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NORWID'S DRAMA OF "SOCIAL TRANSFIGURATIONS"

Norwid used the concept of "social transfigurations" in his lectures on Juliusz Słowacki (*O Juliuszu Słowackim*). As we remember, in the first lecture he presented a chronological outline of the problem of the poet's social duties and "social dignity." The cultural history of Israel, Greece, Rome and the Christian world provided him with arguments in favour of the thesis of the poet's distinguished and even privileged position in the life of individual societies. Despite historical and cultural differences, according to Norwid, the poet invariably fulfilled the honoured role of the priest of hope and as such integrated all key aspects of the existence of a given community. A turning point in the poet's understanding of his mission proved to be the development of Christianity: "Tajemnica tego bardzo jasna: kapłanowie nadziei nie mieli już co robić u Betlejemskiego żłobu" [Its mystery is very clear: the priests of hope no longer had any role to fulfil at Bethlehem's manger] (PWsz VI, 209). For hope was revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ, which entailed a redefinition of the poet's social position. Norwid thus poses a complex problem: "Gdzież więc, mówię, ci kapłanowie odchodzą?! – oto odchodzą oni poza Niedzielę tej nadziei, oto odchodzą w dzień jej powszednie i robocze, albowiem dla człowieka pojedynczego nadzieja jest już spełniona, ale dla człowieka zbiorowego, narodu i narodowości poczynającej się spełnienia nie było. Tam więc oni odchodzą, a przeto urzędu swego, kapłanstwa nadziei, nie składają [...], odchodzą witać całość, co jeszcze blasku Zbawicielowego nie doznała. Idą na pola, gdzie światłość Pańska nie zajaśniała jeszcze [...]" [Whereto, I ask, the sepriests depart?! – behold, they depart beyond the Sunday of that hope, behold, they depart on its weekdays and working days since for the individual man the hope is already fulfilled, but for the collective man, the nation and the arising nationality the fulfilment has not begun. There, therefore, they depart, and they do not leave their office, the

priesthood of hope [...], they depart to greet the whole, which has not yet experienced the radiance of the Saviour. They go to the fields, where the light of the Lord has not yet shone (...)] (PWsz VI, 409-410). Later in the lecture, Norwid continues this thought: “Jeżeli zatem powiedziałem, że poeci odchodzą w te strony, w których światło Zbawicielowej prawdy jeszcze nie świeciło, i idą przecież, nie tracąc właściwego im kapłaństwa nadziei, powiedziałem rzecz słuszną. Od tej chwili albowiem zajaśniała dla historii prawda nowa, że Ojczyzna nie tylko w Chrześcijaństwie się zaczyna, ale zawsze jest ziemią obiecaną, że, ściślej mówiąc, pierwiej była ziemią obiecaną, potem społecznością obiecaną, a teraz mówię, że razem i ziemi, i społeczności obiecanej wygląda się” [If, therefore, I said that the poets depart to those fields where the light of the Saviour’s truth has not yet shone, and they go without losing the priesthood of hope proper to them, I said the right thing. For from now on, a new truth has dawned on history, that the Homeland not only begins in Christendom, but is always the Promised Land, that, to be precise, first it was the Promised Land, then the Promised Community, and now, I say, we seek both the Promised Land and the Promised Community] (PWsz VI, 411-412). In the redefined mission of the poets, nowadays primarily the priests of the “promised community,” a crucial role is given to language, which should keep pace with the social changes and transformations of consciousness initiated by Christianity: “Ten i ów lud albowiem, dziś polany wodą, dziś też policzony został w księgę i epopeję chrześcijańską, aleć języka lud żaden z dnia na dzień nie przemienia, języka mówię pasji uczuć i całej dramy życia, które się za przyjściem Chrześcijaństwa odmieniło [...].” [For this and that people, today sprinkled with water, have also today been registered into the Christian book and epic, but the language of the people does not change from day to day, the language of the passion of feelings and of the whole drama of life, I say, which has changed with the coming of Christianity (...)] (PWsz VI, 412). In this situation, poets have a particularly important mission to fulfil – to create not only a new “język fenomenów” [language of phenomena], but also a new “język transfiguracji społecznych” [language of social transfigurations] (PWsz VI, 412). Norwid perceives this task in terms of a “terrible trial,” since so much depends on the effect of the poets’ actions, but also on the actions of language creators and users, as well as artistic forms of truth... For it is up to them to maintain the link between language and the modern world, which consequently means securing the conditions needed for the development of social (self)awareness and social communication, which are the foundations of communal life. “Bez tych zaś języków nie możemy zaiste poznać epoki, w której się żyje, chyba że w liczbach kalendarzowych i matematycz-

nych cyfrach, nieomylnych tam zwłaszcza, gdzie właśnie że już życia nie ma! Od tej to zaś chwili prace poetów na dwie się połacie rozłożyły: p r z e s z ł o - ś c i i p r z y t o m n o ś c i. Na jedną, aby rozwiązać mowę wieków w ustach Sfinksa, i na drugą, aby mowę chrześcijańską odtworzyć na nowo w chwili, gdy dąży do ubóstwienia formy samej, a przeto do spogańszczenia się, lubo częstokroć bezwłasnowolnie i bezsamowiednie” [Without the selanguages, we cannot in deed know the epoch in which we live, except in calendar numbers and mathematical digits, in falliblee specialty where precisely there is no more life! Since then, the work of poets has been divided into two areas: t h e p a s t a n d t h e p r e s e n t a w a r e n e s s. Within the former, to resolve the speech of the ages in the Sphinx's mouth, and within the latter, to recreate Christian speech anew at a time when it tends to divinise form itself, and therefore to become paganised, though often involuntarily and unconsciously] (PWsz VI, 413).

The notion of “social transfiguration” is, in my opinion, a significant element of Norwid's meta-poetic discourse, applied by him in his lectures probably also as a self-commentary. Particularly in relation to the poet's dramatic works, the concept seems to reveal its importance and semantic depth. After all, Norwid speaks of the social change occurring with the expansion of Christianity, using dramatic nomenclature, as a change in the “whole drama of life,” which should be accompanied by a change in the language of art; provided, of course, that the creator has his social mission and dignity in mind, that he aims at an attitude of “present awareness,” that he wishes to be a guide on the path to the promised land and community. These, in turn – there can hardly be any doubt here – are Norwid's own aims.

Drama is, as is well known, not a particularly valued area of Norwid's work. His image as a writer was always shaped primarily by lyrical and epic poetry, artistic prose, journalism and epistolary writing. And yet, it is always worth repeating, the poet practised drama throughout his life, beginning with *Dobrzy ludzie* [Good People] and *Chwila myśli* [Moments of Thought], dating from 1840-1841, and ending with *Miłość czysta u kąpieli morskich* [Pure Love at Sea Baths] from around 1880. There was a set of deeper assumptions behind this gesture of fidelity. They cannot be reduced to a purely aesthetic fascination with a particular artistic form, nor to the activities of a post-Romantic, referring to the particularly high valorisation of the drama/dramatic poem in the Romantic era. After all, we remember the words critical of the Romantic aesthetics of drama: “dziś nie dość jest [...] tak nazwane *fantastyczno-filozoficzne* pisać dramata, częstotliwie raczej niedokończone niżli głębokie” [today it is not enough (...) to write so-called *fantastic-philosophical* dramas, more frequently unfinished rather than profound] (DW VI, 110), and the writer's constantly renewed efforts to come up with a new,

original dramatic form that transcends the horizon of the Romantic ideas on the subject. Norwid evidently strives to develop a form of drama that would be deeply integrated with his own poetic programme, including that articulated in his lectures on Juliusz Słowacki. Rooted in tradition, drama should thus be a creative response to the challenges of a time permanently transforming the “drama of life,” and therefore requires the creation and constant renewal of the language of “social transfigurations.”

For Norwid, the dramatic form appeared to be exceptionally susceptible to such creative operations. According to the writer, drama (together with theatre) has for centuries remained closely connected to social life and its historical transformations, as evidenced by Norwid’s not very extensive but multifaceted reflection on the dramatic and theatrical achievements of mankind. In this perspective, it is enough to reread the essay “Widowiska w ogóle uważane” [Spectacles in General] to see how important this aspect of drama is for its author. Of course, one must take into account the fact that we are dealing with a text drafted by Norwid on the basis of the existing state of knowledge,¹ and therefore the argument is not fully original, but the distribution of interpretative accents certainly comes from the author of the essay and reflects his point of view well. What is noteworthy is the consistent situating of the origins of dramatic art in a widely outlined religious and social context. It was religious rituals and collective life that were the sources of theatrical performances in ancient Greece and Rome: “Gry publiczne na Cyrk były więcej przeznaczone dla ogółu zebranej publiczności na dzień święta jakiego [...], dla zajęcia masy zgromadzonej na dzień uroczystości” [The public games at the Circus were more intended for the general assembled public on the day of some festival (...), to occupy the mass assembled on the day of a feast] (PWsz VI, 388). On the other hand: “Scena – czyli gra właściwa – ta miała bliższy związek z religijnymi obrzędami” [The stage – or the play proper – had a closer connection with religious rituals] (PWsz VI, 388), its purpose being religiously conceived worship of deities and heroes. It was from this background that ancient theatre emerged as an aesthetic phenomenon, obviously retaining the memory of its original connection with ritual, because “gra sceniczna” [the stage play] arose “z chórow obrzędowych i z solo bóstw albo bohaterów, czyli pół-bogów – powstała więc z pieśni czytanej, śpiewanej i tańczonej około ołtarzy, które przed schodami świątyni stały i na których paliły się ofiary” [from ritual chorus and from

¹ The foreign sources which Norwid might have used while working on his essay still remain unidentified. It is known, however, that he was also familiar with Polish works on the history of theatre, such as Kazimierz Władysław WÓJCICKI’s *Teatr starożytny w Polsce* (Warszawa 1841).

the *soliloquy* of deities or heroes, that is, semi-gods – it thus arose from the song read, sung and danced around the altars which stood before the steps of the temple and on which sacrifices were burned] (PWsz VI, 389). However, when it comes to the formation of successive forms of drama, Norwid strongly emphasises their social roots, for “drama,” synonymous with “action, doing, life, acting,” was invented by, as he states “*duch ogółu społeczeństwa, potrzeba wewnętrzna*” [the spirit of the general public, an inner need] (PWsz VI, 390). Choruses, on the other hand, which, beside the protagonist (it could be the poet himself, which was important for Norwid²), were an inseparable element of drama, although they originated from ritual dance, they ultimately “*wyrażały jakoby objaśniciele i nauczyciele sensu moralnego rzeczy reprezentowanej – było to jakby pomiędzy publicznością a sceną ustanowione kapłaństwo publiczności*” [were conceived of as the explicators and teachers of the moral sense of the thing represented – it seemed to be the priesthood of the audience established between the audience and the stage] (PWsz VI, 391).

In the Christian world, Norwid notices analogous phenomena in the development of theatre and drama. He writes of the continuation of the form of Roman games, which undergo a gradual degeneration until they finally become a bloody arena for the martyrdom of Christians, which finally closes their history. He notes the role of the troubadours, “*którzy w śpiewy swoje wprowadzili pewien rodzaj akcji i deklamacji*” [who introduced a kind of action and declamation into their singing]. Thus, “*na nowo mogłaby była sztuka rozpoczynać od solo poety i chorusów*” [the play could once again have begun with the *soliloquy* of the poet and the choruses], if the troubadours had not ended “*na improwizacjach smaku zepsutego*” [in improvisations of rotten taste], if they had not confined themselves to “*dźwięcznej gimnastyki wyrazów*” [sonorous gymnastics of words], that is, to purely virtuoso poetry (PWsz VI, 392). Finally, and most importantly, the writer shows how once again forms of Christian drama were born around religious rituals and certain phenomena of social life – mystery plays, i.e. a kind of mystical drama or Christian tragedy, modelled after the stage representation of the Passion, and comedy, i.e. “*widowisko obyczajów i ich zdrożności*” [the spectacle of manners and their wickedness] (PWsz VI, 394), originating in the legal environment and alluding to a judgment on human vices, shortcomings and transgressions. In Norwid’s opinion, both mystery play and comedy were vehicles of the same Christian truth, but the manner of conveying it was different. The first

² I wrote about the role of the author’s subject in Norwid’s drama in my book, entitled *Dramat i romantyczne „Ja.” Studium podmiotowości w dramaturgii polskiej doby romantyzmu*, Kraków 2002 (chapter: Norwidowski dramat wieloperspektywiczny).

form manifested the ideal, the second – its realisation in social reality, at the same time revealing the moral side of life.³

In his argument, the author of “Widowiska w ogóle uważane” emphasises the historical aspect of the existence of theatre and drama, seeing them as part of the history of culture, informed by the Vikian model of development: “Jest to koło, które się samoprzeciwym i końcami obrębu zawiązuje i nowe zeń wywija się” [It is a circle that binds itself by the opposite ends of the rim and a new one springs from it] (PWsz VI, 391).⁴ Thus, in the history of dramatic art nothing repeats itself mechanically, because “powtarza się zawsze z jakiejś strony w potężniejszej” [it always repeats itself from some side in a higher power] (PWsz VI, 392). Norwid notices in the history of performance the simultaneous importance of both continuity and change. On the one hand, he affirms the cumulative nature of dramatic and theatrical achievements: “To więc, co dzisiejszą dramę składa, to są całe epoki historii teatru” [What makes up today’s drama are thus whole epochs of theatrical history] (PWsz VI, 390), but on the other hand, given the current course of social life, he emphasises the necessity of remodelling the forms of drama. Thus: “Shakespeare, Molière to są jeszcze odcienia tejże samej rzeczy, lubo wedle cywilizacji, i jej potrzeb zmodyfikowane” [Shakespeare, Molière are still shades of the same thing, albeit modified according to the civilisation and its needs] (PWsz VI, 391). There is no doubt that he himself, as a dramatist, follows a similar approach – he maintains a connection with the sources and the various historical figures of drama, while at the same time viewing it through the prism of the civilisational process and “social transfigurations,” recognising it as a form of their stage representation, taking place in the presence of an on looking audience, which is clearly suggested by the term “widowisko” [spectacle].⁵

Also among the numerous remarks on drama that fill the pages of *Białe kwiaty* [*White Flowers*], we can find statements regarding the social nature of this artistic form. As we should remember, Norwid confirms here the absence

³ This distinction was used effectively by Irena Sławińska in her comprehensive study of Norwid’s dramatic work, culminating in her conception of Norwid’s drama as a multi-variant “Christian drama.” See I. SŁAWIŃSKA, ‘Chrześcijańska drama Norwida,’ *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 3-4, 1985-1986.

⁴ References to Vico’s thought can also be found in other areas of Norwid’s work. See E. FELIKSIĄK, “Norwid i Vico”, *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 1968, Issue 3.

⁵ The term is listed in Linde’s dictionary and explained as, *inter alia*, “a spectacle, an appearance to the eyes.” It should be emphasised that this semantic scope of the word “spectacle” would prove important to Norwid’s thought, especially where the writer’s aim was to emphasise the cognitive and moral role of drama and theatre.

of full, "*prawdziwego-dramatu*" [*true drama*] (DW VII, 61) – it is nowhere to be found, neither in our country, nor in the world: "Teatri drama współczesna [...] krytyki nie wytrzymują i umarłymi są" [Theatre and contemporary drama (...) do not stand up to criticism and are dead] (DW VII, 66). One of the reasons for this crisis, into which the writer's contemporary dramatic and theatrical work has fallen, is – in his view – a lost sense of the importance of silence, its fundamental role in the creation of dramatic situations. However, the example cited by Norwid in the essay to confirm this function of silence reveals, at the same time, the place of theatre in social life. The story of the assassination of Minister Rossi and his telling absence from the box at the operatic performance of *Macbeth* becomes for Norwid an opportunity to analyse the behaviour of the theatrical audience ("dlatego się udałem do teatru, aby publiczność zobaczyć" [that is why I went to the theatre, to see the audience] – emphasises the narrator; DW VII, 66), to view the theatre through the prism of an extraordinary interaction involving the stage and the audience: "W miarę [...] jak opera przez treść swą w dramę i tragedię przechodzić z czasem zaczynała, pusta łoża ministra Rossi, nieoświecona jako inne (iż familijna była), ciemno purpurowe, aksamitne wnętrze swoje ku światłu, jak wielka rana, odmykając, uprzedziła wrażeniem magiczną oną Shakespeare'owskiej tragedii chwilę, kiedy cień zaszytowanego Banka na pustym krześle przy uczcie teatralnej zasiadać ma... I poczęło się grać pomiędzy publicznością a sceną to, co Shakespeare w *Hamlecie* obmyślił był, aby zagrać tragedię na dworze, scenę na scenie dając..." [Gradually, as (...) the opera began to transition in its content into drama and tragedy, Minister Rossi's empty box, not lit as the others (since it belonged to the family), unveiling its dark purple velvet interior towards the light, like a great wound, foreshadowed with an impression this magic moment in Shakespeare's tragedy, when the shadow of the stabbed Banquo is to sit on an empty chair at the theatrical feast.... And there it began to act out between the audience and the stage what Shakespeare had devised in *Hamlet*, to play out tragedy at the court, a stage on the stage...] (DW VII, 67).

Obviously, the situation described by Norwid goes beyond the boundaries of a specific event. In fact, it parabolically reveals several fundamental aspects of the understanding of theatre. First and foremost, it reveals it as part of the public sphere, regarded by the writer as an inalienable form of communal life. Theatre is a *forum publicum*, a place where public matters are subject to interpretation – for it is here that the symbolic representation of the real social world takes place. Moreover, the performance proper crosses the boundary of the stage and ultimately takes place between it and the audience, making the latter a co-protagonist of the performance. As a result, the collective behaviour, the acts of perception and understanding inherent in the audience take on a symbolic meaning. In addition,

the interpenetration of the realities of socio-political life (the assassination of the minister) and the plot of Shakespeare's drama (the murder of Banquo) leads us to perceive the theatre not only as a commentator on current events, but also as a body of their moral judgement, which is suggested above all by the allusion to the scene of theatre within theatre, in which Hamlet captures human consciences in his "mousetrap." The reference to *Hamlet* also reveals an important aspect of Norwid's imagination and consciousness, namely a tendency to interpret reality through the prism of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor (both in the *Dei theatrum mundi* and the *hominis theatrum mundi* versions). Thus, the poet often presents social life in terms of theatre, and he eagerly views man as an actor playing out on a theatrical stage the drama of his individual fate and the history of civilisation.⁶

The above way of thinking about drama is continued in the *Introduction* to *Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy* [*The Noble Lady's Ring*]. Here, too, drama is not a form independent from the practice of life and the religious and moral norms that regulate the functioning of the community. It is addressed first and foremost to a collective audience ("należy nie być osobistym w przyjmowaniu wrażeń scenicznych" [one should not be personal in taking in the stage impressions]; DW VI, 110), who through it can participate in "wyrabianie się prawdy" [the making of truth],⁷ and even come close to absolute truth and in its light perform an act of self-knowledge and moral self-reflection. "*Tragedia-Biała*" [*White Tragedy*] proposed by Norwid is intended for "budującego działania wobec chrześcijańskiego społeczeństwa" [edification of the Christian society], it is to be "periodem obejrzenia-się-społeczności całej, i z jej najsluszniejszej wyżyny, na samą siebie" [a period of a whole *society-looking*, from its most justifiable heights, at *it self*], because here "cywilizacyjna-catość-społeczna, jak oby ogólnego sumienia zwrotem, pogląda na się" [the *civilizational-social-whole*, as if by a general turn of conscience, views itself] (DW VI, 110). It seems important that Norwid uses the notion of the "civilizational-social-whole" in his meta-dramatic discourse, which allows the author to elevate the drama he postulates into the realm of the "great Serio," to the heights of universal parable, and distances it from solutions characteristic of, for instance, *buffo* com-

⁶ See A. DUNAJSKI, *Chrześcijańska interpretacja dziejów w pismach Cypriana Norwida*, Lublin 1985, pp. 111-121; S. ŚWIONTEK, *Norwidowski teatr świata*, Łódź 1985 (published in English as 'Norwid's Theatre of the World' in: *On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays*, vol. 1: *Syntheses*, ed. A. Brajerska-Mazur, E. Chlebowska, Berlin 2019, p. 217-237).

⁷ I refer here to the words uttered in the fourth lecture on Juliusz Słowacki (*O Juliuszu Słowackim*), in which Norwid links the category of the "drama of life" with that of the parable: "parabole mają do siebie, że nie tylko prawdy przedstawiają, ale i dramat życia prawdę wyrabiający" [a common feature of parables is that they not only represent truths, but also the drama of life that produces truth] (PWsz VI, 433).

edy (including Fredro's comedy), where "*warstwa jedna społeczna, przyglądając się drugiej, postrzega oną w jej śmiesznościach*" [*one social stratum, looking at another, perceives it in its ridiculousness*] (DW VI, 110). The second extremely important term mentioned in Norwid's reflections analysed here, and closely linking drama to the life of the community, is the term "edification," which has both an aesthetic (edification, i.e. construction, creation of new, original forms of drama) and a cognitive-moral sense. We can read: "Co do moralnego zadania, mniemam, iż strona *święta, budująca, religijna* starożytnej tragedii nieustała wcale ani może ustać, ale że gdzie indziej pośród utworów dramatycznych główne obrała miejsce swoje" [As for the moral task, I think that the *sacred, edifying, religious* side of ancient tragedy has not ceased at all, nor can it cease, but that it has taken its chief place elsewhere among dramatic works] (DW VI, 110). This place is precisely that of "white tragedy," which, through the use of artistic means different from those of antiquity, nevertheless preserves the fundamental purpose of ancient drama, which was the moral "edification," the formation of its audience, or, put differently, its paideutic effect. Drama and theatre as an important factor in social *paideia* is an idea very close to Norwid, if only because it is present in the philosophical tradition that was extremely important to the poet – in the thought of his intellectual guides: Socrates, Plato, the philosophers of the Hellenistic period.⁸ Even to Day *paideia* can, according to Norwid, be realised through dramatic and theatrical performances: "Aliści i to jeszcze łatwiej się sprawuje we społecznościach, w których, do ważenia i używania *prawdy* nawyknawszy, rozeznawać na pierwszy oka rzut umięją kapitalną różnicę, jaka trwa pomiędzy *naśladownictwem a zbudowaniem*. *Drugie*, będąc obowiązującym i w ład-postępu wchodzącym, a przeto początkującemu pożądanym i pomocnym, gdy *pierwsze*, to jest *naśladownictwo*, przeciwnym będąc samej nawet *ducha-naturze*, przeciąża zarazem naśladowanego i naśladowującego w konieczny wprowadza obłęd. Zaś dostrzegać daje się, że im mniej jakie społeczeństwo jest żywe, tym nie jaśniejsze ma ono pojęcie o różnicy pomiędzy *zbudowaniem się i naśladowaniem!*" [However, it is even easier to do this in societies in which, having become accustomed to weighing and *using the truth*, they know at a glance the essential difference that subsists between *imitation and edification*. *The latter*, being obligatory and entering into the order of progress, is desirable and helpful to the beginner, while *the former*, i.e. *imitation*, being contrary even to the *spirit-nature* itself, overburdens the imitated and leads the imitator into necessary madness. And it is noticeable that the less a society is *alive*, the less clear is its idea of the difference between *edification and imitation!*] (DW VI, 111-112). Thus, the effective-

⁸ The circle of intellectual and literary sources of Norwid's theatrical metaphors was described by Sławomir ŚWIONTEK (*Norwidowski teatr*, pp. 51-81).

ness of theatrical *paideia* requires peculiar dispositions on the part of the audience of a performance – a cognitive and existential readiness to embrace the truth and a willingness to practice it rather than superficially imitate it.⁹ This, *inter alia*, as Norwid suggests, determines the quality of social life, the participation of societies in civilisational progress and the spiritual dimension of reality, and ultimately also the existence of a given collective entity. A dead society, the image of which Norwid often uses in his journalistic and epistolographic writing, unable to “edify itself,” breaks the bond with the source of its existence, sinks into acts of mimicry, loses the authenticity and continuity of its own existence, squanders communal integrity in favour of various individualistic behaviours, of which the writer disapproves in the opening words to *Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy*: “A uszczerbek z tego wielki bywa... Bowiem skoro nie umieją się budować, tedy muszą co niejaki period żądać indywidualności i od onej jeszcze wszystkiego i wszelakiego początkowania wymagając, a z żadnego statecznej korzyści nie odnosząc... aż nareszcie i same one źródło niweczą” [And the damage from this is great... For since they do not know how to edify themselves, they must demand individuality every so often, and demanding from it everything and every kind of beginning, though from none deriving any stable benefit... until at last they themselves nullify the source] (DW VI, 112). The above-mentioned problem should also be linked to the issue raised by Norwid as early as in *Białe kwiaty*, namely the lack in Polish literature of “*kobiet istotnych i całych*” [essential and complete women] (DW VI, 112), without whom it is difficult to make a good play. I believe that for the writer this is not a problem of aesthetic nature, but an issue of primarily social character – in the *Introduction* to *Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy* Norwid describes it as “głębokie dla psychologii społecznej pytanie” [a profound question for social psychology] (DW VI, 112). According to Norwid, women have a special mission to fulfil in the life of every society. For they are, as he wrote in a letter to Maria Trębicka, “j e d y n y m r e a l n y m węzłem między pojedynczą osobą a zbiorową” [the only real knot between the individual and the collective] (PWsz VIII, 288). And being “najżywszym węzłem pomiędzy samotnym Ja a publicznym My, [kobieta] stawa się pierwszą kapłanką naturalnie immolującą egoizm i dającą ugruntowanie zbiorowemu ciału społecznemu” [the liveliest knot between the solitary I and the public We, the woman becomes the first priestess who naturally immolates egoism and gives grounding to the collective social body] (PWsz VI, 653). In Norwid’s view, a woman, aware of the fact that she “u-osobia całokształt społeczności” [personifies the whole of the community]

⁹ The practice of truth is a frequent theme in Norwid’s epistemological reflection, greatly summarised in the essay *Milczenie* [Silence].

(PWsz IX, 49), can have a positive influence on collective life, making it a truly communal life. In the context of the above remarks, the writer's struggle for an appropriate female character in drama thus becomes understandable. For the social mission of theatre also hinged on this.

Of course, Norwid's reflection also formulates strictly aesthetic conditions that should be fulfilled if dramatic and theatrical creation is to achieve its noble social goals. Here it is worth returning to the meaning of Norwid's term "budowanie" [construction, edification] as a synonym for the creation of new forms of drama. Without innovation in the field of dramatic genres, without the ability to subtly create dialogue in drama on the model of "wykwintny dialog potoczny" [exquisite colloquial dialogue] (DW VI, 111), without care for the shaping of drama as "*formy mówienia*" [*forms of speaking*] (DW VI, 110), as a score for the actor's speech (declaimed or read), drama is not able to follow social transformations and reliably reflect the process of the passing of certain forms of the world and the birth of new forms.¹⁰ In the *Introduction to Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy*, Norwid compares the striving for the effect of a harmony between drama and the world to the work of a tailor – he acknowledges that "w dniu stanowczej próby wszyscy dramaturgowie znamienici, przytomni bywając onemu, że tak się wyrażę, *przymierzaniu nowo uzupełnionej sukni*, nie pozostawiali przechodzących dzieł na scenę bez tych a owych niewielkich ostatecznych zlepszeń – i że częstotliwie coś o mało zdłużyć lub niewiele uskąpić, coś wypadło domocnić lub ulżyć. Ostatecznej tej dla autora, a dla aktorów pierwszej pracy świadomi są *wszędzie*, gdzie, że tak znowu wyrażę się, *nie chodziło się arcydługo w szatach pierwszej dla kogo innego utrafiionych!*..." [in the day of a decisive rehearsal, all eminent dramatists, mindful, if I may say so, of *trying on a newly completed dress*, should not leave the works that pass onto the stage without some minor final improvements – and often something should be slightly lengthened or slightly reduced, something should be strengthened or relieved. They are aware of this ultimate work for the author and the first for the actors *everywhere*, where, if I may say so myself again, *one has not been walking around too long in robes first made for someone else...*] (DW VI, 111).

¹⁰ In his lectures on Juliusz Słowacki (*O Juliuszu Słowackim*), Norwid comes to the conclusion that it is life itself that, in shaping its forms, provides forms for art: "by życie w siebie wglądało, potrzeba przecież, aby za sobą pozostawiło formy swoje" [for life to look into itself, it must leave its forms behind]. Further on, referring to a theatrical metaphor, he states: "Cały przecież ogół naszego bytu i form będzie na scenie kiedyś, jak widzimy wiek zeszyły: ale pozostanie zeń to wszystko, co żywotne, co wieczne" [After all, the whole of our being and forms will be on the stage one day, just as we see the last century: but what will remain of it is all that is vital, all that is eternal] (PWsz VI, 462).

As we know, Norwid himself worked on perfecting dramatic forms throughout his life, undoubtedly driven by a desire to create drama that would be appropriate to the current civilisational situation. Therefore, in his creative search, he boldly went beyond the existing repertoire of dramatic genres, simultaneously destroying anachronistic forms and creating new ones on their basis. The scale of this undertaking is indicated by the genre classification appearing in the subtitles of his plays or in the author's commentaries.¹¹ They confirm that Norwid displayed a capacity for genological transformations and resemantisations in relation to all the dramatic forms he practised, but he revealed these predilections to the highest extent in the area of tragedy.¹² He described the main purpose of his formal creativity in this area in the *Introduction to The Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy*. This work, an example of a previously unheard-of dramatic form (“*rzeczy jeszcze nie ma*” [there is no such *thing* yet] in literature; DW VI, 110), is, according to the author, “nowy tragedii rodzaj” [a new kind of tragedy], based on a creative contamination of the poetics of an already transformed comedy (“*komedia-wysoka*” [high comedy]) with the poetics of modified tragedy (“*tragedia-biała*” [white tragedy]). In this way, tragedy is renewed – it acquires a new “robe,” but precisely because of this, it can continue to fulfil its age-old function – “świętą, budującą, religijną” [sacred, edifying, religious], and, we should add, paideutic.¹³

¹¹ Let us recall these original terms: *Zwolon* is a “monologia” [monology], *Wanda* – “rzecz w obrazach sześciu” [a thing in six images], *Słodycz* [*Sweetness*] – “tragedia w jednej scenie” [a tragedy in one act], *Krytyka* [*Criticisim*] – “poema dramatyczne w trzech obrazach” [a dramatic poem in three images], *Aktor* [*Actor*] – “komediadrama” [comedydrama], *Hrabina Palmyra* [*Countess Palmyra*] and *Dobrzy ludzie* [*Good People*] – “komedia serio” [comedy serio], *Tyrtej* [*Tyrtaeus*] – “tragedia fantastyczna” [fantastic tragedy], *Za kulisami* [*Backstage*] and *Chwila myśli* [*A Moment of Thought*] – “fantazja” [fantasy], *Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy* [*The Noble Lady's Ring*] – “biała-tragedia” [white tragedy], *Kleopatra i Cezar* [*Cleopatra and Caesar*] – “tragedia historyczna ściśle w równi do grania, jako i do odczytów napisana: z uwydatnieniem gestów dramatycznych i onych ciągu” [a historical tragedy written strictly as much for acting as for reading: with dramatic gestures and their sequences highlighted].

¹² I have authored a separate article on Norwid's concept of tragedy: “Między starożytnością a współczesnością. Formy tragedii w twórczości Cypriana Norwida,” in: *Długie trwanie. Różne oblicza klasycyzmu*, eds. R. Dąbrowski and B. Dopart, Kraków 2011, pp. 175-187.

¹³ A foreshadowing of this understanding of tragedy can be found in the preface to *Krakus*: “Co do mnie mniemam, iż *tragedia* jest to *uwidomienie fatalności historycznej albo socjalnej narodowi albo wiekowi jakowemu wyłącznie właściwej* – a przeto, zważając ją tak, to jest jako pomocniczą w postępie moralności i prawdy pracę, nie dziwi mię bynajmniej, iż *tragedia* mieć mogła i musiała powagę nieledwie obrządkową” [As far as I am concerned, I believe that *tragedy* is the *exposition of a historical or social fate that is unique to a nation or time* – and therefore, considering it as such, that is, as a work auxiliary to the progress of morality and truth, it does not surprise me at all that *tragedy* could and must have been of almost ritual importance] (DW V, 161).

As can be seen, in his reflection on the history, functions and forms of drama, Norwid makes a number of remarks regarding the dramatic-theatrical language of "social transfigurations." His thought clearly tends towards an understanding of drama simultaneously in terms of aesthetic and supra-aesthetic categories. The subject of the writer's interest is both artistic, stage drama, which is part of expressive culture, and social drama – the drama of human actions, interactions, processes taking place in society, intercultural confrontations and analogies – conceived as a constitutive element of social experience and a potential subject of interpretations of an anthropological-sociological nature, describing social phenomena in the language of drama.¹⁴ As a result, Norwid's intentions seem to bear affinity to the category of cultural performance, which has received the following explanation in the dynamically developing research on this phenomenon today: "a cultural performance is more than entertainment, more than a didactic or persuasive message, more than a cathartic reprieve – it comprises moments in which we, as a culture or as a society, take up self-reflection and define ourselves, re-enact our common myths and our history, present alternative versions of ourselves, or change in some respects in order to remain the same in others."¹⁵ According to another definition, a performance is a culture "in action," a way of maintaining cultural competence and tradition: "A performance is not only something creative, realised, established or even something transcendent of the ordinary course of events; a performance is often a condition for the survival of tradition as such."¹⁶ In this necessarily synthetic characterisation of cultural performance, one more feature of performance, often considered by scholars, cannot be missing, namely reflexivity, including both the ability to reflect on something and being reflexive,¹⁷ which allow us to see in it a kind of social meta-commentary. In the

¹⁴ The dramaturgical approach in social sciences has its origin in the 19th-century philosophy of pragmatism, and was further developed by such prominent thinkers as, *inter alia*, George Mead, Herbert Blumer, Anselm Strauss, Erving Goffmann, who formed the current of symbolic interactionism. See E. HAŁAS, *Interakcjonizm symboliczny. Społeczny kontekst znaczeń*, Warszawa 2006.

¹⁵ J.J. MACALOON, "Wstęp: widowiska kulturowe, teoria kultury," in: *Rytuał, dramat, święto, spektakl. Wstęp do teorii widowiska kulturowego*, ed. J. J. MacAloon, transl. K. Przyłuska-Urbanowicz, Warszawa 2009, p. 12. See also: *Antropologia widowisk. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, compiled by A. Chałupnik, W. Dudzik, M. Kanabrodzki, L. Kolankiewicz, introduction and editing by L. Kolankiewicz, Warszawa 2005.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁷ See, for instance: R. SCHECHNER, "Collective Reflexivity: Restoration of Behavior," in: *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology*, eds. B. Myerhoff, J. Ruby, Philadelphia 1982; B. A. BABCOCK, *Reflexivity: Definitions and Discriminations*, in *Signs about Signs. The Semiotics of Self-References*, ed. B. A. Babcock, New York 1980.

theory of performances, reflexivity is considered as the ability to distance oneself from one's own subjective experiences, to adopt another point of view and to become an object of self-reflection: "it is the ability to become an audience for oneself"¹⁸ and thus achieve a state of self-consciousness or even the awareness of self-consciousness. Seeing one's own cultural reality in the light of performances is, according to the theorists of this phenomenon, a necessary circumstance for the proper functioning of the collective – seeing its true self.

The form of cultural spectacle, its basic material and structural source is the aforementioned social drama. Victor Turner, the creator of the universal model of social drama, used it to explain the dynamics of social change, disorders and conflicts, taking place in different cultures and at different stages of their development following, as he believed, a fixed scenario: a breach of norm, a crisis, a restoration of equilibrium, an action effect (re-establishment of peace or schism).¹⁹ Importantly, in his model of cultural performance he referred to stage drama as a way of becoming aware of social drama,²⁰ as well as to the theory of ritual, which will be discussed later.

With thus outlined context in mind, it is worth examining the worlds depicted in Norwid's drama. After all, most his dramas depict a situation of social change, which is a factor in the plot and its main thread, around which the issues and mes-

¹⁸ J. J. MACALOON, p. 30; V. TURNER, "Liminalność i gatunki performatywne," in: *Rytuał, dramat, święto, spektakl. Wstęp do teorii widowiska kulturowego*, pp. 40, 46-47.

¹⁹ See V. TURNER, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*, Manchester 1957; V. TURNER, *Gry społeczne, pola i metafory. Symboliczne działanie w społeczeństwie*, transl. W. Usakiewicz, Kraków 2005.

²⁰ "I argue that social drama is the raw material from which theatre is then being created – as societies grow in size and complexity – and through which theatre is continually being reborn. I also believe that the form of social drama is essentially universal, although it may display a variety of cultural developments in particular societies" (V. TURNER, "Liminalność i gatunki performatywne," pp. 48-49). Elsewhere, the question of the interrelationship of social drama and stage drama receives a more precise explanation: "Overt social drama feeds into the covert area of stage drama; the form of the former, specific to a given culture in a given place and time [...] influences not only the form but also the content of stage drama, in which, as if in a moving or magic mirror, social drama is reflected. Stage drama, if it is more than entertainment [...], is a meta-commentary – overt or covert, intentional or accidental – on the major social dramas of its epoch [...]. In addition, the message and rhetoric of stage drama, for their part, provide nourishment for the covert structure of social drama, which often explains its susceptibility to ritualisation. Life becomes a mirror in which art is reflected, and living people begin to act out their own lives, as stage drama provides the protagonists of social drama [...] with the most distinctive opinions, perceptions, stylistic devices and ideological perspectives" (V. TURNER, "Teatr w codzienności, codzienność w teatrze," transl. P. Skurowski, *Dialog* 1988, Issue 9).

sage of the individual works are focused. It is characteristic for Norwid to consistently choose as the moment of dramatic plot the situation of change, breakthrough, transition from one form of social life to another, although of course he proposes various aesthetic (as already discussed) and anthropological perspectives for viewing this situation. He refers both to individual case studies and to panoramic, often comparative views of collective life, because he wants to perceive social change from multiple perspectives: from the side of the experience of a particular person – the protagonists of a play, and from the perspective of the dynamics of the historical process, the confrontation of cultural ethos and civilisational formations. It is easy to find examples confirming this thesis, thus below I will elaborate on just a few selected examples.

Certainly, Norwid's first major drama, *Zwolon*, should be recalled as a reference here. In the author's commentaries, this work was very strongly linked to a specific situation of social upheaval, namely the events of the Spring of Nations. And although these events are not subject to direct dramatic representation here, Norwid repeatedly emphasises the importance of this context, writing of his work as having been created "na zaraniu ostatniego europejskiego ruchu" [at the dawn of the last European movement] (PWsz VIII, 101), linking it to recent political actions and emigration: "A wszystko słowem prędkim – bo pisano / Przy łunach, które tu i ówdzie błysły" [And all this in a swift word – for it was written / By the glows that flashed here and there]; "Jest to więc dramat wcale emigrancki" [It is therefore a fairly emigrant play] (DW V, 35). The represented world in *Zwolon*, which is a parable of historical experience,²¹ is characterised by chaos, disharmony and fragmentation, characteristic of depicting times of confusion and change. Harold comments on the reality depicted with irony: "Wszystko dziwnie się plecie / W tego państwa tu świecie / A kto rzecz by spisował / I połączyć chciał – pewno / Ciąg by gorzej popsował" [Everything is strangely intertwined / In the world of this country here / And whoever would write things down / And wanted to link them together – surely / Would worsen their course] (DW V, 86). Meanwhile, in a letter to Lenartowicz, "wśród tego pękającego się świata" [amidst this cracking world], Norwid himself sees the drama of the young generation (PWsz V, 102). The disintegration of a coherent vision of reality is broadly reflected in *Zwolon* at the level of the consciousness of the work's subject, the author's aesthetic choices and, what is particularly important for us, the presented forms of social life and

²¹ Michał Głowiński wrote about Norwid's parable: "On the one hand, it is a structure homologous to the structure of the world, and on the other, it is its interpretation, an interpretation that is rather not conceptual but evidential, 'making something apparent'." See M. GŁOWIŃSKI, "Norwida wiersze-przypowieści," in: *Cyprian Norwid. W 150-lecie urodzin*, ed. M. Żmigrodzka, Warszawa 1973, p. 79.

ideas with social resonance: the tyrant's despotic rule vs. the pursuit of freedom; conspiracy, revolution, the idea of revenge vs. the Christian idea of "zwolenie,"²² derived from the medieval hymn *Bogurodzica* [*Theotokos*], developed in Zwolon's utterances and the vision of Pacholęcie [Infant], and indicating one's duty to follow the Saviour.

In *Wanda* and *Krakus*, the plot takes place on the boundary between the eras of paganism and Christianity, between the era of legend and the era of the actual historical course of time. At the same time, it is the moment of the formation of the Polish nation around the Christian message. The title characters of both mysteries undertake a "deed-sacrifice" on the model of Christ's sacrifice and, as rulers, introduce Him into the life of their people. From that moment on, national history is part of salvific history and thus acquires a definite direction of development and ultimate goal; simultaneously it is related to the sphere of civilisational and religious values. In the act of a difficult initiation, requiring a struggle against temptation and evil, both Wanda and Krakus establish a cultural model for their nation, which in the final part of the works is confirmed by their graves, i.e. mounds, which are a symbol of the act of foundational sacrifice, a refuge of collective memory, a guarantee of the continuity of national history.

The diptych *Tyrtej – Za kulisami* [*Tyrteus-Backstage*] also perfectly illustrates Norwid's work on the issue of "social transfigurations." This is because we are dealing here with an exceptional accumulation of solutions to these problems, and this applies primarily to the mutual relationship between the two parts of the drama. In posing the question of the continuity of civilisation, Norwid highlights the antinomy of epochs and cultures in the image of the world he has created. A sharp boundary is drawn between the ancient and 19th-century culture, Dorian and Phrygian elements, the monumental form of tragedy, preserving the memory of ritual origins and contemporary drama, reflecting the current masquerade of life. Cultural counterpoint is also a feature of each section of the work. In *Tyrtej*, two variants of Greek civilisation are juxtaposed – Athens and Sparta. According to the author, the Athenian civilisation, vital and creative, draws on the sacrificial gesture of Kodrus [Codrus]: "On – kamieniem stał się węgielnym *przeobrażenia ludu*, i oto głęboka Aten żałoba rozrzewniła się po nim w republikę. Nie nauczał on służby warsztatu jak *rzemieślnik* tępy i surowy, ale gestem jednym jako *mistrz* tworzył na wieki!" [He became the cornerstone of the *people's transformation*, and the deep mourning of Athens thus unfolded after him into the republic. He

²² The term "zwolenie" is a neologism coined on the basis of three related Polish words – *wola* [will], *niewola* [slavery] and *wyzwolenie* [liberation]. According to Norwid, "zwolenie" means attuning to the will of God in order to free oneself from that which is contrary to God (enslavement).

did not teach how to serve like a dull and crude *craftsman*, but with one gesture as *a master* he created for the eternity!] (DW VI, 58). By contrast, Spartan civilisation is in a state of decline: "Lud ten cały z-żeleźniał... [...] Już skończyło się wszystko, i bóg tam nic *nie tworzy więcej*..." [The whole people *turned to iron*... (...) All things have already come to an end, and the god there *creates nothing more*...] (DW VI, 56). The death of the present system and culture of Sparta, to which the actions of Tyrtæus lead, would enable the emergence of a new cultural formation,²³ indirectly paving the way for Christianity. On the other hand, in *Za kulisami*, Norwid confronts different forms of modern civilisation; he juxtaposes "nominal" civilisation with a vision of civilisation the source and measure of which is truth. The advocate of this civilisational ideal, Omegitt, the author of *Tyrtej*, no longer has the causal power over his work's protagonist, and is doomed to failure in all areas of his life – as a poet, as a man in search of love and truth, and as a potential reformer.

Kleopatra i Cezar [*Cleopatra and Caesar*] is another example worth considering here. A rather meticulous reconstruction of a specific historical moment is coupled here with the creation of a vast panorama of the twilight of Egyptian civilisation. A similar collapse is soon to befall the Roman civilisation, which will be swallowed up by "a new time" and "new people,"²⁴ as the dying Mark Antony announces. However, the situation depicted in Norwid's tragedy seems to have, by way of parallel and parable, an even wider reach – it also concerns the poet's contemporaneity and the phenomenon he observes of the exhaustion of the vital forces of the current cultural formation. By exposing the cultural aspect of the represented world, the author makes his tragedy an exponent of cultural and historiosophic reflection. Above all, he reveals the tragedy of outstanding individuals coming into collision with the culture of their times (this applies to the title characters of the play) and the tragedy of civilisations doomed to loss of meaning and slow agony.²⁵

²³ S. SAWICKI, *Norwida walka z formą*, Warszawa 1986, p. 127.

²⁴ The protagonist addresses Her (one of the characters) in the following way: "... ludzie jak ty – wezmą / Przyszłość Imperium... oko moje patrycjalne / W chwilach ważnych i w sferach publicznych bystre jest. / *Julius, Pompejus, Brutus* nie poziomy! – *Kato*, / I my, którzyśmy chcieli świata Epopei, / Przeszliśmy i byliśmy!... Czas nowy – chce nowych, / Chce praktycznych... rycerzy..." [... people like you – will take / The future of the Empire ... my patrician eye / In moments of importance and in public spheres is astute. / *Julius, Pompeius, Brutus* unlevelled! – *Cato*, / And we who wanted the world of Epopeia, / Have passed and been!... The new time – wants new, / It wants practical... knights...] (DW VI, 406). Szechera's prophecy has similar overtones.

²⁵ For a historical and cultural interpretation of Norwid's tragedy, see Elżbieta ŻWIRKOWSKA, *Tragedia kultur. Studium o tragedii historycznej C. K. Norwida "Kleopatra i Cezar"*, Lublin 1991.

The works cited above show how specific the world presented in Norwid's dramas is, and how close to cultural performances it is, because in its essence it is focused on the presentation and interpretation of such phenomena as social changes, transformations and confrontations of cultures, the continuity of civilisation, the civilisational aspects of the existence of individuals etc. This analogy is also encouraged by the conviction "inscribed" in Norwid's works about the dramatic character of social processes, which the author frames as a plot focused around a situation of crisis, the breakdown of the world's coherence, the challenge to the social and moral order, to lead it then towards the final restitution of order on new principles or the exacerbation of the crisis. It would hence seem that, from Norwid's point of view, a form integrating stage drama and social drama is the optimal solution.

However, there is another point, extremely important for the specificity of Norwid's drama of "social transfigurations". The author, and this cannot escape our attention, shows a particular interest in social behaviour of a ritualistic nature. Why? On the one hand, he is convinced, as evidenced by his programmatic statements, that drama derives from ritual and can be its functional equivalent. On the other hand, he associates his knowledge of the various historical forms of ritual with his contemporary anthropological reflection on the forms and social functions of ritual.²⁶ In the second half of the 19th century, research of this kind was already being carried out, culminating in Arnold van Gennep's groundbreaking work *Les rites de passage*, published in 1909, which constitutes a scientific reflection on ritual. In this work, the Franco-Flemish ethnographer revealed a specific structure of ritualistic activities. In particular, he described and interpreted rites of passage accompanying a situation of change in an individual's social status and, more broadly, a situation of social change in general.²⁷ It should be noted that van

²⁶ Norwid's sketchbook notes in particular could provide interesting material for further research.

²⁷ In his description, from a structural and social point of view, van Gennep distinguished three essential elements of rites of passage: *rites de separation* – rites of separation, *rites demarge* – rites of transition, *rites de aggregation* – rites of reincorporation (see A. van GENNEP, *Obrzędy przejścia*, transl. B. Biały, Warszawa 2006). The contemporary definition of rites of passage, almost identical to van Gennep's definition, implies that these are rites that "mark the transitions of a person through the life cycle, from one level to the next over time, from one role or social position to another, while integrating human and cultural experience with biological destiny: birth, reproduction and death" (see B. MYERHOFF, L. A. CAMINO, V. TURNER, "Rites of Passage," in: *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade, New York 1987, Vol. 12, p. 380). Following van Gennep's thought, Turner distinguished three stages in the ritual passage from one social state (a system of social attitudes, roles, rules and groups) to another: preliminal, liminal, postliminal. As can be seen, he was focused on the tempo-spatial aspect of ritual, exposing both its creative potential (this applies especially

Gennep's work has found both critics and continuators. But importantly, among the continuators there were precisely the theorists of cultural spectacle, including Victor Turner, who considered ritual, including rites of passage in particular, as one of the genres of cultural performance.²⁸

In Norwid's dramatic works, we are confronted with a striking accumulation of references to various rituals, diverse in terms of their cultural origins and ideological background. They often constitute the overarching plan of a dramatic work, whereby they are both objects of stage representation and form the inner space of the play. However, their presence always gives the play the character of a ritualistic performance, "marking" it as ritual at least to some extent. Suffice it to recall that Norwid makes sacrificial rites an integral part of his drama (such is the nature of the sacrifice of the title characters in *Zwolon*, *Wanda* and *Krakus*); the same applies to initiation rites (the participants of the Christian initiation are Wanda in the act of seeing God, and Krakus during his meeting with Próg and his dream in the emerald cave, the initiation experience is also shared by Tyrtej – the chosen one of the Delphic oracle and the inspired poet), funeral and mourning rites (Krakus' funeral in *Krakus*, the Egyptian cult of the dead in *Kleopatra i Cezar*), commemorative rituals (scenes of mound formation in *Wanda* and *Krakus*), wedding rituals ("royal wedding" in *Kleopatra i Cezar*), festive rituals (masked ball, references to carnival in *Za kulisami*).²⁹

Ritual in its different variants becomes an element of the language of "social transfigurations" in Norwid's drama. The imagery and flow of social and cultural change, broadly understood, remain here linked to the scenario of rites of passage, which are the substrate and structural framework of Norwid's rituals. Thus, they perform a key function in shaping the form and semantic coherence of the individual works. Like all rituals, these also have great cognitive potential, for they symbolically reflect the model of the universe, social ideas and convictions, the direction of desired individual and collective transformation, the path leading to the sacred foundations of existence, to a communion with the supernatural world

to the liminal phase) and its role in sustaining social order and continuity (see idem, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*, Chicago 1969). See also M. BUCHOWSKI, *Magia i rytuał*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 132-140.

²⁸ The typology of performances is the subject of lively debate, but play, ritual, festival and spectacle are most commonly identified as distinct genres of cultural performance. See J.J. MACALOON, pp. 28-29.

²⁹ Each of the rituals depicted by Norwid certainly requires further detailed interpretation. I wrote about the ritualistic side of *Zwolon*, *Wanda*, *Krakus*, *Tyrtej* – *Za kulisami* in my earlier works on Norwid's drama.

and with the divinity itself.³⁰ However, we should note that the introduction of ritual into drama also has a great impact on the communicative and performative dimension of the dramatic form. Through ritual, the dramatist can establish a deep bond with the receiver, can communicate to them fundamental truths about the world, can spiritually and morally form them, and cement in them a sense of community arising around certain meanings and values, i.e. strengthen the social bond. The recipient of the drama thus has the chance to become a participant in the ritual, is able to experience a ritualistic transformation. It must be admitted that Norwid eagerly takes advantage of the opportunities created by such a situation. In this way, he revives the memory of the origins of drama, revalidates its “sacred, edifying, religious” role, opens the stage to live relations with the audience, and makes dramatic-theatrical creation a potential instrument of *paideia* and a source of (self) learning – for the participants of the performance. It should be emphasised that Norwid’s interests include also desacralised rituals, limited to social ceremonies, i.e. to collective practices of a theatricalised character, which nevertheless remain in some relation to the rite proper.³¹ In Norwid’s plays, these are above all rituals of everyday interpersonal contacts, i.e. interactional rituals,³² associated with salon culture, with the etiquette accompanying a salon meeting and salon conversation, and with interpersonal amorous contacts³³ (*Za kulisami*, *Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy*,

³⁰ Rituals communicate the deepest values of a given society, the basic principles, the eternal and most sacred things. Thus, it can be said that “Christian drama,” scientifically described by Irena Sławińska, constitutes the “inner core” of ritualistic actions in Norwid’s drama. The poet always perceives and evaluates cultural, social and interpersonal processes from a Christian perspective, from the point of view of Christianity’s supernatural goals, but also from the perspective of its history and 19th-century needs.

³¹ See J. MAISONNEUVE, *Rytuały dawne i współczesne*, transl. M. Mroczek, Gdańsk 1995, p. 11. Anthropologists also speak of ceremonies of passage: “We are dealing with a ceremony of passage when the power of the ritualistic actions undertaken is limited to their performative effects based on established socio-cultural conventions, consisting exclusively in the transgression of individuals, devoid of extra-communicative implications.” By contrast, the performative power of the rite of passage involves both transformation (substantial change) and transgression (change in social status). See M. BUCHOWSKI, p. 141.

³² This is Erving Goffman’s term, taken from his famous book *Interaction Ritual* (1967), dedicated to the analysis of the ritualistic aspects of social interaction (see E. GOFFMANN, *Interaction Ritual*, transl. A. Szulżycka, Warszawa 2006).

³³ These issues, important for Norwid’s dramatic work, were often considered in terms of classical poetics of drama. See, for instance, I. SŁAWIŃSKA, *O komediach Norwida*, Lublin 1953; I. SŁAWIŃSKA, “Ciąg scenicznych gestów,” in: eadem, *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*, Kraków 1971 (published in English as *Norwid’s Producing Hand* in: *On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays*, vol. 1: *Syntheses*, ed. A. Brajerska-Mazur, E. Chlebowska, Berlin 2019, pp. 153-171);

Miłość-czysta u kąpieli morskich). Norwid's emphasis on this form of rituals is related to his creation of an image of "mercantile and industrial" civilisation, characterised by the reduction of the symbolic and ritual domain, and the conventionalisation of ritualistic acts. The effect of the progressive desacralisation of the world is therefore rituals that are incomplete, apparent, empty – in the religious, metaphysical and existential sense – and thus ineffective. *Za kulisami*, *Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy*, *Miłość-czysta u kąpieli morskich* are Norwid's dramas that perfectly illustrate this problem, especially at the level of rituals connected with betrothal and marriage (however, the couples Omegitt – Lia and Mak-Yks – Countess Harrys find a counterbalance in characters capable of deeply experiencing love, such as Tyrtej – Egeinea and Szeliga – Magdalena). The play *Aktor*, on the other hand, highlights the conventional character of theatrical rituals, linking this phenomenon to the general characteristics of the theatre of social life, with general acting and the loss of authenticity (however, Jerzy transcends the boundaries of theatre understood in this way, reaching in his life the theatre that is "atrium spraw niebieskich" [an atrium of celestial affairs]; DW V, 391). A similar range of problems can be encountered in *Za kulisami* (the scenes of a contemporary masquerade depicting the theatricalisation of social life are evaluatively confronted with the sublime ritualism of ancient theatre, and the "catcalled" playwright Omegitt compares himself to Tyrtæus, a poet initiated into the sphere of the sacred), although here, additionally, Norwid also makes empty rituals a form of expression of political oppression and a state of collective enslavement (allusions to the reality of Warsaw). On the other hand, *Kleopatra i Cezar* contains an image with what seems to be the widest field of references, as it depicts (Egyptian) civilisation in decline, whose main determinant appears to be an all-encompassing ceremonialisation of social life. At the same time, it is the most pessimistic image in Norwid's dramatic work, because in the world presented in the tragedy we do not find an unambiguously positive counterpoint to this evaluation. Here, ceremonies are ultimately consumed by rites of passage, giving access to the sacred sources of life and hope for its continuance and positive development.

The examples analysed above, while confirming the general thesis of the unique function of rituals in the represented world of Norwid's dramatic works, also illustrate the functional and semantic breadth of the ritualisation of drama. As it can be seen, the poet differentiates between rituals and ceremonies, and this distinction plays an important role in his depiction of the course of social and cultural processes in a moment of crisis. Norwid is well aware that rites of

J. ZACH- BŁOŃSKA, *Monolog różnogłosy. O dramatach współczesnych Cypriana Norwida*, Kraków 1993.

passage/transition are losing their original meaning in a secularising world. Thus, the protagonists of his contemporary and especially late dramas can no longer change their social status according to the ritual script. They are left only with the memory of the ritual, the sacred dimension of life as a criterion for judging the modern world – this is the case of Omegitt or Mak-Yks. The writer believes that the 19th-century man is increasingly satisfied with superficial, secular ceremonies, which is best illustrated by the mentality and actions of people like Durejko. But all in all, this means that the problem of the ritualisation of drama is closely linked to Norwid's key questions about the condition of the 19th-century man and the future of civilisation.

In summary, the 19th century, diagnosed by Norwid as a moment of social crisis, a breach of the traditional order, a clash between various cultural formations in the external world and in the human consciousness, necessarily requires new type of drama – to match the problems of the era. Undoubtedly, drama based around the idea of “social transfiguration” can be an adequate response to the challenges of the time – it is an original form of artistic representation of the forces at work in the space of human life and an effective tool for understanding them in the spirit of social anthropology. Furthermore, it allows the author to cultivate the age-old ritualistic functions of dramatic and theatrical creation and to participate, through drama as a cultural performance, in the process of human formation and the transformation of civilisation with a view to the “promised community.” It can be assumed that this is what Norwid perceived as the social dignity and mission of the poet-dramatist in times of social change, in times of transition.

Transl. Rafał Augustyn

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NORWID'S DRAMA OF "SOCIAL TRANSFIGURATIONS"

Summary

The article discusses Norwid's concept of drama and theatre. Notably, Norwid assumes their close relationship with social life and its historical changes. Based on analyses of meta-dramatic and meta-theatrical statements made by the poet, contained primarily in such texts as *Widowiska w ogóle uważane* [*Spectacles in General*] and *Białe kwiaty* [*White Flowers*], in passages from lectures on Słowacki (*O Juliuszu Słowackim*), and in the introduction to *Pierścień Wielkiej-Damy* [*The Noble Lady's Ring*], it is possible to formulate the thesis that Norwid intentionally developed a vision of drama based on the idea of "social transfigurations." What is more, the character of his dramatic works enables one to interpret his particular theatrical plays in the light of anthropological and sociological categories of social drama and cultural

performance. After all, most Norwid's dramatic works depict situations of social change in terms of rites of passage and theatricalised social practices, e.g. social ceremonies or ritualised interactions. As a result, Norwid's drama becomes an artistic representation of forces shaping collective life, a lens facilitating their understanding in the spirit of social anthropology, and an important factor in the formation of man.

Keywords: Cyprian Norwid; aesthetics of drama; social drama; cultural performance; rites of passage.

NORWIDOWSKI DRAMAT „TRANSFIGURACJI SPOŁECZNYCH”

Streszczenie

Artykuł zawiera rozważania na temat Norwidowskiej koncepcji dramatu i teatru, zakładającej ich ścisły związek z życiem społecznym i jego historycznymi przemianami. Analizy wypowiedzi meta dramatycznych i meta teatralnych poety, czyli przede wszystkim szkicu *Widowiska w ogóle uważane*, *Białych kwiatów*, fragmentów wykładów *O Juliuszu Słowackim* oraz przedmowy do *Pierścienia Wielkiej-Damy*, dostarczają szeregu argumentów na rzecz tezy o intencjonalnym kształtowaniu przez Norwida dramaturgii osnutej wokół idei „transfiguracji społecznych”. Co więcej, charakter jego dorobku dramatopisarskiego pozwala na zastosowanie w interpretacji poszczególnych dzieł antropologiczno-socjologicznych kategorii dramatu społecznego i widowiska kulturowego. Większość utworów dramatycznych Norwida unaocznia bowiem sytuację przemiany społecznej, ujętej w ramy obrzędów przejścia i steatralizowanych praktyk społecznych (społeczne ceremonie, rytuały interakcyjne). Dzięki temu, Norwidowski dramat staje się artystyczną reprezentacją sił działających w przestrzeni życia zbiorowego, narzędnikiem rozumienia w duchu antropologii społecznej, a także ważnym czynnikiem formowania człowieka.

Słowa kluczowe: Cyprian Norwid; estetyka dramatu; dramat społeczny; widowisko kulturowe; obrzędy przejścia.

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