inaccuracies in *Les Martyrs*. He states there that Jerome and Augustine were born mere twenty years after the death of Diocletian, and in order to illustrate how saturated the epoch was with the great figures of Christianity, he had to "press the time together" a little ("j'ai été obligé de presser un peu les temps." *Les Martyrs*, p. 6).

bonds, not linked with a common idea. Both in the private and public spheres, Norwid focuses on what is weak, quiet, and focused on inner life. Yet, it is in that weakness that a hidden strength lies, the omnipresent *quidam* is inseparable from what surpasses it, and *Quidam* is the visible profile of the collective man.

When the sixteen-year-old Eudore sets off for Rome, he goes there as a hostage within the multi-generational service of the eldest sons of once rebellious families, ordered by the Senate. He replaces his father who had already been freed from service. Social contacts and living conditions are guaranteed to him in advance. He travels to Rome from Brindisi through Via Appia, the same road which the son of Aleksander takes in his travel from Capua (after taking Via Popilia aka Annia from Reggio). Both are joyful and hopeful in their dreams about the wonderful, proud City. Both lead their own social and spiritual lives, with the son of Aleksander dimly sensing the value of Christianity, and Eudore, who initially departed from the faith, finally serving it with his whole life. In the end, both meet a violent death in Rome: Eudore in the circus arena, like many holy martyrs; the son of Aleksander on the pavement of Forum Holitorium,³⁷ stripped of everything, though covered with flowers, his later fate unknown to anyone – like the “Adolescentulus quidam,” who followed Christ the longest, but then escaped and is now only a shadow of a shadow on “sindone.”

Quidam's protagonists have different worlds of values, which are in many respects diametrically opposed. Among the many figures, more or less sketchy with which the author populated the presented Roman space, there are despots and silent victims, balanced sages and cunning pragmatists, freedom fighters, philosophers and poets; there is the emperor and his officials, there are soldiers, lictors and spies; finally, there are many common people in different clothing with different colours and generally speaking Latin.

All of them, without exception, are in a state of constant readiness, somewhere on the way, each one in their own manner. They plan and go someplace or

37 Forum Holitorium was next to Forum Boarium, outside of Porta Carmentalis. Its southern and north-east borders touched on the Servian Wall and the foot of the Capitol. The Forum had been paved with stone as early as in 2nd century before Christ. Like in many other cities, it was a flower and vegetable market, hence so many baskets with flowers in the fateful scene in *Quidam*. Norwid had great knowledge in that scope: on that market there was the *colonna lactaria*, probably for feeding infants; that is likely why Gwidon carrying a basket of flowers is addressed by a girl “Naczynie niosąc betające mlekiem” (DW III, 261) [carrying a pail sloshing with milk]. See *Forum Holitorium*, in: Platner, *A Topographical Dictionary...*, p. 225; *Forum Holitorium* (<http://www.maquettes-historiques.net/>).

return from somewhere, they participate in intimate and social meetings and in dramatic events. They wander around the “huge” city, fully feeling its inhabitants, even if not necessarily satisfied with their rights. It might be concluded that one of the most significant functions of that clearly perceptible dynamics of images and representations, sometimes linked with narrative commentary as a counterpoint, is to build such a perspective which would gradually reveal the complexity of the mutual relations between people and the city. Also, the knowledge of the space beyond the city, mentions not only the Roman Campania, but also Hellenistic Greece and even of Gaul or Britain, seem in fact to help construct an outline of the truth about the continuing seductive power of Rome, whose very existence is a value. The elements of the presented world illuminate one another in the text of *Quidam* and make all the space concentrate around the Eternal City. That makes the sentence from the poetic diary of the son of Aleksander very convincing: “Rzym jeden Rzymem, a świat – jego murem” (DW III, 140) [Only Rome is Rome, and the world [is] its wall].

Thus, the strange man in the garden of Jazon the Magus makes a terrifying exception. After visiting the Magus, on his way through the garden, Aleksander’s son hears and sees the man fiercely abusing the statue of Apollo as if he was leading a substitute fight in an attack of hatred. As if he could not cope with real life, avoiding less defenceless opponents, as if he was in a trap, unable to be on his way:

Tam więc skwapiwszy się, gdy patrzył chwilę,
Ujrzał naprzeciw biustu Apollona
Postać jakoby męża w wieku sile,
Wzruszającego raz po raz ramiona,
Tam i na powrót kroczonego gniewnie,
Jak gdy kto swego fuka niewolnika

...

I znów przypadał doń, pięściami macał,
I milkł – i siał doń – zakrywał oczy –
Scena ta, zwłaszcza przy świetle niepewnym,
Zatrzymywała wzrok na chwilę długą,
Uczuciem widza nie przejmując rzewnym.
Czasu, gdy nieraz krwi gorącej strugą
Cucono rzesze na cyrku znudzone,
A rzadki wierzył – i trza było może
Wierzyć, by kopać wizerunki boże! –

(DW III, 191, 192)

[And rushing there, watching for a moment

He saw opposite Apollo's bust
 A figure of a man in his prime,
 Shrugging his shoulders again and again,
 Walking angrily there and back,
 Like one scolding his slave ...
 And he turned to it [the bust] again, with a hit of his fists,
 And fell silent – and sat down again – covered his eyes – -
 The scene, especially in the dim light,
 Held your gaze for a long moment,
 Giving no tender feelings to a viewer.
 The time when sometimes a hot stream of blood
 Was used to wake the bored crowds at the circus,
 And few believed – and perhaps it was necessary
 To believe to kick gods' images! -]

For a young man who wants to explore the mysteries of Rome, the event is a psychological riddle. He wonders about the stranger's motivations (the stranger incidentally being another *quidam*). The son of Aleksander ponders the relatively clandestine matters as potential reasons, e.g. some secrets concerning Christians, Jews or perhaps Jazon himself. Shocked by the sudden experience, he sees all that in the context of his own situation; his own participation in matters is not entirely clear to him. The anxiety that accompanies him deepens. And yet, he continues his way through the city which he admires, and in which he will find a violent death witnessed by the crowd.

Old Jazon the Magus, having settled in Rome one day (probably after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70), was reluctant to leave the house. He himself was not a man of the road, and rather received others at his residence, planning roads for them. He also managed to avoid an unexpected path imposed by violence; his age and illness did not save him from banishment, but the emperor's letter with a sentence came as a fatal blow to the heart. Touched by the living, he drank a cup of poison. He chose his last path, which turned out to not to be the route of exile, but the valley of death.

Nearly all the protagonists of *Quidam*, quite vaguely sketched, disappear one by one from the pages of the poem, from the world presented there and commented by multiple voices (by the characters in mutual contact, and by the narrator). They disappear from life: like Gwido (*Quidam*) the gardener, seen first on the steps of the Capitol, eventually freed, and then seen for the last time in the role of a charismatic priest baptising the dying son of Aleksander, while dragged by killers in the Market Square; this time perhaps to his death. Like the young Epirote, son of Aleksander, killed in an unexpected coincidence, unaware of the sense of his death just like the reader. Like the old Jewish sage Jazon the Magus, drinking a cup of poison in the

face of the emperor's decree of banishment; like the poetess Zofia of Knidos, who consciously accepted the received flask of poison; and finally, as Barchob, Jazon's disciple, an insufficiently charismatic leader, who fell in the lost uprising in distant Judea. They go into exile, like the philosopher Artemidor of Corinth. They end their role without a clear point, like the nameless grammar teacher. Almost everyone disappears from the set, fading into an unknown background. From among the named characters of the world created by the author of the poem, the only person to remain in Rome, apart from Emperor Adrian and people from his closest circle (such as Lucius Pomponius Pulcher), is Barchob II, probably the most mysterious figure of all. The poem ends with funerals in two different rites behind the walls in the Via Appia area: a burning pyre with Zofia, surrounded by unrecognised people, among them is likely the exiled Artemidor; the would-be exile Jazon the Magus is placed in a tomb freshly dug by Barchob II, wrapped in ritual cloths, now posthumously humiliated with the words of Pomponius passing by, a representative of the Roman elite who seemed a friend not so long ago.

Almost all of them disappear, but they do remain in the reader's memory until the end; until the very last line of the poem, they co-create meaning. That meaning is also co-created by the main (or perhaps the only) historical figure in the poem: Adrian (or Hadrian, 117–138), the builder-emperor and successor to the triumphant emperor Trajan, and actually continuator of the Augustinian Pax Romana.

When the plot of *Quidam* ends, the uprising in Judea is burning out, and in Rome, Christians are still not forming a distinct environment. After the reader "walks" the intricate trail of the poem's action, it absolutely cannot be said that *homo quidam* would never appear on the streets of the Eternal City again. It is true that the reader leaves the son of Aleksander lying in the Forum Holitorium, or perhaps in the adjoining Forum Boarium (called in *Quidam* the Trade Square), on a Roman cobblestone, stained with human and animal blood, covered with flowers strewn on him among chaotically scattered empty baskets.³⁸ The reader

38 For more on the topic of the complex symbolism of a basket as a grave, see *Invention of Saint Stephen, Protomartyr*, in: Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints*, transl. by William Caxton, first edition 1483, e.g.: "And Gamaliel said to him: These paniers be our tombs, and these roses be our relics" (cited after Temple Classics edited by F. S. Ellis, 1900). In Voragine's text, actions inspired by a sequence of dreams led to the discovery of a body thrown outside of Jerusalem without burial, to its translation and honouring. The fate of the son of Aleksander from Norwid's work is different: the roses are strewn chaotically, the baskets scattered around empty. It may seem a completely different fate. Yet *Quidam* is an open parable, and a graveless *homo-quidam* is always on their way, travelling.

sees Gwidon for the last time as a man captured and dragged by the guards, but nothing specific is known about his future fate – prison or martyrdom. One can also not be sure if he and the gardener carrying a basket full of flowers on his back are one and the same person. And yet the story, which begins with the arrival of the young Epirote to Rome from the Via Appia side, dreamy in the face of the might of the ancient world, in the casual company of a merchant caravan, ends by analogy with the image of “*reginae viarum*,” both as an avenue of graves and as a space invariably open to the world. *Quidam* ultimately turns out to be a parable about the power of life and about the countless faces of *homo quidam* in an outline of “*całości człeka-zbiorowego w czasie*” (DW III, 201) [the entirety of the collective-man in time].

The real and symbolic paths, constantly travelled on by the characters of *Quidam*, are diverse, their goals ambivalent, and they intersect in various ways. But they all seem to have a shared sense. For in that poem, in the space created by Norwid, they lead from one place to another. They prove that there is order, not only in the law or in the landscape. The axiological ambivalence of those paths is actually the ambivalence of fates. Each of them is some stage of choice, tested with life. And each stage opens a new challenge, which actually always means, keep searching, pursue a distant goal.

Readers of *Quidam* have the opportunity to not only closely follow descriptions of ancient Rome's life in midst of the metropolitan world of streets, squares, and hills covered with villas, palaces, and gardens, but, thanks to the indeterminate image of the city, with its stones and greenery, its people and animals, its drama of simultaneous existence on earth and between earth and sky, one also receives from the author the task and the chance to co-create meaning in the open field of values. The effort of reconstructing the multi-threaded fabric of the action, which comes in the form of scattered fragments and unexpected clusters interspersed with the narrator's commentary and digressions, also provides the opportunity to reflect on the extent to which the matters presented there extend beyond the walls of that city, and to which their scope extends over time in human memory and knowledge.

And so, the question about the possibility of a potential and real community with the protagonists of Norwid's poem, called a parable, must arise. It should also apply to the modern reader. It could be both a community of experience based on some analogy, or an awareness of jointly inherited sense, in the horizons of history and myth, to the measure of our will and ability to understand and supplement. The question about the community, built thanks to the

thought conveyed to us by the author but also beyond the text of *Quidam*, and even in the dialogue within the reading of the poem, attempts to reveal the outline of truth originating in the Eternal City, from under the multiple layers of the parable.

It is also a question about the most deeply hidden principle, which reveals itself when it is enough to look at the road to remember the goal. In Norwid's *Quidam*, being on one's way is the inner state of a person, an attempt at self-awareness asking "Quidam?" (DW III, 261) in order to recognise the moment when the scattered patterns subordinate to the co-created whole and, together with that whole, shape or repeat a pattern. It is thus a question about the principle which makes it impossible to contemplate accidental crossing of fates and makes them part of the shared fate of mortals,³⁹ crushing rocks with hope in order to build houses, tombs, and roads from them.

Over the affirmed historical continuity in the development of civilisation, Norwid sensed a potential common memory of a prototype in the triune of Platonic ideas and in the message of the Gospel. The philosophical and logical differences between them are the subject of a poetic dispute in the house of Zofia of Knidos, where unannounced guests appear, nearly all the characters of the poem. It is one of the dominants of the poetic parable, a theme with many variations. It is worth recalling here its most mystical, expressive, and mysterious variant – the words of a song repeated like the echo of a voice in the wind:

Bo inna pojąć wzór – i, cało-dźwięków tworó
W po-za-jawie słuchając, nad światy,
Samemu kwiatem rość, ku prawdzie pierwowzoru,
A inna – wieniec wić – lub rwać kwiaty – –

(DW III, 209)

39 See Zygmunt Kubiak, *Nowy brewiarz Europejczyka* (Warszawa: Więź, 2001), p. 210 f: "He said that somewhere in the Roman catacombs, probably those of Callistus ... which hold ... the ashes of both Christians and pagans, there is a Greek writing on the wall of the corridor, quoted by the young archaeologist in Italian: *Nessuno immortale: coraggio!* – 'No one is immortal: have courage!' I translated that immediately to Greek in my mind: *Udei athanatos: tharrei!* ... wandering, I looked at the walls, but I could not find the inscription anywhere. ... And yet that voice, that writing chiselled in the wall – be it still there or gone – was beautiful to me. It had ... royal conciseness, which is the trademark of classical literature ... a sense of human community, the community of all living creatures ... It is like a teaching: let us all look in that direction together, holding hands."

[For it's a different matter to understand the *pattern* – and listen
 To the all-sound-creation in beyond-the-reality, beyond the worlds,
 Grow like a flower yourself, towards the truth of the prototype,
 And another matter – to weave a wreath – or pick the flowers –]

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Tomasz Korpysz

What Does the Angel Say? On the Margin of “Letter” by Cyprian Norwid

Abstract: The poem “List” [Letter] is a relatively early poem which received little attention and appreciation, but it is a very interesting work that refers to the Revelation by St. John. The poem transcends historical and political contexts and says a lot about Norwid’s relationship to history, about his anthropology, Christianity, and the vision of God. History appears here as a process with a definite direction and goal. It is a process in which man should leave space for God. The text introduces important sacred elements into Norwid’s anthropology and stresses that it is necessary to consider God’s plans and possible Divine interventions in human life; it is also necessary to be open to them. Above all, Christianity outlined in “List” is about the attitude of humility, patience, and endurance on the one hand, and faith, hope, and trust on the other. The God presented in the poem is a transcendent Being, unlimited and indescribable, mighty and just, but also patient, kind, and merciful, always open to man and waiting for their response. All the elements which have their origins mainly in the Bible are only outlined in “List,” and they recur many times throughout Norwid’s mature writing.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, “List,” the Revelation, Bible, Angels in Literature, interpretation

To Professor Stefan Sawicki

“List”

To mówi Anioł, który prosi za *nią*

I wie, co płynie, pierwej, niżli spłynie:

– O! niechaj wklęśnie pokory otchłania

Jako wybrane, *ziemia ta*, naczynie...

To mówi Anioł w zarannej godzinie,

Niżli się niebios obsuną zasłony,

Jakoby namiot w górze rozpuszczony.

O! niech i serca wielkie się położą,

Jak drobnych pereł ziarna w oceanie,

O! niech i myśli wielkie się nie trwożą,

Czy jeszcze laurów im zielonych stanie;

O! niechże *pogan nie wyzwą poganie*.

– Widziałem – mówi – płacz *wielko-ludowy*,

Jako na niebo chmurą ciągnął długą,

I jak w otwarty bok wszedł Chrystusowy,
 Niby że w kościół – i jak stroną drugą
 Prześwieca... Psalmów, hymnów sploty całe
 Wszystkie niebieska czeladź rozpościera,
 I wszystek obłok runo składa białe,
 I jedna drugiej coś podaje sfera,
 Przedziwny łańcuch czyniąc, albo drogę,
 Albo drabiny światłej stopniowanie,
 Albo zastępów szlak w przepaści błogie,
 Gdzie nieskończone słyhać: *“Niech się stanie!”*
 Potem widziałem ziemi spodziewanie –
 Ale niewiele kwiatów tam rzucono;
 I rzadkie palmy na drodze krzyżowej,
 I rzadko ludu z głową pochyloną,
 I rzadziej z myślą pochylone głowy...

O! – nie tak, nie tak dni oczekiwania
 Po smutnym świecie winny by rozwiościć;
 I nie tak *wolność a bratnie kochania*,
 I nie tak *równość* – innych musisz dośnić...

Ale się połóż w ciszy i spopieléj,
 Jeżelić przyszłe drogim zmartwychwstanie –
 Bo nie zaniecha *On*, skoro wyceli,
 I będzie łaskaw, mimo urąganie,
 I czasu swego da – ani *Go* wstrzyma
 Najdumniejszego chorągiew olbrzyma.

Tylko *osądzi w Łasce*, taką rzeczą,
 Która robakom wążku ujmie nagle –
 Bo albo sławy sobie wręcz zaprzeczą,
 I każdy równą wydmie pychą żagle,
 I obrzydliwym będzie wieniec piętmem,
 I przepaliwszy się, wynamiejętniem...

Albo z kamyka kędyś podle drogi,
 Albo z ostatniej wezwie moc marności,
 I wzuje sandał – i przed ziemskie bogi
 O całą przestrzeń posunie liłości,
 I każe nosić chorągiew przymierza
 Ani z mądrości, ni z głupstwa nadętym,
 Ni z dóbr, ni z nędzy – ni z siły pacierza,
 Ani z niczego... *który* niepojętym
 Jest i pokuszeń nie zna ani granic,
 I wszystko za nic ma, a nie ma za nic.

[LETTER

Thus the Angel says, interceding for it:
And knows what comes before it:

- Oh! let the abyss of humility make it concave
As a chosen vessel, this *land*...

Thus the Angel says in the morning hour
Before the heavens' curtain falls,
Like a tent opened in the skies.

Oh! let great hearts rest, too,
Like fine pearls in the ocean's depth,
Oh! let not great thoughts be troubled, either,
Whether there are enough green laurels for them?
Oh! may *the heathens not challenge the heathens*.

- I saw – he says, a *giant multi-populous* cry
Drawing onto the skies in a long cloud,
And enter Christ's opened side,
As if a church – and through the other side
It shone... Psalms, entire collections of hymns
Spread by the heavenly retinue,
And all the cloud offer their white fleece,
And each sphere gives forth to the other,
Making a strange chain or path,
Or steps in a ladder of light,
Or a trail of hosts into a blissful abyss,
Where you hear infinite: "*Let it be done!*"
Then I saw the expectation on earth –
But few flowers were thrown there;
Few palm leaves on the way of the cross,
Few among the people with their heads bowed,
And fewer even with their heads bowed in thought...

Oh! – Tis not, tis not how the waiting days
Should spread spring over the sad world;
And tis not how *freedom* and *brotherly love* [should be],
Or *equality* – you must dream of others...

But you lie down in silence and burn to ash
If you hold the future resurrection dear –
For He will not abandon an aim once taken,
And He will remain kind in spite of any insults,
And He will give His time – and He shall not be stopped
By a regiment of the proudest giant.

But He shall *judge in Grace*, in such a way
 Which will suddenly rob the worms of their course –
 For they will either deny themselves the fame,
 Or each blow out their sails with pride,
 And the wreath shall be a disgusting stigma,
 And having burned out, we will shed passion...
 Or from some pebble by the road,
 Or from the most meagre He will summon power,
 And put the sandal on – and before the earthly gods
 Move by an entire space of mercy,
 And make us bear the banner of the covenant
 Puffed neither with wisdom nor with folly,
 Neither with goods nor poverty – nor the power of prayer,
 Or anything at all... [*He*] *who* is incomprehensible,
 knows no temptations and no boundaries,
 And against Him everything is worthless, yet He holds everything dear.]¹

In 1908, Roman Zrębowicz thus wrote about the above-quoted work:

The poem belongs to that great mid-nineteenth century epoch in which mixing (and sometimes even identification) of social problems with purely individual ones may have been the main *idée fixe* of the eminent heads of the time. – In “List,” the European concept of humanitarian universalism, having passed through the prism of a thoroughly Christian soul, became an original and direct expression of C. Norwid’s worldview.²

The quote above is a commentary accompanying the first book publication of the discussed poem, written half a century earlier and first printed in *Przegląd Poznański*.³ The commentary does not explain much; it is very general, and at the same time it has the exalted style characteristic of the editor, which had already

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- 1 As discussed further in the paper, many phrases and structures contained in the original poem are ambiguous, and other potential translations may be suggested in the body of the paper [translator’s note].
 - 2 Roman Zrębowicz, “Objaśnienia wydawcy,” in: Cyprian Norwid, *Wybór poezyj*, collected and annotated by Roman Zrębowicz (Lwów: Księgarnia Polska B. Połonieckiego, 1908), p. 57.
 - 3 The poem was written in 1849. Thanks to Zygmunt Krasieński, it was published in *Przegląd Poznański* of March of the same year. See Juliusz W. Gomulicki, “Bibliografia,” in: Cyprian Norwid, *Dziela zebrane*, ed. J.W. Gomulicki, Vol. II, *Wiersze. Dodatek krytyczny* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy: 1966), p. 31; Juliusz W. Gomulicki, “Metryki,” in: Norwid, *Dziela zebrane*, p. 78; Juliusz W. Gomulicki, “Komentarz,” in: Norwid, *Dziela zebrane*, pp. 358–359. See also Zofia Trojanowiczowa, Zofia Dambek, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, Vol. I: 1821–1860 (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2007), pp. 344, 348, 349, 351.

been criticized by e.g. Waław Borowy.⁴ Three years later, meticulously noting mistakes in Zrębowicz's lesson, Zenon Przesmycki (Miriam) wrote:

One of the first poems after the poet moved to Paris, written under the impact of the splits, inflamed differences, power-hungry pride, barren quarrels among emigrants, all of which must have all the more powerfully struck a soul still lulled with visions of longed-for rebirths and reunions.⁵

That editor's comments are clearly closer to the text of the poem, but are still limited, and they reduce the extent of the poem's message. Miriam interprets and concretises some of Norwid's images and assessments, but also narrows them down to one perspective, referring only to Polish emigration living in Paris.⁶

Nearly a hundred years later, Zbigniew Sudolski wrote about "List:"

Already the first weeks of his stay in Paris produce a poem entitled "List," which gives a retrospective, disappointed look at past events, and instructs to wait for the fulfilment of our longings in silence and evangelical grace.⁷

That sentence, again only marginal, regrettably, adds an important element to the previous comments because it refers to the historical context ("past events" are obviously the Revolutions of 1848, called the Spring of Nations) and raises a very important issue of the Christian perspective of assessing described phenomena. However, the statement still contributes little to the interpretation of the poem.

Between the publication of the above-given oldest and most recent short general commentaries, there have only appeared a few references to the poem which has not been interpreted in its entirety so far. Only Stefania Skwarczyńska, Wojciech Kudyba, and Anna Kadyjewska devoted more attention to the text, but

4 Referring to Borowy's words, Marek Buś notes: "The Young Poland "grandly irresponsible eloquence" of Cezary Jellenta or Roman Zrębowicz doesn't suit Borowy at all." Marek Buś, "Borowy – norwidysta," in: Marek Buś, *Norwidyści. Miriam – Cywiński – Borowy – Makowiecki – Wyka* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego w Krakowie, 2008), p. 125.

5 Zenon Przesmycki, "Przypisy wydawcy," in: Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma zebrane*, Vol. A: *Pism wierszem Cypryana Norwida dział pierwszy*, ed. Zenon Przesmycki (Warszawa–Kraków: Wyd. J. Mortkowicza, 1911), p. 795.

6 Przesmycki also sees in the poem (in lines 8–12) an allusion to the conflict between Norwid and Mickiewicz; see Przesmycki, "Przypisy wydawcy."

7 Zbigniew Sudolski, *Norwid. Opowieść biograficzna* (Warszawa: ANCHER, 2003), p. 141.

they did not formulate even brief, superficial interpretations of the whole, referring only to selected lines, phrases, and images.⁸

A small number of studies might suggest either low artistic quality of the poem (the assumption contradicted e.g. by S. Skwarczyńska, who terms “List” a “beautiful work”),⁹ or unambiguity and simplicity of the message, inviting no deeper reflection, as well as transparency of form and structure; but this, in turn, is contradicted by W. Kudyba, who noted the semantic and syntactic difficulties and ambiguities complicating the interpretation of the work.¹⁰ As a side note, it is worth recalling that Zygmunt Krasiński, when sending the poem to Stanisław Koźmian, wrote: “I understand what he wanted [to achieve], but few will understand,”¹¹ and a few weeks later, when explaining lines 40–41 at Koźmian’s request, he noted: “What would you expect – you cannot disaccustom an obscure mind from obscure writing; a mind which sees obscurely the images within, not clearly!”¹²

A closer reading of “List” proves that the relatively early poem, written by a mere 28-year-old, is extremely interesting due to the imaging and, above all, the presented vision elements. At the same time, the poem is not entirely clear, not easily interpretable, and most importantly, it cannot be reduced solely to historical or political dimensions – to Norwid’s disappointment with the Spring of Nations and its critical assessment, and to postulating the need for a new, different attitude of Poles towards the problem of their homeland’s enslavement. It seems that specific historical events, which undoubtedly constitute an important background of the work, and actually became the direct reason for its creation, are still only a pretext for broader considerations about the attitude of people to time, history, future, about the tasks of a man living in a specific earthly here and now, about the relationship with God, and finally about God himself and

8 See Stefania Skwarczyńska, “Ideowo-artystyczne konstrukcje obrazowe Norwida na bazie lauru i korony cierniowej,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, No. 3–4 (1986), pp. 38–39; Wojciech Kudyba, “Aby mowę chrześcijańską odtworzyć na nowo.” *Norwida mówienie o Bogu* (Lublin: TN KUL, 2000), pp. 87–90; Anna Kadyjewska, “‘TEN, który jest wszystko, jest wszędzie.’ O Bogu w pismach Cypriana Norwida,” in: *Norwid a chrześcijaństwo*, eds. Józef Fert, Piotr Chlebowski (Lublin: TN KUL, 2002), pp. 414, 415, 418 (Kadyjewska writes more about “List” in an unpublished doctoral dissertation of 2005, titled *Obraz Boga w pismach Cypriana Norwida*).

9 See Skwarczyńska, “Ideowo-artystyczne konstrukcje obrazowe,” p. 38.

10 See Kudyba, “Aby mowę chrześcijańską,” pp. 87, 89, 90.

11 Quoted after Gomulicki, “Komentarz,” p. 358.

12 Quoted after Gomulicki, “Komentarz,” p. 359.

the Last Judgment. It is thus a poem important both for Norwid's historiosophy, as well as for the anthropology of the poet and his vision of God. Therefore, it undoubtedly deserves an in-depth interpretation, especially as it poses many difficult questions to the reader. This text is an attempt to catalogue those questions and provide answers to some of them.

The first issue, which has been overlooked so far, relates to the title. It belongs to the group of one-word titles characteristic of Norwid (as many as 108 out of 177 poems with original titles have one-word titles, usually nouns);¹³ also, at least at first glance, it follows the convention characteristic of a poetic letter also frequently used by the author of *Assunta* (nearly 30 poems by Norwid follow the genre to a greater or lesser extent). A letter is a message from a specific sender to a specific recipient, so it should be determined who plays those roles in the poem. The question is further justified because there are two speakers in the poem: the angel and someone who has met the angel and is now recounting the meeting. One may thus consider either the message ("letter") of the angel to the speaker and through the speaker to the other recipients, or the message ("letter") of the speaker who repeats the words of the angel to others. It is also unclear who the addressee of the "letter" is, the one who met the angel, or those to whom he transmits the angelic message (which is in fact the message of God himself, the angel only a messenger).

The doubts indicated above may be clarified with a certain quasi-genological clue. As previously mentioned, the discussed work only seemingly refers to the convention of a poetic letter, so popular in the nineteenth century, and the title's explanation should be sought elsewhere. Both the two-level structure of the text, i.e. the message from a personal vision (meeting and conversation with the angel), in which another vision is contained (descriptions of the past and future given by the angel), its mystical character and its subject (admonitions, warnings, directions and promises concerning people on the one hand, and on the other – images of otherworldly, sacred reality, and even information about

13 According to some editing decisions by Norwid himself, and mainly the tradition established by J.W. Gomulicki to publish some poetic fragments of larger works (epic poems and dramas) also as independent pieces, it may be assumed that a little over 300 poems by the author of *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On the Freedom of Speech] survive until today (without counting variants, which are sometimes seen as separate texts, or fragments which are not fully legible, unfinished, of unclear origins, reconstructed, surviving only in someone else's copies, etc., and which in PWsz are contained in the part *BRULIONY I UŁAMKI*; see PWsz II, 161–171 – poems numbered 271–280 and PWsz II, 261–272 – works numbered 339–359).

God and the Last Judgment) refer the reader to St. John's Book of Revelation and the letters it contains. That is the most likely source of the actual convention in which Norwid's poem was written. The sender of the eponymous letter is thus the angel (and through him, God himself), and the recipient is not a specific speaker, but simply people who believe in God.

The poem begins with an introduction comprising lines 1–2 and 5–7. Both parts open with the anaphorical "To mówi Anioł" [Thus the Angel says] (lines 1 and 5),¹⁴ suggesting a literal transmission of the angel's words by the speaker, whose testimony confirms their authenticity.¹⁵ The subject becomes thus only an intermediary, one who has received a vision, the grace of meeting God's messenger, and is now faithfully reproducing his words.¹⁶

Both metatextual passages contain very interesting and significant phrases. First, the subject, in accordance with the Christian doctrine, attributes knowledge inaccessible to man to the angel, exceeding the earthly frames of time and space – as one who is close to God, the angel knows not only the past, but also the future and the plans of the Creator towards people ("wie, co płynie, pierwej, niżli spłynie" [knows what comes before it] – line 2). Second, the speaker indicates that the angel is in part a "two-way" messenger, for he not only transmits God's message to man, but also intercedes for people and asks God for help or mercy for them ("za nią" [for it (=the earth)]) from the first line is clearly meant as 'in

14 Further in the paper, quotations from "List" are only given by line numbers.

15 An analogous anaphor recurs in John's Revelation, but the actual speaker of the words related by the angel is Christ himself: "These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand" (Rev 2: 1), "These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again" (Rev 2: 8); "These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword" (Rev 2: 12), "These are the words of the Son of God" (Rev 2: 18), "These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars" (Rev 3: 1), "These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open" (Rev 3: 7), "These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Rev 3: 14). If not otherwise indicated, quotations from and references to the Bible used herein are given after the New International Version.

16 A similar vision of oneself as a messenger is given in the Revelation by John, who states in the Prologue: "The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near" (Rev 1: 1–3).

its intention' and not 'in its place'). Third, God's goodness is indirectly suggested; the verbs "płynąć" and "spływać" [lit. to flow] in their abstract sense, relate to the sphere of the sacred, to God's activity, usually collocate in Polish with positively valued lexemes (such as "grace," "mercy," "consolation," "peace," etc.). Fourth and finally, it is very significant that the meeting with the angel takes place "w zarannej godzinie" [in the morning hour] (line 5). That time of day has some well-established connotations in culture; it is a special time when the world changes and, in a sense, loses its sharp boundaries, when supernatural phenomena are possible, and otherworldly realities can penetrate into the earthly reality. Norwid repeatedly uses those connotations and places the described events, as he writes in *Quidam*, "Pomiędzy świtem a nocy zniknięciem" (DW III, 131, 132)¹⁷ [Between dawn and night's disappearance]. This poem occurs when "zasłony niebios" [heavens' curtains] (line 6) are still raised, so it is possible to establish direct contact with heaven and God and for the angel to cross a certain border and come to man. "Obsunięcie zasłon" [falling or drawing of the curtain] (see line 6) creates an impassable barrier between the sacred and the profane and makes it impossible or at least difficult to have contact. The sacred remains inside the tent and is veiled.¹⁸ It is worth noting that the characteristic comparison to a "rozpuszczony w górze namiot" [tent opened in the skies] undoubtedly has biblical origins,¹⁹ and the tent as a place of God's presence is strongly rooted in the Holy Scriptures as well as present in Christian culture (e.g. in various types of visual representations).²⁰

There is some controversy connected with the interpretation of the analysed fragment. Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki unequivocally concretises the pronoun from the first line: "za nią – za Polską"²¹ [for it (lit. for her) – for Poland]; Stefania

17 See also e.g. "Vendôme" (PWsz I, 108–112).

18 As clearly results from the hitherto discussion, the image of the angel which emerges from the poem is very interesting; it is thus surprising that the (probably) only study concerning angelic motifs in Norwid's works does not discuss "List" at all, cf. Dorota Szagun, "Anioł i anielskość w romantyzmie na podstawie poezji Kornela Ujejskiego i Cyprian Norwida," in: *Anioł w literaturze i w kulturze*, eds. Jolanta Ługowska and Jacek Skawiński (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT-Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2004), pp. 98–110.

19 The Bible has many similar images; see e.g. "he stretches out the heavens like a tent" – Psalm 104(103): 2, "He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in" – Is 40: 22.

20 As a side note, *tabernakulum* is the Latin word for a tent.

21 Gomulicki, "Komentarz," p. 359.

Skwarczyńska interprets it similarly: “za naszą ojczyznę”²² [for our homeland]. In light of the interpretation suggested above of the whole work, broader than just the historical one, the pronoun can be applied not only to Poland (in the spirit of national messianism), but also to the whole earth or the whole humanity (in a historiosophic spirit or rather one of redemption in historical view). Such reading strengthens the following part of the poem, especially the vision of the end of times, which has a clearly universalist message.

The angel's first sentences start with an emphatic anaphorical exclamation “Oh!” (lines 3, 8, 10, 12), indicating true commitment of the angel, and at the same time the wishful nature of his statements, a true desire to influence the recipients, and, consequently, change their fate; it thus weakens the repeated and apparently authoritarian particles: “niechaj” (line 3), “niech” (lines 8, 10) and “niechże” (line 12) [let, may]. The words of the angel can therefore be interpreted more as postulative-optative statements – he recommends a certain attitude, certain behaviours from people, and would like that attitude to become common for their sake.

So, what exactly are the angel's recommendations?

First, “ziemia ta” [this land] (in accordance with the suggestions formulated above: not only Poland and Poles, but also the entire earth and all humanity) should “wklęsnąć pokory otchłanią” [let the abyss of humility make it concave] (line 3). That original but semantically quite transparent spatial metaphor about the need for people to stay humble before God and His judgments contains the surprising expression “pokory otchłań” [abyss of humility]. The noun “otchłań” [abyss] often has negative connotations (also in the Bible) and means a dangerous, threatening space, and sometimes simply represents hell. It is also used by Norwid in such senses, see e.g. “Dant zablądził do Piekła przez las i spotyka mary miłości obłąkanej na wstępie otchłani” (PWsz X, 77) [Dante has lost his way to Hell through the woods and meets the apparition of love gone mad at the opening of the abyss]; yet in his writings it is more often meant simply as a space impossible to comprehend and to cross (see e.g. PWsz I, 9, PWsz I, 116, PWsz I, 243), as well as the (sometimes dangerous) sea or ocean depths (see e.g. PWsz I, 64; PWsz II, 387; PWsz VIII, 68). Sometimes the “abyss” may have sacred connotations and in some combinations mean heaven (see e.g. “zaświatowa otchłań” PWsz VIII, 32 [the abyss of the beyond], “błękitniejsze otchłanie” PWsz I, 205 [bluer abyss]), or be part of a specific definition of God, referring to the immensity of one of His attributes (cf. “Miłości otchłań” PWsz III, 478 [abyss

22 Skwarczyńska, “Ideowo-artystyczne konstrukcje obrazowe,” p. 38.

of Love]). Thus, when using the noun, the poet usually emphasises primarily the enormity of some phenomenon he discusses, and various evaluations are most often an added element. And so, “otchłań pokory” [abyss of humility] likely means the greatest possible, limitless humility.²³

The “otchłań” [abyss] and the earlier “wkłęśnięcie” [becoming/making concave] motivate a metaphorical comparison of “ziemia” [earth, land] to a “wybrane naczynie” [chosen vessel] (line 4)²⁴ which should be open to receive God’s grace. The *comparatum* carries at least two important pieces of information: every person (and so the whole earth) is chosen (and thus wanted, loved) by God, but every person (and so the whole earth) is also prone to sin, weak, and spiritually fragile like a vessel. The words undoubtedly echo biblical metaphors and comparisons, e.g. “we have this treasure in jars of clay” (2 Cor 4: 7) or “dash them to pieces like pottery” (Rev 2: 27).²⁵ Perhaps one may seek Mariological themes

23 As a side note, it is worth noting that the expression “otchłań pokory” [abyss of humility] appears sometimes in various religious and literary texts. It refers to the trait of either God or man and sometimes the Virgin Mary. A few examples: The seventeenth-century saint, Margaret Mary Alacoque, wrote: “This divine heart ... is an abyss of lowliness to counteract our foolishness, an abyss of mercy for the wretched, an abyss of love to meet our every need.” (after: M. Basil Pennington, *Through the Year with the Saints* (New York: Image Books, 1988), p. 163). Marguerite Porète, a French 13th-century mystic burned at stake for heresy, in her work *The Mirror of Simple Souls* wrote of seven stages of mystic experience – in the sixth, the soul immerses in an abyss of humility, in which it does not see God yet, but God sees that soul, and in it – Himself (see Marguerite Porète, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, transl. by Ellen L. Babinsky, New York: Paulist Press, 1993). In one of her fables, Kazimiera Iłhakowiczówna thus wrote about the spiritual *interior* of the main protagonist: “When La-fi-Czanju was thus reflecting, he had to descend into himself through all the other abysses down to the tenth one, which is the Abyss of Humility, and there he was able see with his soul’s eye the living image of the beggar girl” (*Bajeczna opowieść o królewiczu La-fi-Czaniu, o żołnierzu Soju i o dziewczynce Kio*, Poznań: Wyd. Poznańskie, 1990, p. 50). And in the Litany of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, composed by Cardinal Newman, one of the calls is: “Heart of Mary, most humble” – rendered in the Polish translation as “Serce Maryi, otchłani pokory” [Heart of Mary, abyss of humility] after: John Henry Newman, *Rozmyślenia i modlitwy*, transl. by Zygmunt Kubiak (Warszawa: PAX, 1973).

24 Here *Jako* [as], as well as in lines 7 (*jakoby* [like]) and 14 (*jako* [like, as]), introduces a simile.

25 It is worth adding that in one of his letters, when indicating the contrast between God and man, Norwid calls earth a “padół gliniany” [valley of clay or mud] (see DW XI, 426), stressing not only the connection of what is earthly with clay and mud, but also its crumbliness and impermanence.

here as well, and more specifically references to popular litany invocations, including the most famous of those containing the noun “vessel,” “Spiritual Vessel.”²⁶ The analysed metaphorical comparison also conforms to the reflections on the essence of man, which are constantly present in Norwid’s writings. On the one hand, “każdy w sobie cień *pięknego* nosi. / I każdy – każdy z nas – tym *piękna pyłem*” (DW IV, 106) [everyone carries a shadow of beauty in themselves. / And each of us is that speck of beauty], each person carries “Boży anioł” (PWsz I, 136) [God’s angel] in their chest, or even “człowiek ma bóstwo w piersiach swoich” (DW XI, 508) [man has divinity in their chest], yet on the other hand, “człowiek *całym* powstał, *zupełnie-wytwornym*, / I *nie było mu łatwo być równie pokornym!*... / *Bo cały był i piękny... i upadł*” (DW IV, 225) [man rose whole, completely-sophisticated, / And ‘twas not easy to take humility pains!... / For he was whole, and beautiful... and he fell...] – everyone is marked with the original sin and commits many sins, losing their innate sanctity and dignity. A certain antinomy in the perspective of man is a constant feature of Norwid’s anthropology; e.g. in the poem “Deotymie. Odpowiedź” [To Deotyma. A Reply], the poet writes to its addressee: “Pani raczyłaś wspomnieć, mnie, *człowieka*, / Pył marny i rzecz-Bożą” (PWsz I, 287) [Madam, you kindly alluded to me, a *man*, / Meagre dust and God’s-thing], and in the poem “Sfinks [II]” [The Sphinx [II]] he creates a poetic definition of man as “*kapłan bezwiedny / I niedojrzały*” (PWsz II, 33) [Man?... he’s *an ignorant callow / Priest*].²⁷ As Irena Sławińska writes with a somewhat too-far-reaching generalisation:

26 The Mariological trail is fairly justified as Mary is considered the symbol of perfect humility. It is in that context that Norwid writes of her e.g. in the work “Do Najświętszej Marii Panny. Litania” [To the Holiest Virgin Mary. Litany]. In the text thereof, the poet uses the noun “naczynie” [vessel] in relation to Virgin Mary: “Nac z y n i e m stała się Duchownym” [You have become a Spiritual Vessel], “O! Ty – zaprawdę Poważne Naczynie” [Oh! Thou – a truly Revered Vessel], “O! Nabożeństwa Dziwnego Naczynie” (see PWsz I, 196) [Oh! (You) the Vessel of Exceptional Devotion].

27 Trans. Adam Czerniawski, Cyprian Norwid, *Selected Poems* (London: Anvil Press, 2004), p. 62. For more on the poetic definitions in which Norwid indicates the essence of humanity see Tomasz Korpysz, “Człowiek bowiem cóż jest? Cóż jest człowiek? O wybranych definicjach poetyckich Cypriana Norwida,” in: *Czytając Norwida 2*, ed. Sławomir Rzepczyński (Słupsk: Pomorska Akademia Pedagogiczna w Słupsku, 2003), pp. 175–186; Tomasz Korpysz, “Kilka uwag o definicjach poetyckich Norwida (na przykładzie ‘Sfinks [II]’),” *Poradnik Językowy*, Vol. 10 (2006), pp. 77–85; Tomasz Korpysz, *Definicje poetyckie Norwida* (Lublin: TN KUL, 2009), pp. 229–284.

In accordance with the Christian doctrine of divine filiation and original sin, Norwid always sees man in the two extremes: he sees their “szkarłat królewski” [royal scarlet], the dignity of a child of God, and their weakness of a “pył” [ash, dust, speck].²⁸

Second, “wielkie serca” [great hearts] are to “położyć się” [lie down, rest] (line 8) “Jak drobnych pereł ziarna w oceanie” [Like fine pearls in the ocean’s depth] (line 9). The “great hearts” are most likely a synecdoche for people with great hearts²⁹ who can be understood in two ways; either as those who are considered very good by others (perhaps also by themselves) and as people of extraordinary sensitivity and empathy,³⁰ or as those who are enthusiastic and genuinely committed to something.³¹

Regardless of the final interpretative decision, such people are to hide, to cease being visible, maybe even to stop acting noticeably, and to adopt a humble, waiting attitude. Yet at the same time, they cannot lose themselves in that attitude, fall into apathy, or lose their essential qualities. On the contrary, they are to wait for the right moment when they are brought to the surface like pearls from the bottom of the ocean, able to fully reveal themselves and show their value. It can be assumed that the “fine pearls” are simply a metaphor for a specific measure (“pearls like fine grain;” people of particular value may be numerous, but on a global scale, symbolized here as an ocean. they are tiny and not very visible); however, the expression may also be seen as a suggestion that people carry inside a grain or seed³² of greatness and holiness (symbolised by pearls), that they are only “potentially” pearls. In the latter case, the time of humble silence, calm and expectation is somewhat paradoxically meant to be a time for specific activity – the transformation of a grain into a pearl, and therefore a difficult

28 Irena Sławińska, “Ci git l’artiste religieux,” *Znak*, Vol. 12, No. 7/8 (1960), p. 912.

29 The “great hearts” could also be seen as referring to particularly strong emotions connected with people’s attitude to the world, their commitment to experiencing the earthly here and now, and perhaps with impatiently waiting for the future (including – if historical aspects of the poem are considered – future fate of Poland). According to the angel’s advice, such emotions (although of positive value) should be hidden, pushed aside or silenced (“wielkie serca” [great hearts] are to “położyć się” [lie down, rest] in the ocean). Such interpretation, although possible, does seem less convincing.

30 Cf. e.g. “kind-hearted/big-hearted,” “wear your heart on your sleeve,” etc.

31 Cf. e.g. “wholeheartedly,” “take something to heart,” etc.

32 The noun “ziarno” [seed] appears several times in Norwid’s writings in the sense of a beginning or spark of something – see e.g. “ziarno sztuki” (PWsz VI, 362) [seed of art] or “ziarno cywilizacji ludzkiej” (PWsz VI, 437) [seed of human civilisation].

transformation related to effort and suffering,³³ or from the Christian perspective, the maturation to the lost innate holiness, to the dignity of a priest, prophet, and king, and to meeting God.³⁴ Clearly, the angel's words are an announcement of the future triumph of those who are to "lie down" or "rest" today "Jak drobnych pereł ziarna w oceanie" [Like fine pearls in the ocean's depth] (line 9), and so an indirect indication of God's goodness and justice, as well as the certainty of His intervention. Such image of God is developed further in the poem.³⁵

Third, the "wielkie myśli" [great thoughts] (line 10) are to stop worrying "Czy jeszcze laurów im zielonych stanie" [Whether there are enough green laurels for them] (line 11). Another synecdoche defining people appears here, this one for people with above-average knowledge and intelligence and deeply involved in the world around them intellectually.³⁶ Despite the unfavourable "here and now," they should be sure that all their effort and commitment will be appreciated in the future, that those who enter glory will receive an everlasting reward (symbolized by the "green laurels") for their contribution to the task of changing the reality. Thus, once again, the angel indirectly signals the justice and inevitability of God's judgments.

Fourth, the angel makes the following appeal: "O! niechże pogan nie wyzwą poganie" [Oh! may the heathens not challenge the heathens] (line 12). Before that line, the angel suggests (with deep desire) that people become humble, not boast about their virtues and merits, not doubt God's providence, and be patient while waiting for His intervention. This line expresses a completely different idea. The

33 Proof of the fact that Norwid knew how pearls are born may be found in the suggestions contained in the fourth stanza of the poem "Purytanizm" [Puritanism] (see PWsz II, 68).

34 A similar motif can be found in the poem "Człowiek" [A Human], in which a child is described as "jeszcze ziarno" (PWsz I, 271) [still a seed] and "ziarno Chrześcijańskiej Ery" (PWsz I, 272) [a seed of the Christian Era].

35 The metaphor of man as a seed is, of course, not typical of Norwid alone. It appears already in the Bible, and also in literary texts, e.g. Juliusz Słowacki wrote in a work entitled by publishers [*Początek poematu o tajemnicach genezyjskich*]: "Man is a seed – born before ages / From the spirit – and the sun is in every human / Still great – equal to globes – holy" (after: Juliusz Słowacki, *Próby poematu filozoficznego*, eds. Władysław Floryan, Juliusz Kleiner, Stanisław Kolbuszewski, in: *Dziela wszystkie*, ed. Juliusz Kleiner, Vol. XV, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1995, p. 103).

36 Just like in the case of line 8, it is possible to refer the entire image not indirectly to people, but directly to thoughts – insightful, deep, important ones, which in the temporal reality of the earth may remain unnoticed and unappreciated. In this case, however, the synecdochic interpretation seems more convincing, as well.

verb “to challenge” unambiguously suggests a military meaning of the whole phrase, one can challenge someone to a duel, to a fight, etc. In this light, perhaps the angel’s words should be understood as follows: those to whom the message is addressed should not stand against each other or fight with each other because this is what heathens do, and not those who are children of God, those to whom He sends His angel.³⁷ People who truly, deeply believe in God and trust in Him should rely on His providence. With such an interpretation in the quoted fragment, one may see a reference to Norwid’s criticism of the Spring of Nations (as emphasised by some commentators), and more broadly, a reference to unprepared, cruel armed struggle, which brings with it mainly destruction and death. As the poet repeatedly points out, war (not “fight,” which was usually understood differently by Norwid)³⁸ is not the best way to achieve the intended goals, even those such as the nation’s freedom and independence.

The first part of the angel’s message (lines 3–4 and 8–12) is clearly an appeal in which a prediction of God’s future intervention may also be found. The next fragment (lines 13–24) is, in turn, a record of the angel’s vision in which there appear elements characteristic of mystical revelations, such as the sight of the deified Christ, saved souls and angels residing in heaven, the motif of a ladder of light rising to heaven, or spheres surrounding the Earth.³⁹ Yet, beside them there are also original images which are more difficult to interpret unequivocally.

The angel’s vision begins with the description of “*placz wielko-ludowy*” [a giant multi-populous cry] (line 13), which “*na niebo chmurą ciągnął długą*” [drew onto the skies in a long cloud] (line 14) and “*w otwarty bok wszedł Chrystusowy*” [entered Christ’s opened side] (line 15). The “cry” can be understood as a metonymy of sadness or suffering,⁴⁰ but it may also be seen as a

37 As a side note, it is worth mentioning that the thought of certain attitudes and behaviours (sometimes including fight, especially cruel one) not matching being a Christian recurs several times in Norwid’s writings. See e.g. the entry *chrześcijanin* [Christian] in: Anna Kadyjewska, Tomasz Korpysz, Jadwiga Puzynina, *Chrześcijaństwo w pismach Cypriana Norwida* (Warszawa: UW, 2000), pp. 18–33; Tomasz Korpysz, “‘Chrześcijanin’ w pismach Cypriana Norwida,” in: *Norwid a chrześcijaństwo*, pp. 371–402.

38 See e.g. Jadwiga Puzynina, “O ‘walce’ w pismach Norwida,” in: *Strona Norwida. Studia i szkice ofiarowane Profesorowi Stefanowi Sawickiemu*, eds. Piotr Chlebowski, Włodzimierz Toruń, Elżbieta Żwirkowska, Edyta Chlebowska (Lublin: TN KUL, 2008), pp. 347–359.

39 J. W. Gomułicki believes that the motifs of spheres and a “ladder of light” were taken by Norwid from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (see Gomułicki, “Komentarz,” p. 358).

40 Such is Kadyjewska’s interpretation of the fragment: “in ‘List,’ Norwid highlights the ecclesial dimension of the passion in the image of Christ’s open side, which human

metonymy of prayer requests and/or complaints directed to God by people experiencing that sorrow or suffering. In both cases, the compound adjective “wielko-ludowy” [giant multi-populous] might mean “one that is associated with numerous (all?) peoples,”⁴¹ and therefore have no semantic connection with the noun “wielkoludy” [giants, lit. great, large people] appearing in Norwid’s writings in the sense of “great, outstanding people” (cf. e.g. “nie wziąłem od was nic, o! wielkoludy” PWSz II, 15 [I took nothing from you, oh! you giants]). The image emphasises the prevalence of difficult human experiences, but also the commonness of turning to Christ in prayer and the universalism of His saving mission, which with His suffering and death (signalled by the expression “otwarty bok” [open side]), He entered the continuous human suffering (after all, He “ludzkie wycierpiał męczeństwo” [suffered human martyrdom] – PWSz I, 95) and made it meaningful. That universalism is additionally emphasised with a comparison to the church; the open side of Christ, which is not only a sign of His passion but also of His constant openness to people, and accepts everyone like a church (or rather: the Church) which is indeed universal.⁴² It is worth noting a certain paradox here; the image of Christ’s open side refers to the earthly body of Christ, the God-Man, and to the scene of the crucifixion (cf. Jn 19: 43), but the angel’s vision presents Christ the God, His mystical deified body, which actually still bears the marks of the passion undertaken for the salvation of humankind,

suffering – metaphorised as a weeping procession – enters ‘as if the Church’ (PWSz I, 105). The pierced side of Jesus, the source of strength and unity of Christianity, is ready to receive it, and [that suffering], immersed in the wounds of the Crucified, becomes the beginning of a mystical return to Eternal Love” – Kadyjewska, “TEN, który,” p. 418.

- 41 One of the meanings of the adjective *wielki* [great, giant] noted in the dictionaries of the time is “znaczny pod względem ilości, liczby, liczny, mnogi” [large as concerns number, numerous, voluminous] – see *Słownik języka polskiego* edited by Jan Karłowicz, Adam Kryński and Władysław Niedźwiedzki, Vol. I-VIII (Warszawa: nakładem prenumeratorów, 1900–1927) (further as: *Słownik warszawski*). The same dictionary has the entry *wielkoludny*, which means “wielką ludność mający” [having a large population].
- 42 It is worth remembering Norwid’s broad understanding of the Church; cf. e.g. Alina Merdas, *Ocalony wieniec. Chrześcijaństwo Norwida na tle odrodzenia religijnego w porewolucyjnej Francji* (Warszawa: PAX, 1995), pp. 179–184; Ryszard Zajączkowski, “Głos prawdy i sumienie.” *Kościół w pismach Cypriana Norwida* (Wrocław: Wyd. Naukowe UMK, 1998), mainly pp. 105–107, 218–223; Kudyba, “Aby mowę chrześcijańską,” pp. 117–124; the entry *kościół / Kościół* [church/Church] in: Kadyjewska, Korpysz, Puzynina, *Chrześcijaństwo w pismach...*, pp. 103–129.

which may suggest that Christ is constantly suffering and is constantly wounded by human sins.

Christ's acceptance of man "crying" causes a specific transformation: what may seem unnecessary, senseless suffering, which is difficult to bear from an earthly perspective, after praying and after inclusion in Christ's sacrifice becomes something which sanctifies and enables salvation. Such is apparently the sense of the subsequent lines. The "płacz wielko-ludowy" [multi-populous cry], pictured probably as a dark cloud, changes after entering Christ's side and "stroną drugą / prześwieca" [through the other side / It shone] (lines 16–17), as if reflecting the light of God's glory and joining the sphere of the sacred.⁴³ Perhaps the image from lines 17 and 18, and also to some extent further ones, should be treated as a kind of acceptance, honouring or greeting. Those who are already saved, and/or the angels ("niebieska czeladź" [heavenly retinue]) greet the transformed "cry" with psalms and hymns, and somehow inscribe it into the "sploty" [collections, lit. weaves] of prayers of praise in heaven. The "obłoki" [clouds] in the next verse can be understood in two ways. First, as something which belongs to heaven, is sacred, and forms a kind of road, the beginning of a safe path leading to God Himself. A road which is then formed by the successive spheres to a "przedziwny łańcuch" [strange chain] (line 21) or "drabina światła" [a ladder of light] (line 22). Second, and more likely, it can be seen as the former "long cloud" of human "cry," which after the transformation caused by joining the mystical body of the martyred Christ becomes pure and holy and only as such it can follow the road through the successive spheres. Once again, the possible sources of the image may include the Revelation by John, and more specifically the passage about the triumph of the chosen (cf. Rev 7: 9–17). The chosen are "they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev 7: 14–15).

The ultimate goal of the path taken by the transformed "cry" is "przepaści błogie, / Gdzie nieskończone słyhać: «Niech się stanie!...»" [blissful abyss, / Where you hear infinite: "Let it be done!"] (lines 23–24), which can be assumed to

43 Interesting is the change of the tense in the angel's narration from the past ("widziałem" [I saw] – line 13, "ciągnął" [drew] – line 14) to the present ("prześwieca" [shines] – line 17, "rozpościera" [spreads] – line 18, "składa" [offers] – line 19, "podaje" [gives] – line 20). It may signal the fact that after surpassing the earthly here and now, on entering the sphere of the sacred, time ceases to exist, and the reality of the saved is eternal and extra-temporal.

mean the dwelling place of God, the ultimate goal of all.⁴⁴ Describing the holiest circle of heaven, Norwid uses an expression which may be seen as somewhat surprising in the context: “przepaści błogie” [blissful abyss] (line 23). As in the case of the “otchłań” [abyss] from line 3, he neutralises the negative connotations of the noun (and even assigns a positive evaluation to it thanks to combining it with the adjective “blissful” and a broader context) and primarily uses it to emphasise the enormity and limitlessness of the final sphere.⁴⁵ The constant “Let it be done!” echoing in it is not fully unambiguous. It can be seen either as God himself (who is undoubtedly the centre of the “blissful abyss”) repeating the words while still performing successive creative acts and supporting the world in its existence; or, an option which seems more convincing, as the words of those who, after traversing all spheres, achieve complete unity with God, perfect “release” and utter, forever-sounding “fiat.”

In lines 25–29, the earlier time perspective from lines 13–15 returns, the angel again recounts what he saw. This time, however, those are likely no longer elements of a vision but real images of earthly reality. Shifting his focus from the sphere of the sacred to the sphere of the profane, the angel indicates that the earth (i.e. people living on it) is in constant expectation. That expectation, which may concern both the fulfilment of temporal, may be even prosaic, hopes and longings, and the fulfilment of times, the coming of Christ, is full of hope, as suggested by Norwid’s use of the noun “spodziewanie” [expectation, hope]: “Potem widziałem ziemi spodziewanie” [Then I saw the expectation on earth] (line 25). The following lines (26–29) specify that the expectation is not what it should actually be:

Ale niewiele kwiatów tam rzucono;
I rzadkie palmy na drodze krzyżowej,

44 The analysed image resembles a fragment from a later poem (of 1865) “Do słynnej tancerki rosyjskiej – nieznaney zakonnicy” [To a Famous Russian Dancer, an Unknown Nun] (PWsz I, 393): “Płynniej i słodziej tylko ciekną fale, / Tylko różańców zlatują opale, / Grawitujące do Miłości-środką, / Co zwie się Chrystus – i każdą z nich spotka!” [More sweetly and flowingly only waves roll, / Only opal beads of a rosary fall down, / Gravitating towards the Love-centre / Whose name is Christ – Who will meet them all.] Also, an image of “wyswobodzone” [freed] and cleansed souls flying “We wszech-istność Chrystusową” [Into the all-existence of Christ] appears in “Nieskończony” [The Infinite] (see PWsz I, 202).

45 Elsewhere, writing about God as the one who is “Taki bezdenney naokoło człeka” [So bottomless around man], Norwid uses the phrase “światłości przepaść” [abyss of light] in a similar context (see PWsz I, 190).

I rzadko ludu z głową pochyloną,
I rzadziej z myślą pochylone głowy...

[But few flowers were thrown there;
Few palm leaves on the way of the cross,
Few among the people with their heads bowed,
And fewer even with their heads bowed in thought...]

Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki sees in the quoted lines

A pessimistic picture of the course of the Spring of Nations, the martyrs of which often failed to complete their task and crown it with success (“Few palm leaves on the way of the cross”), and whose viewers were neither able to honour those martyrs (“few flowers,” “Few among the people with their heads bowed”) nor engage in any deeper reflection on the events at all (“fewer even with their heads bowed in thought”).⁴⁶

While not rejecting the presented interpretation completely, this fragment of the poem can be understood more broadly. The angel might be pointing out that, although God waits for everyone and gives everyone the chance to transform and sanctify themselves (cf. lines 13–24), few on earth still remember that and few try to change their lives. With such reading, the scantily thrown flowers can symbolise, too, rare signs of people worshipping God, showing Him reverence, and thanking Him for the graces received. The “Rzadkie palmy na drodze krzyżowej” [Few palm leaves on the way of the cross] are, of course, an allusion to the Passion of Jesus Christ, as well as to Palm Sunday which could symbolise lack of empathy and indifference to the suffering of other people, and/or not seeing the value of that suffering and its future consequences, and on the other hand, it could be a symbol of underestimating the importance and value of Christ’s saving sacrifice, forgetting it, and perhaps also attempts to avoid suffering along with Christ and accepting one’s own cross in a spirit of humility and trust. The statement “rzadko ludu z głową pochyloną” [Few among the people with their heads bowed] may refer not so much to the gesture of honouring the martyrs, as Gomulicki wishes to see it, but to the attitude of humility mentioned in lines 8–9 which, especially in the face of evil and suffering, is becoming less and less common among people while necessary to achieve salvation. The last observation of the angel: “I rzadziej z myślą pochylone głowy” [And fewer even with their heads bowed in thought], seems to be the most general one, and therefore difficult to specify clearly. Undoubtedly it concerns some deeper intellectual reflection. The context allows the assumption to be made that it is primarily

46 Gomulicki, “Komentarz,” p. 359.

about self-reflection, standing in the truth, and recognising one's imperfection and sinfulness, and through that, adopting the attitude of humility, which the angel calls for later in his monologue (see lines 35–36).

In the next strophoid (lines 30–33), the angel emphasises the earlier critical assessment of the wrong behaviour and attitudes of people:

O! – nie tak, nie tak dni oczekiwania
 Po smutnym świecie winny by rozwiościć;
 I nie tak *wolność a bratnie kochania*,
 I nie tak *równość* – innych musisz dośnić...

[Oh! – Tis not, tis not how the waiting days
 Should spread spring over the sad world;
 And tis not how *freedom* and *brotherly love* [should be],
 Or *equality* – you must dream of others...]

Here, he speaks directly (while referring to the motto of the French Revolution) about the fact that people fulfil their aspirations in a wrong way as they await future events, both concerning their earthly life and those that occur on the plane of the salvation history. The waiting time should be different than the one which people experience now; it should “rozwić” [spread spring] differently (the authors of *Słownik warszawski* define the word as: “take on the colour of spring, put on the spring cover, get the appearance, the character of spring”). The quoted metaphor seems to mainly emphasise that human expectation should not be passive, marked with stagnation, resignation, sadness, and a shadow of death, but rather full of trust, hope, and even joyful certainty of imminent rebirth, new beginning, and “od-pocznienie” (cf. PWsz III, 444) [beginning anew].⁴⁷ Undoubtedly, the expression can also be seen as an allusion to the Spring of Nations; quite wrongly considering the analysed word to be a neologism (dictionaries from the era contain the verb, although only in a reflexive form), J.W. Gomulicki writes: “rozwić (neol.) – rozkwitnąć w prawdziwą wiosnę (podtekst: prawdziwszą i pełniejszą aniżeli Wiosna Ludów)”⁴⁸ [spread

47 Such an interpretational possibility is indicated by S. Skwarczyńska, although she inscribes it in the general historical reading of the poem: “Perhaps those recommendations of the poet should be interpreted as joyful, because they assume the certainty of the resurrection of the homeland, because they recommend awaiting that event without angry impatience and unnecessary spurts” Skwarczyńska, “Ideowo-artystyczne konstrukcje obrazowe,” p. 38.

48 Gomulicki, “Komentarz,” p. 359.

spring (neol.) – bloom into a real spring (implied sense: truer and fuller than the Spring of Nations)].

The next two lines, starting with the anaphorical “I nie tak” [And it is not (how)], are a good example of the previously signalled syntactic complications occurring in the poem. With a superficial, linear reading, line 32 might be considered a case of contrasting; one should not strive for freedom (perhaps a somewhat abstract, idealistic, or exaggerated, unlimited one), but rather strive to achieve a specific state of “bratnie kochanie” [brotherly love] oriented towards one’s neighbour. Yet, an analysis of the two anaphorical lines indicates that the conjunction “a” [and] is used here in the function of a connection and not contrasting. The angel’s warning can thus be understood in two ways. First, as indication that freedom, equality, and fraternity (“bratnie kochanie”) are misunderstood and wrongly taken by people (perhaps absolutised) and that such an attitude towards them should change and people should strive to realise those values differently (“innych musisz dośnić” [you must dream of/for others]).⁴⁹ Second, as a reminder (or awareness) that one should not strive for primarily only freedom, fraternity, and equality, because man, especially a man of faith and trust, should await other values, transcending the earthly reality at hand. Such a thought might be somewhat surprising especially considering the historical context, but the only case in Norwid’s writings. The poet repeatedly emphasises that man is only a “przychodzień” (PWsz III, 572) [stranger, comer, passer-by] on earth, only a temporary resident who “czynsz płaci światu” (PWsz I, 336) [pays a rent to the world], and their real homeland “*nie stąd wstawa czołem*” (PWsz I, 336) [raises its head *from elsewhere*]. Therefore, no goods or values achievable in earthly reality (even such as freedom, equality and fraternity) can fully satisfy the longing for the lost heavenly homeland, and they should not be treated by people as absolute values.⁵⁰

49 Such an interpretation would agree with the comment, frequent in Norwid’s writings, about the misunderstanding of various concepts and equal misuse of the words corresponding to them. Such comments are found both in the author’s discursive texts (see e.g. *Wstęp* [Introduction] to *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On the Freedom of Speech] – DW IV, 213), and in the words of his characters (see e.g. “Spartakus” [Spartacus] – PWsz I, 285–286). Sometimes they take the form of interesting definitions through negation – see Korpysz, *Definicje poetyckie Norwida*.

50 A similar reflection might have been expressed most distinctly in the poem “Królestwo” [Kingdom], written over ten years after “List” (PWsz II, 64): “Nie niewola ni wolność są w stanie / Uszczęśliwić cię... nie! – tyś osobą: / Udziałem twym – więcej!... p a n o w a n i e / N a d w s z y s t k i m n a ś w i e c i e, i n a d s o b ą.” [Neither captivity nor freedom

After the criticism in lines 30–33, lines 34 and 35 contain a clear recommendation: “Ale się połóż w ciszy i spopielej, / Jeżelić przysze drogim zmartwychwstanie –” [But you lie down in silence and burn to ash / If you hold the future resurrection dear –]. The fragment can be read as another case of Norwid’s polemics with the Spring of Nations and, in general, with armed struggle as a method of regaining independence, liberties, and rights.⁵¹ In the late 1840s, similar reflections recur in Norwid’s writings several times. In July 1848, thus shortly before “List” was written, the poet wrote to General Jan Skrzynecki:

... czynność w emigracyjnym sensie jest to grzech największy Emigracji; dziś osobliwie, kiedy czynu w Europie całej ani widać i wszystko tylko są wypadki, trafy, przydarzenia się – dziś wydzieranie się jest grzechem. ... Jużć Pan Bóg jest wszędzie – w historii jednej miałby nie być? – Jeżeli tedy jest, toć trzeba miejsce Mu zostawić i nie zakratkować rachunkami całego zamiarów ludzkich pola – trzeba-ć umieć i czekać (DW X, 156).

[... activity in the emigrational sense is the greatest sin of the Emigration; especially today, when no acting can be seen anywhere in Europe, and everything is just accidents, chance events, occurrences – today, tearing out is a sin. ... God is everywhere – why should He be absent from history alone? So, if He is there, then one must leave Him room and not cover the whole field of human plans with calculations – one must be able to wait.]

In later years, especially after the fall of the January Uprising of 1863, Norwid repeatedly argued against rash, unprepared, and bloody uprisings or wars, claiming that one could not have “rzeź niewiniąt” [slaughter of the innocent] “co kilkanaście lat” (cf. DW XII, 323–324) [every dozen years], that the situation when “za późno myślą, a za wcześnie działają!” (PWsz IX, 272) [*they think too late and act too early!*] and “każda książka wychodzi za późno, a każdy czyn za wcześnie” (PWsz IX, 274, cf. also e.g. PWsz IX, 271) [*each book comes out too late, and every action comes too early*] needed to change, that each action must be preceded by a time of calm reflection, because work should be done first of all “z potem czoła” [with the sweat of the brow] (see e.g. PWsz I, 387, 388; PWsz IX, 155).⁵² A similar idea is undoubtedly present in this poem, but in light of

can / Make you happy... no! – you are a person: /Your share is more!... – to rule / Over everything in the world, and over own self.].

51 Skwarczyńska states: “the poet wishes to fill the nation’s waiting for the resurrection of Poland with inner improvement, not an externalized act; with waiting out the run of bad luck, not fighting it.” Skwarczyńska, “Ideowo-artystyczne konstrukcje obrazowe,” p. 38.

52 For more on the topic see Włodzimierz Toruń, “‘Bić się umięją, a nie umięją walczyć’ Norwid o zmaganiach Polaków,” in: *Strona Norwida*, pp. 381–395.

the previously presented interpretation, it seems that the poet's words can be understood more broadly and reach beyond the historical context. Apparently, he means not only (or maybe not so much) armed struggle, but also the general fact that people often try to create a life plan for themselves and implement it by themselves. On the one hand, that makes them sin with pride, wanting to achieve everything on their own, and on the other hand, they sin with the lack of trust in God or even with rejecting Him, removing Him from their vision of the world and own life. The angel restores the right proportions, indicating that, in fact, man owes everything to God and should rely on His providence, and that "przyszłe zmartwychwstanie" [future resurrection] requires above all humility and openness. As can be seen, the thoughts contained in the earlier fragments of the angel's message, especially in lines 3–4 and 8–12, return here.

At this point it should be emphasised that humble waiting for God's intervention does not have to be a passive one, and even should not be such. As Stefania Skwarczyńska rightly notes: "the poet's conviction that patient awaiting of the day of resurrection must be creative, not passive, must be spiritually active and socially fruitful, forms an unshakable foundation."⁵³ Norwid often emphasises the necessity to actively join "rzeczy świata tego" (cf. PWSz II, 238) [the things of this world], work on oneself and on the surrounding reality. He also expresses the thought several times that human life is a kind of task or "work" to be performed.⁵⁴ He repeatedly stresses that a person should be creative. Yet, at the same time, he constantly emphasises the importance of remembering the sacred essence of man, their sacred beginning and end. The anthropological reflection of Norwid, already mentioned, has a constant feature: perceiving man as "osoba święta" (see DW XI, 119) [a holy person] stretched between extremes, called to priesthood, who – sometimes sinfully entangled in mortality, "w rzeczach potocznych trzeźwą będąc" [being conscious in everyday matters] – is, or at least should constantly be, "w wieczne zachwycona" (see DW IV, 163) [in delight for the eternal].⁵⁵

53 Skwarczyńska, "Ideowo-artystyczne konstrukcje obrazowe," p. 39.

54 Józef Fert wrote that for Norwid "life is a work – an individual and original creation to which Everyone is called." Józef Fert, "Dzieło życia," *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 8 (1990), p. 84.

55 Already in a youthful poem "Do mego brata Ludwika" [To My Brother Ludwig] Norwid wrote (PWSz I, 68): "Popatrzmy w niebo, tam górnymi bądźmy, / A ręce w zwyczaj ujarzmiwszy – prządźmy" [Let us look into heaven and be lofty there, And taming our hands in custom – let us weave...].

The angel's words, "Ale się połów w ciszy i spowieć" [But you lie down in silence and burn to ash] (line 34), thanks to their connotations, also indicate a specific understanding of activity. Since those who wish to achieve "przyszłe zmartwychwstanie" [future resurrection] are to "położyć się w ciszy i spowieć" [lie down in silence and burn to ash], it means that they have to eliminate their ego, stop demanding rewards, and become ashes or dust, and thus undergo a significant transformation (the analysed verb "spowieć" [turn to ashes] is clearly used here in a figurative meaning).⁵⁶ They must acknowledge their own sinfulness and smallness before God, as well as their transience and mortality. Thus, they must become humble, even achieving a kind of perfection in that humility, "skruchą się pokruszyć" (PWsz I, 201) [to crumble oneself in repentance], as the poet writes elsewhere. Such a task requires intellectual, emotional, and, above all, spiritual effort on oneself which in turn excludes passivity.⁵⁷

The next fragment of the angel's speech is a theological mini-treatise on the subject of God. It can also be considered a kind of warrant or promise of the "przyszłe zmartwychwstanie" [future resurrection]. It is possible, and it is certain:

Bo nie zaniecha *On*, skoro wyceli,
I będzie łaskaw, mimo urąganie,
I czasu swego da – ani *Go* wstrzyma
Najdumniejszego chorągiew olbrzyma.

lines 36–39

[For He will not abandon an aim once taken,
And He will remain kind in spite of any insults,
And He will give His time – and He shall not be stopped
By a regiment of the proudest giant.]

56 The verb *spowieć* [burn to ash] appears in Norwid's work only once, but other lexemes from that word family also relate to the process of turning to dust or ash and the effect thereof, usually understood in a metaphoric manner – see "spopielenie" [turning to ash] (PWsz III, 478; PWsz V, 68, here literally about burning a corpse), "spopielony" [turned to ash] (PWsz I, 154, PWsz IX, 486 x 2 – both contexts epistolary, with irony and negative valuing). In the analysed image, perhaps an allusion can be found to the act of sprinkling heads with ashes on Ash Wednesday and/or to the thought that in order to rise from the dead, one must first turn to dust, which in turn may be a reference to the words of Christ recorded by St. John: "unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (Jn 12: 24).

57 Clearly, Norwid believed that not only truth, but also resurrection "się razem do chodzi i czeka!" (PWsz II, 66) [you both arrive at and wait for].

The angel shows God as the One who is benevolent, merciful, and at the same time consistent and faithful to His intention or resolution (“nie zaniecha *On*, skoro wyceli” [*He* will not abandon an aim once taken]), regardless of the attitude of people (“będzie łaskaw, mimo urąganie, / I czasu swego da” [*He* will remain kind in spite of any insults / And *He* will give His time]) because, as the Psalmist says, “he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities” (Ps 103(102): 10). That is why a person can be sure that the “Opatrzności-Pan” [Lord-of-Providence] (see DW XI, 191) provides constant care to them and shall not leave them alone in difficult experiences; at the most appropriate moment of His choice (“w swoim czasie” [in due time, or: in His time]) *He* will enter human life and grant the necessary graces.⁵⁸ The lack of specificity of the gifts can be treated as another signal of the impossibility of stating something true and adequate in its deepest essence about God, His attributes, and actions. The verb “wycelić” [to aim] is used in an interesting manner here. The dictionaries of the time only record it in a military sense (to aim a weapon at something or at someone). In such a sense it appears in the second context of Norwid’s writings, in “Częstochowskie wiersze” (PWsz I, 149) [Częstochowa poems]. “List” seems to mean that “Bóg widzi wszystko” (PWsz III, 524) [God sees everything] and directs His actions to a specific individual, to the one who needs it, the one on whom His watchful but tender look is focused at the moment (at whom it is “aimed”).

The actions of God signalled above are limited by nothing and no one: “ani *Go* wstrzyma / Najdumniejszego chorągiew olbrzyma” [*He* shall not be stopped / By a regiment of the proudest giant] (lines 38–39). No earthly power, authority, or might – symbolised here by “chorągiew olbrzyma” [a giant’s regiment] – can stop God. If necessary, *He* will break any resistance and even the “proudest giant” will have to acknowledge his own insignificance and adopt an attitude of humility. Characteristically, both in line 36 and in line 38 the pronoun “*On*” [*He*] was used rather than any of the many possible proper names referring to God. Perhaps the pronoun, thanks to its generality and lack of concretisation, indicates that you cannot say anything certain about God because *He* is perfect and therefore radically different from what man can experience on earth; *He* is “*znikający*”

58 That is the most likely interpretation of the syntactically unclear construction “czasu swego da” [*He* will give His time] (line 38), which is formally ambiguous. It may mean that God will give His time to man, devote it to give His attention to them. However, it can also be treated as an elliptical structure, as suggested above: in due time God will “give,” i.e. bestow graces not specified here.

nam przez doskonałość” (PWsz II, 158) [*escaping from our sight through perfection*]. He exceeds the capabilities of the human mind but also escapes the ways of describing the world available to man (that thought returns at the end of the poem). Even the name *God* is not fully adequate, as Norwid states elsewhere with the phrases “Ten, którego zwą Bogiem” (PWsz IX, 322) [the One whom they call God] and “Przedwieczny (którego zowią *Bogiem*)” (PWsz IX, 205) [the Eternal One (whom they call *God*)]. It is worth emphasising here that the poet repeatedly points to the ontological difference, and thus the unknowability of God. In his texts, “defining God through negation is also represented in great numbers,”⁵⁹ e.g. “niezmierzony” (PWsz I, 91) [immeasurable], “nie obrachowan” (PWsz I, 191) [not estimated], “Niewidzialny” (PWsz II, 119) [*Invisible*], or “*Nie Obrachowany na niebiesiach*” (DW XII, 534) [Not Estimated in heavens].

In the subsequent lines, perhaps in reference to the biblical Book of Psalms, which says that “The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love” Ps 104(103): 8, the angel once again emphasizes that God “*osądzi w Łasce*” [will judge in Grace] (line 40). He is thus not only a just judge, but also understanding, full of love, he is “*Miłosierny a Sprawiedliwy*” [*Merciful and Just*], as the poet wrote in 1860 in a letter to Michał Kleczkowski (see DW XI, 441).⁶⁰ And God acts through his words (the “*rzecz*” [lit. thing] seems to be used here in the old sense of “utterance” or “statement”),⁶¹ which have the power to create and change reality.

The “*rzecz*” [thing] of the Creator “*robakom wążku ujmie nagle*” [will suddenly rob the worms of their course] (line 42); that difficult phrase was thus explained by Zygmunt Krasieński to Stanisław Koźmian, who asked him to do so:

The two lines probably mean that the Lord will soothe the world and cut the disorder with such a thing as will suddenly rob the worms – I think it means the proud and blasphemous – of their arrogance and strength, convince them that they are stupid! It must be something like that.⁶²

59 Kadyjewska, “TEN, który jest,” p. 408.

60 It is worth noting that the image of God as a judge, strongly rooted in culture, appears only twice in Norwid’s writings – in “List” and in “Vendôme” (see PWsz I, 110).

61 Possible is also another interpretation of the noun *rzecz* [thing]: it can mean some property, some attribute of God which is going to be the most important factor in judging people – love, justice, mercy, etc. It seems that it is how the word was understood in Norwid’s poem by Zygmunt Krasieński – see below.

62 Quoted after Gomulicki, “Komentarz,” p. 359.

With the additional context, it can indeed be assumed that “robak” [worm] is a negative term for people here; a term that indicates their wretchedness in the face of God and His final intervention which will suddenly and unexpectedly cut the thread of human fate, and thus destroy naive plans for a future designed exclusively for human measure and not considering God (cf. “He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts” – Lk 1: 51).⁶³ The immediate consequences of the Creator’s actions may vary, as emphasised by the three anaphorical “albo” [or, either] (lines 42, 47, 48).⁶⁴ Line 43, “Bo albo sławy sobie wręcz zaprzeczą” [For they will either deny themselves the fame], when read in isolation, could be interpreted as a description of those who reject their earthly glory and power when facing God the Judge, for they will understand that in the new reality those things are nothing.⁶⁵ Therefore, they will undergo a positive transformation (postulated by the angel in lines 3–4, 8–12 and 34) and will adopt the right attitude, that of humility. Yet the context of the work, especially the following lines: “I każdy równą wydmie pychę żagle, / I obrzydliwym będzie wieniec piętrem” [And each blow out their sails with pride, / And the wreath shall be a disgusting stigma] (lines 43–44) make one read the entire image differently.

It seems that the words quoted above refer to those who, even in the face of the Last Judgment, will not want to or be able to undergo the necessary transformation, metanoia. With this interpretation, line 43 should be read quite differently; those in question, called “worms” a moment earlier (line 42), at the moment of the final choice of good or evil will opt for the latter. They will then deny the glory of God to which they have been called and are called, even at this

63 The quoted sentence comes from Mary’s *Magnificat* from Luke’s Gospel, which part was translated by Norwid in 1880 as: “Ramię gdy wznioł w mocy, pysznych łamie / Przez własne serc ich urojenia” [When He raised his arm in might, He breaks the proud / Through the delusions of their own hearts] (PWsz II, 244). On Norwid’s translation of that text see Tomasz Korpysz, Jadwiga Puzynina, “O psalmach Cypriana Norwida. Na przykładzie ‘Psalmu w Hebronie,’” *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 24–25 (2006–2007), pp. 77–94.

64 Numerous anaphors and syntactic inversions may be another signal of the poem having its roots in the Bible, beside the already indicated lexical and metaphoric references.

65 The image of people, metonymically described earlier, would thus return here – in lines 3–4 (“niechaj wklęśnie pokory otchłanią / Jako wybrane, ziemia ta, naczynie” [let the abyss of humility make it concave / As a chosen vessel, this land]), 8 (“serca wielkie” [great hearts]) and 10 (“myśli wielkie” [great thoughts]) – people who in the face of God would follow the angel’s postulates and reject what was of value to them and determined their importance from the earthly perspective.

moment, whose “seed” they bear in them; they will renounce being children of God, deny their innate holiness and “fame” (God’s glory), and thus reject salvation. They will still remain convinced of their own greatness, proud of their earthly achievements, and pride will remain their sole driving force, uniting them, as it were, in opposition to God (“I każdy równą wydmie puchą żagle” [And each blow out their sails with pride] – line 43).⁶⁶ It is worth stressing here the peculiar inverted parallelism of the analysed image with the one opening the poem. “Blowing out your sails with pride” by people who reject God’s love stands in stark contrast to the angel’s postulate of “becoming concave with the abyss of humility” (see line 3).

In the next line, the angel indicates the consequences of the attitude described above. The highly desired and idealised earthly fame, once it is achieved and treated as the highest good which one does not want to surrender, to abandon in the name of humility even in the final reckoning, will, in the perspective of God’s judgment and eternity, become something burdensome, a negative mark, a sign of condemnation, (“I obrzydliwym będzie wieniec piętne” [And the wreath shall be a disgusting stigma] – line 44).⁶⁷ Those who cannot leave their earthly goods and worldly achievements behind, who cannot strip themselves of them, will not be saved because God “has brought down rulers from their thrones” and “has sent the rich away empty” (Lk 1: 52,53).⁶⁸ Considering the previous references to the Revelation by John, the description of those who did not choose God but “worshiped the beast” (Rev 13: 4) can be recalled here; the “second beast” “forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads” (Rev 13: 16). On the day of judgment, those who bear that mark (the Brest Bible and the Gdańsk Bible, like Norwid, use the noun “stigma” (*piętno*)) will be condemned to eternal

66 Wiesław from the poem *Pięć zarysów* [Five Sketches] speaks of such people that “się spyszni / Umiejętnością” [they grew proud / In their skill] and that is why God reveals important truths not to them, but to “onim / Prostaczkom ... ciemnym i wzgardzonym” (DW IV, 172) [those / Simple people ... who are ignorant and scorned].

67 Again, a kind of inverted parallelism can be seen here – the “wreath” of earthly glory, which becomes a “disgusting stigma,” is in a way the opposite of the “green laurels” from line 11.

68 In the already cited translation by Norwid, the words read as follows: “Króle z stolic wyrzuca i stawi w bramie” [He throws kings out of their capitals and puts them in the gate] and “Bogacze odprawia próżne!” (PWsz II, 244) [He sends the rich away empty (handed)!].

damnation.⁶⁹ In this case it is also clear that Norwid's metaphor might have its prototype in the image present in the Book of Revelation.

The last line of the discussed strophoid, line 45 ("I przepaliwszy się, wynamiejętniem" [And having burned out, we will shed passion...]), causes the greatest issues with interpretation in this part of the poem. First, the meaning of the word "wynamiejętniem" [we will shed passion, or burn with passion] is unclear; second, it is surprisingly used in the first person plural; and third, the relation of the whole phrase to the previous line is not obvious. The verb itself was already noticed by Ignacy Fik, who wrote:

The form is original: "And the wreath shall be a disgusting stigma – And having burned out, we will shed/burn out with passion" ("List"). The latter word is threefold unsuccessful: as a rhyme (-*ętnem*, -*ętniem*); as a form (because it should be -*ętniemy*); and as a neologism (because it should be - we shall become more passionate, from "passion").⁷⁰

The rather harsh evaluation from that author of the first work on Norwid's language is unjustified as the form, *wynamiejętniem*, comes from a verb, *namiejętnić/namiejętnić się* (also used by Norwid – see PWSz VI, 92), and that verb is related to a regional, Masovian variant of the adjective *namiętny* [passionate], *namiejętny* and the noun *namiętność* [passion], *namiejętność*, which also appears in several of the poet's texts (see PWSz III, 437; PWSz V, 328 x 2).⁷¹ That information refutes the thesis of Ignacy Fik and Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki that the discussed lexeme is a neologism, but it does not determine whether the word means "we will become more passionate," or rather "we will rid ourselves of our passions" (the ambiguity is introduced by the prefix *wy-*).

69 One of the angels announcing the Last Judgment says "in a loud voice:" "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name." (Rev 14: 9–11).

70 Ignacy Fik, *Uwagi nad językiem Cypriana Norwida* (Kraków: Skład główny w kasie im J. Mianowskiego, 1930), pp. 26–27. Also J.W. Gomulicki considers *wynamiejętniem* a neologism – see Gomulicki, "Komentarz," p. 359.

71 Longer forms, variants of the more common derivatives of the noun *namiętność* [passion], are rare, but noted in the sources since the sixteenth century. For more, see Antonina Obrębska-Jabłońska, "Norwidowska 'namiejętność' regionalizmem," *Sprawozdania z posiedzeń Komisji Językowej Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego* 1952, Vol. IV, pp. 105–114.

The anaphorical “i” [and] might suggest the need to treat lines 43–45 as parallel, not only structurally but also semantically. In that case, line 45 should be understood as describing the next stage or type of behaviour of those who reject God’s love. After death, the Last Judgment and condemnation, their negatively valued passions (perhaps related to living the earthly here and now too intensely, to an inability to break away from earthly life, or to an emotional rejection of the sacred) will develop even more, further separating them from God; they will thus be “more passionate” with their earthly passions. With such a reading, the verb *przepalić się* [to burn out, burn through] would have to denote a negative process of destroying, losing oneself, or dying in fire;⁷² perhaps in such a case, one ought to seek there a reference to the fire of hell to which those who reject God condemn themselves.

The interpretation above, although semantically possible and apparently resulting from the successive lines of the work, as well as fitting into the parallelism mentioned above, is not very convincing. More likely, although perhaps surprising, is another one, which assumes the actualisation of the other possible meaning of the word *wynamiejętniem*: “we will rid ourselves of passions.”⁷³ It is also confirmed by Norwid’s use of the derivatives mentioned above, especially the well-known fragment of *Promethidion*:

– Spytam się tedy wiecznego-człowieka,
 Spytam się dziejów o spowiedź piękności;
 Wiecznego człeka, bo ten nie zazdrości,
 Wiecznego człeka, bo bez żądzzy czeka,
 Spytam się tego bez namiejętności –
 “Cóż wiesz o *pięknem*?”

(DW IV, 106)

[– I will then ask the eternal-man
 I will ask history about confession of beauty:
 The eternal-man, for he does not envy,
 The eternal-man, for he waits without desire,
 I will ask him without passion:
 “What do you know about *beauty*?”]

72 In the essay “Odpowiedź krytykom ‘Listów o emigracji’” [“Reply to the Critics of ‘Letters on Emigration’”] Norwid uses the verb in that sense, writing about “przepalanie jadem” (PWsz VII, 38) [burning through with poison].

73 Such interpretation is also supported by W. Kudyba (see Kudyba, “*Aby mowę chrześcijańską*,” p. 90).

and the following words of Felix, the protagonist of *Miłość-czysta u kąpeli morskich* [Pure-Love at Sea Baths]:

Perły ja szukam... jest to namiejętność.
 Namiejętności (o czym Pani nie wie)
 Ślepe są, co zaś jest ślepyim – nie wgląda
 W następstwa – ...

(DW VI, 451)

[A pearl I seek... it is a passion.
 Passions (which you do not know)
 Are *blind*, and what is blind – does not look
 At consequences –]

Obviously, the “passions” in Norwid’s texts are something which can completely overwhelm a person, which prevents them from having an objective view of reality and in a sense captivate them. Therefore, they are usually negatively evaluated by the poet.⁷⁴ The process of ridding oneself of earthly passions, as suggested in the analysed fragment of “List,” and its metaphor associated with fire (“przepaliwszy się” [having burned out]), clearly refers to line 34: “Ale się połóż w ciszy i spopielej” [But you lie down in silence and burn to ash] (incineration is connected with fire); in some sense, it is a response to the angel’s call. It also corresponds generally with the message from the earlier words of the heavenly messenger: a person who wants to obtain the grace of salvation must become humble, undergo a radical spiritual transformation, and release themselves from what separates them from God, including dangerous, violent feelings, i.e. “passions.” With such a reading, the verb *przepalić się* [to burn out]

74 The same is true of dictionaries illustrating the condition of the old Polish language, which give e.g. the following collocations as typical ones: “namiętności bestliwe, brzydkie, burzliwe, bydlęce, nierządne, niespokojne, plugawe, popędliwe, próżne, sromotne, wielkie; namiętności miarkowanie, tłumienie, uzdrowienie; namiętności cisną, opanowały, wkradły się, zgasły; namiętności cierpieć, umartwiać, uskromić, wykorzeńić” [savage, ugly, turbulent, animal, indecent, restless, filthy, rash, vain, disgraceful, great passions; moderating, suppressing, healing passions; passions crush, seize, creep in, fade away; suffer, mortify, tame, uproot passions] (see entry *namiętność* [passion] in: *Słownik polszczyzny XVI wieku*, ed. Maria R. Mayenowa, Vol. XV: *namacać – nić*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1986). In *Słownik warszawski*, the valuation is not so unambiguous, but the examples of collocations there also indicate that passions can overwhelm a person and that they are usually associated with excessive involvement of a person in something negative.

refers to a difficult, perhaps even painful, but positive process of testing, purification, and transformation, metanoia. It should be emphasised that the word also appears with the same meaning in other texts by Norwid. One can recall here, e.g. the globe “nie przepalony jeszcze sumieniem” [not burnt through with conscience] from the poem “Czasy” [Times] (see PWsz I, 116; cf. also “Socjalizm” [Socialism] – PWsz II, 19), but most of all a fragment of the work *Nieskończony* [Infinite], which mentions “perłowe w pieklach dusze” [pearly souls in hell] (w. 60):

Jak wam śpieszno się przepalić,
Lżejszym zerwać się płomykiem,
Wyswobodzić, zjąć, o-calić
I nie zetknąć w drodze z nikim,
Strzelistością lecąc nową
W Słowo-ciało najprzeczystsze,
We wszech-istność Chrystusową, ...

PWsz I, 202

[In what hurry you are to burn out,
To leap up with a lighter flame,
Get free, be one, unite,
Without contact with anyone on the way,
Flying with new loftiness
Into the purest Word-Body,
Into the all-existence of Christ, ...]

It is worth mentioning that similar uses of lexemes from the semantic field of fire appear relatively often in the Bible. In order to emphasise the truth and permanence of God's words, the psalmist states e.g.: “As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him” – Ps 18(19): 30 (cf. 2Sm 22: 31; Prov 30: 5). To emphasise the value of pure gold to which he compares faith, St. Peter says: “These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (1 Pt 1: 7).⁷⁵

The other interpretation of the line presented above, “I przepaliwszy się, wynamiejętniem” [And having burned out, we will shed passion...] seems more

⁷⁵ Refinement and testing of gold in fire is mentioned in the Bible several times – see e.g. Sir 2: 5; Rev 3: 18. Once there also appears the motif of testing human hearts in fire (see Jdt 8: 27).

convincing, and matches the general message of the work better than the first one; therefore it is necessary to recognise that the discussed stanza of “List” presents an ellipsis. The first two sentences starting with the conjunction “i” [and] describe the attitude and fate of those who reject God’s love; line 45 shifts to refer to those who respond positively to that love, experience a clear internal transformation (“burn out”), lose their earthly “passions,” become humble, and thus pass the “judgment in Grace” positively.⁷⁶ The obvious change in perspective of describing the reality of people facing God’s judgment and its evaluation is confirmed by the use of the first person plural, a grammatical form of the verb of significance here (*we* “wynamiejętniem” [will rid ourselves of passions]).⁷⁷

The fragment discussed above proves to be quite resistant to interpretation. Due to syntactic complexities, the last strophoid of “List” is not easy to interpret on first reading, either. The opening two and a half lines, despite inversion, are still relatively clear: “Albo z kamyka kędyś podłe drogi, / Albo z ostatniej wezwie moc marność, / I wzuje sandał” [Or from some pebble by the road, / Or from the most meagre He will summon power, / And put the sandal on] (lines 46–48). It still concerns the unlimited power of God, and, at the same time, His love, mercy, and justice (radically different from the human ones). During the time of judgement, God will choose and appreciate those who have decided to respond to His invitation, and who in the earthly reality have often achieved nothing tangible, were ordinary, average or plain “marni” [meagre], and even the most meagre of all (as in line 47) in the eyes of others. What is more, if it is assumed that “kamień” [pebble, stone] is used here in the literal sense, God’s omnipotence, so strongly emphasised, can make an inanimate thing in human terms come alive, become powerful, and be endowed with extraordinary dignity (as symbolised by the sandal, in reference to the Bible).⁷⁸ Yet the phrase may also

76 A similar – also postulated or rather hypothetical – transformation is mentioned by Jerzy, a protagonist of *Pięć zarysów* [Five Sketches], who notes that if people on earth would have really learned and accepted the truth about God’s omnipotence and the insignificance of human ambitions and plans, “Wtedy by w porządku / Przedwiecznym dojrzewano i zmartwychwstawano” (DW IV, 171) [Then all would in Pre-eternal / Order mature and resurrect].

77 The “we” (‘we who pass the trial and change, and in effect will be saved’) means here the subject of the angel’s statement and others who believe in God’s mercy and own salvation, rather than the angel and the recipients of his words.

78 W. Kudyba sees in this fragment the “biblical motif of animating stones” (*“Aby mowę chrześcijańską,”* p. 88). A similar image can be found in the poem “Pieśni społecznej cztery stron” [A Social Song in Four Pages]: “*Tworzącego zeszlj Ducha, / A kamień posłucha... / ... / Tworzącego zeszlj Ducha / Na świata bez-tory, / A i głaz się udobrucha,*

have a figurative meaning, the pebble symbolising average people, considered to be of little value or even unnecessary (like a pebble by a road) in the earthly world here and now.⁷⁹ Undoubtedly, this fragment of “List” is again inspired by the Bible, and more specifically by the First Epistle to the Corinthians (“God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.” – 1Cor 1: 27–29)⁸⁰ and the scene of the prodigal son’s return in Luke’s Gospel (see Lk 15: 22).⁸¹ However, it is worth noting that, unlike the Bible, Norwid’s poem once again stresses that God’s action is based on the word – God “wzywa” [summons, calls], so He is a speaking being, the agent of communication with man, and His word has an extraordinary causative power.⁸²

The second part of line 48 with line 49: “– i przed ziemskie bogi / O całą przestrzeń posunie litości” [– and before the earthly gods / Move by an entire space of mercy] are another example of inversion-induced syntactic complications encountered by the reader of “List.” As W. Kudyba writes:

[...] the truth about the strange logic of God’s love does not appear “directly” here; it is hidden in a complicated syntactic structure, requires prior analysis of the relationships between the elements of the utterance, and remains ambiguous.⁸³

Kudyba sees three possible interpretations of the opening lines of the last strophoid:

/ Zakwitną topory” (DW IV, 36) [*Send the creating Spirit, / And a stone will listen... / ... / Send the creating Spirit / Onto the track-less world, / And even a rock will mollify, / And axes will bloom*].

- 79 Such an understanding of the noun *kamień* [stone, rock] also has its origins in the Bible – see e.g. Ps 118 (119): 22, Acts 4: 1–12.
- 80 As in the quoted biblical phrases, people are spoken of in “List” indirectly – usually by means of metonymy or, as in this fragment, by substantivisation. The only exceptions are: “poganie” [heathens] in line 12, “płacz wielko-ludowy” [giant multi-populous cry] in line 13 and “lud” [people] in line 28.
- 81 A. Kadyjewska writes: “In ‘List,’ the face of the merciful Father emerges from a story about God who, like in Luke’s parable about the prodigal son, puts a sandal – a sign of dignity – on his recovered child” (Kadyjewska, “TEN, który jest,” p. 415).
- 82 The first signal that God communicates with people not only with non-verbal signs, but also with words, appears already in line 40 (“taką rzeczą” [lit. with such a thing]).
- 83 Kudyba, “*Aby mówę chrześcijańską*,” p. 89.

1. “and will put on the sandal, and move mercy by an entire space before the earthly gods;”⁸⁴
2. “Or He will summon power from some pebble by the road, or from the most meagre, and put the sandal on, and move it [the meagreness!] by an entire space of mercy before the earthly gods;”⁸⁵
3. “Or He will summon power from some pebble by the road, or from the most meagre, and move it [the power] by an entire space of mercy before the earthly gods.”⁸⁶

A different reading is proposed by A. Kadyjewska:

Probably somewhere in the text, there “hides” the recipient of the first activity, absent on the surface, and the object of the second activity – God puts the sandal on *someone* and moves *someone*. ... The Most High puts the sandal on His faithful followers.⁸⁷

As made apparent, the quoted phrase can hardly be interpreted unequivocally. All the suggestions mentioned above for understanding it are justified both syntactically and semantically, and each of them in its own way can be inscribed in the earlier words of the angel. However, W. Kudyba’s first and third interpretative hypotheses seem unlikely. If “posunie” [moves] were to be combined with “litości” [mercy], then there would be no object on which God “wzuwa sandał” [puts the sandal]; on the other hand, “moving the power,” and thus elevating it, does not quite explain the metaphor of “przestrzeń litości” [a space of mercy], which refers to God’s favour rather than His power. In light of the considerations presented, the interpretation of A. Kadyjewska and the second proposal of W. Kudyba are more convincing. It is worth noting that, in fact, they are not contradictory – according to both, the purpose of the text is to emphasise God’s immense and infinite mercy⁸⁸ and the fact that, thanks to that mercy, at the end

84 The author explains: “Assuming that the preposition *before* appears here in its archaic sense *more than*, in this sentence one can find the idea of a God who cannot be outdone in love, infinitely more compassionate than any earthly power” (Kudyba, “*Aby mowę chrześcijańską*,” pp. 89–90).

85 In that interpretation, God “elevates the humiliated, puts them before and over ‘earthly gods’” (Kudyba, “*Aby mowę chrześcijańską*,” p. 90).

86 The author further states: “The semantic stress would then fall not so much on the mystery of ‘elevating’ the meagre as on the mystery of God’s power – and it is God’s might that the context concerns” (Kudyba, “*Aby mowę chrześcijańską*,” p. 90).

87 Kadyjewska, *Obraz Boga*, p. 171.

88 It should be noted that once again an interesting special metaphor appears: after “otchłań pokory” [abyss of humility] in line 3 and “błogie przepaście” [blissful abyss] in line 23 there is “przestrzeń litości” [space of mercy]. In all those cases, the use of

of times, elevated will be those who were considered by other people as inferior, who may have suffered due to that, and who achieved nothing in this world, but remained faithful to God and responded to His call. Ultimately, it is they (described with the words “most meagre,” according to W. Kudyba, or – according to A. Kadyjewska – not named with any word, suggested in an ellipse) who will prove to be more valuable than those who seemingly achieved everything on earth (“ziemskie bogi” [earthly gods]).

Yet still another interpretation of the phrase in question seems to be the most probable one.⁸⁹ It may be assumed that Norwid used a specific anticipatory order here and both “putting the sandal on” (line 47) and “moving before the earthly gods” (lines 48–49), as well as “bearing the banner of the covenant” (“chorągiew przymierza” from line 50) refers to those who are described in lines 51–53.⁹⁰ Salvation and heavenly glory, symbolised by the sandal and the banner of the covenant,⁹¹ will be won only by those who achieve perfect humility and do not boast of any earthly goods and deeds. It is not only about such objective values as knowledge, wisdom, or wealth and material goods, but also about “głupstwo” [folly], “nędza” [poverty] and “siła pacierza” [power of prayer]. These words are a clear warning against false humility as well as of own ignorance and naivety, poverty or prayerful zeal. Even that which is considered valuable from the perspective of a believer, that which is in accordance with the recommendations of the Church, cannot be treated as a “ticket” to heaven. God “osądza w Łasce” [judges in Grace] (line 40) and it is only to God’s mercy, not any merits, that man can owe eternal life.

The poem “List” ends with a specific definition of God (lines 53–55):

the lexemes emphasises the enormity, even limitlessness of the described objects, and the spatial nouns obtain a definitely positive valuation.

- 89 I should like to express my thanks to Professor Jadwiga Puzynina for drawing my attention to the possibility of that interpretation.
- 90 Of course, in such a case it must be assumed that Norwid did not maintain the agreement between line 49 and lines 51–53. Such violations of syntactic relationships, especially in the case of inversion, are not an exception in his texts.
- 91 The “chorągiew przymierza” [banner of the covenant] in line 50, which is essentially a banner of glory, referring to descriptions and representations of the risen Christ, is clearly contrasted with “najdumniejszego chorągiew olbrzymia” [regiment (but in Polish also a flag) of the proudest giant] in line 39, which, as a sign of earthly power, ultimately becomes a symbol of pride and consequently condemnation. It is another, third example of interesting oppositions built on the principle of reverse parallelism.

... który niepojętym
 Jest i pokuszeń nie zna ani granic,
 I wszystko za nic ma, a nie ma za nic.

[[He] who is incomprehensible,
 knows no temptations and no boundaries,
 And against Him everything is worthless, yet He holds everything dear.]

As mentioned earlier, apart from the adjectival form *Chrystusowy* [Christ's] (line 15), the entire composition has not one of the traditional names of God at any time. Moreover, there are signals in the angel's words that God is unknowable, and therefore inexpressible and unnamable. That type of reflection, especially the ending of the poem cited above, is part of a trend in apophatic theology according to which, when speaking about God, one should use only paradoxes, antinomies, and negations because it is impossible to say anything certain about Him. One can only say what He is *not* like.⁹² In the analysed fragment, Norwid highlights the fact that a man cannot understand God (and His attributes, including love and justice – so important in the light of the considerations herein); that God has no boundaries and is not limited by anything; that He is not subject to any temptation.

While lines 53 and 54 seem understandable, the last line: “I wszystko za nic ma, a nie ma za nic” [lit. And for Him everything is nothing, yet He does not consider it nothing] requires a closer look. J. W. Gomulicki writes:

The meaning of the paradox: (God) is so inconceivably great and omnipotent that He has the right to regard everything as nothingness, but His greatness and omnipotence at the same time makes every creature, even the lowest one, matter to Him.⁹³

On the other hand, A. Kadyewska sees two possible interpretations here:

The first possibility is that to God everything is nothing in some respects, and not in another: He is so great that the whole world means little to Him (in an ontic sense – it is not necessary for Him to exist), but at the same time, in the order of love, that same world means very much to Him. The second possibility of interpretation is related to the ambiguity of the word *nothing*: it means “little,” “a negligible amount,” or “nothingness.”

92 Several of Norwid's definitions of God containing negation have already been mentioned. At this point, it is worth recalling two selected phrases based on a paradox, which state that God “jest Nikt i jest Osobą” (PWsz II, 120) [is No-body and He is a Person] and that He is “kimś, dla którego nic za wielkiego i nic za małego nie ma” (PWsz IV, 120) [someone for whom nothing is too big and nothing is too small].

93 Gomulicki, “Komentarz,” p. 360. The author notes here reminiscences of the reading of Tertullian's works.

Assuming that the first use of this lexeme in the discussed line refers to the quantitative meaning, and the second – to the meaning of “nothingness,” this sentence would communicate that to God all things mean little, but are not nothingness.⁹⁴

The second of the proposed readings seems more convincing. It is only worth adding that in the dictionaries from the time, the lexeme *nic* [nothing] has slightly different meanings than those reconstructed by A. Kadyjewska; in *Słownik warszawski*, it means “żadna rzecz” [no thing] and “rzecz bez znaczenia, rzecz drobna, drobiazg, drobnostka, bagatela, fraszka, głupstwo” [a meaningless thing, a small thing, a trifle, something petty, unimportant, a joke, nonsense]. Referring to that definition, it’s possible to say the last line of the poem has the following meaning: in the eyes of God, everything is small and trivial, but nothing is completely meaningless and nothing deserves to be completely lost, to be absent.

As seen in the analyses above, the poem “List,” while not necessarily one of Norwid’s masterpieces, is a very interesting work, drastically exceeding historical and political contexts, and says a lot about the poet’s attitude to history, about his anthropology, Christianity and his vision of God and the Last Judgment. Here, history appears as a process with a specific direction and purpose, a process which man can impact only in a limited manner, and in which they should leave space for God. The discussed text brings important sacral threads to Norwid’s anthropology, stressing the need to constantly consider God’s plans and God’s possible interventions in human life, as well as the need to be open to them. The Christianity depicted in “List” is, above all, about the attitude of humility, patience, and perseverance on the one hand, and of faith, hope, and trust on the other. Finally, the God emerging from the poem is “Opatrzności-Pan” (cf. DW XI, 191) [Lord-of-Providence] transcendent, inconceivable and indescribable, powerful and just, but also patient, kind, merciful, and still open to man. All of those threads, primarily rooted in the Bible and only sketched here, recur many times in Norwid’s mature works.⁹⁵

94 Kadyjewska, *Obraz Boga*, p. 120.

95 Already after this text was prepared for print, the author read an interesting study by Grażyna Halkiewicz-Sojak titled “‘Apokaliptyczne’ wiersze Cypriana Norwida” in: *Apokalipsa. Symbolika – tradycja – egzegeza*, Vol. II, eds. Krzysztof Korotkich and Jarosław Ławski (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2007), p. 295–309, where she writes e.g. about the poem “List,” also connecting it with John’s Revelation and analysing selected images.

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Edyta Chlebowska

Echo of ruins – Scherzo – Solo: Norwid's Vanitative Triptych

Abstract: The article is devoted to three lithographs by Norwid: *Echo ruin*, *Scherzo*, and *Solo* viewed as a thematic and semantic whole and a kind of tentative triptych. The poet shifted the centre of gravity from the technical and formal layer towards senses forming the content layer of the representations. The technique used in those depictions must be considered characteristic of Norwid's mature visual art. In all three works, the author used a two-layer (foreground-background) composition. The human, the protagonist of the works, cannot find understanding with another human, or, in a broader perspective, with the society (*Scherzo*), the surrounding world (*Solo*), or even their own work which also clearly exposes the imperfection of its author (*Echo ruin*). The article attempts to present the formal differences between the three lithographs as well as their thematic unity, which may be defined in the most general terms as focused on issues of vanity and passing. In *Echo ruin* and *Scherzo*, the idea of *vanitas* concerns specific aspects of human existence and creation. The central place in that "triptych" belongs to *Solo*; the work refers most fully to passing, which encompasses the human and the entire surrounding reality.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid, lithograph, *vanitas*, melancholy, ruin

In Irena Jakimowicz's synthetic study on the history of Polish graphic art from its beginnings back in the fifteenth century to modern times, there is a small section devoted to Norwid's graphic works.¹ The very presence of the name of the author of *Solo* in the list of artists who went down in the history and development of artistic graphic techniques in Poland is highly significant, and is also important for the history of the reception of Norwid's art. Actually, a note about him can be already found in *Słownik rytowników polskich* [Dictionary of Polish Engravers] published shortly after Norwid's death; but Edward Rastawiecki only included it in a brief statement: "poet, who happened to work with sculpture, lithography and engraving. He made a few etchings."² The concise nature of the entry on

1 Irena Jakimowicz, *Pięć wieków grafiki polskiej* [exhibition catalogue] (Warszawa: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 1997), pp. 75–77, illustrations 88–90; in the catalogue part of the publication, Norwid's graphics are listed in positions 378–382 (p. 343).

2 *Słownik rytowników polskich tudzież obcych w Polsce osiadłych lub czasowo w niej przebywających* (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 1886), p. 217.

Norwid is not surprising considering the fact that it was only in the twentieth century which – mainly due to the efforts made by the editors of Norwid’s literary output – gave a much better insight into the graphic works left by the poet and consisted of just over twenty compositions. Additional years brought scientific studies of the collection of Norwid’s graphics (mainly the publications by Hanna Widacka³ and Aleksandra Melbechowska-Luty)⁴ and papers studying elements thereof, focused either on analysing particular pieces or selected aspects of the collection. It ought to be stressed here, just like the entire visual art legacy of the poet, Norwid’s graphic works remained in the scope of interest of literary scholars, apart from the positions mentioned above, mainly norwidologists who saw a scientific reflection on the poet’s non-literary work as a chance to gain more versatile knowledge on his creative profile. One more remark: only a few publications make attempts to place Norwid’s visual art against a broader context of artistic phenomena, co-creating the image of Polish and European art of the times. That specific scientific “Norwid-centrism” is somewhat conditioned by the unique nature of the subject, which does not easily yield to categorising and labelling it under specific artistic trends and conventions. It is thus no surprise that in the very first sentence concerning the writer’s etching work, Jakimowicz states that he occupies “a completely separate position, independent of the main, reproductive trend of the then graphics, as well as of the current needs and patriotic tasks.”⁵

The author of *Pięć wieków grafiki polskiej* [Five Centuries of Polish Graphic Art] stresses, on the one hand, the originality of thought and imagination of Norwid, who was pursuing his own artistic vision, and on the other hand, she notes the Rembrandt origin of his graphic legacy, noticeable in both the aspect of subject and that of form, “as proven by the specific, free leading of the etching lines, depths of black and flashes of light.”⁶ Importantly, a strong relation to the Rembrandt tradition was considered quite early in subject literature to be an essential feature of Norwid’s graphics. When the artist was still alive, one of his etchings published in the paper *L’Artiste* was provided with an editor’s note that traced Norwid’s sources of inspiration to the works of Dürer, Rembrandt and Leonardo da Vinci. At a later time, the name of the author of *Solo* was often

3 Hanna Widacka, “Grafika Norwida,” *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 3–4 (1985–1986), pp. 153–180.

4 Aleksandra Melbechowska-Luty, *Sztukmistrz. Twórczość artystyczna i myśl o sztuce Cypriana Norwida* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2001), pp. 132–143, 263–271.

5 Melbechowska-Luty, *Sztukmistrz*, p. 75.

6 Melbechowska-Luty, *Sztukmistrz*, p. 76.

recalled when discussing Rembrandt tradition in Polish art, alongside such names as Jan Piotr Norblin de la Gourdain or Michał Płóński. The usual object of interest were the etchings: *Wskrzeszenie Łazarza*, *Sybilla*, *Pythia*, *Więzień* and *Rozmowa umarłych* [The Resurrection of Lazarus, Sibyl, Pythia, Prisoner, and Dialogue of the Dead], where the inspirations of Rembrandt's graphics seem most visible.

Speaking of Norwid's etchings, it is worth remembering that this was the artist's favourite and most frequently used graphic technique. Norwid remained faithful to it ever since his first etching attempts in the 1840s under the guidance of Florentine artist, Vincenzo Della Bruna, down to his last graphic work *Dialog umarłych* [Dialogue of the Dead] dated 1871. When, in 1868, embittered with the lack of recognition for his literary work, he sent some of his friends a kind of an artistic offer containing an "index" of the artistic genres he practiced; in the point concerning graphic arts, he only included aqua-fortis etching.⁷ One is left to guess what made him choose that particular artistic medium over other ones. Perhaps it was the result of his fascination with the work of Rembrandt – so important for the entire visual art legacy of Norwid – who elevated etching to the highest level of artistry; yet it could have just as well been a choice of a technique used most commonly by graphic artists, who, not only designed the composition, but also transferred the pattern onto the template by themselves. It should also be remembered that in the nineteenth century etching has lost much of its significance, replaced by lithography and woodcut. It was only late in that century, mainly thanks to the artistic associations Société des Aquafortistes and Société Française de Gravure à l'Eau-forte, that the technique started to be promoted again, thus opposing the domination of mass-produced reproductive graphics. Norwid himself chose techniques other than etching sporadically and usually no more than once: in 1850 he used soft-ground etching to create *Św. Józef z Dzieciątkiem* [St. Joseph and Child], and ten years later he made a steel engraving frontispiece to the issue of Teofil Lenartowicz's poems *Zachwycenie* [Rapture] and *Błogosławiona* [The Blessed One]. The only deviation in that respect which could be viewed as more significant was Norwid's lithographic work in late 1850s and early 1860s. First, and quite reluctantly, he agreed to prepare a cycle of drawings by Artur Bartels, issued in the volume *Łapigrosz. Szkice obyczajowe*⁸ [Moneygrubber. Sketches of Manners] for lithography. Considering

7 PWsz IX, 351 (letter to A. Cieszkowski of July 1868) and PWsz IX, 353 (letter to M. Kleczkowski of 12th July 1868).

8 The collection of "sketches" from the life of the title-character of *Łapigrosz* was issued in late 1857 in Paris by J. K. Wilczyński within the series *Album de Wilna* (Series 6,

Norwid's reluctance towards artistic commissions, which made him produce others' compositions, it is easy to guess that when he decided to return to lithography some years later he used the technique to create his own fully original works. As a result of collaboration with the lithographic office of Saint Aubin in Paris, in 1861 he created three works in the pen technique: *Scherzo*, *Echo ruin* [*Echo of Ruins*] and *Solo*. Although their dimensions differ and no close analogies can be found in their compositional layer, the three pieces were certainly meant by the author to be an "entirety," "set" or cycle.⁹ Still, they have far more in common than just the time of creation and the technique used. No doubt the pieces stand out in the whole collection of Norwid's graphics with their most complex iconography and richness of symbols, contained in what is actually a little-developed compositional layout. Other works by the author of *Solo* (except for *Alleluja* [Hallelujah], *Muzyk niepotrzebny* [Unnecessary Musician] and *Dialog umarłych* [Dialogue of the Dead]) are typically simple in content. The titles of the works speak for themselves: *Nie było dla nich miejsca w gospodzie* [There Was No Room for Them at the Inn], *Św. Józef z Dzieciątkiem* [St. Joseph and Child], *Pythia*, *Sybilla* [Sybil]. It happens that the artist mainly focuses on a quest for form expressed in the manner of drawing lines, the distribution of hatching, and the resulting play of lights and shadows. An example of that are two versions of the image of Lodovico Sforza (*Sforza w więzieniu* [Sforza in Prison], also known as *Le Prisonnier* or *Męczennik* [Martyr]), which give an identical view of an elongated bust of the Duke of Milan in the setting of a prison dungeon. Apart from a few very minor details, the two works differ exclusively in the manner of making the drawing: sharp synthetic cuts emphasising the facial expression, which dominate in one version, give way to a more delicate and more

No. 3). Norwid's name was not listed in the publication, but his signatures are found in five of the fifteen tables composing that pictorial "story"

- 9 In Norwid's visual work, one can indicate works of a cyclical character, to mention just the drawings in *Awantury arabskie* [Arabic Drawings] and the set of dark watercolours termed *Fantazje ilustracyjne* [Illustrative Fantasies]. However, attempts to apply the term "cycle" to the lithographs of interest here, which appear in subject literature, do not have sufficient justification as those works do not constitute a formally homogeneous set; cf.: Dariusz Pniewski, *Między obrazem i słowem* (Lublin: TN KUL, 2005), pp. 302–322, Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn, "O wschodzie czy o zachodzie słońca? 'Solo' Norwida," in: *Norwid – artysta. W 125. rocznicę śmierci poety*, ed. Krzysztof Trybuś, Wiesław Ratajczak, Zofia Dambek (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2008), p. 92.

detailed drawing which blurs the contrast between the covered and clear parts of the image in the other version.

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The situation is quite different concerning the three lithographs of interest: *Scherzo*, *Echo ruin* and *Solo*. The centre of gravity clearly shifts from the technical and formal plane towards the senses and meanings which compose the content of the representations. The drawing technique used in the works can be considered characteristic of Norwid's mature visual works. The freely drawn line aptly captures particular forms and smoothly meandering bold strokes of the pen coexist with irregular grids of hatching, accentuating the spatial nature of the presented figures. In all those works, the artist used a two-plane composition; yet, that is where their similarities end. The remaining elements of the visual structure of the particular works were treated differently. The background quite vaguely marked in *Scherzo* with just a few small elements, highly gained in significance in *Echo ruin*, and obtained its most extensive form in the last of the three lithographs. The bleak landscape forming the background for the lonesome figure in *Solo* takes an almost equal position as the orchestra scenery of the foreground despite their clear division.

It would be a vain effort to try and close the content of Norwid's lithographs in just a few words. Starting with the identification of the figures and recognition of the relations between the particular elements of the image through decoding the composition's content, down to the sense of the titles given by the author – practically each of the above listed components of the iconographic "structure" escapes any attempts at unequivocally deciphering to a lesser or larger degree. Norwid himself termed his works to be drawings "na granicy poważnej karykatury" [bordering on serious caricature], which, one might guess, touched difficult aspects of reality through the artistic means it included (i.e. deformation, change of proportion, exaggeration of characteristic features, highlighting contrast). In fact, *Scherzo*, *Echo ruin* and *Solo*, despite considerable flexibility of the generic framework, do not strictly belong to Norwid's caricature legacy, particularly if one considers the deepening of the semantic sphere towards more symbolic representations which is typical for those works. However, it is worth emphasising that typically satirical works of the artist mainly include such images to induce reflection rather than simple amusement. Such a state of affairs is closely related to the belief proclaimed by Norwid that "humor prawdziwy musi mieć łzę na dnie" [true humour must have a tear at the bottom] (PWsz X, 50).

In the subject literature, the lithographs made in 1861 were usually treated as individual works unconnected at any plane but for the strictly technical one. While they take a significant position in Norwid's chamber of visual art, they have not been granted an exhaustive interpretation excluding the composition *Solo*, which has been the object of several longer studies. In her review of Norwid's graphic legacy, with emphasis on the polysemy of the pieces, Hanna Widacka indicated a general framework of some proposals on how to read the content of *Scherzo* and *Solo*.¹⁰ She suggested that the former may be understood as a satire against blind human faith in natural phenomena or as a "mockery of the eternally battling Polish emigration." She linked the latter work to the theme of melancholy derived straight from Albrecht Dürer's famous copperplate, while also stressing the musical aspect of the work and referred to the motif of hidden patriotic content, related to the "censorship" episode. *Echo ruin*, which in Widacka's words "irritates and disturbs with its mood," became the object of interest of Grażyna Królikiewicz, who analysed Norwid's concept of ruins as a symbolic sign.¹¹ The author of *Terytorium ruin* [Territory of Ruins] saw a reference to the iconography of melancholy also in this composition, linking the lithograph to the theory of "a glance towards heaven" proposed by the artist in his poem *Assunta*, she defined it as a "melancholy of hope" as opposed to the "melancholy of despair" represented by *Solo*.¹² In a monographic study on Norwid's visual arts legacy by Aleksandra Melbechowska-Luty, the latter composition – the only one among the three pieces of interest to this paper – was discussed at length; the author followed the path indicated by Widacka and extended her discussion with fragments of Norwid's texts corresponding to the content of the image.¹³ The presence of melancholic motifs in *Solo* was also the object of interest of Sławomir Rzepczyński, who, in his attempt to define the specific nature of the poet's "melancholic lyricism," compared the lithograph to poems composing the "black suite."¹⁴ Recently, Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn sought to answer the

10 Widacka, "Grafika Norwida," pp. 167–169.

11 Grażyna Królikiewicz, *Terytorium ruin. Ruina jako obraz i temat romantyczny* (Kraków: Universitas, 1993), pp. 128–131. *Echo ruin* was recently discussed in a similar context by Jolanta Bajko in her article "O ruinie raz jeszcze. 'Rzecz o wolności słowa,'" in: *Norwid – artysta. W 125. rocznicę śmierci poety*, pp. 190–194.

12 Królikiewicz, *Terytorium ruin*, p. 131.

13 Melbechowska-Luty, *Sztukmistrz*, pp. 264–271.

14 Sławomir Rzepczyński, "Melancholijny liryzm Norwida. Między 'czarną suitą' a litografią 'Solo,'" *Studia Norwidiana*, Vols. 20–21 (2002–2003), pp. 3–16 (in this volume published as: "Norwid's Melancholy Lyricism. Between the 'Black Suite' and the Lithograph *Solo*.")

question of the time of day captured in *Solo*.¹⁵ A separate position among studies on Norwid's lithographs is taken by the proposal of Dariusz Pniewski,¹⁶ which is so far the only integral interpretational view on *Echo ruin*, *Scherzo* and *Solo*. The basic thesis that the pieces are linked with "themes concerning artistic work, an artist's calling, and the role of criticism,"¹⁷ situating them within the problem area of the short story "Ad leones!," was presented by the scholar in a suggestive and convincing manner in the course of extensive analyses.



Figure 3. C. Norwid, *Solo*, 1861, lithograph, paper, National Library in Poland. Photo National Library in Poland.

The enigmatic or even polysemic content of the lithographs created in 1861 is the feature invariably focused on by researchers, and it is usually the starting point for any interpretations proposed. It also encourages further research, as the last

15 Okulicz-Kozaryn, "O wschodzie czy o zachodzie słońca?," pp. 91–99.

16 Pniewski, *Między obrazem i słowem*, pp. 302–322.

17 Pniewski, *Między obrazem i słowem*, p. 302.

word has apparently not yet been said on the matter of recognising the semantic wealth of the compositions. Most certainly, some of the hitherto findings, particularly those situating the pieces within specific iconographic themes, ought to be considered binding; yet, there are also some which raise bigger or smaller doubts. It happens that interpretations are based on mistaken discernments concerning matters as fundamental and seemingly obvious as the description of the image. To give an example: once a sketched outline of a city was identified in the background of *Scherzo*,¹⁸ even though there is truly no possibility to find even the most remote trace of such a suggestion in the composition itself. Most problematic description elements can be found in the studies on *Solo*; they actually mostly concern the figure presented in the lithograph. Researchers persisted in endeavours to find an instrument under the cloak wrapped around the figure, as if such a musical attribute were a necessary condition for the character's presence in the orchestral setting. Once a flute was recognised,¹⁹ another researcher saw a harp,²⁰ although the main argument in favour of each option was always the same – the arrangement of the drapery, which was supposed to reveal the shape of an instrument hidden under the cloak. Thus, the imagination of scholars called an object into existence which they then included in their interpretations which has never been presented by Norwid in the lithograph. There were no few inaccuracies in the descriptions of the compositions related to the perception of the relations within the image, to mention just the statement that the figure from *Solo* is leaning against a fallen, dead tree,²¹ while the tree is actually located quite a distance from the character. Although the deficiencies of a lithograph's compositional structure do make spatial orientation within the scene difficult for the viewer, yet, not to such an extent that one may seek, direct relations between elements belonging to separate planes of perspective. The examples presented above of dubious or even mistaken findings related to the initial step of analysing a work of visual art may seem insignificant in themselves. However, they gain in gravity if one considers that they are often the starting point for far-reaching conclusions in interpretation. The aforementioned instruments “added” by the researchers to the image of the figure in *Solo* are the most eloquent testimony to the power of temptation to over-interpret; they are its effect and its tool to organise the space of meanings and senses recognised in the lithographic “puzzle.”

18 Melbechowska-Luty, *Sztukmistrz*, p. 140.

19 Melbechowska-Luty, *Sztukmistrz*, pp. 266, 268.

20 Pniewski, *Między obrazem i słowem*, p. 310.

21 Rzepczyński, “Melancholijny liryzm Norwida,” p. 6.

One research issue is only briefly signalled here: the one related to the sphere of basic meanings – though apparently obvious and far from dubious – contained directly in the visual layer of Norwid's graphics. What this paper is intended to achieve is to sketch in the research perspective on the lithographic "triptych" – although, as previously stated, the three works do not compose any formal set – a proposal resulting from the conviction of a thematic unity quite strongly linking the compositions of 1861. In contrast to the artistically oriented interpretation by Dariusz Pniewski, which viewed the sense of Norwid's images in categories of relations on the line of artist – artwork – recipient (critic), this is an attempt to view the lithographs from a vanitative perspective.

The idea of *vanitas* is possibly a unifying force for the topics of *Scherzo*, *Echo ruin* and *Solo*, and highlights an inner core under the surface of the compositions, apparently so different content-wise; a core around which their artistic and semantic values are organised. The thought of the passing of this world, of the transience of human life, and of the impermanence of human works gained a very interesting interpretation in Norwid's lithographic realisations, while each of the pieces refers to a different aspect of the idea of *vanitas*.



Figure 4. C. Norwid, *Scherzo*, 1861, lithograph, paper, National Library in Poland. Photo National Library in Poland.

The group of six augurs presented in *Scherzo* seems to embody all the negative features which may be part of a decision-making body. The facial features of its members presented in a caricature convention reveal a weakness of character and deficiencies in the moral sphere. The stately draperies of antique-stylised robes are not matched with equally noble posture which would be expected for the dignity of the office. Yet, what is the most bothering are the disturbed relations within the presented group. The two men in the foreground are turned towards each other, and one of them, wearing an insincere smile, is reaching towards a purse hanging from his belt. Most likely, as suggested by Pniewski, this image presents a bribery attempt. The other members of the board do not communicate with each other in any way. What is more, they ostentatiously demonstrate their indifference towards the sign hanging behind their backs showing an image of ducks, which were actually the main object of interest to Roman augurs. Only one of them seems to be looking at the birds yet, he does so with an expression of disapproval. With this presentation, Norwid is showing a lack of power or idea which could join the board members in constructive activity aimed at achieving common aims. That raised the fundamental question of what body the author of *Vade-mecum* wished to portray in the forms of the augurs. Due to a lack of closer situational context to help specify the space of the board's activity, at least a few potential solutions to the problem could be indicated. Hanna Widacka's suggestion pointing to the representatives of the internally battling Polish emigration²² seems just as convincing as the proposal by Pniewski, who views Norwid's "Leonardian caricatures" as images of art critics "blind" to the values of a work of art.²³ But the scene, with its quasi-encyclopaedic note added by the author, can also be interpreted in the spirit of Daumier's caricatures, thus relating them to diplomatic spheres. For instance, among the satirical works of Honore Daumier which portrayed Roman soothsayers, one may find a presentation of two "augurs of French diplomacy" who do not want to attempt to read the fortune from the two-headed Prussian eagle sitting on a tree nearby for fear of what they may find inside.²⁴

22 Widacka, "Grafika Norwida," p. 167.

23 Pniewski, *Między obrazem i słowem*, p. 322.

24 A complete catalogue of Daumier's visual works with reproductions of all images can be found at the website dedicated to the artist: www.daumier.org/8.0.html. See also: Jules Champfleury, *Histoire de la caricature moderne* (Paris: Dentu, 1865); John Grand-Carteret, *Les Moeurs et la Caricature en France* (Paris: La Librairie Illustrée,



Figure 5. Honore Daumier, *Les Augures de Rome ne pouvaient pas se regarder sans rire*, wood engraving, *Le Charivari*, 3.IV.1834.

Another caricature, published in *Le Charivari*, presents Louis Phillippe I and Charles Maurice Talleyrand, facing each other with contented faces. The caption under the illustration refers to a thought by Cato the Elder, quoted by Cicero,²⁵ claiming that when one augur meets another, they give each other knowing smiles. There is an additional note describing the portrayed men as two clowns in an analogous situation. Also in his other images, Daumier uses the guise of augurs to represent either specific French politicians (e.g. Joseph Louis Adolphe Thiers and Louis Mathieu Mole), or diplomatic representatives

1888); Henry Marcel, *La Caricaturiste Daumier* (Lyon: Imprimeries Réunies, 1908); Philippe Robert-Jones, *Étude de quelques types physiologiques dans l'oeuvre de Daumier* (Bruxelles: [s. n.], 1949); Ségolène Le Men, "Calligraphie, Calligramme, Caricature," *Langages*, Vo. 75, No. 8 (1984) special: "Letters et icons" (dir. Jean-Didier Urbain), pp. 83–102; Louis Provost, *Honoré Daumier, a thematic guide to the oeuvre* (New York: Garland, 1989); Ségolène Le Men, *Daumier et la caricature* (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 2008).

25 Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2, 24.

of other countries. While the needle of the satire of the French artist is directed with surgical precision towards specific circles of figures in the world of politics.²⁶ Norwid's *Scherzo* is a stern judgement of not so much, or not only the current phenomena of social, artistic or political life, as it is mainly – through the incomplete and indeterminate nature of the scene, both features characteristic of lithography – a bitter “mockery” of the flaws found with the representatives of various political circles and independent of external circumstances conditioned by history. The timeless character of the scene is indicated, not only by the antique costume typically used by Norwid to express some universal truth about



Figure 6. C. Norwid, *Echo ruin*, 1861, lithograph, paper, National Library in Poland. Photo National Library in Poland.

26 Daumier used that type of caricature and satire in his work quite often; see e.g.: Elisabeth Luther Cary, *Honoré Daumier, a collection of his social and political caricatures* (New York: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1907); Wolfgang Balzer, *Der junge Daumier und seine Kampfgefährten, Politische Karikatur in Frankreich 1830–1835* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1965); Roger Passeron, *Daumier témoin de son temps* (Paris: Bibliothèque des arts, 1979); *La Vie politique de Daumier à nos jours*, dir. Noëlle Lenoir (Paris: Somogy, 2005).

humanity, but also by the symbols in the upper part of the composition: a skull, laurel branches, and an hourglass. They seem to shift the figurative scene into the space of the idea of *vanitas*, emphasising the impermanence and at the same time imperfection of earthly power and honours held which in effect becomes the most distinct message of *Scherzo*.

Another aspect of the idea of *vanitas* is touched by *Echo ruin*. What comes to the foreground is not the experience of vanity for earthly honours, but the thought of the illusory permanence of human works. The stones of the ruin rubble in the background of the composition echo weakly with the glory of the monumental structure those stones could compose if the inner element organising the “całość rzeczy” [entirety of things] like an architectural foundation were not lost. Yet, the lithographic ruin does not resemble in the least Norwid's “całość rzeczy w całość ruiny zmieniona”²⁷ [the entirety of things turned into an entirety of ruin], whose injured limbs “niewzruszenie ciągle” [invariably and constantly] proclaim spiritual unity and whose principle of existence embodied in the column remnants of Palmyra Norwid stated in song XIV of *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On the Freedom of Speech]. That artistic vision might be more aptly termed a ruin of incompleteness, which, due to “zagubienie planów” [lost plans], could not achieve its final shape like a type of Babel tower. The name of the goddess Nemesis – the Greek guardian of universal order, who sternly punished any lack of moderation and excessive pride of people²⁸ – which is written in the stone pieces, seems to confirm such “reading” of the ruin scene lost in the landscape. It also ought to be remembered that imaging the vanity of human efforts coalesced, particularly in the period of late baroque classicism, sentimentalism and romanticism, with the motif of ruined architecture.²⁹ Hence, the great popularity of the artificial ruins decorating European parks, which, in the word of Jan Białostocki “beside ‘picturesque’ values ... always have the sense of a symbol; they are the most monumental realisation of the idea of *vanitas* known to us.”³⁰ The ruin located in the background of Norwid's composition finds its counterpart in the foreground of the lithograph. It is the open book with its pages scattering chaotically and empty; in its incompleteness it stands in opposition to the “book of life,”

27 Cf. *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On the Freedom of Speech], XIV, l. 34 (DW IV, 271).

28 Pierre Grimmal, *Słownik mitologii greckiej i rzymskiej*, ed. Jerzy Łanowski, trans. Maria Bronarska (Wrocław-Warszawa: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987), p. 248.

29 Jan Białostocki, “Vanitas. Z dziejów obrazowania idei “marności” i “przemijania” w poezji i sztuce,” in: Jan Białostocki, *Pleć śmierci* (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 1999), p. 106.

30 Białostocki, “Vanitas,” p. 106.

presented by Norwid in a few other visual works.³¹ The figure leaning over it, which might be seen as an image of an artist, or maybe a poet, is also disturbing. The face is shown in a caricatured view, also in violation of the basic principles of perspective; the eyes are directed upwards, but the look seems to escape somewhere far away at the same time; even the hands are portrayed as if incapable of creative work – thus the figure also seems to be a ruin; a contradiction of the idea of a creator and creation propagated by Norwid. Thus this paper does not agree with Grażyna Królikiewicz, who saw *Echo ruin* as the imaging of “melancholy of hope,” with the image of a living ruin on the one hand, and the figure of the poet referring to Norwid’s idea of a “glance towards heaven” on the other.³² Quite the contrary: I believe that the composition is no less dark than the lithograph *Solo*, described by the author of *Terytorium ruin* as the “melancholy of despair.” It is sufficient to notice that each element of *Echo ruin* can be described in the categories of lack or incompleteness; each one carries a seed of death within itself. Both in the stone hieroglyphs, in the melancholically numb figure, and in the book falling apart beneath the figure’s limp hands from whose pages one cannot read a word, there lurks emptiness, filling the hostile space with a sense of an inevitable end. The protagonist of the lithograph, in a pose full of contradiction – apparently bent over the open book but with hands unable to take the fallen pen and eyes which do not seek contact with the workstation – is not fulfilled in creative activity. The sight immediately raises questions: whence in a composition of Norwid, who seems to proclaim the motto “ars longa vita brevis” with nearly all of his legacy, both literary and visually, and no less so with his own life, comes such a bitter and somewhat ironic image of the artist? Whence the vision of a faulty, incomplete work? Might it perhaps be, as in *Scherzo*, a kind of warning? A warning against artistic pride which in elevating the creator above the reality at hand places the artist at the same time beyond the relation of the Creator and the creation? The sloppy, patched clothing of the figure presented in the lithograph might then be less an expression of his poverty or difficulties of life, and more a testimony to his deficiencies of spiritual nature, also reflected in the hostile, mask-like face of the man. In *Echo ruin*, Norwid seems to announce “vanitas vanitatis” in the creations of human hand and thought, not avoiding a slight didactic tone contained in the somewhat ironic presentation of the artist.

31 Cf. the lost pen and ink drawing of 1851, titled *Księga życia* [Book of Life], and the image of the prophet Isaiah from the collection of the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw.

32 Królikiewicz, *Terytorium ruin*, pp. 130–131.

Among the three compositions of interest, the idea of the vanity of human efforts likely gained the most universal expression in the lithograph *Solo*. Although one might, like Aleksandra Melbechowska-Luty and, even more consistently, Dariusz Pniewski, focus on the artistic aspect of the work seeing the image of an artist in the figure in the foreground and analysing the relations connecting the figure to the particular elements of reality presented within the frame,³³ such a perspective does not exhaust the wealth of senses layered like “curtained” compositional plans. Presenting a human figure of which so little can be said³⁴ – beside the obvious melancholic pose coming to the fore – in scenery where one might see a holistic and, at the same time, a symbolic vision of a world in a state of decay may, in fact, induce the viewer to read the lithograph as the image of human life. The striking element of *Solo* is the clear separation, even isolation of the foreground from the background, both containing images of a few basic aspects of reality, starting with the figure, placed very close to the viewer and yet inscrutable, through elements of culture in a state of suspension, to a catastrophic image of nature, represented by the pool of water and a dying forest yielding to an unspecified destructive force. Each of the basic fragments of reality seems to be immersed in a state of disintegration; each one is forced to yield to the course of events, inevitably heading towards degradation with no support from the other elements. Also, the human – for the figure is of greatest interest here, having been assigned a particular place by Norwid amidst the picture of a world passing away inevitably – whose lonely shape huddles unto itself and is unable to establish a creative dialogue with that world, must face their fate in which “ta nić czarna się przędzie” [that black thread is woven] alone. The pose might seem similar to the medieval acedia, defined by St Thomas Aquinas as “drawing away from good deeds” and being “sorrow for the spiritual good.” The melancholic aura of the lithograph refers the viewer immediately to the idea of *vanitas*. Those instruments of a silent orchestra can hardly be anything but the embodiment of the sense of the vanity of this world. Widely used in pictorial variants of the topic, particularly in the seventeenth century in Dutch

33 Such an interpretation clearly emphasises the relation of Norwid's *Solo* with the image of an artist's melancholic nature, derived straight from Dürer's *Melencolia I*, including the connotation with genius; cf. Wojciech Bałus, *Mundus melancholicus. Melancholiczny świat w zwierciadle sztuki* (Kraków: Universitas, 1996), pp. 74–75.

34 Starting with the basic issue of the figure's actual gender, up to the character's relation towards the orchestral setting (whether the person is a member of the orchestra, an instrumentalist, or perhaps a singer, a soloist, or maybe a “third” person, unconnected with the musical background).

paintings,³⁵ they were most often meant to invoke the idea of sensual pleasures, constituting “*vita voluptaria*.”³⁶ The vanitative sense of musical instruments is related no less strongly to the fact that they represent the most ephemeral and impermanent of the arts – the one most strongly linked to the passage of time.³⁷

In Norwid’s *Solo*, the mark of melancholic indeterminateness is also strongly expressed. Each of the previously indicated fragments of reality, where one can see symptoms of decay and detachment from sources of life, contains some potential of positively marked senses. The sun’s disc hanging just over the horizon³⁸ relates to the age-old rhythm of sunrises and sunsets which bring some hope for the degraded nature, a chance for rebirth – after all, among the dead trees a new forest may be called to life. The instruments, so strongly connected with vanitative issues – even if silent, they can sound again for they have not been abandoned in disorder, but they are “ready for action.” The double basses stand on their stands, and notes are placed on theirs, so musicians’ hands could possibly “awaken” the still life with a harmony of music at any moment. And the protagonist – if not just their huddled shape, but also the face were to be brought out of shadow, even if not fully justified by the location of the visible source of light (the sun is just over the horizon), that might suggest inner activity of the figure, a stirring in the soul to express the need to move to a higher level of spiritual development, or maybe even a yearning for God.

*

Pełna była słoneczność – rozległy i głęboki dokoła widok, a całe sklepienie niebieskie jakimś błogosławionym wdziękiem harmonii obejmowało świat i ludzi. Coś jakby złote sklepienie pierwotnej jakiej bazyliki chrześcijańskiej, gdzie zacne serca i żywe zamieniały ze sobą bratni pocałunek w Bogu dobrym i aniołach jego... (DW VII, 183)

[Full was the sunlight – the view all around wide and deep, and the whole celestial vault embraced the world and people with a blessed grace of harmony. Much like a golden

35 Charles Sterling, *Still Life Painting: From Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

36 See Białostocki, “Vanitas,” p. 79.

37 See Krzysztof Lipka, “Martwe natury – milczące instrumenty,” in: *Semantyka milczenia 2. Zbiór studiów*, ed. Kwiryna Handke (Warszawa: Slawistyczny Ośrodek Wydawniczy, 2002), pp. 151–162.

38 Speculations on the time of day shown in the lithograph which occur in the interpretations of *Solo* are excluded here for the simple reason that the structure of the image lacks any data which would allow to determine whether it is sunrise or sunset. The only thing which can be stated with absolute certainty is that Norwid captured a borderline moment, a turning point on the scales of the powers of light and darkness.

vault of some early Christian basilica, where heart noble and alive exchanged a brotherly kiss in the good God and his angels...]

May that short fragment of a somewhat sentimental picture from the short story “Stygmat” [Stigma], which gives a synthetic, panoramic view on the harmonious landscape, formed by natural scenery, architectural elements embedded in it, and the staffage completing the picture, serve here as a kind of a counterpoint for the reality pictured in the discussed lithographs. In *Echo ruin*, *Scherzo* and *Solo* there is a very strong sense of disturbance of that harmony which should unite all elements of the presented world “w Bogu dobrym i aniołach jego” [in the good God and his angels]. The sunny aura present in the literary description, the vast, unobstructed view and the Christian perspective which gives “harmonii pełność” [full harmony], are replaced in the lithographs with a sense of want, a break, an incompatibility of particular motifs. The human cannot find any common ground there either with another person or, more broadly, the society (*Scherzo*), or with the surrounding world (*Solo*), or even with their own work, which additionally reveals distinctly the imperfection of its creator (*Echo ruin*). Norwid's lithographs, which formally do not constitute any set, are linked with a common theme which might be defined in the most general terms as focusing on issues of vanity and passing. *Echo ruin* and *Scherzo* present aspects of the idea of *vanitas*, for the presentations concern clearly defined fragments of human existence, such as the matter of power and honours, and the issue of the creator and creation. The central place of that lithographic, “triptych,” should then belong to *Solo* which offers the fullest and most universal realisation of the idea of *vanitas*, encompassing not just the human, but the whole reality surrounding them represented by the elements of the natural and the cultural environment, with consideration for their mutual relations.

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