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"NO SINGLE LEAF, NOR ITS TINIEST TOOTH." NORWID BEYOND ROMANTICISM

Despite the passage of many decades since the time of Miriam, Norwid's place in Polish culture and literature still seems to be an open question. In general, the work of the author of *Promethidion* is seen as belonging to the Romantic era and tradition. This is how it is treated in university courses and curricula or in school textbooks. However, these Romantic classifications are also constantly accompanied by significant caveats: "separate place," "distinct place," "special case" (the latter much less frequently). And when it comes to independent opinions, the variability of ideas and their labile nature, even if only revealed chronologically, must lead to thoughts of an erosion of the Romantic trope once indicated. Before Zofia Stefanowska was able to gather arguments and formulate theses for her renowned article on Norwid's Romanticis (*Norwidowski romantyzm*), proposals had already been made that significantly corrected the research "perspective" of the eminent scholar and expert on Romanticism.

Answering the question posed in the title of the chapter "Dla kogo pisał Norwid?" [For whom did Norwid write?] of the book devoted to the author of *Vademecum*, Zdzisław Łapiński not only raises the question of Norwid's divergence from the "literary and general culture of his contemporaries,"[1] but at the same time finds an outlet for this explosion of original and unusual talent. He says that "the same reasons that alienated Norwid from the contemporaneity of his time bring him back to our contemporaneity. Taking as his 'group of reference' the group of intelligentsia which did not then exist in its mature form, the poet was

[1] Z. Łapiński, *Norwid*, Kraków 1971, p. 154.

able to guess surprisingly much from its future tastes, interests, attitudes [...].”[2] Of course, as the scholar stipulates, Norwid could not have foreseen some processes and issues. At the same time, Łapiński also avoids a clear answer to the question to what extent this sensitivity to the “later” receiver and to the current issues distanced the poet from his epoch. Was this distance so great that it tore him away from the Romantic or even 19th century topicality? This question remains unanswered, although such a significant leaning into the “future” must have carried serious consequences, even if we are aware of the connection between Norwid’s work and his contemporary philosophical, religious, social or political views, of which Łapiński constantly reminds us. Already before the war this was raised by Manfred Kridl in the literary magazine “Droga”:

> In determining Norwid’s attitude to Romanticism (or rather to certain sides of Romanticism), we cannot rely on his individual theoretical views, but above all on what constitutes his “poetic world” and the forms of expression of this world, that is, all that he actually lives by as a poet. Well, it seems unquestionable that Norwid is possessed by the Romantic drive to create truths that are not truths of poetry, to resolve philosophical, historiosophical, political and social issues. Particularly in his voluminous poems we find all ideas, symbols, historical processes, intellectual generalisations, types, quidams, concepts. They are permeated by a belief in absolutes, in eternal ideas, in stigmata, in the metaphysical sense of history, in the Spirit and its primacy, in the supernatural origin and liberating power of the Word, in the dissolution and exhaustion of life in the Idea. And also the general character of his exclusive art, elevated above the world, shrouded in mists and darkness, hieratic, celebratory, his style, in which everything can be found but directness and simplicity – all this is strongly connected with the era that has ended.[3]

While the perspective of contemporaneity, in particular the contemporaneity of the 20th century, captured in terms of the sociology of culture, does not aspire to dismantle or deconstruct the established historical picture of Norwid’s work, a number of proposals formulated in later years, mainly from the end of the last century, seem to take a much more radical view of the issue analysed here. First of all, they break with the imposing Romantic paradigm,[4] taking into account all its complexities, entanglements and complications. I refer herein particular

[2] Ibid., pp. 167-168.

[3] M. Kriedl, “O lirykach Norwida,” *Droga* 1933, Issue 11, pp. 1135-1136.

[4] I use this term without any relation to the vision of Romanticism (defined precisely as the Romantic paradigm) formulated by Maria Janion. I am inclined to consider the term paradigm within the framework of a classical, stable pattern, composed of a system of features and properties, while Janion, similarly to Thomas Kuhn, emphasises its labile character, determined by time and circumstances in which the cognising subject is entangled.

to Janusz Maciejewski's proposal, who, on the one hand, sees many common elements and phenomena exposed by the movement known as Biedermeierism, described in the Polish context by Maria Żmigrodzka,[5] and, on the other hand, places Norwid alongside the positivists. Noticing differences in the ideological and axiological sphere, he brings out elements and points of contact, treating the work of the author of *Pierścień Wielkiej Damy* [*The Noble Lady's Ring*] as a kind of complementary programme, which explains the appearance of numerous dissimilarities alongside the convergences.[6]

The connection with Positivism, if only because of Norwid's biographical convergence, seems obvious – if only on a purely research, problematic level. However, other postulates were put forward with regard to the work of the author of *Solo* – there were attempts to draw on Parnassianism, Symbolism or Modernism in general. In his reflections, Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki was looking for links with Baudelaire's oeuvre, particularly in the *Vade-mecum* cycle, which – according to the editor – referred to *Les Fleurs du mal*.[7] Alicja Lisiecka,[8] and more recently Maria Delaperrière[9] and Magdalena Siwiec[10] have also written about links with Baudelaire. Gomulicki drew attention to Theophil Gautier; this was the direction followed by Maciej Żurowski who, in his famous study *Norwid i Gautier*, attempted to identify similarities between Norwid's poetics and his programme, and those of the precursor of French Parnassianism.[11] The book devoted to the comparison between Mallarmé and Norwid, authored by Piotr Śniedziewski, which, in a sense, constituted the culmination of this modernist thread, seemed to

[5] See, for instance, M. Żmigrodzka, "Powieść biedermeierowska," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1966, Issue 2, pp. 379-405.

[6] See J. Maciejewski, *Cyprian Norwid*, Warszawa 1992.

[7] See J. W. Gomulicki, "Komentarz," in: C. Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane*, ed. J.W. Gomulicki, Vol. II: *Wiersze. Dodatek krytyczny*,Warszawa 1966, pp. 741-746.

[8] A. Lisiecka, "O baudelairyzmie 'Vade-mecum,'" *Twórczość* 1968, Issue 3. Another work worth mentioning here is Z. Bieńkowski, "Baudelaire et Norwid," in: *Journée Baudelaire. Namur-Bruxelles, 10-13 octobre 1967. Actes du Colloque*, Bruxelles 1968.

[9] M. Delaperrière, "Norwid i Baudelaire: zbliżenie przez sztukę," in: *Od tematu do rematu. Przechadzki z Balcerzanem*, eds. T. Mizerkiewicz, A. Stankowska, Poznań 2007.

[10] M. Siwiec, "Ze stygmatem romantyzmu. O Norwidzie i Baudelairze z perspektywy nowoczesności," *Teksty Drugie* 2014, Issue 4, pp. 195-214.

[11] M. Żurowski, "Norwid i Gautier," in: *Nowe studia o Norwidzie*, eds. J. W. Gomulicki, J.Z. Jakubowski, Warszawa 1961, pp. 167-190, and idem, "'Larwa' na tle porównawczym," *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 1963.

close the topic.[12] This was quite neatly and aptly captured by Michał Kuziak in his review of Śniedziewski's work:

> [...] if Mallarmé has been unquestionably linked to Modernism (there have been many works discussing the modernist poetics of the author), in the case of Norwid, such a link constitutes an interpretative hypothesis, I would add – still a daring one, giving a fresh perspective on the literary output of the author of *Promethidion* (importantly, the researcher finds traces of examined elements of the poetics of language and text decomposition already in Norwid's early poems). Moreover, the author of the reviewed book himself reads the work of the Polish poet in the context of Mallarmé's works, without reversing this relationship.[13]

Śniedziewski's bold juxtaposition, casting a modernist outlook on Norwid's work, was by no means the only and most daring proposal on the poet's place on the map of literature and culture. Wiesław Rzońca, whose *Premodernizm Norwida – na tle symbolizmu literackiego drugiej połowy XIX wieku* [*Norwid's Pre-Modernism in the Context of Literary Symbolism in the Second Half of the 19th Century*] consolidated and deepened the direction of the indicated approach, also followed this path.[14] But let us not forget that many years before this publication, the same researcher presented Norwidand his texts from the perspective of contemporary, as of the end of the last century, Postmodernism, especially Derridean theory of deconstruction (*Norwid. Poeta pisma*).[15] Rzońca's stance is complicated by his publication *Norwid a romantyzm polski* (Warszawa 2005), which seems to turn back from the path of modernisation towards a traditional approach – taking the Romantic side. Rzońca's attitude seems highly symptomatic, not only because of its polymorphism, but also because of the subject matter, its historico-literary openness.

This rather cursory outline of successive attempts and research projects attempting to situate Norwid's work in relation to historical and literary phenomena beyond the traditionally ascribed Romanticism, and at the same time linking it with diverse and distant movements, such as Positivism and Postmodernism, indicates not only the considerable divergence and enormous lability of both the

[12] P. Śniedziewski, *Mallarmé – Norwid. Milczenie i poetycki modernizm we Francji oraz w Polsce*, Poznań 2008.

[13] M. Kuziak, "Mallarmé – Norwid komparatystycznie," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2001, Issue 1, p. 255.

[14] See W. Rzońca, *Premodernizm Norwida – na tle symbolizmu literackiego drugiej połowy XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2013.

[15] W. Rzońca, *Norwid. Poeta pisma. Próba dekonstrukcji dzieła*, Warszawa 1995. Rzońca wrote another dissertation in this vein: *Witkacy – Norwid. Projekt komparatystyki dekonstrukcjonistycznej*, Warszawa 1998.

researcher and the researched, but also the open character of the research problem. The plethora of emerging ideas, especially since the 1990s, showing a new image of Norwid, unrelated to the epoch shaped in Polish literature by Mickiewicz, must lead once again to the question of Norwid's Romanticism. This question should resound all the more strongly and emphatically because their authors generally assume in their reflections that Norwid was not a Romantic. As soon as this assumption is formulated, they try to prove (their considerations are most often extensive, filled with valid comparative material) that the author of *Promethidion* was someone else entirely, e.g. a modernist or pre-modernist, or a positivist, or a precursor of modern poetry, or a symbolist.

Without determining who is right in this polyphonic dispute – which has intensified over the years – I would like to take another look at the formulated and settled conviction about Norwid's Romantic origins. Did he really situate himself on the side of Romanticism, as Stefanowska believed, or did he function in a completely different literary and artistic space? Such different ideas attempting to define Norwid's historical affiliation show that this is still an open and disputed question.

I still have to make two reservations. The first concerns the notion of Romanticism. After all, the question immediately arises to which model or, in general, to which type of Romanticism Norwid can be compared. Obviously, this is not the place here to resolve the intricacies and perplexities of this notion. I am aware of the multidimensionality of this movement in literature and culture. Essentially, the Romanticism of Mickiewicz or Krasiński, or that of early Słowacki, or the so-called "mystical period" have to be considered in a different way; moreover, literature developed differently in Poland and in exile. Many scholars claim that there is no single or even several Romanticisms, but many. I would be far from holding such an extreme view of the issue – after all, the lack of boundaries and distinctions makes the concept and its designator invisible. There is, however, (I think) a certain tangible set of characteristics and qualities which – beyond the timeframes (which were also only conventional in the 19th century) – allow us to distinguish Romanticism from Classicism or from Positivism (or Realism).[16] Even if our emphasis on or hierarchisation of these features and qualities varies (e.g. at one time emphasising the subject, at another time the relation to nature or

[16] I am fully aware of the complication and multidimensionality of the term itself, of the existence of many movements, defined as Romanticism, understood differently in philosophy, in culture or in literature. This rich complexity was shown in an article by Władysław Tatarkiewicz (idem, "Romantyzm, czyli rozpacz semantyka," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1971, Issue 4, pp. 3-21). Contrary to the title, the reflection of the historian of philosophy aims to recognise and systematise this term, and thus effectively limit the polysemantic formula.

history), their arrangement does not constitute some kind of arbitrary and entirely subjective reality, devoid of any boundaries.

And for the second reservation, the framework of this article makes it impossible to present a comprehensively broad and systematic argument. I am fully aware that the selection of issues, problems, as well as the directions of reflections presented here is selective, and at times may even seem cognitively sensitive. I have tried to highlight topics that have rarely been discussed or those that have so far been discussed in a biased manner, with a certain preconceived conviction.

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The issue of Norwid's relationship to Romanticism has preoccupied critics and scholars almost from the outset, and the assumption that the poet belongs to this movement seems a natural one, although it is almost immediately accompanied by a second thought – that in relation to the great authors of the epoch, the author of *Promethidion* presents something separate and distinct. In an article published in 1933, *Stanowisko Norwida w literaturze* [*Norwid's positionin literature*], Stanisław Cywiński took as the starting point of his considerations a biographical-historical observation that pointed to a significant "shift in time" of the artist in relation to the Romantics:

> Cyprian Norwid was born on 24 September 1821 and died on the night of 22-23 May 1883. His first minor works began to appear in print in 1840, while his most important works were written between 1848 and 1883.[17]

According to Cywiński, these dates suggest several important reflections. First of all, in his opinion, it would be difficult to find some kind of culminating moment in Norwid's literary career, as in the case of Mickiewicz, Krasiński or Wyspiański. Nor is there a period in Norwid's biography in which there would be some kind of stagnation or decline of creative abilities "so that later, all that is left is an idle repetition of older motifs," as was the case with the author of *Irydion* (i.e. Krasiński), "but also with Fredro, Sienkiewicz or Weyssenhoff." Rather, the opposite tendency is evident here, as with Słowacki, "because the works of both of them were rising steadily until their very deaths." In connection with this observation, the editor of "Dziennik Wileński" asks a fundamental question, and also tries to answer it straight away:

> But the above dates should orient us in yet another way: they must give us an answer to the question: To which epoch of Polish literature does Norwid belong, to which group of writers

[17] S. Cywiński, "Stanowisko Norwida w literaturze," *Ruch Literacki* 1933, Issue 3, p. 33.

should he be counted? Above all, do we have the right to call him a Romantic only due to the chronology?

Well, it is true that he was born in the very year when Mickiewicz penned his first truly Romantic poem, the very title of which was an open declaration and manifesto of "Romanticism." It is also true that the beginnings of Norwid's work fall in the years when great patriotic Polish poetry had not yet ceased to use Romantic categories and had not yet abandoned Romantic psychology. But, at the same time, it is impossible to deny that Norwid wrote his first significant works already at a time when, with the death or complete silence of the great poets, Romanticism was dying out all along the line, and Polish literature "stopped with the exaggeration of received one-sidedness, and then fell into mannerism."[18]

This axiologically unambiguous quotation from *Niewola* [*Enslavement*] ending the above statement, attests to the transgressive nature of Norwid's work and life in relation to Mickiewicz's legacy:

However, even if we were to maintain this false template, ordering the life of Polish Romanticism to be artificially stretched out until the January Uprising, allowing nothing in between Romanticism and Positivism, even then, furthermore, even considering as a boundary post not the date of the Uprising, but the years 1866-7, when decisive manifestations of Realism or Positivism really manifested themselves – we would have to conclude that, chronologically, Norwid does not fit into Romanticism, not even into the extended Romanticism, because half of his works, his most mature, most important and largest works (not to mention his correspondence, the focus of which was probably clearly shifted to later years), were already written in an unquestionably new period, in the years 1866-83, when not only were realistic and positivist tendencies fully developed in literature, but even a slight reaction to Positivism was beginning to emerge [...]. And yet [...] even in these last years, Norwid did not cease to create, in the strictest and essential meaning of the word, and works such as *Kleopatra i Cezar* [*Cleopatra and Ceasar*], *Milczenie* [*Silence*] or *Stygmat* [*Stigma*] are by no means copies of old ideas, nor are they the products of a dying pen and waning talent![19]

For Cywiński, the proverbial glass is half empty, especially when viewed from the perspective of the poet's later achievements, his work after the January Uprising, especially since *Vade-mecum*. But the same glass can also be half-full – and this is how Zofia Stefanowska saw the matter in her study "Norwidowski romantyzm" [Norwid's Romanticism], which is fundamental to the problem analysed here. The scholar starts primarily with Norwid's literary youth. In doing so, there is no doubt about the affiliation of the poet and his work in that period:

[18] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[19] Ibid., p. 34.

In his Warsaw period, Norwid belongs to the generation of young Romantics, that generation for whom the November Uprising was mostly a childhood memory, and who debuted somewhere around 1840. Norwid was the most brilliant among the debutants, but his poetry of the time clearly reveals this generational affiliation.[20]

Indeed, it is true that the future creator of *Quidam* started out as a poet and writer alongside a sizeable group that came to be known as the "young Warsaw literati." This rather broad and vague term made it possible to identify such different and disparate phenomena as the informal members of the Warsaw Boheme and feminist movement Entuzjastki [Enthusiasts] or literary association Cech Głupców [Guild of Fools] and the circle of "Przegląd Naukowy" [Scientific Review]. Undoubtedly, Norwid's work at that early stage is characterised – like that of most of his contemporaries – by the stigma of epigonism, expressed in the use of formulas and forms transferred almost directly from pre-November Romanticism, especially when it comes to the fundamental category of the artist's conflict with the world and the clash between ideal and reality. The compensator or mediator of the tension between these extremes (sets of oppositions) is deed or action, which is a natural consequence of human activity. After all, it is in this area that we can see the fundamental differences between Norwid and his contemporaries. Analysing this period of the poet's biography, Zofia Trojanowiczowa noted:

In line with the beliefs of the leading generation, Norwid regards activity (enthusiasm) transposed into deed as the primary duty of man. But deed is understood by Norwid differently from most of his peers. Just as in terms of aesthetics, the central problem of the juvenilia is the question of the task of poetry and the consequent question of the inadequacy of thought and word, so in terms of ideology the central problem is the question of deed. The postulate of deed is Norwid's answer to the question: how should one live?[21]

Deedwould occupy Norwid particularly intensively during the period of the Spring of Nations, and he would develop its concept creatively on the basis of the philosophical reflections of August Cieszkowski, which was insightfully described by the Swiss scholar Christian Zehnder.[22] The reconstruction of this notion at an early stage of the poet's oeuvre would encounter natural resistance to the matter – the synonymic and phraseological terms are too tenuous to attempt at a broader and complete vision, but even this fragmentary deduction (described by

[20] Z. Stefanowska, "Norwidowski romantyzm," in: eadem, *Strona romantyków. Studia o Norwidzie*, Lublin 1993, p. 60.

[21] Z. Trojanowicz, *Rzecz o młodości Norwida,* Poznań 1968, pp. 108-109.

[22] Ch. Zehnder, "'Tatarski czyn' Norwida między hierarchią a erupcją (semantyka, konteksty, konsekwencje)," *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 37, 2019, pp. 17-39.

Trojanowiczowa) shows that Norwid links deed closely with artistic creation (e.g. in the poems "Dumanie II" [Meditation II] or "Adam Krafft"), it is also sometimes the domain of determination and courage ("Burza" [Storm]) and everyday work ("Do wieśniaczki" [To the Village Girl]). The line of demarcation seems clear. The revolutionary "burning flag" or the equally violent "furious image" – so important, for example, to Roman Zmorski – are of no interest to the poet. These metaphors, of an eminently Romantic origin, referring after all to the imagination of the "young Warsaw literati," lie – from the very beginning – outside the sphere of sensitivity of the future author of *Promethidion*. Trojanowicz goes on to say:

> [...] subversive, "furious," demonic moods, in the works of the "young Warsaw literati" – despite the appearance of anarchy – usually served the purpose of non-anarchist political and social propaganda, and were intended to mobilise revolutionary public opinion. By contrasting action and victory with "furious images," Norwid contrasted action with the revolutionary propaganda of the generation.[23]

Norwid assumed – like the majority of writers and poets of his generation – a close relationship between literature and deed. Poetry, in particular, should grow directly out of the experiences of the author, should be – as he would say in *Menego* – "o życie zaczepiona" [hooked to life] (DW VII, 38). It became a natural extension of the acts of the author and his audience, it created space and scope for freedom and liberty. The poet and artist had to be a mouthpiece of rebellion, both in the political sense (he spoke out against Poland's enslavement by the partitioners) and in the internal sense – he touched upon the conventions of manners, social prejudices against originality and individualism. In the programmatic poem "*Pióro*" [*My Quill Pen*],which constitutes as much a summary of the poetic struggles of the Warsaw period as it does a turning point towards mature creativity, we hear the postulate of independence, freedom and distinctiveness. Norwid shifts the emphasis carefully and deliberately – from opposition and protest to independence and originality. Originality – noticed by his fellow writers and readers of his first poetic attempts – becomes, in a sense, a measure of poeticism, a measure of aesthetic aspirations, and also provides an opportunity and a defence against falling into epigonism[24]. Or perhaps otherness was the measure of poetic talent? These flashes, still barely visible in the Warsaw period, would only become apparent after the poet left the country. It is all about a strong tendency to break away

[23] Z. Trojanowicz, p. 109.

[24] The intricacies associated with the secondary and imitative creation are described in depth by Marta Zielińska in her work on Mickiewicz's imitators, see eadem, *Studium o zjawisku epigonizmu w systemie literatury romantycznej*, Warszawa 1984.

from the Romantic pressure, to strongly assert a different vision of the world and of man. Of course, as Stefanowska writes, the young Norwid "is not yeta solitary phenomenon,"[25] but at the same time it is difficult to agree with the second part of this sentence, that he "fits well into a particular phase of Polish Romanticism."[26] 'Well' should mean here: how exactly? Would it be possible to juxtapose his early work with the equally sparse achievements of Zmorski, Filleborn, with Antoni Czajkowski, who had a famous debut, or perhaps with Edward Dembowski, Narcyza Żmichowska, Karol Baliński or Teofil Lenartowicz? In each case, a comparative reading must encounter the resistance of the matter, the still imperfect and unformed poetic matter of Norwid, which eludes and defends itself as much as it can against being locked in a "drawer."

In this early period, it is difficult to speak of any fundamental breakthrough and crystallisation of a new programme, of a turn in the opposite direction. We also have at our disposal a fairly small number of texts, both poetic and in prose, to be able to draw clearly defined conclusions from them. By the time Norwid left Warsaw, his contemporaries could also boast a sizeable body of work. Each of them, for all intents and purposes, was just starting out, barely publishing their first texts. But even if we assume that Norwid does not flow against the current of achievements of the Warsaw milieu, he undoubtedly moves somewhere alongside it. He intertwines his fate with this milieu, but does not identify with its face, a face that is, by the way, multidimensional. Perhaps he was aware that he was gazing at the brilliance of the achievements of his great predecessors, with Mickiewicz and Malczewski at the forefront, and wanted to avoid the trap of imitation? He knew that such a strong light could blind and paralyse, enslave with the intensity of achievements. A lack of originality threatened the catastrophe of oblivion, against which, of course, an excess of eccentricity (so important, for example, for Boheme), which was a kind of distorted substitute for perfection, did not protect.

But unlike his contemporaries, Norwid wanted to create a new artistic programme for a new poetry. He did not stop at exploiting common Romantic patterns for immediate needs, but clearly sought new means of expression, both stylistic and compositional. One can recognise this search in the accumulation of means of agitation – in the saturation of poetic utterance with postulates and slogans, in the introduction of the reader to the work, in the handling of the subject and the collective addressee. They can be seen in his references to Classicist poetics, declined by the "young Warsaw literati," in his frequent use of literary allusion,

[25] Z. Stefanowska, *Norwidowski romantyzm*, p. 62.

[26] Ibid.

in his attempts to exploit silence and understatement for the purposes of artistic expression, in compositional arrangements that provoke repeated reading. It can be seen in the frequent "delicate, dull" motifs and impressions, against which the motifs reflecting "righteous indignation" appear all the more strongly, as can be seen in the attention-grabbing use of trifles, everyday things and their submission to philosophical or social thought.[27]

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In the aforementioned article *Norwidowski romantyzm*, Zofia Stefanowska stated that Norwid single-handedly created a new type of poetry, but that poetry fitted into the Romantic paradigm, whereas the starting point for building a new literary and ideological programme was the opposition against Mickiewicz and his Romanticism,[28] which was understood in a peculiarly way by Norwid. The spectacular protest, which was the famous Roman confrontation with Mickiewicz as the leader of the Italian legion being formed and as the leader challenging Pope Pius IX himself, becomes a turning point in this interpretation. In order to minimise the impact of this bold protest, the scholar highlights the influence of the Resurrectionists and the alleged inspiration by Krasiński's and Cieszkowski's views.

But the fact that Norwid, in line with the views of the two aforementioned Romantics, criticised Towianism as "mystical radicalism," "communism," "Pan-Slavism," "Synagogue," does not simultaneously imply that he agreed with them on other issues. The terms cited by Stefanowska come from letters to General Jan Skrzynecki (dated 15 April 1848) and to Józef Bohdan Zaleski (dated 24 April 1848). The location of these expressions is important. The situational context of these statements has to be taken into account here: both addressees, with conservative views, strongly identifying themselves with Catholicism, were convinced of the value of the knightly ethos, and had a vision of a politically strong and spiritual national leadership. Although Zaleski, similarly to Towiański's allies, was a supporter of Pan-Slavism, he saw the idea of unifying the Slavic world between Germany and Russia under the patronage of the reborn Polish Republic, not the eastern Empire. The political frame of reference in this sequence of terms extracted from both letters is also significant here. Researchers analysing and interpreting Norwid's writing in period of the Spring of Nations have shown links

[27] Z. Trojanowicz, *Rzecz o młodości Norwida*, Poznań 1968, pp. 104-105.

[28] This issue also appears in the next famous text by the same author: "Pisarz wieku kupieckiego i przemysłowego," in: eadem, *Strona romantyków*, pp. 5-53.

with Cieszkowski's philosophy and Krasiński's views. In the case of the latter, attempts were made – which can already be considered rather peculiar at the time – to find affinities in terms of style and even versification. However, when we take a closer look at the individual elements of these dubious comparisons, we immediately perceive Norwid's distinctiveness, otherness and even strangeness. The explored notion of history and the slogans centring around it – of action, of the individual, of the historico-creative role of the human being, of a turn towards reality – at first sight similar and identical to the views of the author of *Ojcze-Nasz* [*Our-Father*], turn out to be quite different from up close. For Cieszkowski, the point of critical reference was Hegel and his philosophy, or more precisely – historiosophy. Disagreeing with the German thinker's delineated laws and principles, the Polish philosopher sought to dissect the forms of the Christian universe. Hegel contested the cognisability of the future – the basis of the conception of the author of *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie* [*Prologomena to Historiosophy*].[29] Cieszkowski, therefore, framed history within a similar functional model – cognition touched upon future epistemological perspectives, was supposed to discover the laws of the historical order, where a principle encounters a contradiction, and from this confrontation a new value emerges, subject to a similar principle of development: first greatness, then decline, and then a new value. Cieszkowski's revisions referred to the French intellectual achievements of the time, and allowed for the introduction of a new revelation and belief in the new progress of humanity that thinkers on the Rhine were talking about. The Polish philosopher – although his changes may have seemed downright revolutionary – operated within Hegelianism.[30] "By introducing the dimension of the future into Hegel's historiosophy and proclaiming its cognisability, Cieszkowski thus accomplished – in Cornu's words – 'a revolutionary transformation of Hegel's philosophy.'

[29] This is not a minor or marginal issue in this conception. "The completion of development – as one expert on Hegel wrote – follows from the basic principles of the system, from the logic of the development of the absolute spirit" (K. Bakradze, *Filozofia Hegla. System i metoda*, Warszawa 1965, p. 240). The lack of completion of the development of the absolute spirit would make it impossible to consider the whole philosophical system as absolute philosophy.

[30] The so-called Tübingen school, especially the Catholic part of it, operated on similar principles at the time. It was inspired by Hegel's philosophy, although at the same time it sought to overcome its principles – to frame the dialectic within the framework of revelation. Its leading representatives, such as Johann Adam Möhler, Johann Sebastian von Drey and Johann Baptist von Hirscher, strove for the unity of historical theology and speculative philosophy, for the creation of a kind of symbiosis between divine revelation and human reason. See, for example, J. R. Geiselmann, *Die katholische Tübinger Schule: Ihre theologische Eigenart*, Herder 1964 and H. Harris, *The Tübingen School*, Oxford 1975.

However, this transformation consisted, in essence, in an attempt to bring certain circulating threads of socialist-religious French thought into Hegelianism," noted Andrzej Walicki.[31] And he immediately added, citing the insights of David Owen Evans,[32] that this leaning towards the "future" and the accompanying conviction of a "golden age" ahead and of the religious perspective of humanity constituted the general climate of French "social Romanticism."[33] Cieszkowski charged Hegel with applying not a trichotomous, but a tetrachotomous division to history – thus a criticism formulated in defence of the purity of method, in the name of dialectics. For the Polish philosopher, the future constituted the synthetic epoch, and the two previous epochs – before and after Christ – its thesis and antithesis. He called the antiquity the epoch of feeling, the present, i.e. lasting until now, from the time of the Saviour – the epoch of thought, while the third was the epoch of action.[34]

Cieszkowski's philosophical language was the language of German philosophy; the dialectical method he employed (and the conceptual categories associated with it) was a modification of Hegel's dialectics. By graduating from the Hegelian school, Cieszkowski's philosophical culture towered over most of his French "social Romantic" contemporaries.[35]

Norwid's understanding of history flows from a dualistic and at the same time Christian rather than dialectical view of reality.[36] Torn, devoid of comple-

[31] A. Walicki, *Między filozofią, religią i polityką. Studia o myśli polskiej epoki romantyzmu*, Warszawa 1983, p. 52.

[32] This refers to the classic book *Romanticism in France 1830-1848*, Oxford 1951.

[33] A. Walicki, *Między filozofią*, p. 52.

[34] See A. Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena do historiozofii. Bóg i palingeneza oraz mniejsze pisma filozoficzne z lat 1838-1842*, Warszawa 1972, pp. 6-7. "A modification within Hegel's division of history must therefore have entailed a reformulation of the concept of spirit, a reformulation that would have altered the location of history within the manifestations of spirit. For if, contrary to what Hegel believed, the unity of being and thought was not achieved in philosophy, but was achieved through practice, and thus in history, then it would not be philosophy that is the highest manifestation of spirit, but history. History thus leaves the sphere of the manifestation of the objective spirit assigned to it by Hegel, and is introduced into the sphere of the absolute spirit, and though as its highest manifestation" (M. N. Jakubowski, "Hegel i 'koniec filozofii': kontekst polskiej 'filozofii czynu,'" *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici. Filozofia* 1993, XV, Issue 264, p. 52).

[35] A. Walicki, *Między filozofią*, p. 54.

[36] The Christian conception of history in Norwid's work outlined in Rev. Antoni Dunajski's proposal, although it highlights the perspective of the poet's religious understanding of history, in fact considers it in a Hegelian model. In the poet's statement that "każde zjawisko napotkane przypomina mi zaraz odpowiednią mu sprzeczność [every phenomenon encountered reminds me at once of its corresponding contradiction] (from a letter to Michalina Zaleska née Dziekońska of

tion, marked by absence and tainted by sin, the world develops on the path of painstakingly combining opposites, grinding differences and contradictions, on the assumption that evil is not an equivalent force to good, and that absence finds its meaning in completion. The poet's search for the meaning of suffering does not reduce it to a dark force determining the existence of good. Just as many of his poetic antinomies do not prove equilibrium, hence instead of speculation the poet reaches for paradox. In the case of the so-called "German philosophy," the essence lies in perfecting and completing successive stages of development (civilisational, cultural, spiritual, material), whereas in Norwid's case it is about following an already marked out route, where the goal and endpoint are already clearly defined and delimited. Cieszkowski located this point in the future, recognising it on the basis of dialectical speculation, while Norwid returned to the past. Here the turning point – Christ – had already occurred, and history is the process of realising values in the space of culture (or/and history). In Norwid's case, they adopt an overtly personalistic sense and dimension. Although the poet addresses the importance of culture – as an indispensable space for existence – he does not grant it the rank of being, as it was done by the representatives of "German philosophy," led by Herder and Hegel, or Romantic philosophy in general. He considers man as the subject of history, but man is understood as a person, complementing and realising himself in his relations with others, and not as various collectives – generations,

November 1862, DW XII, 125), Rev. Dunajski recognises – unfortunately incorrectly – a dialectical thought or principle. Norwid's take, he says, differs in its Christian face: "The dialectic of Norwid's thought has the character of a poetic sharpening of the colours in the vision of the image; besides, Norwid's dialectic has a more Christian face" (*Chrześcijańska interpretacja dziejów w pismach Cypriana Norwida*, Lublin 1985, p. 41). First of all, he erroneously identifies dialectics, which is, after all, the concept of the development of reality as a process of emergence and overcoming of opposites, with dualism, which is presented in a specifically Christian way. It must not be forgotten – and this is the path Norwid follows – that in Christian concepts (beginning with St Paul), dualism is subordinated to Christology and soteriology (it is all about body and spirit, fighting the lusts, see Rom 7-8, Eph 4:7-24; 5:8-14 and Col 3:1-17). Also, nowhere in Norwid's texts do we find a thought that indicates that evil is an equivalent force to good. A number of other works also belong to the tradition of linking the poet's thoughts directly with the historiosophical concepts of Hegel or, more broadly, "German philosophy": Z. Żabicki, "Historiozofia C. Norwida," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1959, Issue 2, pp. 725-730; A. Lisiecka, "Romantyczna 'filozofia przyszłości' Cypriana Norwida," in: *Nowe studia o Norwidzie,* eds. J. W. Gomulicki, J.Z. Jakubowski, Warszawa 1961, pp. 191-239 (especially pp. 213-224); eadem, *Norwid – poeta historii*, London 1973. Dunajski's considerations follow the direction once proposed by Wojciech Karpiński, who – without recognising a complete contradiction in the proposed concept – saw in the author of *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*] "typical dialectical thinking in the spirit not of *Hegelianism*, but of Christianity" (idem, "Cyprian Norwid," in: W. Karpiński, M. Król, *Sylwetki polityczne XIX wieku*, Kraków 1974, p. 63).

nations, civilisations, understood as the sum of separate individuals or as collective entities (even if they were considered individually in Romanticism, it was only as a concretisation of general contents and phenomena). These perform various functions in history and carry specific values, also "przychodzą inną drogą do urzeczywistnienia" [they take different paths to realisation] (DW IV, 130), but the point of reference is always the human individual, the concrete, real human being. In Norwid's work, "Słowo […] umie Człeka *w jeden* ogół zlewać" [the Word (...) can merge Man *into a single* whole] (DW IV, 243), while this movement runs in the opposite direction in Romanticism – it is the whole that determines human existence, defines its meaning and value. The subjectified totality – deprived of a personal perspective – is subject to a principle of movement and change stretched over time, a continuous improvement that is subject to the law of passing through the aforementioned triad. Of course, Romantic philosophy – especially Hegel – recognised the complication of the whole mechanism of this process, unlike, for instance, the representatives of the cumulative philosophy of history, but the evolutionary mechanism built on a dialectical schema must have seemed particularly foreign to Norwid. He constantly mentioned it. After all, while emphasising the faults and flaws of the 19th century, its retrograde course, if only on the level of ethics and axiology, constituted a kind of argument denying the idea of development (even in its Romantic conflict-catastrophic variant, suggestively conveyed to us in Krasiński's works). The declarative dissociation from "German philosophy" had its conscious and deep foundations, growing out of the Christian tradition, above all from the writings of the Church Fathers. Thus, instead of dialectics, in Norwid's works we find antinomy and dualism of the world and man, instead of speculation – a reference to sacred history, instead of reflection on the improvement of humanity through development or conflict – a path towards salvation. Romantic finalism has its teleological prototype, abandoning formulaic speculation in favour of values centred around notions of historical salvation, linked to Christ's passion and resurrection and future Parousia. The analogy grows presumably out of the identity of the sources – used, after all, quite differently. Herder and especially Hegel, who is regarded as the founder of modern historiosophy, drew on the Christian concept of history, adopting above all a linear vision of time, for which St Augustine is regarded as the founder. This conception of the philosophy of history, which is in clear opposition to the Romantic philosophy of history, is brought forth in *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*], especially in the ninth song of the poem, which can be seen as the poet's historiosophical manifesto or, strictly speaking, a manifesto of his theology of history.

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Both Zofia Stefanowska and Zofia Trojanowiczowa emphasise in their syntheses and studies that Norwid's statements contain the declarative idea of treating Romanticism as an epoch already closed, and therefore he would place himself outside Romanticism, yet at the same time his creative practice would prove the opposite. The author of *Młodość Norwida* [*Norwid's Youth*] would even suggest the poet's struggle to save Romanticism, the struggle for true Romanticism. The one before the Spring of Nations "was only the first part of a larger whole, a sort of Romantic period in an era that is not yet finished." In the end, Trojanowiczowa claims with full conviction:

> Norwid placed new poetry outside this Romantic period, but within the same literary epoch, which he did not, of course, call Romanticism. Thus today, from the perspective of our contemporaneity, taking into account the postulate of completing Romanticism, it could be said of him that not only he was and wanted to be a Romantic – also in accord with his programme – but a Romantic that is different from his predecessors.[37]

Therefore, it would be Romanticism, but without these "distortions," such as messianism, the sacralisation of martyrdom, national exclusivity and absolutisation, the crossing out of reality, the negation of continuity, contempt for the body and form, for matter... But if one followed these hypothetical resignations consistently, would we still be dealing with Polish Romanticism? The accuracy of this line of thought is not confirmed – contrary to Trojanowiczowa's declarations – in the preface to *Niewola* [*Enslavement*]. On the contrary, the preface contradicts it. In this case, Stefanowska comes to our rescue, pointing to Norwid's tendency "to treat Polish Romanticism as a closed, completed epoch and – consequently – to place his own person and his own programme outside Romanticism."[38] According to the scholar, this external attitude to Romanticism can be observed precisely in the preface to *Niewola*, written in 1848. The concept of Romanticism, or even more broadly of national literature in general, as a reaction to Classicism is, on the one hand, an expression of an intentional, external look at the first of the aforementioned trends as a closed historical phenomenon. On the other hand, and this is the key conviction – both in Stefanowska's and Trojanowiczowa's view – the remedy or a way out of this situation, i.e. building a new programme, based on "marrying Romanticism with Classicism."[39] In laying out her argument,

[37] Z. Trojanowiczowa, "Norwid wobec Mickiewicza," in: eadem, *Romantyzm od poetyki do polityki. Interpretacje i materiały*, selected and edited by A. Artwińska, J. Borowczyk, P. Śniedziewski, Kraków 2010, p. 25.

[38] Z. Stefanowska, "Norwidowski romantyzm," p. 65.

[39] Ibid., p. 67.

in addition to pointing to the preface from *Niewola*, Stefanowska draws attention to one of the footnotes from *Promethidion*:

> Norwid's programme is even more clearly laid out in a footnote to *Promethidion*, where the poet says: "I have convinced myself that the feeling of harmony between the content and the form of life will be for us the foundation of art," after which he explains that Classicism is the form and Romanticism is the content.[40]

And she promptly draws a dialectical conclusion:

> Thus something like a triadic understanding of the development of literature – from thesis, understood asClassicism or form – through negation, understood as Romanticism or content – to "harmony of content and form," to synthesis. Synthesis, again the philosophical watchword at that time.[41]

In this commentary, it is questionable to equalize the "feeling of harmony between content and form" and the concept of "synthesis." The invoked methodological mechanism, reconstructed in the spirit of German Romantic philosophy (i.e. as a developmental process of the emergence and abolition of opposites), is in fact at odds with Norwid's observations. Form and content, similarly to the aforementioned literary movements, i.e. Classicism and Romanticism, are undoubtedly different, polar phenomena, but at the same time polarity does not determine the direction of the abolition of their opposites – the thesis and its opposite, the antithesis. Combining does not mean harmony. Truth is not the resultant of opposing views or opposing claims. Years later, after all, the poet would say in the poem "Królestwo" [Kingdom] (from the *Vade-mecum* cycle): "– Prawda? nie jest *przeciwieństw miksturą*…" [– Truth? is not *a mixture of opposites*...].[42]

In the main text of *Promethidion*, to which the footnote indicated by Stefanowska refers, reference is made to the putting "*together of national art*," and above all to the fact that from Frederic Chopin's grave there will arise a development of national art. This development is likened here to the bindweed, which is ubiquitous in the Polish landscape (its flowers are arranged, among other things, in the form of a wreath), spreading spontaneously and pervasively. The poet understands the development of art as a "sumienniejszy" [more conscientious], and therefore axiologically and aesthetically more perfect, and at the same time ethically more complete expression in relation to the form of life and the content of life. The former, that is the content, refers to aesthetic qualities, and the latter, that

[40] Ibid., p. 66.

[41] Ibid.

[42] C. Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. J. Fert, Lublin 2004, p. 55.

is the form, to goodness and truth. The tensions between the forms are abolished, though not through struggle and transformation, but through complementation and harmonious ordering. Norwid explicitly rejects the synthesis of tensions in the introduction to *Niewola* [*Enslavement*]:

Wiadomo jednakże, iż praktyczność literatury nie zależy na ześrodkowaniu jej w myśl jedną, co – przeciwnie – mistycznym raczej jest kierunkiem, a który pod tę porę jest spełniony, lecz i owszem, na wy-pojedynczeniu (na specjalizowaniu), na rozpromienieniu tego węzła narodowej mądrości. (DW IV, 41)

It is known, however, that the practicality of literature does not depend on centring it on a single thought, which – on the contrary – is a rather mystical direction, and which is fulfilled at this time, buton the singularisation (on specialisation), on the illumination of this knot of national wisdom.

The complementarity of content and form has its practical purpose, in line with the essence of life and the world, but the attempt to impose on it an ideal way of functioning – not necessarily coinciding with reality – referring to some external idea, such as "centring [...] on a single thought," imposed by will or need "is a rather mystical direction." It is therefore, dissected over the years in various variants, a thought of literature, or even more broadly, of art close to life, practical, as in *Promethidion* – linked to craft and industry. Or perhaps this anti-Romantic turn towards reality, towards ordinary life, has its most Romantic sense? Perhaps even unintentional? However, a fully Romantic dimension? Stefanowska sees this paradox in Norwid's absolutisation of art and the inclusion of this turn in the "typically Romantic conception of man's final goals."[43] Undoubtedly, Norwid's understanding of art is very broad – art with virtually no boundaries, seen in the perspective of beauty, which is "the Shape of Love," which brings him close to Romantic aesthetics, referring mainly to Plato. Art was linked to love through beauty. It, in turn, as a universal value, reached directly to God, hence the only boundaries for art were the boundaries of human nature. The value of the triad: art – beauty – love, was addressed in Romanticism, although this concept was obviously much older, dating back to Antiquity. Unlike Romanticism, however, Norwid transforms this concept by understanding love in a Christian spirit. He seeks its source and justification outside of man, outside of ideas or emanations of an undefined Spirit, in the personal God.

This view of art will gain its proper meaning when we consider it within the teleological (v. eschatological) aims of history. According to Stefanowska,

[43] Z. Stefanowska, "Norwidowski romantyzm," p. 68.

through transferring aesthetics (understood in opposition to Romanticism) to the axis of time, the intended anti-Romantic gesture of the creator of *Promethidion*, which expresses a radical turn towards reality, is linked to the final Romantic conception of history. This interpretation gives rise to resistance against equalizing Romanticism and historiosophy, Romanticism and the conception of man's final goals (v. history). It is as if the attempts to order the historical process, to search for the meaning of history, originated from or were conditioned by exclusively Romantic sensibilities, although in Norwid's case the circle of writings of the Church Fathers seems much more important, which is confirmed both by his notes and the reflections recorded in his prose writings and letters.

Zofia Stefanowska's proposal perpetuated the vision of Norwid as a Romantic for many years. Her orderly and confident argumentation– starting with sociological and historical insights – seemed convincing and, above all, was characterised by research pragmatism. The whole conception of the scholar was based on two pillars. The first was built on the idea that Norwid "was in a sense an anti-Romantic, a continuationist by negation." And at the same time: "This negation, however, always stopped at some point and opposition to Romanticism inevitably gravitated towards a Romantic vision of the world." There is also the other pillar, transforming and broadening the image of the epoch. According to it Romanticism – to put it briefly – needs to be changed, or more precisely – broadened so as to encompass Norwid:

> If he does not fit into the model of Polish Romantic poetry, it is not because he is a bad Romantic, but because our model of Romanticism is wrong. Instead of throwing Norwid out of the epochs of the development of Polish literature, we need to expand our understanding of Romanticism in such a way that Norwid fits in well.[44]

[44] Z. Stefanowska, p. 71. It is not uncommon for supporters of the poet's Romantic lineage to reach for the European argument – of course, it is supposed to be decisive both by its situational context (strongly linked to the poet's biography) and by the breadth and complexity of the comparison. This is how Edward Kasperski, among others, saw the matter – probably even more strongly and unequivocally than Stefanowska – linking Norwid to Romanticism: "Norwid's opposition to Romantic extremes – also to the 'idolisation' of nationality – did not by itself cause him to go beyond Romanticism. It generally meant opposition to one of the tendencies of Romanticism or to a particular poet." He further stated: "The attitude towards Romanticism was more complicated than a simple, unequivocal acceptance or rejection. [...] The background for Norwid's poetry seems to be primarily European Romanticism, its proper aspirations, aesthetic categories, and way of thinking" (E. Kasperski, *Dyskursy romantyków. Norwid i inni*, Warszawa 2003, p. 43). The researcher drew attention to the Romantic spirit of striving for originality, self-creation, a tendency to transgressions (not only in the sphere of poetics) and a metaphysical horizon.

One should, of course, ask in the name of what rationale we should extend the model of Romanticism. Is it solely because of Norwid? If so, such a move must be highly questionable. For it looks as if we are dealing with a phenomenon or an object of research, which poses a classification problem and does not fit into a certain type of phenomena with predetermined features, although a less important property – namely its contiguity on the temporal axis – brings it closer to this type of phenomena. Thus, in order to fit it into a model that has already been formed, we must necessarily transform this model. The question is whether this deformation, the extension of the model, does not fundamentally alter its order or deform the essence of things. And this is all because of an individual case. Because of a phenomenon. This is the first serious logical doubt concerning the proposed approach. There is also a second doubt. To what purpose does Stefanowska extend the Romantic model or even Romanticism, if in the first pillar of her conception she indicates that Norwid's anti-Romantic attitude is only an apparent negation of Romanticism? She argues: "There is in Norwidan ever-present aspiration to seemingly go beyond Romanticism and a lack of exit."[45] In other words, the denier identifies with the denied. If, then, it is only an artistic gesture, gravitating to the centre of this opposition, why perform this kind of intellectual operation on such a vast area of phenomena? Thus, the two lines of research reflection produced by Stefanowska seem contradictory. For if we assume that Norwid's anti-Romantic stance in fact leads him towards Romanticism, then why broaden the understanding of Romanticism so that the author of *Promethidion* can find a place in it. If he was a different Romantic from his great predecessors – a Romantic nonetheless – why change the vision of Romanticism. This is the first contradiction. And for the second contradiction, when we expand our vision of Romanticism on the grounds that Norwid does not fit into it, it makes no sense to point to the already established Romantic features and characteristics of its works.

Exactly! Features and qualities. They are the prerequisites that identify a work of art, determine whether a writer or a poetic group belong to a movement or trend of an era. The qualities and characteristics of poetry and literature, poetics or the ideas carried by the text.[46] Of course, the question of their scale and scope remains open.When is it possible to adopt one or another categorisation on the basis of x distinguished features (v. properties)? Should one treat the importance of all

[45] Z. Stefanowska, p. 68.

[46] The difference in the poet's attitude, which Stefanowska perceives in relation to that of the Romantic generation, is connected with the fact that "in Norwid's work there appeared problems determined by the situation of the writer in the society of industrial civilisation" (Z. Stefanowska, "Pisarz wieku kupieckiego i przemysłowego," p. 13). According to her, the problem concerns the circumstances in which Norwid had to create, not the essence of his work.

features equally? Or would their axiological hierarchy be needed?Stefanowska does not address the indicated doubts in her reflections, focusing only on a few arbitrarily selected elements: the protagonist, history, nation – Poland, relation to the world, religiosity. And yet, this list could be extended, for instance, to include literary genres, versification, the vision of the audience etc. But even these selected examples, and especially their interpretation, show the scholar's biased attitude. It is also revealed in the reduction of her own methodology, which Krzysztof Trybuś described and evaluated very accurately much later:

> Among the research assumptions of the author of the book [*Strona romantyków*] one thing does not fully convince me. Stefanowska states: "Determining Norwid's place in Polish literature, and thus his relation to Romanticism and to later trends, is a task that cannot be resolved in an uncontested and satisfactory manner by the methods of descriptive poetics" (p. 10). Probably she is right. The "Norwid phenomenon" is not only a genre, a style or a convention. It is also the worldview of an artist who treats art as a social phenomenon, the result of interaction with an audience. And like a true Romantic, he wants to express himself with all his work, all his achievements. And yet it is the originality of the language of his poetry that establishes his place in literature.[47]

Trybuś's doubts seem to be echoed by Zdzisław Łapiński, who points to the close relationship between the shape of Norwid's poetics and his general beliefs about the world. At the same time, the scholar points out that

> [...] the shape of Norwid's poetics is, to some extent, derivative of his general convictions about the world. Or, to put it differently, perhaps it was certain artistic dispositions that made him adopt this and not another attitude towards all forms of reality.[48]

According to Stefanowska, the Romantic lineageof Quidam – Norwid's nameless protagonist – is to be founded on a conflict with the collective, which, as we know, for Konrad or Kordian [Mickiewicz and Słowacki's protagonists, respectively] was a function of life and existence. Of course, the question immediately arises as to whether this premise is distinctive or less cardinal. Or does it characterise a larger group of literary characters, starting with Romanticism? Doubts arise at the basis of this interpretation – linking the indicated feature with the protagonist of Norwid's poem. Does the alleged conflict constitute the essence of Quidam? Does Norwid build his character on it? Can we define the framework and

[47] K. Trybuś, "Jaki Norwid?," in: idem, *Stary poeta. Studia o Norwidzie*, Poznań 2000, pp. 24-25.

[48] Z. Łapiński, *Norwid*, p. 150.

meaning of the tension between the poem's protagonist and the collective? Which collective is referenced here? The Greeks? Romans? Or perhaps Christians? Or perhaps all of them? The same is true of other examples, those concerning Poland and the concept of nation, the relationship to the world and history.

Perhaps the most telling issue seems to be that of religiosity? Stefanowska points out that it is precisely this that constitutes the most Romantic feature of the poet's work, because Romantic religiosity is, as she says, "expansive and possessive," seizing all areas of reflection on the world. This is true. Norwid's religiosity pertains to all aspects of reality, it is total. But again, is totality and expansiveness a distinctive feature of Romantic religiosity? After all, the same was true in case of writers and thinkers of the medieval or baroque periods. A totally divinised vision of the world was presented by Dante or St Thomas Aquinas, but also by Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński, and by Johann Sebastian Bachin music. A characteristic feature of Romantic religiosity seems to be its individualism, but also equalizing the spiritual with the religious, the supernatural; the irrational with the religious. Hence this tendency towards heterodoxy, which in a sense shapes this movement in art, fills it with a certain content. Romanticism embraced religiosity as an individual experience to such a degree for the first time. Contrary to Stefanowska's axiological generalisations, Norwid's religiosity is not "more static than the religiosity of the great Romantics of the previous generation,"[49] i.e. Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński, Cieszkowski or Hoene-Wroński, but moves within the framework of orthodoxy. It is difficult to perceive the tendency to break dogmas as a measure of a movement. One would have to treat orthodox phrases – characteristic, for instance, of conversionist attitudes – with equal validity. But what then of the extraordinary intensity of confessional experiences, characteristic of mystical attitudes (e.g. St John of the Cross or St Catherine of Siena), where – as we remember – apophatic theology concretises appropriate systems of linguistic evocation, characterised by extraordinary intensity and immense scope. And yet the mystics cited were not moving away from dogma. In fact, going beyond its framework, beyond the framework of tradition, could in a sense be considered simpler and easier than respecting the boundaries, while maintaining the intensity of experience and reflection. Given the number of themes addressed and the ways in which they are approached, one can even speak of a considerable advantage of Norwid over his great predecessors. Added to this is the sensitivity absent from them to such an extent and the tendency to transpose religious qualities and values from the axis of thematic adjacency to the axiological axis, which shows the religious vision of the world not necessarily through religious motifs, but through the world

[49] Z. Stefanowska, "Norwidowski romantyzm," p. 70.

of values.[50] When we look at the biographies of the authors and thinkers of the Romantic period, heterodoxy is an essential characteristic of their religiosity. Hence, Norwid's religiosity – if only because of its orthodoxy – does not fit into the accepted model or the outlined tendency. The question is whether the poet's attitude means, as Stefan Sawicki believes, "crossing the boundaries of Romanticism"[51] or whether it consciously realises a completely different type of religious sensibility? The scholar's suggestion presupposes a Romantic starting point and only further transgression, which, in a sense, fits into the framework of thought imposed by Stefanowska. In Norwid's case, however, I would not give preference to this type of solution, especially since no fundamental breakthroughs and turns are visible in his religious attitude, as is the case, for instance, with Mickiewicz or Słowacki. The conversion experience seems to be outside the sphere of Norwid's approach, although there are some records – especially in his poetry – of difficult experiences, most often connected with the situation of sin and evil, also suffering and the painful search for its meaning. The starting point of religious experience is reality, which also stands in stark contrast to Romantic sensibility and practice, which seeks to change this reality under the influence of religious (v. mystical) experience. If we were to translate this into paths of theological cognition, Norwid almost openly advocates recognising revelation from the perspective of the created, which in turn stands in opposition to the path that begins with the perspective from the sacrum towards the created. This second path was advocated by the Romantics.

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The relation to reality and the relation to the subject – these foci of Romantic strategies – in Norwid's work are subject to a reorganisation of structures and forms that give it originality and distinctiveness. Within this broad aesthetic turn towards the everyday and even the colloquial, and towards personalism, there is also irony,

[50] This was pointed out by Stefan Sawicki. The scholar has consistently stressed that most of Norwid's poems, "gravitate rather towards non-religious themes of the world and man [...]. But he also embraces and interprets these themes in a religious, evangelical perspective" (S. Sawicki, "Religijność liryki Norwida," in: idem, *Norwida walka z formą*, Warszawa 1986, p. 73). Elsewhere, he added that there are works in Norwid's oeuvre, and "their number increased since *Vade-mecum*, which at the surface do not reveal the Christian frame of reference at all or reveal it very poorly. They also interpret the world in a Christian spirit, but they do so very discreetly" (idem, "Nie są nasze – pieśni nasze," in: C. Norwid, *Wiersze* [*Poems*], selected, introduced and commented by S. Sawicki, Lublin 1991, p. 29).

[51] S. Sawicki, "Religijność liryki Norwida," p. 75.

an extremely important category for the entire 19th century. As Szturc says, its Romantic variety is

> [...] an artistic doctrine founded on Friedrich Schlegel's philosophy emphasising the creationist aspect of the literary work and attributing to its creator a genuinely divine and truly free creative attitude. As one of the key problems of Romantic thought, Romantic irony was a way of manifesting the sovereign subject of creative activity emerging from the pages of the work and engaging in an ironic dialogue with the reader.[52]

Therefore, what was essential here were all sorts of methods of shattering illusion and revealing the conventionality of the depicted world, resulting in authorial detachment and decomposition of form, moreover, an expansion of the meta level in terms of the flow of thought. This category was mastered in Polish literature by Słowacki, especially in *Podróż do Ziemi Świętej z Neapolu* [*Journey to the Holy Land from Naples*], in *Balladyna* and, of course, in *Beniowski*.

In Norwid's work, irony goes far beyond the assumptions and models envisaged by Romanticism. For it is a feature of existing reality, encapsulated in the structure of the world, in the structure of the creation, it is "konieczny bytu cień" [a necessary shadow of being].[53] In his classic book, Zdzisław Łapiński emphasised that the author of *Vade-mecum*

> distinguished between irony of phenomena and irony contained in a certain attitude towards the world. The former, although recognisable only by cogniser's consciousness, is independent of us. The blending of trivial and sublime phenomena, the resistance of the matter to the spirit, the spontaneous plotting of events with surprising twists and an unexpected finale, confounding our expectations by reality – this is the former type of irony. An emotional attitude, allowing for a range of mixed experiences, hostile and friendly, painful and joyful, turbulent and gentle, an awareness of "chiaroscuro," that is, of the diversity of facts and the impossibility of grasping them, also a certain moral sense that does not agree with hasty and authoritative ethical judgements – these are some of the characteristics of irony of the second kind.[54]

Stefan Kołaczkowski, who even before the war noticed and recognised this category as the main one in Norwid's work, pointed to its difference and even distinctness from the Romantic model:

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[52] W. Szturc, *Ironia romantyczna. Pojęcie, granice i poetyka*, Warszawa 1992, pp. 5-6.

[53] It is significant that in one of the recent monographs devoted to Romantic irony, Norwid appears only contextually and, moreover, incidentally through the reference for Lenartowicz's *Złoty kubek*. Cf. W. Hamerski, *Ironie romantyczne*, Warszawa 2018.

[54] Z. Łapiński, *Norwid*, p. 88.

Contrary to its name, it [i.e. Romantic irony] actually has little to do with irony, and has no relation to Norwid's irony. Even where Norwid, as in *Szczesna*, deliberately travesties Romantic irony, he is a satirist rather than an ironist. Romantic irony was born of the individualistic anachronism of the Romantics, the struggle against their own sentimentalism, magical idealism – and finally, internal split. One would be sorely mistaken, as Norwid writes in *Milczenie* [*Silence*], "kto by Diogenesa poczytywał jedynie za improwizatora dorywczego i za bezkierunkowy jaki humor" [who would regard Diogenes merely as a casual improviser and a directionless humourist]. We do not find anywhere in Norwid this condemned directionless irony, flowing from whimsiness, often from imaginary superiority over the world, brooding despair, being blasé, apathy or scepticism. Norwid did not deny reality as such, nor did he despise the commonplace. This is what distinguishes his irony from that of the Romantics, the "disillusioned souls" of the epigones of Romanticism and the later sceptics of the late century.[55]

Irony is imposed on the artist by the world. The cognitive act and the cognitive subject – in accordance with the objective truth of reality, rather than the subjective needs and properties of being – tunes into that which defines the structure of the cognised. Thus, irony has far more extensive properties and qualities in Norwid's work than those associated with its aesthetic functions (a means of artistic expression), manifesting the subject's creative abilities and will. As "konieczny bytu cień" [the necessary shadow of being], irony allows one to know the world, including man, in its full form; it allows one to see the true face of being, devoid of falsity, but also of illusions. In Song XI of *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*], irony is treated as a weapon of truth, and the attitude of the ironist comes close to that of the moralist. The shortening of the distance between these very extreme attitudes, and even equating them, becomes possible through Christ's parables. In the autumn of 1852, Norwid wrote to Jan Koźmian:

Przeczytaj wszystko, co Zbawiciel faryzeuszom odpowiadał, ale przeczytaj nie tak, jak oklepało Ci się o uszy – tylko sercem i życiem powołaj przed się czytając, a zobaczysz, że kolosalniejszej ironii nigdzie nie spotkałeś i spotkać nie możesz nad oną. Nawet forma, *pytajnikami*, a nie *twierdzeniami*, czysto ironiczna – (DW X, 449)

[55] S. Kołaczkowski, "Ironia Norwida," *Droga* 1933, Issue 11, p. 1003. In the case of Norwid's irony, Wiesław Rzońca's position seems important. He claims that the poet's work does not fulfil the conditions of ironic communication, whereas what researchers or critics take for irony is in fact "ciemność mowy" [the darkness of speech] of the author of *Vade-mecum*, its ambiguity. Irony – according to the researcher – presupposes unambiguity and clarity of the message. See idem, *Norwid-poeta pisma*, Warszawa 2005, p. 125 and 128. Distinguishing between two types of irony, light and dark, Socratic and Romantic, the researcher associated the poet exclusively with the latter. The obvious error of such reasoning was discussed by Tomasz Mackiewicz, see idem, *Socrates Norwida. Kontekst – recepcja – kontynuacja*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 163-164.

Read all that the Saviour replied to the Pharisees, but read it not as it sounds cliched to your ears – only invoke it before you with your heart and your life while reading, and you will see that nowhere have you encountered a more colossal irony and cannot encounter anything superior to that. Even the form, using *question marks*, not *assertions*, purely ironic –

Significantly, the evangelical point of reference builds in the later part of this speech a typology of irony with a distinctly axiological orientation:

Tak jest, mój Drogi, nie wstydzę się ja tej ironii, bo dość jest słudze, aby był jako Pan, a uczniowi, żeby jako Mistrz był. Nie poprawię ja Zbawiciela, nie. Pamiętaj, że dwie są *Ironie*: jedna piekielna (to jest, kiedy siebie za cel ma i raduje się ze zła swego), druga, która z czasu jeno pochodzi i z działania. Dłuto wyciosujące twarz anioła z marmuru zgrzyta gorzko… Owóż Ty, co chcesz, aby nie zgrzytało, chcesz próżniactwa i chcesz, aby anioł był głazem, a ja próżniakiem. (ibid.)

Indeed, my Dear One, I am not ashamed of this irony, for it is enough for the servant to be as the Lord, and for the disciple to be as the Master. I will not correct the Saviour, no. Remember that there are two *Ironies*: the one infernal (that is, when it has itself as its goal and rejoices in its evil), and the other that comes from time alone and from action. The chisel carving the angel's face out of marble screeches bitterly... That one you do not want to be screeching, you want vanity, and want the angel to be a boulder, and me to be a vain man.

The poet does not even ask rhetorically any longer, but he rhetorically states, clearly situating himself outside the autotelic face of the aspirations of Romantic irony. The declaration is fundamental and at the same time highlights a radical split. It is worth noting that Norwid again appeals to the experience of reality by contrasting it with subjective reason, when "it has itself as its goal." Even if we consider the negative assessment of Romantic irony, or even more broadly, of Romantic literature, to be too radical, and its image to be exaggerated, this does not change the basic intention – to situate oneself outside, to situate oneself quite characteristically on the plane of irony – that extraordinary achievement of mature Romanticism – outside the powerful movement which, after all, conveyed the consciousness and Polish culture of that time. An example of a negative reflection presents *Epos-nasza* [*Our Epic*].

More often than not, scholars have been inclined to situate the protagonist of the poem vis-à-vis the protagonist of Cervantes's novel in terms of identification and understanding. There are indeed quite a few possibilities here, including even Girard's "triangular desire" (also called "desire through others")[56]; incidentally, in his conception, the French scholar refers to Cervantes. *Epos-nasza* situated itself in

[56] See R. Girard, *Prawda powieściowa i kłamstwo romantyczne*, transl. K. Kot, Warszawa 2001.

the study of the Romantic reception of Don Quixote, within the historical framework once described by Erich Auerbach.[57]

In contrast to the Enlightenment epoch, when the figure of Cervantes was considered primarily a fanatical victim of biblical passion, the Romantics saw him as a noble defender of an ideal, a symbol of dissent from reality, someone who acts against the whole world in the name of values. They noticed his uncompromising, heroic stance, including his axiological and simultaneously tragic dimension. The latter aspect was emphasised, *inter alia*, by Heinrich Heine. Słowacki, on the other hand, saw in Cervantes's character someone who reminded him of Icarus.[58] In contrast to the previous era, in the first half of the 19th century, Don Quixote thus became an unequivocally positive character, perfectly realising the ideal of the hero of the age – misunderstood by his surroundings, mad, acting against everything and against everyone in an uncompromising and open manner. In the Romantic conception, authenticity and steadfastness balanced and even overshadowed Don Quixote's absurdity and madness. Heroism and uncompromising attitude became more important than the grotesque. Researchers and critics gave Norwid no chance.[59] He had to fit into this scheme. The poet's image reflected in the figure of Don Quixote as if in a mirror, and his reception of Cervantes's novel must have been an example of Romantic reception.[60]

[57] See E. Auerbach, *Mimesis. Rzeczywistość przedstawiona w literaturze Zachodu,* transl. and prefaced by Z. Żabicki, preface to the second edition by M. P. Markowski, Warszawa [s.a.], pp. 335-336.

[58] See Z. Szmydtowa, *Cervantes*, Warszawa 1965, p. 92.

[59] This is also how the figure of Don Quixote in Norwid's poem was interpreted by Tomasz Korpysz, who, in his article *Nie tylko* '*Epos-nasza.*' *O obrazie Don Kichota w pismach Norwida* tries to give depth to and model this image, and even to show criticism of the knight-errant's attitude on the part of the poet (for example, in his lectures *O Juliuszu Słowackim* [*On Juliusz Słowacki*]), but – significantly – he considers the examined poem as the only example of a clear identification. See idem, "Nie tylko 'Epos-nasza.' O obrazie Don Kichota w pismach Norwida," in: *Norwid. Z warsztatów norwidologów bielańskich*, eds. T. Korpysz, B. Kuczera-Chachulska, Warszawa 2011, p. 33.

[60] Michał Głowiński's opinion may serve as evidence of such reception of *Epos-nasza*. See idem, "Świadectwa i style odbioru," in: idem, *Dzieło wobec odbiorcy. Szkice z komunikacji literackiej*, Kraków 1998, p. 138. See also A. Berlińska's interpretation capturing the reality of the poem in an almost identical approving tone; eadem, "Stylizacja tematyczna w wierszu C. K. Norwida 'Epos-nasza,'" *Zeszyty Naukowe Filia Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku* 1980, Humanistyka. Dział F: Prace Filologiczne, Issue 31, Vol. V, pp. 7-23.

Zofia Trojanowicz[61] once, and quite recently also Agata Seweryn,[62] drew attention to the tone of the poem. The latter described the character of the work as ironic-heroic. Despite interesting, in places, argument and a number of interesting analytical observations, she in a sense subscribed to the model indicated earlier by assuming axiological bipolarity. Trojanowicz's reflection is much more subtle, yet consistent in terms of the line of thought. Her insight addresses a basic and fundamental issue, namely that *Epos-nasza* is an ironic work *par excellence*. This observation can, and should, be extended – irony manifests itself here with such force and intensity (it encompasses elements of imagery, situation, language, it is present in versification and rhyme euphony) that even in the case of Norwid, who from almost the very beginning made irony the hallmark of his work, one can speak of a certain excess of it. The scholar also saw at once the serious consequences of the observation made. If irony is so total and also encompasses the sender of the work, then who is the addressee of this "s-krzypnięcie wstecz" [screech backwards]. For if "they," especially those who "po paradyzie latają w promieniach" [are flying in rays around the paradise] (PWsz I, 160), then the power of the poet's poetic and even creative emancipation would be immense and unequivocal. Hence Trojanowiczowa – understanding and recognising a Romantic in Norwid (let us not forget that at that stage of the development of Norwid Studies this was an almost dogmatic condition) – read *Epos-nasza* as an author's game – primarily self-ironic, even self-sarcastic, the frame of which was built on the Hegelian formula, which enclosed Cervantes's hero in a sequence of contradictions that cancelled each other out and conditioned one another.

Norwid, consciously or unconsciously, took up Hegel's conception of Don Quixote from *Vorlesungenüber Estetik*. As Z. Szmydtowa writes, "Hegel presented him as a symbol of the noble individual, detached from life and from history, whose activity becomes ridiculous as a result of their anachronism. [...] Hegel's formula showed the contrast between nobility and its inappropriate realisation, between subjective value and social uselessness, between the inner seriousness of thought and its ridiculous expression."[63]

And yet, is this dialectical argument, probably motivated by the historical and literary need to keep Norwid in Konrad's cell, not at odds with the principle expressed later in the already quoted verse from "Królestwo" [Kingdom]: "– Prawda? *nie*

[61] Z. Trojanowicz, *Rzecz o młodości Norwida*, Poznań 1968, p. 217.

[62] The researcher devoted as many as two chapters to *Epos-nasza* in her book *Światłocienie i dysonanse. O Norwidzie i tradycji literackiej*, Lublin 2013, pp. 305-370.

[63] Z. Trojanowicz, *Rzecz o młodości Norwida*, p. 217.

jest przeciwieństw miksturą…" [– Truth? is not *a mixture of opposites*...]?[64] What if the poet were to be liberated? To liberate, that is, to read the ironic overtones of *Epos-nasza* in terms of an outward-facing polemic. In this sense, taking reference to the model hero of the Romantics and the positioning of the subject (the lyrical hero) either in the role of a child or in the role of Sancho Panza makes a deeply motivated sense. In this way, the entire world of the work, the entire represented reality, would gain its axiological point of reference, based on the illusiveness of what the addressees of this polemic might call epic or epic reality. One would like to reply: "each epoch has its own epic"– which should refer not only to 1848, but to the entire epoch, which in a sense was ended by the Spring of Nations. And what about the pronoun "nasza" [our]? This is only an apparent problem. Norwid's reference to the situation of child reading (basing, in a sense, the entire communicative situation in the poem on this motif) introduces a great distance between the sender and the object of his poetic treatment. Through it, the irony-filtered, fully understandable admiration of a child radically changes not only the tone but also the meaning of what is described. Identification becomes negation, admiration exposes the motivation of the reaction, and the intensity of the child's imitation becomes a measure of the actual distance. In this context, the pronoun "nasza" [our] completely changes its meaning – it loses its value and the privilege of signifying what is common and inseparable. It becomes as illusory as the world described and the highly valued term denoting it. The point is not, after all, to depreciate, mock first readings or even bibliomaniacal inclinations, but it is about creative maturity. In this sense, the examined poem is a denial of a Romantic reading of Cervantes, or even more – a discrediting of the Romantic way of recognising reality on the model of Don Quixote. *Epos-nasza*, with the date 1848 underneath (in Gomulicki's edition it is not clear for what reason it was moved to the title[65]), is the poet's decisive polemic not only with the generation of post-November Romantics that were close to him, but in general a polemic against Romanticism and its way of recognising and assessing reality. If treating this text in these terms, it should be regarded as an exceptionally strong voice expressing an attitude towards great predecessors, towards the Romantics and Romanticism. Norwid's irony vs. Romantic irony, for which the figure of the knight-errant seems almost emblematic.[66]

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[64] C. Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. J. Fert, p. 55.

[65] Cf. PWsz I, 158 and the first print of the poem: B. Erzepki, *Literatura i Sztuka*. Supplement to *Dziennik Poznański* 1910, Issue 26.

[66] See P. Chlebowski, "'Z osieroconym bawi się strzemieniem….' O wierszu Norwida 'Epos nasza,'" in: *Romantyk jako czytelnik. II Sympozjum im. Zofii Trojanowiczowej*, eds. A. Borkowska-Rychlewska, W. Hamerski, K. Trybuś, Poznań 2020, pp. 267-283.

After all, Norwid must have been aware of its power and value. He must have been fully aware of confronting a powerful phenomenon, initiated by Mickiewicz. It is, of course, possible to consider the series of lectures *O Juliuszu Słowackim* [*On Juliusz Słowacki*] in relation to Klaczko's lectures on Mickiewicz (delivered at the beginning of 1858), and thus to inscribe Norwid's statement within the framework of an aesthetic and ideological polemic, as evidenced by the book by Zofia Trojanowiczowa, who identifies the situation precisely as "the last Romantic dispute."[67] In this "dispute," Mickiewicz is juxtaposed with Słowacki, Norwid with Klaczko, and its active participants, including, of course, the creator of *Promethidion*, move within established formulas and ideological constellations. But when we read Norwid's lectures, we get the irresistible impression of looking from the other side of literature and art. Indeed, Słowacki becomes an excellent and natural point of negative support, but the trouble is that Norwid does not treat the work of the author of *Beniowski* as vital, allowing for a clear-headed actualisation and real reception of the phenomenon, but as a completed work, closed, often detached from place and time, like all Polish literature of the time. Słowacki's poem *Anhelii* read in Warsaw during the Paskiewicz Night period [the period between 1831-1856 in Congress Poland] seemed a poetic mirror of that time. At the same time, however,

Literatura żadna pewno takich nie miała czytelników, jak ci młodzi czytelnicy w Wilnie i w Warszawie, którzy krwią i łzami kartki czytanej poezji okupowali. Katastrofy te były, zaiste, rzezią niewiniątek w wigilię odrodzenia się słowa narodowego. Ani laury żadne, ani rozgłos nie ozłacały im czarnych więzienia kątów. (PWsz VI, 463)

Certainly, no literature had such readers as these young readers in Vilnius and Warsaw, who occupied the pages of the poetry they read with blood and tears. These catastrophes were, indeed, the slaughter of innocents on the eve of the rebirth of the national word. Neither laurels nor publicity gilded their blackened prison cell corners.

What matters are the circumstances. It is under their pressure that the contemporary receiver acts. Not in spite of circumstances, not against circumstances, but precisely under the pressure. Neither laurels nor publicity sweeten the tragedy, do not change the situation, often a tragic one.

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[67] Z. Trojanowiczowa, *Ostatni spór romantyczny Cyprian Norwid – Julian Klaczko*, Warszawa 1981.

A realistic and clear-headed assessment of the world and its pressures builds not only the literary protagonist, but also the receiver. It shapes his character and nature. Hence, instead of extreme individualism, Norwid shifts the focus to quiet Quidam, he replaces great deeds (framed by some historical-political order) with a single small gesture, in which a great epoch of history and a great social community are contained, and in silence – often rejected – the works of the spirit are completed and aggregated. It is not a question of negation, highlighting and operating with a paradox (which probably also belongs to the ironic paradigm of the world), but of a multidimensional, complete truth about man, especially in its negative aspects. Hence such a radical departure from the vision of the subject, who not only has a masterful command of words, but at the same time seems to sever ties with the real world in the name of the values of extreme individualism. "Modlitwa" [Prayer] (beginning with the words: "Przez wszystko do mnie przemawiałeś, Panie" [Through everything you have spoken to me, Lord]), which is almost a challenge to Mickiewicz's *Improwizacja*, seems to be an overtly polemical case here. The words the poet included in a letter to Jan Koźmian from 1852 should be regarded as a complementary self-commentary: "Ja nie mistrz-słowa, ale sługa-słowa" [I am not the master of the word, but the servant of the word] (DW X, 449). However, from the point of view of the considerations conducted here, much more interesting are the cases of a negative reflection of the subject, at the same time strongly identified, even equated with the author himself. What is at stake here is not the reconstruction and meticulous noting of deviations from the Romantic ideal of poetry, cracks and scratches in the already established and fixed model, as in Słowacki's *Beniowski*,[68] but a completely new approach, a new positioning of the subject of action in relation to the sphere of things and phenomena, and above all values. After all, Romantic axiology, which elevated the entanglements and dilemmas of the lyrical hero, and ultimately the author himself, to the highest rank, even when they were a measure of his downfall, placed the sender on the "light side of the force." The drama of choice and the stirrings of the spirit were aroused by the subtle strings of axiology, constantly the same, constantly in harmony of the high diapason, constantly "above the levels." In Norwid's case, it was different – the lyrical hero often became part of reality which was painful, fractured, devoid of wings and power. The ethical filter exposed mercilessly not only the behaviour of others, but was sometimes ruthless to the subject – to the author himself, perhaps more ruthless to him than to the object of ironic description. This feature, completely overlooked in research

[68] See S. Treugutt, *Beniowski. Kryzys indywidualizmu romantycznego*, 2nd revised edition, Warszawa 1999.

so far, seems fundamental and essential to the formation of Norwid's poetry, its extraordinary closeness to its author. Characteristic in this respect seems the poem "Marionetki" [Marionettes], a poetic account of a salon scene and a conversation with an unknown lady on the subject of a nagging sense of "boredom."[69] Czesław Niemen, who vocally interpreted this poem, pointed out that

> "Marionetki" is [...] a masterful depiction of salon boredom and, more generally, indifference to human fate, in which, as in a microscopic close-up, Norwid moves from an existential and cosmic perspective to a revealing moral message, lined with melancholic irony.[70]

The aforementioned message about people and "ślicznie zapięty krawat" [the neatly fastened tie] read without secondary modelling, compromises the lady, who takes the side of negatively judged form and convention, the side of ritual. But, with equal validity, the sentence crowning the poem about the neatly fastened tie can be understood as the lady's ironic response (a kind of retort) to the irony of the lyrical hero. This "s-krzypnięcie wstecz" [screech backwards] would also directly affect the subject, situating it in a role no less ambiguous than that of the lady. From there, it is only a step to a different understanding of the title *Marionettes* and an understanding of the work as a whole. In the case of the first interpretation, which emphasises the relationship of alienation of the protagonist to the world described, we deal with a classical approach – close to the Romantic tradition. However, in the second, self-ironic interpretation, the lyrical protagonist puts himself in the role of a salon hypocrite, and the criticism ricochets off his "neatly fastened tie."Why marionettes in the plural? The generalising metaphor – which interpreters are inclined to reach for –provides a safety cushion. However, a clearly delineated situation limited to only two characters (the lyrical hero – the lady) leads to a completely different conclusion. The tone of the punch line strikes at the sensitive point of the sender of the statement. As a participant in the salon, also as a subject of "boredom," he does not manage to escape criticism. The whole thing, in the end, applies both to the lady and to him – to the "marionettes." The harsh light of irony – including self-irony singles out only them from the background and puts them in the limelight.

This negative reflection is revealed even more clearly in the poem "Nerwy" [Nerves] from the *Vade-mecum* collection. It is a poetic account of two visits. The

[69] An expanded interpretation (in relation to the one presented here) of this poem by Norwid, entitled "'Krawat mieć ślicznie zapięty!...' O wierszu 'Marionetki'" was published in the book *"Czytać jest to dogłębiać wyrażenia…". Norwid – interpretacje*, ed. T. Korpysz, Warszawa 2021.

[70] R. Radoszewski, *Czesław Niemen. Kiedy się dziwić przestanę... Monografia artystyczna*, Warszawa 2004, p. 102.

first, in a place "gdzie mrą z głodu" [where they are starving to death], written in the past perfect tense. And the second, hypothetical, at the Baroness's place (again set in the space of the salon) – written in the future tense. In the former, we deal with the liminal human experience. The latter, on the other hand, is about sharing the former experience with others. The hidden analogy between the two scenes, both experiences – accurately perceived by Marian Płachecki – equally scandalous and equally grotesque (the one "na nieobrachowanym piętrze" [on the uncalculated floor] and the one from under the "plafon" [plafond] at the Baroness's house) indicates

that it is not only the sheer intransigence of the poem's protagonist that prompts him to "tell her," but also the need to expiate the embarrassing fall on the dark staircase and the reason for it: the almost tourist-like sightseeing "w miejscu, gdzie mrą z głodu" [in a place where they are starving to death]. Someone who has failed to live up to Christian confession may not yet want to turn out to be a Pharisee, freely perorating about helping the poor as long as it does not demand anything from him.

This is a relatively optimistic, if not downright naïve, variant. A pessimistic variant of interpretation would have us see the poem's narrative as an attempt to obscure one's own sin against loving one's neighbour. What from the reader's perspective is a carefully thought-out staging of a situation of moral choice, an open-ended choice, for the first-person protagonist is an elaborate, meandering psychomachy designed to conceal from himself the realisation that just yesterday he had already c h o s e n against the faith. He did not see his fellow human beings in those who were starving. He viewed them almost as something, like unspecified creatures who are starving.

In view of this, today he is no longer faced with the choice of whether or not he would turn out to be a Pharisee at the Baroness's place. He has been one since yesterday! The heroic choice taken by the reader, "**Cóż? po**wiem jej…"[**What? will** I tell her...], fulfilled by the hero of the poem would be unthinkable Pharisaism. On the other hand, the dilatory option, "Cóż? **po**wiedzieć jej…" [What? **To** tell her...] in his position would be a testimony to relative decency. Relative, because only with regard to himself. Relative, because devoid of any external effects, but it does not protect against the multiplication of internal machinations, self-justifications and anguish, but not real remorse. The title of the poem – "Nerwy" [Nerves] – refers directly to the drama of Pharisaic consciousness[71].

Sometimes the dark reflection becomes hostage to a situation, whether real or created. To the former, we could include "Nerves"; to the latter, another text from the *Vade-mecum* cycle, "Czemu nie w chórze?" [Why Not in Chorus?].The act of theophany is framed here as a pastorale: "U żłobu, gdzie jest Bóg" [At the manger where God is] (PWsz II, 45), it reveals three attitudes. The chosen ones identify with it to such an extent that even defeat comes with glory and fulfilment. Those

[71] M. Płachecki, "Nerwy. Aporie wyboru," in: idem, *Wojny domowe. Szkice z antropologii słowa publicznego w dobie zaborów (1800-1880)*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 286-287.

fleeing from pursuit and persecution – merely remain silent, remaining "w progu" [at the threshold]. And in turn, those who "ledwo wbiegli w wieś" [have barely run into the village] (PWsz I, 45), experiencing almost physically the force of evil, hearing "niewiniąt rzeź" [the slaughter of the innocents], are incapable even of the reactions experienced by those "at the threshold" – the images of crime are still fresh in their awareness. The protagonist of the poem – again identified with the author himself – situates himself outside the circle of the adoring public. The experience of blood ("Jam widział k r e w !..." [I have seen b l o o d ! . . .] PWsz I, 45) prevents him from participating in the chorus of the triumphers. Misfortune in its wildest and most brutal form results in poetic aphasia, it disrupts the order of things – entering the darkness, if only as a passive participant (one who has seen), closes the way to the light. Virtually guiltless, with no possibility of escape and no real prospect of change. The "slaughter of the innocents," which accompanies the joyful news of Christ's birth, determines the protagonist's attitude. Whoever witnessed the crime must refuse to participate in the song of triumph. Zofia Mitosek rightly states: "There is something mysterious in such an evocation of the Gospel; knowing Norwid's religious convictions, it is impossible to suspect him of blasphemy.Yet the attitude of the speaking subject needs no comment – it is a discord flowing from seeing and knowing, it is a dissonance in the song of the chosen ones."[72]

The experience of evil – most often external, associated with circumstances and reality – shrouds Norwid's protagonist in darkness. The situation limits his field of action, while all forms, if only of culture and convention, stimulate his "nerves" as a kind of receptors of the Pharisaism inherent in each of us. However, sometimes this experience is conditioned internally, limited to the subject himself. In such situations it is not uncommon for the poet to resort to parabola and allegory, which obscure the personal tonality and, at the same time, allow the poet to move freely in the space of darkness. I would include the poem "Źródło" [Spring] in this group, wrongly considered in terms of historico-civilisational rather than personal spiritual experience. Crucial in this respect is the scene of the trampling of the eponymous "spring" by the Man, who, in a demonic frenzy, performs an act of cursing and profanation.

In her study devoted to Norwid's faces of Satan, Anna Kadyjewska refers to this poem, calling the figure of the Man – because of his behaviour, full of sarcastic fury – a "demonic hero." The association with the figure of the enemy, perpetuated in the literature of the 19th century in manifold ways, if only in Byron, Goethe or Słowacki, clearly leads to such a conclusion. Kadyjewska claims: "The devil's

[72] Z. Mitosek, "Przerwana pieśń. O funkcji podkreśleń w poezji Norwida," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1986, Issue 3, p. 158.

laughter is always 'bitter,' 'furious' [...], derisive and malicious, exposing his hateful attitude to the world. Perhaps Satan's derision is related to his Old Testament function as an accuser (Job 1:6-12, 1-7; Kings 22:19-24) or to the belief, strong in Christianity, that the devil, who is the embodiment of negation, can only mock and parody God."[73] This hateful attitude concerns not only the world, the creation, but the Creator himself – it is the most striking and disturbing moment in the work. After all, it touches directly on "Duch-stworzenia" [the Spirit-of-creation]. The shouting and blaspheming protagonist with his "odrębna wymowa" [strange accent], with his "wściekły śmiech" [furious laughter], resembles the possessed ones from the Gospels, from whom Christ casts out evil demons. The one in Norwid's "Źródło" goes much further – he desecrates *Santa sanctorum*. And yet Norwid does not call him Satan, devil or demon. Furthermore, he juxtaposes the protagonist's behaviour with the noun "mąż" [husband/man], which after all evokes only positive semantic qualities, unchanged in the past and today (we should remember that in the 19th century it was still a synonym for knight). Why, then, this strong clash between an axiologically highly placed name and such a negatively created situation? None of the interpretations to date explain or clarify the confrontation between semantics and behaviour. Besides, neither Gomulicki nor Aniela Kowalska notice this "clash," showing no reflection.[74] To some extent it is noticed by Marek Adamiec, but he shifts the focusto the spring – in his interpretation, it was indeed trampled on, profaned. He states that "'Źródło' has lost the character of God's perfect work, it has been likened to a soiled ribbon."[75] Thus, the researcher believed in the words of the Man: "Patrzcie!... jak Duch-stworzenia obuwie mi czyści!..." [Look!... how the Spirit of creation cleans my shoes!...]. The clash between nomenclature and situation also forms the basis of Paweł Matywiecki's doubts as he develops his argument towards apocatastasis. He cites 20th century conceptions of this trend, including those by the mystic Adrienne von Speyr and the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. However, the analogy of Norwid's poem

[73] A. Kadyjewska, "'Świata-tego Książę.' O Norwidowskich obliczach szatana," *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 17-18, 1999-2000, p. 45.

[74] J. W. Gomulicki, Commentary on: C. Norwid, *Dzieła zebrane* [*Collected Works*], Vol. 2, Warszawa 1966, pp. 729-730. See also: idem, "Norwidowska podróż przez piekło (ze studiów nad genezą i kształtem *Vade-mecum*)," *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1966, Issue 2 and idem, Introduction to: C. Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, Warszawa 1969; A. Kowalska, "'Źródło' Cypriana Norwida. Próba odczytania," *Prace Polonistyczne* XLV, 1989, pp. 309-317 (it is an extended version of the article in: eadem, *Wiersze Cypriana Norwida*, Warszawa 1978, pp. 85-89).

[75] M. Adamiec, "Cypriana Norwida 'świat na opak,'" in: *Cyprian Norwid. W setną rocznicę śmierci poety. Materiały z sesji poświęconej życiu i twórczości C. Norwida (27-29 października 1983)*, Kraków 1991, p. 79.

to this concept is not convincing; and it is by no means a matter of the ahistoricity of the proposed approach (the origins of this theory actually go back to the writings of Gregory of Nyssa). Apocatastasis draws attention to the emptiness of hell, while in "Źródło" there appear also a small plant and, above all, a lyrical hero wandering in this godless space. At the same time, the theological concept does not answer the question posed by Matywiecki: How is it possible that the Spirit of Creation has its source in hell[76] – in a space marked by absence? But does the spirit of the triumph of evil not succumb to an illusion that the poet compromises already at the level of physical experience: "jakoby wstęgę, która mu sandał oplotła" [like the ribbon that wrapped his sandal] (PWsz II, 133). The juxtaposition of "czyści" [clean] with "oplata" [wrap] is striking here. It almost recalls the thought from the early epigram "Odpowiedź do Włoch" [A Response to Italy]: "Bo Masynissa-dziejów kona / I samo sidło w sidle…" [For Masinissaof history is dying / And only a snare within the snare...] (PWsz I, 184). It is an open question whether rage and sarcasm are not a symptom of defeat. Did Man, hoarse with hatred, mean a symbolic act of his own exaltation ("czyszczenie obuwia" [cleaning of shoes]) and at the same time trampling of the spring, or was the hidden intention – at least hidden from us – to stop its life-giving pulse? And the loudness of the cry and the strength of the protagonist's behaviour, do they not become a measure of his defeat?

The defeat of the demonic Man overturns the possibilities outlined by the interpreters. It invalidates Kowalska's pessimistic ecological interpretation – the world is saved because the source beats. It is similar to the vision of Norwid's contemporary infernal reality and society of the 19th century (Gomulicki), or the violated laws of reality (Adamiec), or the laws governing hell (Matywiecki). All the above-mentioned proposals of reading treat the represented world in the poem –in accordance with the method of allegorical interpretations – as a figurative vision of the world, of some state of reality external to the subject (and, consequently, to Norwid as the author).[77] Where does this belief come from? It is difficult to say. In

[76] P. Matywiecki, "Źródło w piekle," in: *"Klucze od echa." Cyprian Norwid – obecność. Wiersze*, ed. and introduction by E. Kącka, Kraków 2018, p. 112.

[77] The arrangement of space outlined by Norwid was generally treated as a simple and fairly obvious reference to the *Inferno* from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, while at the same time recognising this allegory as an exponent of the author's assessment of the contemporary world, his contemporary civilisation and culture, associated with the situation of hell. See, for instance, K. Wyka, "Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz," in: *Cyprian Norwid. Studia, artykuły, recenzje*, ed. J. Grodzicka, Kraków 1989, p. 104; A. Kuciak, "Norwid wobec Dantego. Kilka przybliżeń," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1996, Issue 3, p. 37. Stefan Sawicki points out in his commentary on the poem that "despite its spatial, allegorical-symbolic poetics, it is not so much about the space of hell as the situation of hell" (idem, [explication] to C. Norwid, "Źródło," in: idem, C. Norwid,

fact, there is no clue pointing to an external world – at the level of imagery, there is no suggestion of some kind of collective, phenomena of a generalising nature or accentuating temporal space. Conversely, the solitude and nature of the wanderer's relationship accentuates entirely different fields of association, linked to some type of personal experience, as existential as possible, focused and personally limited. From there, it is only a step to see this allegorical vision in subjective, spiritual and internal terms. In this sense, "Źródło" should be treated as a very personal text, as a kind of spiritual experience; a record of the struggle with the sense of one's own sinfulness. Only in this way can the character of the Man be understood. The encounter between the lyrical hero, who wanders through hell, and the Man at the spring is in fact an encounter with oneself. The work would then be not about profanation or desecration, but about the experience of evil. The kind of experience that happened to the Psalmist: "Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord" (incidentally, Norwid wrote down the text of Psalm 130 (129), one of the seven penitential psalms, in *Modlitewnik ofiarowany Włodzimierzowi Łubieńskiemu* [*A Prayer Book for Włodzimierz Łubieński*] in 1846). According to Christian tradition, hellwould be an allegory of spiritual burnout, of spiritual emptiness experienced by man aware of his sinfulness.[78]

Negative lyrical subject creation is not dominant throughout Norwid's work. Poems and poetic works using this mode do not constitute the majority in his literary output. At the same time, however – and this must be strongly emphasised – they are like the proverbial salt. They greatly influence other texts, created in the paradigm of generalising and rhetorically transparent formulations (by the way, this element clearly associated with Classicism requires thorough research as one of the distinctive features of Norwid's poetics). The dark reflection of the subject of Norwid's poems should be regarded as a "untied link" in the historico-literary process. It appears in certain areas of Modernism, and comes to full voice in contemporary poetry (I refer here primarily to the works of Różewicz, Miłosz, but also Białoszewski). The protagonist of Norwid's dark poems[79] probably refers to the experience of the

Wiersze [*Poems*], selection, introduction and commentary by S. Sawicki, Lublin 1991, p. 192) – the editor, however, does not specify this observation.

[78] P. Chlebowski, a separate interpretation of the poem "Źródło" [Spring] See: "Piekło-i-ja. O wierszu Norwida 'Źródło,'" in: *Romantyczna fantastyka. III Sympozjum im. Zofii Trojanowiczowej*, ed. W. Hamerski, Z. Przychodniak, Poznań 2022, pp. 75-95.

[79] I refer here to the term introduced by Michał Głowiński when describing Norwid's allegory, although the scholar referred to the inconsistency and peculiar movement of this poetic figure, used on a considerable scale in the works of the author of *Vade-mecum* (hence the term: "poetry of stirred forms"). Głowiński recognises the phenomenon from the reader's side, simultaneously pointing out that the characteristic feature of these "obscure" figures is that the poet

lyrical subject in the poems of Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński, or – to a lesser extent – of the metaphysical poets of the Baroque, while the strength of his original figure and the strength of his poetic message – with a perceptible, though sometimes difficult to recognise, biographical epicentre – places the creator of *Vade-mecum* outside all the known areas of the historico-literary process of the 19th century, outside the movements and phenomena of the poetry of that time.

The once controversial book *Oni i Norwid* [*Them and Norwid*] by Marek Adamiec, devoted to the reception of Norwid's work, has – despite its all considerable faults and even research shortcomings – produced a rather significant finding, which, although it has been resurfacing in research and critical analysis of Norwid's work, has never received such a wide treatment and scope. Adamiec's proposal has a strong sociological and historical foundation, which interests me less, but it also attempts to reconstruct a certain model of the receiver inscribed in the poet's texts. Whether this receiver was formed accurately or not, whether the sender reckoned with the capabilities of the real reader or not, is less important; what is important though– and this, it must be said, Adamiec emphasises at every turn –is that the sender went beyond the horizon of that time. The author's thesis that Norwid was the direct perpetrator of his own defeat and that he "owes it to himself" leads us to the obvious conclusion of the incompatibility of Norwid's work with the literary practice of his epoch. Allusions, quotations, dialogue elements oriented towards his own work and biography – often unknown to the reader – led to obscurity and incomprehensibility. The use of ellipsis, silence and the desire to transform poetic language through the complication of syntax and the introduction of semantic play on a hitherto unprecedented scale, blurring the boundary between poetry and eloquence – these are elements leading to an idiolectisation of the message. This is reminiscent of the musical notations of contemporary composers, who break with the principle of the universalisation of the message in favour of individualisation. The stylistic distinctiveness of a work presupposes the distinctiveness of its notation. The factor confusing the viewer was one of the factors shaping Norwid's poetics – the effect of surprise was its cardinal feature. Hence the friction and constant clash between the sender and the receiver. The other, the unexpected, the surprising did not have the value of a concept, but a strong epistemological motivation, framed by ethical order to which every artist was subject. This gesture – so different from everything the Romantics had managed to accustom receivers to – also included forms seemingly

accepted them as traditional forms, established in literary awareness, but at the same time used them in a non-traditional way. See M. Głowiński, "Ciemne alegorie Norwida," in: *Cyprian Norwid w setną rocznicę śmierci poety*, pp. 179-194. In this case, "obscurity" does not mean a lack of coherence, but the positioning or even evaluation of the subject, its place in the world of the work (and thus the axiological order of poetic reality).

taken out of the literary past and strangely revived by the power of poetic energy. Poetic treatise, legend, parable, dialogue of the dead, philosophical poem subjected to reinterpretation and redefinition became yet other – to use Michał Głowiński's terminology – "stirred forms." Głowiński also pointed out – on a completely different occasion (not directly related to the works of the author of *Vade-mecum*) – that Norwid presented completely new demands for the receiver, demands that were foreign to both the Enlightenment and Romantic traditions. Analysing the structure of the poem "Ostatni despotyzm" [The Last Despotism], Głowiński stressed that the 19th century reader might feel uncomfortable being an observer of such a poetic dialogue. Why?

"Ostatni despotyzm" is a monologue only on the surface; it is in fact a dialogue, a dialogue that is particularly difficult to read, since the speakers are not identified and named, and their lines are not distinguished. The role of the narrator, who would ensure the continuity of the whole utterance (in the sense in which continuity can be spoken of in relation to the previous poetry), is reduced to a minimum [...]. Adopting such a principle makes "Ostatni despotyzm" an exceptionally cut-up and fragmented utterance. Also from the point of view of syntax and versification. One verse contains as many as three syntactic units, a phenomenon encountered before, but with a different motivation – this kind of syntactic fragmentation usually appeared when it was intended to convey the drama and pace of the events being reported. Such motivations are certainly not present in Norwid's poem. This versification and syntax results from the dialogical character of the poem [...]. It results from an orientation towards other people's speech, which is rare in poetry in general and in the poetry of that era in particular. The reader of the time could not grasp the principle of montage, by which the poem is structured, the montage of the speech of several persons.[80]

Of course, "Ostatni despotyzm" is not the only work of this type; to become fully convinced of this, one only has to reach for *Beatrix*, "Wczora-i-ja" [Yesterday-and-I], the a for ementioned "Marionetki" [Marionettes], "Buntowniki, czyli Stronnictwo-wywrotu" [Rebels or the Party of Subversion], "Święty-pokój" [Blessed Peace], not to mention large fragments of the poem *Quidam*. The lack of continuity of the utterance and the technique of free montage does not only affect the areas related to dialogue, the quotation of someone else's or the subject's own speech, but permeates into other areas and layers – imagery, setting or syntax. Moreover, there are meaningful – multi-sense titles, epigraphs, footnotes, the already mentioned irony or other forms of poetic distance, ellipses and enigmatic allusions, and, last but not least, disturbed poetic flow, which, on the one hand, favoured all these assumptions, but, on the other hand, posed virtually insurmountable

[80] M. Głowiński, "Wirtualny odbiorca w strukturze utworu poetyckiego," in: idem, *Dzieło wobec odbiorcy. Szkice z komunikacji literackiej*, Kraków 1998, p. 85.

barriers for the receiver of the time. And then there is Głowiński's concluding sentence, which, although it refers to the text of "Ostatni despotyzm" analysed by him, can be successfully extended to the whole oeuvre by Norwid, and is in fact only strengthened with the passing years, of which *Tajemnica lorda Singelworth* [*Lord Singelworth's Secret*] is perhaps the most striking example: "The virtual reader assumed by Norwid's poetry is supposed to have skills unknown to his contemporary literary audience."[81] Violating the habits of audiences in poetry is undoubtedly one of the tenets of contemporary poetry, its avant-garde trends in particular, and not subject to the domain of Romantic conventions. Of course, rebellion as an artistic gesture was one of the distinctive features of this movement in literature and culture, but let us not forget that by blowing up the classical foundations, Mickiewicz's heirs put in their place their own, equally hermetic and equally systematised (vide: the genre canon, the shape and role of the subject, the system of versification, the reader's profile) as the previous ones.

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For Krzysztof Trybuś, Norwid's work represents the twilight of the Romantic era. In his interesting and inspiring book, *Stary poeta* [*The Old Poet*],[82] he tries to examine the characteristic feature of the poet's biography and work, which was pointed out by Kazimierz Wyka.[83] He discusses it in a multidimensional and multithreaded manner, and links the characteristic attitude of the author of *Promethidion* with the Mediterranean topos of the Old Poet. Norwid's entire oeuvre is a kind of experience of the end and exhaustion. At the same time, let us remember that the poet died at St Casimir's Shelter at the age of 62, in a veterans' house, and not – as wrongly perpetuated in the collective belief – in a poorhouse. Nowadays, this is the pre-retirement age, the borderline between middle age and old age. Even if we were to consider the current realities of statistical life span, it would be difficult to metrically call the poet an old man. At the same time, however, the conviction of Norwid's "old age" very quickly became established in the opinion of the public. The unsuccessful trip to America proved to be a testament to this belief. The thirty-something poet, upon his return from across the ocean, began to be regarded as "a veritable wreck." Was it a description of the actual state or a stylisation, as in

[81] Ibid., p. 87.

[82] K. Trybuś, *Stary poeta. Studia o Norwidzie*, Poznań 2000.

[83] K. Wyka, "Starość Norwida," in: idem, *Cyprian Norwid. Studia, artykuły, recenzje*, Kraków 1989, pp. 181-192.

Szyndler's famous portrait? Without resolving this dilemma, according to Trybuś, Norwid – old physically or spiritually, or perhaps stylised as an old poet – closes the Romantic peloton. He represents a refined and powerful coda in a grand sweeping composition. He is the last of the great artists. His otherness and originality flows from the situation – an awareness of his own time and, simultaneously, a stubborn defence against the ominous shadow of epigonism. This is how Trybuś reads many texts by Norwid, including the poem *Quidam*:

With its literary shape, the poem reflects the decadence of the world it describes. Quidam's death, read [...] as Norwid's symbolic death, is also the death of the Romantic hero in the setting of the sunset of Romantic literature.[84]

Continuity is the condition for such a readingof an epoch that began in our youth with the famous *Oda do młodości* [*Ode to Youth*] by Mickiewicz. By the way, we were not the only ones to begin with it. But why not treat this topos – it is an open question whether it refers to old age or maturity (the semantic scopes of these two concepts do not entirely coincide) – in terms of a conscious negation. After all, what can be contrasted with youth – paradoxically contrasted, with its strength and energy?

Of course, when positing the thesis of Norwid's positioning outside Romanticism – a conscious positioning – an important reservation needs to be made, one that would require a separate extensive dissertation. I only signal it here, closing this selective argument. The fact of being "beyond" does not imply that the author of *Assunta* was a positivist, symbolist, avant-garde creator (or someone who heralded it). If we have already parted with our dreams of Norwid's Romanticism, we necessarily want to place him in some movement or ascribe almost all movements to him, in fear or anxiety of the historico-literary destabilisation of the phenomenon. This is the direction taken by Wiesław Rzońca's reflection in his book *Norwid a Romantyzm polski* [*Norwid and Polish Romanticism*] (Warszawa 2005), which finds in the poet's work elements of Romanticism (the primacy of the spiritual element over the material), Realism (the cult of practice and love of reality), Symbolism (the parabolic nature of poetic expression), Parnassianism (awareness of the aesthetic value of art) and Modernism (avant-gardism). And the conclusion? It sounds rather peculiar, especially when juxtaposed with the originality of Norwid's work:

Norwid's work is thus hybrid at its core. However, not only is it impossible to subordinate it to Romantic syncretism, but also to the traditional schematisation of 19th century literature, built on

[84] K. Trybuś, "Starość sztuki," in: idem, *Stary poeta*, p. 125.

the dichotomy Romanticism-Positivism. For this dichotomy assumes the primacy of the ideological factor, which, as is now obvious, should not be decisive in reflection on art.[85]

Thus, in creating a new model of poetry, he became an avant-garde artist; the intensification of the spiritual while denying Romanticism led to the path of Symbolism. On the other hand – and this sounds rather strange and unexpected – "the postulate of connecting the work with reality [...] resulted in de-objectification and depersonalisation [sic!], which led Norwid's work directly to (broadly understood) Modernism."[86]

The last remark, disclosing the conceptual principle behind the reflection, reduces the whole thing to speculative operations, completely detached from the object of description. But it also reveals the strength of the need, or perhaps the need for the strength of traditional literary-historical interpretation, where each element is assigned a specific place in a given sequence of things. Rejected from one place, it must find itself – necessarily – in another place. No phenomenon, no singularity. Structuralism weighs down heavily in this type of situation, even over the line of thought of those scholars or critics who, associated with it, might consider it a methodological affront. And yet, the idea that the creator of *Promethidion* followed a completely separate path – and I need to stress again: a separate path – seems neither an impossible thought, nor absurd, nor terrible, no more than it is absurd and terrible to describe his work – regardless of the axiological awareness of the one defining it – as hybrid.

Transl. Rafał Augustyn

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„LISTKA JEDNEGO, NI ZĄBECZKA W LIŚCIU". NORWID – POZA ROMANTYZMEM

Streszczenie

Artykuł stanowi polemikę z dotychczasowymi ustaleniami historycznoliterackimi, które sytuują dzieło Norwida w ramach nurtu romantycznego: zwłaszcza z koncepcjami Zofii Stefanowskiej, Zofii Trojanowiczowej czy Edwarda Kasperskiego, ale także z pomysłami ks. Antoniego Dunajskiego, wyprowadzającymi historiozoficzną refleksję poety z dialektycznej myśli Hegla (albo ogólnie: tzw. filozofii niemieckiej), przyprawionej chrześcijańską tradycją i lekturą Biblii. Artykuł zwracał uwagę na niektóre cechy i właściwości poetyki Norwida, jak: oryginalna koncepcja bohatera, personalistyczna koncepcja dziejów, ironia czy ukształtowanie podmiotu lirycznego oraz wirtualnego odbiorcy lirycznego, które w sposób zdecydowany zaświadczają o funkcjonowaniu poety poza wskazanym nurtem literackim oraz ideowym epoki. Zarazem tym ustaleniom przyświeca myśl, że twórca *Vade-mecum* poruszając się poza romantycznymi konwencjami niekoniecznie musiał wpisywać się w jakiś inny, już istniejący nurt (jak np. pozytywizm, parnasizm), czy też taki, który dopiero zaistnieje w przyszłości (np. modernizm): jego dzieło stanowiłoby wówczas zapowiedź owego nurtu (jako premodernista, jako prekursor współczesnej liryki, jako symbolista etc.). Autorowi artykułu przyświeca zatem refleksja o odrębności, fenomenie Norwida i jego oryginalnej spuścizny przynajmniej na tle literatury polskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: romantyzm; Zofia Stefanowska; Zofia Trojanowiczowa; historiozofia; bohater liryczny; podmiot; bohater; ironia; czyn.

"NO SINGLE LEAF, NOR ITS TINIEST TOOTH." NORWID BEYOND ROMANTICISM

Summary

The article polemicizes with those findings in the history of literature that situate Norwid's output within the Romantic movement, especially conclusions drawn by Zofia Stefanowska, Zofia Trojanowiczowa and Edward Kasperski, but also certain ideas developed by Rev. Antoni Dunajski, who argues that the poet's historiosophic reflection is rooted in Hegelian dialectics (or German philosophy in general), seasoned with the Christian tradition and readings from the Bible. The author emphasises certain properties of Norwid's poetics – his original concept of the protagonist, his personalist concept of history, irony, and the development of both the lyrical subject and the virtual lyrical audience, which all decidedly confirm that the poet functioned outside the said literary and ideological movement. These claims are also supported by the idea that even though Norwid operated beyond the Romantic convention, he would not embrace some other, existing trend (e.g. Positivism or Parnassianism), or already represent one from the future (e.g. Modernism). Instead, as a pre-modernist and precursor of contemporary lyricism, or a symbolist, he foreshadowed future literary movements. Accordingly, the article claims that Norwid's work constitutes a separate and original phenomenon, at least in Polish literature.

Keywords: Romanticism; Zofia Stefanowska; Zofia Trojanowiczowa; historiosophy; lyrical subject; protagonist; irony; deed.

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