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“SUCH A MASTER...”
NORWID’S PRESENCE IN LATE LYRICS
BY TADEUSZ RÓŻEWICZ

I have found silence... And now I can begin my lesson on Norwid and in Norwid. I want to be a good student. And although I have been reading Norwid for over sixty years... I start everything from the beginning... and where is the beginning here? Perhaps, as it is the case with Norwid, the beginning is at the end... at the end of my days and my reading...¹

At the beginning of the 1990s, Tadeusz Różewicz was preparing a selection of Norwid’s poems for the series “Lekcja Literatury” [Lesson in Literature] published by Wydawnictwo Literackie in Kraków, and was working on the introduction to this anthology. The book never came into being, but a trace and testimony of this work is the essay entitled “To, co zostało z niepisanej książki o Norwidzie” [What remains of the book on Norwid I never wrote],² from which the opening quotation of this article is taken. Not surprisingly, although the writer admits to having read Norwid systematically for sixty years, there are many more references to Norwid in the last quarter of his literary career than before. This does not mean, however, that this was an entirely new phenomenon in Różewicz’s poetry at the time. Certain similarities in the poetry of Norwid and Różewicz can be discerned from the debut of the author of “Echa leśne” [Forest Echoes] and “Niepokój” [Unease], and they reveal a similar sensitivity of both artists as observers of the social and cultural phenomena characteristic of the times in which they lived. In the poetry of both, there resonates a strong concern for the human being exposed to the corruption of both spiritual life and social relations. This convergence was linked to the awareness

¹ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “To, co zostało z nienapisanej książki o Norwidzie,” in: idem, *Utwory zebrane, Proza 3*, Wrocław 2004, pp. 114-142, p. 125.

² The first version of this essay was published in 2002, in Issue 3 of *Kwartalnik Artystyczny*.

that their own lives coincided with a time of one of the historical breakthroughs, and that poetry, or art more broadly, should, in epochs of axiological chaos, save those values that would allow man to find meaning in a dislocated, uncertain reality. Both felt that the shape of the new world was only just emerging from the confusion of events and it was unclear whether it would ever reach a coherent form. From this came a conviction about the moral duties of poetry, a recognition of the primacy of ethics over aesthetics.

Although the goal of their artistic path seems similar, its shape and the way it was traversed were different. Norwid did not lose confidence in the values encapsulated in the code of the culture he was born into and which he inherited. He saw the source of the crisis in the fact that symbols and rituals, which until recently had served as signposts, were being forgotten and their once vivid content was slowly becoming illegible. He therefore combined his artistic duty with reminding of them and reinterpreting them, which was supposed to restore the faded values to their radiant topicality. He did not shy away from constructing concepts that explained the human condition and the course of history; this tendency was strongest in the mid-19th century, in the years between the Spring of Nations and the poet's departure for America.³ Różewicz focused his attention on other aspects of humanist reality. Distrustful of ideas, he strove to save the remembered, actually experienced image of the world – the props which are thrown into the rubbish heap by the course of civilisation: the tastes and smells of childhood, the gestures and words of people – also those met in passing, sometimes funny, but sometimes involuntarily revealing some fragment of the inner drama.⁴ Thus, whereas Norwid set his poetry the task of reconstructing values through the renewal of a language capable of telling an evangelical message in the reality of “wiek kupiecki i przemysłowy” [mercantile and industrial age],⁵ Różewicz chose the stance of a chronicler of the humanist catastrophe of the 20th century. Therefore, it was not the evoked ideas that were the main reason for Różewicz's insistently repeated reading of Norwid's works. On that account – where can one find the reasons for the fascination with the 19th century artist who both “attracted and repelled”?

³ This tendency is particularly evident in works such as *Promethidion*, *Zwolon*, *Pieśń społeczna* [*A Social Song*], the rhapsody *Niewola* [*Enslavement*].

⁴ This way of building the represented world and creating literary characters is already evident in his early short stories and is most poignant in the creations of old, lonely people, especially mothers rejected by their adult children; see, for instance, the short stories *Na placówce dyplomatycznej* [*At the Diplomatic Post*], *Ta stara cholera* [*This Old Hag*].

⁵ Z. STEFANOWSKA, “Norwid pisarz wieku kupieckiego i przemysłowego,” in: eadem, *Strona Norwida. Studia o Norwidzie*, Lublin 1993.

There are two aspects worth examining – the affinity of their lyrical motifs and poetic technique. What draws attention, for example, is the presence in Różewicz’s poems of repeated elements of literary imagery that the writer sometimes directly associates with Norwid’s influence, and even if there is no such suggestion, interpretative reflection reveals such an analogy. These include, for instance, the motifs of absence, ruin, silence, or those associated with plastic arts qualities: white, black, grey, the motif of sculpture or architecture. Despite their diversity, they are united by a semantic thread related to the deficiency of existence, the hunger for value, the longing for existential completion.

In terms of poetic technique, it is not difficult to notice numerous similarities, e.g. the terse use of metaphors, striving for conciseness and a clear message, various shades of irony (sometimes almost mockery), ambiguity,⁶ and in terms of text genres – play with genre conventions, a tendency to contaminate them,⁷ fragmentariness; while in longer poetic works – a predilection for composition based on the concepts of collage and *silva rerum*. Quite often, in Norwid’s case, especially in *Vade-mecum*, and in Różewicz’s – in the volumes from the last twenty years of his work, one can see a tendency to give a poetic meaning to the graphic form of the poem.⁸

In the *Afterword* to a selection of his poems published at the turn of the millennium, the author of *Niepokój* [*Unease*] wrote:

The poem is a common phenomenon, poetry is a very rare phenomenon... poetry, unlike the poem, has no beginning and no end.⁹

In this short text, Różewicz returned several more times to the mystery of the poetic word, eventually making the opposition between poem and poetry the leitmotif of his self-commentary. Thus he continued:

⁶ One way of achieving the effect of ambiguity in Różewicz’s poems is to dispense with punctuation. Interestingly, Norwid also sometimes experimented with punctuation for the very same purpose. This was fostered by the presence of two systems of punctuation in the second half of the 19th century: the departing rhetorical-intonation one and the implemented logical-compositional one. Różewicz and, more broadly, the avant-garde poets who created “the fourth system of the Polish poem” made use of certain expressive qualities of the old rhetorical model of punctuation.

⁷ I wrote more extensively on the contamination of literary genres in Norwid’s work in the article: “Norwidowskie sposoby kontaminacji gatunków literackich,” in: *Genologia Cypriana Norwida*, ed. A. Kuik-Kalinowska, Słupsk 2005, pp. 103-118.

⁸ See D. HECK, “Zamiennik estetyczny w kenotycznych pejzażach Tadeusza Różewicza. Impresje o milczeniu,” in: *Literatura – kultura religijna – polskość. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana profesorowi Krzysztofowi Dybciakowi w 65. rocznicę urodzin*, eds. K. Koehler, W. Kubyba, J. Sikora, Warszawa 2015, pp. 281-291.

⁹ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “Posłowie,” in: idem, *Niepokój. Wybór wierszy*, Warszawa 2000.

Even in my poetic youth I separated poetry from poems. The poem is the body of poetry, but what is the soul of poetry, I do not know... is it feeling, thought? It seemed that without faith, hope and love man could not live... But at the end of the 20th century a suspicion is born that this mammal could reproduce without love, could live without faith and die without hope. It has emerged from the depths and lives on the surface. It does not live, but consumes.¹⁰

The theme also appeared in a reminiscence of his own work on an anthology of Leopold Staff's poems, which he prepared for publication after the death of his friend and master.¹¹

When – many years ago – I was preparing a “selection” of Leopold Staff's poems, I was striving to condense poetic matter – to transform quantity into quality. It seemed to me that, from Staff's vast oeuvre, I was extracting lasting, living elements, that, by colliding poems that were poles apart, I was triggering a sparkling and explosion of form and content. I was clearing Staff's oeuvre of “poems” in order to show living poetry.¹²

When Różewicz wrote these words, reconstructing his intentions behind editing a selection of Staff's works, he was working on an anthology of Norwid's poems, and it is possible that this reminiscence appeared because the juxtaposition of Norwid's poems was also intended to “condense poetic matter” and bring to the surface of the poems the elements of pure poetry. I will thus treat the essay “To, co zostało z nie napisanej książki o Norwidzie” as a working variant of the introduction to an anthology that has not been written. Such a reading makes it possible to hypothetically assume that the poems quoted or commented on by Różewicz are the ones he wanted to include in his selection, because he perceived in them a particularly intense presence of living poetry.

The list opens with “Moja piosnka” [My Song], written by Norwid in Florence. Różewicz quotes the last stanza of this lyric and states that “this is a sad poem.” This true but banal statement is joined by a much less banal indication of the source of this sadness. According to the commentator, it stems from a longing for “rzecz czarnoleska” [lit. the thing of Czarnolas], i.e. for the kind of poetry that bears witness to a harmonious settling in the world that was completely unavailable to Norwid.

“Rzecz czarnoleska” is Kochanowski's poetry and not just his poetry, but everything that surrounded Kochanowski... What he lived in... what he loved... with whom he drank... “Rzecz czarnoleska” is not for the homeless anonymous poet in Paris, London and New York... not for Norwid...¹³

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ L. STAFF, *Kto jest ten dziwny nieznajomy*, selection by T. Różewicz, Warszawa 1964.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Quoted in T. RÓŻEWICZ, *Proza 3*, p. 122.

Pure poetry is therefore, according to Różewicz, the quintessence of the entire inner and outer life available to the author, a synthesis that sometimes reveals itself in a flash of words.

Różewicz moves smoothly from the sad “song” to a poem set in a different mood, evoking a smile “full of cheerfulness and irritation.” This work is quoted below in its entirety, because not everything here fits into the formula of a cheerful joke, nor does everything meet with the approval of the poet-reader.

CZEMU

Próżno się będziesz przeklinał i zwodził,
I wiarołomił zawzięciu własnemu –
Powrócisz do niej – będziesz w progi wchodził
I drżał, że – może nie zastaniesz?... czemu!

*

Sam sobie będziesz słówkiem jednym szkodził,
Nie powierzonym, prócz tobie jednemu.
Będziesz się b e z n i e j z n i ą kłócił – i godził,
I wrócisz wątpiąc, czy zastaniesz?... czemu!

*

Szczęśliwi przyjdą, jak na domiar złemu:
Kołem osiędą ją – chwilki nie będzie,
By westchnąć szczerze... ach! czemu i czemu
Przyszli szczęśliwi? Rozparli się wszędzie,
Wszędzie usiedli z czołem rozjaśnionem –
Dom napełnili – stali się Legionem!...

*

Przeczekaś wszystkich?... to – dwóch ci zostanie,
A j e d e n w progu jeszcze ma pytanie
I choć na zegar pojrzawszy, się sroży,
Ty – nawyknałeś już nie ufać jemu:
Wróci i znowu kapelusz położy,
I rękawiczki zdejmie jeszcze – – c z e m u ?

*

Aż chwila przyjdzie, gdy w y j ś ć? – lepiej znaczy,
Niżeli zostać po obojętnemu;
Wstaniesz – i pójdziesz, kamienny z rozpaczny,
I nie zatrzymasz się, precz idąc – – c z e m u ?

*

A księżyc będzie, jak od wieków, niemy,
Gwiazda się żadna z miejsca nie poruszy –
Patrząc na ciebie oczyma szklistemi,
Jakby nie było w Niebie żywej duszy:
Jakby nie mówił nikt N i e w i d z i a l n e m u,

Że trochę niżej – tak wiele katuszy!
I nikt, przed Bogiem, nie pomyślił: c z e m u?
(PWsz II, 118-119)

WHY?

In vain will you deceive yourself and swear,
As you betray your own resolve –
You will return to her – cross her threshold
And tremble that you may not find her? – why?

*

A simple word will offend you, you offend yourself,
A word understood by you alone,
In your mind you argue with her, and make up,
And you return, doubting whether you'll find her – why?

*

Those more fortunate than you arrive, making matters worse,
They circle round her, a moment cannot be found
To sigh sincerely – ah! why? why?!
Have the fortunate arrived? – Are they scattered every where?
Every where they sit with enlightened brow,
The house is full! They have become legion?! . . .

*

Will you wait them out? You two will remain,
But a third raises a question in the hall,
And though you rage as you look at the clock,
You have grown accustomed not to trust him:
He will come back, and prettily doff his hat,
And eventually take off his gloves – why?

*

And when the time comes when it means more
To leave – than to stay on not caring,
You will stand up and go, turned to stone in despair,
And you do not linger, you go right out . . . why?

*

Arid the moon will be there, silent, as it has been for centuries,
Not a single star will fall from its place –
And you will stare with glassy eyes
As if not a single soul lived in the heavens,
As if no one had ever reminded the Compassionate One
That here, a bit below, there was so much torture,
And no one has ever asked Him: why?¹⁴

¹⁴ English translation by G.T. KAPOLKA, *The Polish Review*, Vol. 28, 1983, No. 4, p. 53.

Różewicz saw in this tableaux cheerful self-irony underlain with humour, praised the capture of the universal character of the situation of the lover, for whom the object of his feelings is inaccessible – permanently or temporarily, and therefore he circles around the house of his beloved, intimidated by the company gathered around her. The interpreter looks at this poem as a film frame depicting an amusing situation, frozen for a moment by a poetic word. He is only bemused by the message, because – “[...] in the last stanza the moon and the stars, and God himself [sic!] are involved in the affair of the unhappy lover... but the earlier stanzas are amusing, one reads them with a smile... .”¹⁵ The lofty style and hyperbolisation of the subject in the poem’s finale does indeed clash dissonantly with the emotional monologue of the lyrical subject that fills the preceding stanzas. Perhaps this contrast is a not entirely intended artistic effect. The word “katusze” [torment] does not seem an adequate designation for the sufferings of the shy lover, and the expectation that his dilemmas will move the stars produces a comic effect. But perhaps the poet’s intention was to produce a self-ironic comic effect? – The author of the “unwritten book” associates a note made in the margins of the poem with remarks on episodes in Norwid’s life. In the admirer heading hesitantly to the salon of his beloved, Różewicz recognises Norwid hurrying to the residence of Maria Kalergis. He interprets the next referenced lyric, “Sens świata” [Sense of the World], from a similar perspective.

The above examples reveal this style of Różewicz’s reading, which treats a literary work as a record of the author’s experiences and emotions. In this context, the poems acquire the status of notes from a lyrical diary, “raptulariusz” [Lat. *raptularius*, a journal] of feelings and events. This way of reading makes it possible to combine literary motifs with mentions taken from biographical anecdotes. For instance, Różewicz links the recollection and interpretation of the artist’s last words – “przykryjcie mnie lepiej” [cover me better] – both with anecdotal material and with the theme of *Czarne kwiaty* [Black Flowers] (the mystery of deathbed words). He attempts to subject this mystery to rationalist criticism, but stops before the main point, leaving some room for silence. It is precisely those works that he values most, the works that take the readers to the verge of the word and leave them on its edge.¹⁶ He supposes that this is when the moment of epiphany, the revelation of the

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Hugo Friedrich treated this type of lyrical situation as one of the distinguishing features of modernist poetry and showed this aspect as particularly expressive in the poems by Stefan Mallarmé (see H. FRIEDRICH, *Struktura nowoczesnej liryki*, transl. and introduction by E. Feliksiak, Warszawa 1978. In the context of Norwid’s work, see Maciej ŻUROWSKI (“Norwid i symboliści,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 1964, Issue 4, pp. 101-125) and Piotr ŚNIEDZIEWSKI (*Mallarmé – Norwid. Milczenie i poetycki modernizm we Francji i w Polsce*, Poznań 2008; esp. Chapters V and VI).

“soul” of poetry, can occur. The poem by Norwid that evokes such an experience in Różewicz is “Czułość” [Tenderness]. A longer passage is quoted below in which he attempts to describe his experience as a poet-reader in contact with this lyrical miniature.

I am not an innocent reader [...] but a sinful professional. I have dozens of favourite poems. Here I can only tell the story of “one love.” Many years ago I became attached to Norwid’s poem “Czułość” [Tenderness]:

Czułość – bywa jak pełny wojen krzyk
I jak szemrzących źródeł prąd,
I jako wtór pogrzebnny...

*

I jak plecionka długa z włosów blond,
Na której wdowiec nosić zwykł
Zegarek srebrny – – –

[Tenderness – is oft like a war-drenched cry,
And like wellsprings’ murmuring whirl,
And like a burial lament...

*

And like a braided long blond curl,
Upon which the widower is wont to wear
His silver watch – – –¹⁷

[...] – I like this poem for its brevity, precision and accuracy. The poem is accurate, i.e. it hits me. It is perfect, i.e. it ends where it needs to. Only a few poets know and feel where a poem needs to end, where it ends [...] the poem “Czułość” is for me like the striking of a clock. It strikes an hour and falls silent. It falls silent and resonates for some indefinite time within me. I often communed with this poem between 1945 and 1946 [...]. I wanted to explore its clear mystery. It seemed to me that this poem contained the solution to a riddle that had been tormenting me: whether there really is such a thing as “poetry” in the world, whether it is possible for it to survive the “death of god,” the “death of man,” the “death of civilisation”...

Does the poetry live in the words of the text? Is it present in it like blood in a living person? Does it appear only momentarily and then disappear? Does it leave the words of the work and return to them? Why do only certain people see it and feel it? [...] To discover and capture “poetry.” That is what I wanted. Then “Czułość”, along with Norwid, left me. For a long time.

And then some other day this poem came back to me again. Perfect. Taciturn. Now, just when my distrust of “poetry” has grown, when I use the word increasingly with inverted commas full of doubt and irony. “Czułość” has come back alive...¹⁸

¹⁷ English translation by D. BORCHARDT, in collaboration with A. BRAJERSKA-MAZUR, C. NORWID, *Poems*, New York 2011, p. 53.

¹⁸ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *Proza* 3, pp. 130-132.

Here, it is no longer a question of biographical contexts and the conventions of their literary preservation, nor even of the vigilance of memory and imagination to make the poetic image match visible reality. “Czułość,” like Mickiewicz’s Lausanne lyrics, directs towards questions about the essence of poetry, its mystery. Norwid might also have said – towards a parabolic approximation of undefined feelings and spiritual states¹⁹. The composition of the poem is striking in its simplicity. In a succession of comparisons, Norwid seeks to approximate the various aspects of the eponymous, positively valued feeling of tenderness. He does not build a definition; instead, he suggests a sequence of comparisons.²⁰ This was pointed out by Tomasz Korpysz, polemising with earlier interpretations attributing to “Czułość” the characteristics of a poetic definition²¹. The four comparisons that fill the poem refer to such different designata that their *ratio comparationis* is not obvious, or not there at all. “Approximations” of showing/experiencing tenderness indicate the variety of stimuli that evoke such a state. A common feature of the comparisons in the first stanza is a strong acoustic emphasis – a war cry, the murmur of spring water, the refrain of a funeral song. These acoustic qualities and the indefinite boundaries of the space in which the lyrical situation has been placed make the music dominate the image, blurring its contours. This makes the final comparison, which associates tenderness with the symbolism of objects with a concrete appearance – with their colour and shape clearly indicated, all the more powerful. Here, too, the human being appears – the subject of the experience to which the mementos point, momentarily opening up the dimension of the past and loss. The thematised musicality introduced by the motifs of cry, murmur and refrain corresponds with the instrumentation of the poem shaped by a simple versification procedure. In each of the

¹⁹ See C. NORWID, *Milczenie* [Silence], PWSz VI, 221-250.

²⁰ The poem attracted the attention of scholars. Norwid’s lyrical miniature was interpreted by, among others: A. CZERNAWSKI (“Wiersz współczesny,” *Wiadomości* 1971, Issue 2, p. 2), Roman JAKOBSON (“‘Czułość’ Cypriana Norwida,” in: *For Wiktor Weintraub. Essays in Polish Literature, Language and History*, The Hague 1975, pp. 227-237), H. SIEWIERSKI (“Architektura słowa. Wokół Norwidowskiej teorii i praktyki słowa,” in: idem, *Architektura słowa i inne szkice o Norwidzie*, Kraków 2012, pp. 115-116), T. KORPYSZ (“Cypriana Norwida wiersze-definicje?,” in: *Genologia Cypriana Norwida*, ed. A. Kuik-Kalinowska, Słupsk 2005, pp. 73-91), R. SIOMA, “Pamięć zmysłów?... O ‘Czułości’ Cypriana Norwida,” in: *Norwidowski świat rzeczy*, eds. P. Abriszewska, G. Halkiewicz-Sojak, I. Dobrzeńska, D. Wojtasińska, Toruń 2018, pp. 489-502. K. SAWICKA-MIERZYŃSKA interpreted the poem in Różewicz’s context off ocusing on imagery and the issue of representation (see eadem, “Dlaczego ‘Czułość’ Cypriana Norwida jest jednym z ulubionych wierszy Tadeusza Różewicza?,” in: *Symbol w dziele Norwida*, ed. W. Rzońca, Warszawa 2011, pp. 311-320).

²¹ T. KORPYSZ, “Cypriana Norwida wiersze-definicje?”

two tercets, the lines get shorter and shorter. The number of syllables in successive lines decreases in a regular manner – in the first stanza: 10 – 8 – 7; in the second: 10 – 8 – 5. This gives the effect of moving from shouting to the disappearance of sounds and, finally, to silence. Różewicz's metaphor, comparing the poetic effect to the striking of a clock and the reverberation that this sound leaves for a while, turned out to be an extremely apt interpretative suggestion. The disappearance of speech in ever shorter lines leads the reader towards a wordless understanding of the state of tenderness, towards the limit of the poetic word. The lyrical situation opens up to a poetic epiphany.

There is a fundamental problem with the use of the word 'epiphany' in relation to literature and the description of the sensation it evokes. We reach for it to encapsulate in linguistic forms the description of a state of illumination – a cognitive and/or aesthetic enlightenment for which verbal forms of expression are no longer sufficient. The term has been "borrowed" for the purposes of literary discourse from the field of theology and religious studies.²² However, it has already become established in interpretations of poetry²³ and it is difficult to do without it when we want to capture moments in which sounds or motifs reveal their symbolic, or perhaps metaphysical, side to the receiver and can open up a glimpse of transcendence, the immanent side of spirituality, or... silence. – Just as in Norwid's "Czułość."

Norwid is a poet in whose works 'epiphany' returns to its double semantic entanglement in the matter of beauty, goodness, truth and the divine patronage sanctioning these values. Its two poles, the divine and the human, and the possible mediation between them by the work of art, were strongly emphasised by John Paul II in his *Letter to Artists*, who dedicated the text "To all who are passionately dedicated to the search for new 'epiphanies' of beauty so that through their creative work as artists they may offer these as gifts to the world"²⁴ and referring to Norwid's understanding of beauty and the mission of art.

²² Theological dictionaries point to the Greek root of the word and distinguish between the biblical meaning: "the historically verifiable intervention of a personal God in the world" and the religious meaning: "the sudden appearance and disappearance of a deity;" see K. RAHNER, H. VORGRIMLER, *Mały słownik teologiczny*, Warszawa 1987. In interpretations of poetry, the latter meaning, unmodified and adapted to the needs of literary studies, has been adopted.

²³ See R. NYCZ, *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości. Poetyka epifanii w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej*, Kraków 2001; A. van NIEUKERKEN, *Ironiczny konceptyzm. Nowoczesna polska poezja metafizyczna w kontekście anglosaskiego modernizmu*, Kraków 1998; S. SAWICKI, *Wartość – sacrum – Norwid 3*, Lublin 2017; P. ŚNIEDZIEWSKI, *Mallarmé – Norwid...*

²⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Artists*, published on Easter Sunday, 4 April 1999, in: K. WOJTYŁA, JAN PAWEŁ II, *Poezje – dramaty – szkice – Tryptyk rzymski*, Kraków 2004, p. 560.

It seems doubtful whether Różewicz, in the last two decades of his work, was “searching for the epiphany of beauty.” He was rather concerned with the “epiphany of goodness,” and one of the chosen, albeit imperfect, guides on this path turned out to be Norwid again.

Let us return to the essay “To, co pozostało z nienapisanej książki o Norwidzie.” Although “Czułość” was singled out by Różewicz and indicated as one of his favourite poems, it is not the only example of his fascination with Norwid’s lyric poetry; alongside two other pieces can be mentioned: “W Weronie” [In Verona], “Daj mi wstążkę błękitną...” [Give Me a Blue Ribbon...]. These are lyric poems show a frozen moment of existence and reveal an awareness of some acute insufficiency – a lack of rootedness in the space of the world and Polish poetry (a lack of “rzecz czarnoleska”), a lack of reciprocated love and tenderness. They record a moment of touching truth about subjective longing for the unattainable fullness of being. Różewicz also distinguishes lyric poems that aroused his pure and selfless admiration and evoked an experience of almost religious rapture: “Bema pamięci żałobny-rapsod” [A Funeral Rhapsody in Memory of General Bem], which “acted like a mystery, like a rite,”²⁵ or the poem “Do słynnej tancerki rosyjskiej – nieznaney zakonnicy” [To a Famous Russian Dancer, an Unknown Nun]. The juxtaposition of works does not allow us to abstract a clear criterion according to which the poet-reader chose certain poems and omitted others. This is because the poet-reader’s selection also includes “Częstochowskie wiersze” [Poems of Częstochowa], stylised as plain folk poetry but in fact quite conceptual and not at all concise, and “Laur dojrzały” [Mature Laurel], with its moral message calling on the author to humility and stoic acceptance of the rhythm of time, as well as “Czasy” [Times], the historical polemic with the Hegelian idea of the end of history²⁶. Różewicz’s poems inspired by his lessons in Norwid shed some more light on this variety of selected works. The poetry of the author of *Vade-mecum* is captured by the would-be creator of the anthology in metaphors of ‘stone’ and ‘spark.’ The former evokes the effort of the sculptor, visible especially in the outlines of works not yet completed; the poet mentions Michelangelo’s Florentine sculptures in this context²⁷. The spark has been associated with the motif of stones:

Norwid jest czasem
jak uderzenie dwóch skał

²⁵ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *Proza 3*, p. 130.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁷ This may refer to Michelangelo’s unfinished Florentine pietas, even though Różewicz does not mention them.

dwóch kamieni
 o siebie
jak uderzenie
ślepych kamieni
z których tryska iskra
i światło
co obejmuje (te zgromadzone łatwopalne materiały)²⁸

Norwid is sometimes
like the collision of two rocks
two stones
 with each other
like an impact of
blind stones
showering with a spark
and light
which encompasses (these collected flammable materials)

This lyrical miniature somewhat reveals the criteria for selection. – The presence of stones indicates the favouring of those poems that show the effort of creation and leave traces of this effort in the form emerging from formlessness.²⁹ The spark can be interpreted as a metaphor for enlightenment, a flash born of this effort.

The quoted lyric is not the only poetic entry inspired by the would-be anthology. In the poems: “Wieczór dla Norwida” [An Evening for Norwid], “Świta” [Dawn] and “Dom św. Kazimierza” [St Casimir’s House], the author records reflections sparked by his reading of his 19th century predecessor. Tired of “tapping those trees of poetry like a woodpecker,” he is close to discouragement. Once again, he tries to answer the question about the reasons for the association of Norwid’s poetic style with sculpture, about the sources of the visual character of his poetic images, because “Norwid’s poems are both read and watched... watched while reading.”³⁰ And he finds no answer. The experience of standing on the border between word and silence, which cannot be crossed, is repeated. In his search for an answer, the interpreter tries to see through the eyes of his imagination the figure of a brilliant inhabitant of a Parisian asylum (“Dom św. Kazimierza”). But even this endeavour

²⁸ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *Proza 3*, pp. 124-125.

²⁹ On effort as a thematised problem and literary motif in Norwid’s writing, see B. KUCZERA-CHACHULSKA, “Czas siły-zupełnej.” *O kategorii wysiłku w poezji Norwida*, Lublin 1998.

³⁰ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “Wieczór dla Norwida,” in: *Proza 3*, p. 117.

does not bring us any closer to an answer. The silent hero of the poem obscures rather than illuminates the mysteries of his poetry.

stanął – i obejrzał – oddalił się żeby
lepiej zobaczyć... odpycha aby przyciągnąć
zaciemnia aby wyjaśnić...
grachoćodpycha³¹

he stood – and looked – he moved away to
see better... he repels to attract
he obscures to clarify...
he plays though repels

The last line, taken from Norwid’s “Fortepian Szopena” [Chopin’s Grand Piano], recurs many times in Różewicz’s notes and poems inspired by Norwid. Its paraphrase also closes the draft of the “unwritten book on Norwid;” or perhaps it rather opens it, since the author finishes the piece by suspending the question to which he has not found an answer: “For us, the posterity, the question of whether Norwid is this type of Master, who plays though he repels, is still relevant.”³² The draft unveiled important aspects of the “Master’s play,” but did it answer the question of what actually repels from him?

The outline of the response can be reconstructed from the sparse references. At times, Różewicz is repelled by the poetics of the sublime, as revealed by the critical comment on the last stanza of the poem “Czemu” [Why], at other times by the restrained expression of sensual qualities (“Norwid’s flowers are black and white... The women are veiled, hidden... in wide dresses, like ships”). At yet other times – by an overly categorical moralist tone, which in turn can be inferred from the lack of references to those works in which it resounded most clearly in Norwid.

The draft remained a fragment, like many of the two poets’ texts, but it reinforced the inner imperative to find “the right word for the things of this world.” And this is no small effort. “Wieczór dla Norwida” [An Evening for Norwid] contains such a self-portrait of a busy poet:

piszę ten wiersz
zmęczony
i w sobie pochylon

³¹ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “Dom św. Kazimierza,” *ibid.*, p. 116.

³² *Proza 3*, p. 134.

piszę ten wiersz pamiętnik
ogryzmołony
i sobie niechętny³³

I am writing this poem
tired
and inwardly hunched

I am writing this diary-poem
ink-besmeared
and self-deprecating

The syntax and lack of punctuation make it impossible to resolve whether this is an image of the authorial subject. It is possible to discern the semantic duplication here and assume that both the poem and the poet are marked by fatigue and discouragement. It is unclear whether this is caused by the painstaking work of editing and drafting, which makes the poet inwardly hunched and the personified poem patiently endures it, or whether it is caused by hardships of life, in which the realm of memories continues to expand and the horizon of the future shrinks. The quoted stanzas have a palimpsest character; the reference to the opening poem of the *Vade-mecum* cycle shows through the entire quoted passage, and the lyrical situation too resembles that one, fixed in words a century ago:

[...] piszę – pamiętnik artysty,
Ogryzmołony i w sobie pochylony –
Oblędny!... ależ – wielce rzeczywisty!³⁴

[...] I write anartist's account,
ink-besmeared and inwardly hunched –
Errant!... but of course – utterly true!³⁵

Vade-mecum and the later poems of the Parisian recluse, similarly to Różewicz's volumes of poetry written in the last two decades of his artistic output, can be read in the formula of "ink-besmeared diaries of an artist." In the case of Różewicz's poetic collections, this is encouraged by their editorial layout, their hybrid text genres

³³ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *Proza 3*, p. 116.

³⁴ C. NORWID, *Dzieła zebrane [Collected Works]*, ed. J. W. Gomulicki, Vol. I: *Wiersze*, Warszawa 1966, p. 546.

³⁵ English translation by D. BORCHARDT, in collaboration with A. BRAJERSKA-MAZUR, C. NORWID, *Poems*, New York 2011, p. 19.

and the associated attitude of poetic realism. In the following, his late volumes will be analysed in this perspective, starting with *Plaskorzeźba* [*Bas-Relief*].

PLASKORZEŻBA

The collection was published in 1991, the year of the author’s seventieth birthday. The editors and graphic designers of Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie took care to ensure that the editorial layout of the book emphasised the expression of the poetic word. The very form of the volume invites the potential reader into a writing laboratory, the door of which has been left ajar. The receiver can read each of the works included here in two versions – a copy of the draft manuscript and its final, smoothed-out form. Such a reading allows one to touch upon the process of the poem’s birth. This does not mean, however, that it makes it possible to trace all the stages of its formation. As Różewicz mentioned in his interviews, he sometimes wrote down a dozen or so variants of a single text, he would return years later to poems that had been published earlier and would sometimes introduce changes that would modify their meaning or include them in contexts imposing a different direction of interpretation than the established one. Sometimes poems noted down on scraps of paper would get lost somewhere and would be found years later to gain a “second life.”

The impression of accompanying the author’s creative work is reinforced in *Plaskorzeźba* by the inclusion of graphics prepared by Jerzy Tchórzewski and a drawing made by the poet. Their task is not to illustrate poetic motifs, but rather to synthesise, in a succinct iconic form, the direction of the author’s reflection and the accompanying mood. Even the type of paper is a subtle allusion to a bygone writing tradition – thin, delicately ribbed; similar to that on which 19th century poets wrote their works. The type of paper is reminiscent of that on which some of Norwid’s autographs have been preserved – including those stored in the Ossolineum in Wrocław.³⁶ The material allusion to the appearance of old “scrapbooks” contrasts with the photographs by Adam Hawałej on the inside cover of the volume. The photographs show Różewicz in two shots – at his desk among the books, with a wreath of the poet laureate, and against the background of overflowing municipal

³⁶ Manuscripts of Norwid’s poems are kept in the manuscript section of the Ossolineum: “Odpowiedź [Kajetanowi Koźmianowi]” [A Reply (to Kajetan Koźmian)], “Spartakus” [Spartacus], “Na zapytanie: Dlaczego w konfederatce? Odpowiedź” [Response to the Question: Why Wear a Four-pointed Cap].

rubbish bins.³⁷ The photographs are an artistic abbreviation visualising the contrast of the author's everyday experience – on the one hand, a mental wanderer through poetic worlds; on the other, a stroller among metropolitan rubbish bins. These divergent perspectives of observing and experiencing reality gave rise to dissonant and sometimes ironic interpretations of the world.³⁸

The plastic signs in *Plaskorzeźba* lead towards the space of the word and suggest from the outset that it will be a record of what is tangible both in the reading and the landscape of the contemporary city, and what – for aesthetic reasons – has perhaps been obscured or passed over in silence. The reader receives the diary of a realist poet, which is further emphasised by the grey cover with a texture reminiscent of the surface of stone. Dorota Heck draws attention to yet another semantic aspect of the cover: “The editorial art in *Plaskorzeźba* enhances the effect of the literalness of the title. The cover is namely printed with a pattern that resembles marble, and the letters look as if they have been carved.”³⁹ The inscription carved on the grey marble slab evokes an association with a tombstone and foreshadows a contemplation of death. This visual suggestion introduces the overarching lyrical situation for the entire collection, which is framed by looking at life from the perspective of death. It appears both in the reflection, which seeks to capture the entire meaning of human life (e.g. in the poignant poem dedicated to the memory of Konstancy Puzyna, or in “Kredowe koło” [Chalk Circle]), and in the recollections of those who have passed away but left a significant mark in the poet's memory and in the memory of culture (“rozmowa z Przyjacielem” [Conversation with a Friend], “Gawęda o poetach” [A Tale about Poets], “przerwana rozmowa...” [Interrupted Conversation...]). Memories of people and books illuminate for a moment the artists who had to pay for their work with the pain of life, sometimes with madness and suicide. The poet gives tender attention, for instance, to August von Goethe or Klaus Mann and their forgotten writing, completely overshadowed by their great fathers... From Franz Kafka's pre-mortem notes he tries to reconstruct the dramatic lines of his inner biography.⁴⁰

³⁷ See T. RÓŻEWICZ, A. HAWALEJ, *Śmietniki*, Wrocław 2016. The motif of the rubbish bin appears frequently in Różewicz's work – both as an object of description and as a metaphor for contemporary civilisation.

³⁸ It is perhaps no coincidence that Norwid is the forerunner among Polish poets of giving symbolic connotations to his own photography, most notably as the author of the poem “Na zapytanie: czemu w konfederatce? Odpowiedź” [Response to the Question: Why Wear a Four-pointed Cap].

³⁹ D. HECK, p. 281.

⁴⁰ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “przerwana rozmowa,” in: *Plaskorzeźba*, pp. 115-131. This poem was intended by the author to be a prologue to the drama “Pułapka” [The Trap].

In Różewicz’s poetic reflection, death is sometimes considered from a close distance, and at other times – from the perspective of metaphysical questions to which the poet does not find an answer, but this reveals the drama of his search for them. The changeability of perspective is combined with a variety of poetic diction. In *Plaskorzeźba* we can find poetic returns to old poems and motifs, soliloquies, conversations with the dead and poetic farewells.

A strong gesture to demonstrate the “circular” compositional principle is already made in the first work, which bears the prepositional title “bez” [Without]. It can be read as a response, years later, to “Lament” from the volume *Niepokój* [Unease] – the young poet’s programme poem. Such a reading is possible not only because of the theme and the subject’s creation, but also because of the genological references to the convention of poetic prayer. Similarly to his early lyric, “bez” is also a record of a breakthrough in the inner biography of a man facing recurring questions about his spiritual identity. The situation is different from the starting point, compared to the poem from years before, in that the poet formulated the answers in the form of a firm *anti-Credo*. And now that life has come full circle, the old questions have returned. The reason for the lament in the opening poem of *Plaskorzeźba* is the loss of faith and hope, shown here through the motif of God’s departure and framed as a poetic prayer. The paradox of the prayer convention adopted in the poem lies in the fact that the praying person engages in a dialogue with an interlocutor whose existence he doubts, but at the same time the very fact of the dialogue constitutes this interlocutor.

In her search for tools to analyse Słowacki’s religious lyric poetry, Joanna Kułakowska distinguished three varieties of poetic prayer, taking as a criterion the dominance of one of the three motifs: God, the praying person or prayer forms adopted from tradition. If a reflection on God dominates, it is a theocentric prayer; if the poet focuses attention on his feelings and sensations in the face of transcendence, the work can be described as an egocentric prayer; if a paraphrase of existing prayer forms dominates, we recognise a poetic liturgical prayer in the poem.⁴¹ The boundaries between genre varieties can be sharply drawn in theoretical-literary conceptualisation, but in literary practice they are usually blurred, and in the case of the protagonists of this study – crossing genological boundaries was one of the recognisable features of their writing style. Despite this caveat, I use Kułakowska’s

⁴¹ J. KUŁAKOWSKA, *Formy modlitewne w twórczości Słowackiego. Od “Hymnu” do „Zachwycenia”*, Kraków 1996. Cf. also: *Z głębokości. Antologia polskiej modlitwy poetyckiej*, Vols. I, II, eds. A. Jastrzębski, A. Podsiad, with a foreword by A. Podsiad, Kraków 1974. The classification of varieties of poetic prayer in Joanna Kułakowska’s book was inspired by the foreword by Antoni Podsiad.

conception with caution, because in the case of this particular poem it opens up an important aspect of interpretive perspective.

The exposition of the subject emphasises its importance and takes the shape of a dispassionate statement:

największym wydarzeniem
w życiu człowieka
są narodziny i śmierć
Boga⁴²

the biggest event
in human life
are the birth and death
of God

After this introduction, the conversation with the absent God begins. It is, at first, a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer and the prayer of Jesus dying on the cross.

ojcze Ojcie nasz
czemu
jak zły ojciec
nocą

bez znaku bez śladu
bez słowa

czemuś mnie opuścił
czemu ja opuściłem
Ciebie⁴³

our Father
why
like a bad father
by night

without a sign without a trace
without a word

⁴² T. RÓŻEWICZ, *Plaskorzeźba*, p. 7. Incidentally, it is worth noting that Różewicz uses here a versification technique analogous to that used by Norwid in "Czułość."

⁴³ Ibid., Jesus' words "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," Matt 27:46 refer to Psalm 22:1-18, sung in the Catholic liturgy on Palm Sunday.

why have you forsaken me
why I have forsaken
You

Complaint and lament are intertwined with an inquiry into the reasons for God’s discrete departure from the praying man’s life. Themes of theocentric and egocentric prayer are interwoven; the latter involve the question of whether God’s abandonment was a punishment for sins. Self-reflection gradually becomes an examination of conscience. In his defence, the culprit has only the memory of the Holy Communion he received as a child (“after all, as a child I fed on / you”). But he puts his sins on the other side of the scale – his fascination with the sensual side of life, his laughter (as a satirist, or perhaps as a mocker), the poet’s pride, stemming both from the tradition of Mickiewicz’s Konrad and from the socialist realist experiments (“I tried to create / a new man / a new language”), as well as the lack of humility that accompanies all of this. Confession, however, does not aim at the forgiveness of sins, because since God has gone, the grace of absolution has also disappeared. What remains is a return to the starting point – the lament of the abandoned man, repeated in the conclusion:

życie bez boga jest możliwe
życie bez boga jest niemożliwe⁴⁴

life without god is possible
life without god is impossible

Prayer has come full circle. It rebounded on the poet’s lack of faith, or perhaps on the civilisational armour and spiritual emptiness of our supposedly post-Christian and post-secular era. Różewicz opened *Plaskorzeźba* with one of the most shocking religious poems in contemporary Polish poetry.

Does this poem have anything to do with Norwid’s mentorship? It would seem that there can be no similarity here, for the difference is fundamental. For Norwid, God is the only certain existence and has not left the human world. He constantly speaks to man through the word of the Bible, but also through the book of nature, the beauty of art and the voice of conscience. The problem is only that man finds it difficult to read this message, and it is even more difficult for him to find an answer to what he has managed to read.

⁴⁴ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “bez,” in: *Plaskorzeźba*; the couplet appears twice in the poem: p. 7 and p. 9.

MODLITWA

Przez wszystko do mnie przemawiałeś, Panie!
Przez ciemność burzy, grom i przez świtanie;
Przez przyjacielską dłoń w zapasach z światem,
Pochwałą wreszcie – ach! – nie Twoim kwiatem...

I przez tę rozkosz, którą urąganie
Siódmego nieba tchnąć się zdaje latem –
I przez najśodszy z darów Twych na ziemi,
Przez czułe oko, gdy je łza ociemi;
Przez całą dobroć Twą, w tym jednym oku,
Jak całe niebo odjaśnione w stoku!...

Przez całą Ludzkość z jej starymi gmachy,
Łukami, które o kolumnach trwają,
A zapomniane w proch włamując dachy,
Bujnymi z nowa liśćmi zakwitają.
Przez wszystko!...

Panie! – ja nie miałem głosu
Do odpowiedzi godnej – i – milczałem
[...]
Gdy doskonałość Twą obejmowałem,
To jedno słowo wyjąknawszy: “*klamię*” –
Do niemowlęctwa wracam...

Jestem *znamię!*...
Sam głosu nie mam – Panie, dałeś słowo,
Lecz wypowiedzieć ktoś ustami zdoła?
Przez Ciebie – prochów stałem się Jehową,
Twojego w piersiach mam i czczę anioła –
To rozwiąż jeszcze głos – bo anioł woła⁴⁵.

PRAYER

Thou have spoken to me through everything, Lord!
Through the darkness of the storm, the thunder and through the dawn;
Through a friendly hand wrestling with the world,
Through praise at last – ah! – not through Thy flower...

⁴⁵ C. NORWID, “Modlitwa” [Prayer]. Own editing (based on the autograph) for the edition of Norwid’s *Dziela wszystkie* [Complete Works].

And through that delight which outraging
Of the seventh heaven seems to breathe in summer –
And through the sweetest of Thy gifts on earth,
Through a tender eye as a tear covers it;
Through all Thy goodness, in this one eye,
As the whole heaven lightened in the stream!...

Throughall Humanity with its old edifices,
The arches that rest on columns,
And the forgotten ones turning roofs in the dust,
Exuberant with new leaves in bloom.
Through it all!...

Lord! – I had no voice
To answer with dignity – and – I kept silent
[...]
When I embraced Thy perfection,
Having stammered out this one word: “*I lie*” –
I return to infancy...

I am *a stigma!*...
I have no voice myself – Lord, Thou have given me a word,
But who can speak with their mouth?
Through Thee – I became Jehovah of ashes,
In my breasts I have and worship Thine angel –
Then untie the voice yet – for the angel is calling out.

The common motif of these two poetic prayers, written at different times and in different places, is reaching the limit of knowledge, and the symptom of the limitation becomes the insufficiency of language. However, while Norwid prays to overcome it, asks for the gift of words and hopes to receive it, Różewicz treats this state as an insurmountable obstacle. All that remains is silence.

However, if we apply to Różewicz’s poem the context of another work by Norwid that explores the same theme – the reflection from “Monolog” [Monologue] on prayer – we can notice other similarities.

+ Modlitwy idą i wracają – nie ma nie wysłuchanej.
Dlatego wszystkie wysłuchane, że każda zwraca się na powrót.
A dlatego powraca każda z modlitw, że wszystkie są z Miłości.
Kto pracował na Miłość, ten z miłością pracować potem będzie.
[...]

A kto pracował tak na Miłość – jako Ty, gdy raczyłeś stać się człowiekiem dla tej pracy?
Co byłeś smutny aż do śmierci, a miłujący zawsze?

Co nie miałeś gdzie głowy świętej złożyć, Królu świata całego.
Zdradzony przez Naturę i przez Boga samego opuszczony, a nie obalon przecież – Bóg!⁴⁶
(C. Norwid, “Monolog” [Monologue], PWSz I, 79)

+ Prayers go and come back – there are none left unheard.
All are heard because each one turns to return.
And each prayer returns because they are all from Love.
He who has worked for Love will then work with Love.
[...]
And who has worked so much for Love – as You did when You deigned to become human for this work?
When you were sad until death, but always loving?
When you had nowhere to lay your holy head, the King of all the world.
Betrayed by Nature and abandoned by God himself, after all – God is not overthrown!

In the light of the passage quoted above, the essence of prayer is its return to the praying person, which can be interpreted by man as a failure to hear, a rejection. This is precisely the perspective highlighted by Różewicz’s poem. In the case of both poets, this context evokes the motif of Christ’s complaint when he experiences abandonment by the Father and his kenosis a moment before his death. However, each author draws a different conclusion from this situation of the Passion – Norwid points to the open possibility of overcoming the desperate meaning of this situation owing to God’s love and man’s love. Różewicz stops at the threshold of such hope.

Although traces of Norwid, marked by quotations and allusions, are quite discreet in *Plaskorzeźba*, they are clear and concern the key themes undertaken by Różewicz – the crisis and “death” of poetry, silence, the existential price of poetic creation, the memory of the dead. Let us try to follow the most prominent of these.

The theme of the untitled poem, marked with three asterisks, is the dying of culture; not a new theme in Różewicz’s writing, and one that has persistently recurred at least since the writing of the narrative poem “Spadanie” [Falling]⁴⁷. When the axiological axis and the “bottom,” i.e. the image of the end of the fall, are missing, we are falling disorderly “in the shape of a wind rose,” in various directions, and the poet is a powerless chronicler of this process. Over time, there is less and less

⁴⁶ The text, distinguished here by Gomulicki as a separate work, is a fragment of *Modlitewnik* [A Prayer Book], which Norwid wrote in the Berlin prison to offer to Włodzimierz Łubieński. Łubieński was Norwid’s friend who made efforts to secure the poet’s release (see *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, Vol. I, cf. also C. NORWID, PWSZ VII).

⁴⁷ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “Spadanie, czyli o elementach wertrykalnych i horyzontalnych w życiu człowieka współczesnego,” from the volume *Twarz trzecia*; see *Wybór poezji*, ed. A. Skrendo, Wrocław 2017, BN I no. 328, pp. 369-382.

passion and emotion in the writer’s observations recording this process, and more and more calm detachment. The perspective of the sad observer also defines his attitude and lyrical situation in the excerpt from a poem from the *Plaskorzeźba* collection quoted below:

*Wygaśnięcie Absolutu niszczy
sferę jego przejawiania się*

marnieje religia filozofia sztuka

maleją naturalne zasoby
języka
[...]
wymierają pewne gatunki
motyli ptaków
poetów
o imionach dziwnych i pięknych
Miriam Staff Leśmian
Tuwim Lechoń Jastrun

Norwid

nasze sieci są puste
wiersze wydobyte z dna
milczą
rozsypują się

są jak kurz
tańczący na promieniu słońca
który wpadł do pustego
wnętrza
świątyni⁴⁸

*The extinction of the Absolute destroys
the sphere of its manifestation*

religion philosophy art languish

natural resources of language
decline
[...]

⁴⁸ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *Plaskorzeźba*, p. 51.

extinct become certain species of
birds butterflies
poets
with strange and beautiful names
Miriam Staff Leśmian
Tuwim Lechoń Jastrun

Norwid

our nets are empty
poems extracted from the bottom
are silent
fall into pieces

they are like dust
dancing on a sunbeam
which fell into an empty
interior of
a temple

Norwid's name is separated by double spacing from the list of other Polish poets with whom Różewicz shared a close affinity. In the case of the poet who made intensive use of the graphic layout of all the elements of a poem for semantic purposes, this is a significant procedure. It emphasises the uniqueness, or perhaps the loneliness, of Norwid on the map of Polish poetry, but at the same time it highlights the importance of his work for Różewicz himself as a poet perceiving in Norwida forerunner of the chroniclers of cultural catastrophe.

We will find more similar, discreet yet significant traces of Norwid in *Plaskorzeźba*, especially in the auto-thematic lyrics, which are dominated by a tone of melancholic reflection on the essence and mystery of words. The reflection on the relationship between word and silence, inspired by Norwid's thought, gives rise to a statement on poetry that "gnieździ się w milczeniu" [inhabits silence].⁴⁹

The poem with the first line [na początku jest słowo...] [at the beginning is the word...] is entirely woven from references to Norwid. Firstly, there is a reference to the concept of the word, which has metaphysical sources indicated both in the *Prologue* of the Gospel of St John and in Plato's *Cratylus*.⁵⁰ Secondly, there is the conviction that, standing on the brink of infinity, the poet, like any coryphaeus

⁴⁹ T. RÓŻEWICZ, [poezja nie zawsze przybiera formę wiersza...], in: *ibid.*, *Plaskorzeźba*, p. 11.

⁵⁰ See Rev. J. SOCHOŃ, *Bóg i język*, Warszawa 2000; Rev. A. DUNAJSKI, "Słowo stało się Siłą." *Zarys Norwidowej teologii słowa*, Pelplin 1996.

who transgresses the established paradigm of his era, will only be rejected and rehabilitated years later. This idea of the fate of great men frequently recurs in Norwid’s writing; in his lyrics, it is most clearly expressed in the poems “Adam Krafft” and “Coś ty Atenom zrobił, Sokratesie...” [What Have You Done to Athens, Socrates...]. In Różewicz’s poem we find its echo in the following words:

po końcu wiersza
zaczyna się
nieskończoność

[...]

ale przed poetą
otwiera się przepaść

po latach
zostanie odgrzebany
oczyszczony z błota
pyłu ziemi

kamień z nieba
wyzuty z ognia
meteor⁵¹

beyond the end of the poem
begins
infinity

[...]

but before the poet
a chasm opens up

after many years
he will be unearthed
cleared of mud
earth dust

a stone from heaven
devoid of fire
meteor

⁵¹ T. RÓŻEWICZ, [na początku jest słowo...], in: idem, *Plaskorzeźba*, p. 13.

The final poetic image – the metaphor of poetry falling from the sky like a meteor transformed into stone – is a clear allusion to Norwid’s poem “W Weronie” [In Verona]. In the poetic landscape of that work, there is a star falling from the sky, which is interpreted in two ways by the witnesses: the cypresses recognise in it God’s tears falling on the graves of lovers, and the people recognise it as “kamienie, na które nikt nie czeka” [stones for which no one is waiting]. Encrypted in Różewicz’s allusion lies a question that undermines Norwid’s hope for the future triumph of great poetry and great thought. At the end of the 20th century, the poet doubts whether there will really be anyone waiting for the word discovered years later.

An interesting point to the common places of the “post-ethological” thread in the poems of both artists is the parallel of the images of “death” and “funeral” of poetry in Norwid’s elegy “Na zgon poezji” [On the Death of Poetry] and in Różewicz’s poem “Do Piotra” [To Piotr]. First, consider the following passage from Norwid’s elegy:

Ona umarła!... są-ż smutniejsze zgony?
 I jak pogrzebać tę śliczną osobę?
 Umarła ona na ciężką chorobę
 Która się zowie: p i e n i ą d z i b r u l i o n y.
 Pamiętasz dobrze oną straszną dobę,
 Gdy przed jej łóżem stałem zamyślony,
 Łzę mając wielką w oku, co szukało,
 Czy to, co gaśnie, jest duch albo ciało?
 [...]
 Umarła ona (Poezja), ta wielka
 Niepojednanych dwóch sfer pośrednica,
 Ocean chuci i rosy kropelka,
 Ta monarchini i ta wyrobnica –
 Zarazem wielce wyłączna i wszelka,
 Ta błyskawica i ta gołębica...
 Gdy ci, co grzebać mają za rzemiosło,
 Idą już piaskiem zasypywać wzniosłą!

Odtąd w przestronnym milczenia kościele,
 Po brukowaniu się przechodząc płaskiem,
 Nie jej ja depcę grób... lecz po tych dziele
 Stąpom, co cmentarz wyrównali piaskiem.

[C. Norwid, “Na zgon Poezji (Elegia)” [On the Death of Poetry (Elegy)], PWsz II, 200-201]

She died. Of all deaths hers is the most dead.
 How should one bury such a pretty lady?
 She died of a most serious malady

Called: *money* and rough *manuscripts* unread.
You will remember that time of tragedy
When I stood sad and pensive by her bed,
The big tear in my eye trying to surmise
Whether the spirit or the body dies.

[...]

She died (Poetry), the great go-between
Among two spheres irreconcilable,
Ocean of lust and drop of dew on green,
Lightning and dove but undividable,
That sometime handmaid and sometime queen,
Exclusive and yet common, pliable...
And those whose trade it is to the dead
Come now to pour the sand upon her head.

In the vast church of silence since, I lurk
On pavement slabs. And yet I do not stand
Upon her grave. My steps fall on the work
Of those who smooth the cemetery with sand⁵².

Consider now excerpts from Różewicz’s poem addressing a similar theme:

Piotrze mówię bez uśmiechu
skończ ten film o mnie
o pogrzebie poezji
o moim pogrzebie
[...]
życie poezji
jest pełne niespodzianek
kilku skrzących grabarzy
w kraju i za granicą
chowa mnie
w pierwszym drugim i
trzecim
obiegu

na pogrzebie poezji
panuje niezdrowe ożywienie
prawie jak na pchlim
targu

⁵² English translation and by J. PETERKIEWICZ, in collaboration with Ch. BROOKE-ROSE and B. SINGER, C. NORWID, *Poems – Letters – Drawings*, Manchester 2000, p. 89.

[...]
słowa moje pragną
wiecznego spoczynku
chęć wrócić
do POCZĄTKU
[tutaj w rękopisie skreślony fragment:
„kiedy słowo
było ziarnem
kłosem
ojcem
matką]

wyjawilem Ci tajemnicę
wcielonego słowa
ale ty nie dosłyszałeś
akurat odwróciłeś głowę
za oknem dzwonił tramwaj
w telewizorze zjawił się Kaczor Donald⁵³

Piotr I say without a smile
finish this film about me
about the funeral of poetry
about my funeral
[...]
the life of poetry
is full of surprises
a couple of eager gravediggers
at home and abroad
burry me
in the first second and
third
circulation

at the funeral of poetry
there is unhealthy excitement
almost like at a flea
market

⁵³ T. RÓŻEWICZ, „Do Piotra,” in: *Plaskorzeźba*, pp. 77-79. The addressee of the poem is Piotr Lachmann, a documentary film director. Among other things, he made documentaries of meetings and conversations between Tadeusz Różewicz and Ryszard Przybylski in Przybylski's flat in Warsaw and was a participant in these conversations (from behind the camera). See R. PRZYBYLSKI – T. RÓŻEWICZ. *Listy i rozmowy*, ed. K. Czerni, Warszawa 2019 (Chapter “Rozmowy na Akermańskiej”).

[...]
my words yearn for
eternal rest
want to return
to the BEGINNING
[in manuscript there is a deleted passage here:
“when the word
was the seed
the ear
the father
the mother”]

I have revealed to you the secret
of the word incarnate
but you did not hear
you just turned your head
outside the window the tram was ringing
Donald Duck appeared on the television

The different conventions and lyrical situation do not obscure similarities. What draws attention in both poems is the personification of poetry. It plays the role of a parable organising the imagery and enabling a play with double entendre. In Norwid’s elegy, the physical features of the dying one are even so pronounced that interpreters have had doubts as to whether the subject of the poem is the death of a woman who was “poetic” when alive, or the death of poetry compared to the death of “this pretty lady.” Unlike usual, Norwid’s imagery here is more saturated with motifs of corporeality than in Różewicz’s poem. Another significant difference concerns poetic rhetoric. Różewicz speaks “to Piotr” about his lyric and gradually broadens his perspective, moving from his personal writing experience to a broader civilisational panorama. By contrast, Norwid’s elegy, from the outset, is concerned with the situation of European poetry in the second half of the 19th century; the generalisation covers here a larger scope. However, the analogies are more pronounced than the differences. What is convergent is the understanding of the role of poetry as the word mediating between the spheres of body and spirit, finitude and transcendence. And it is in this aspect that poetry “is dying.” For Norwid, the cause of its death is the civilisation of money and propaganda that was being born in front of his own eyes. For Różewicz – the noise, harmony and haste in a culture subjected to the rhythm of commercialism and the hectic circulation of goods and people. Both poets desire a return to the beginning, which is marked by the dignity of the divine and human word, revealed in the *Prologue* of St John’s Gospel (“In the beginning was the Word...”). While in the case of

Norwid this conclusion is not surprising, because it follows harmoniously from his entire thought, in the case of Różewicz, it may be surprising if we remember that he is labelled a nihilist or atheist. Meanwhile, if one looks more carefully at the notes in his diaries, references to reading the Fourth Gospel appear again and again from the late 1950s, when he was working on the collection "Formy" [Forms], and in parallel on "Kartoteka" [The Card File] and on the theatrical adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *Gambler*. A note from August 1984, entitled "Ryby i słowo" [Fish and the Word], sheds some light on the explanation of the return to reading these very biblical passages, which he did frequently also thirty years later. It is quoted below in its entirety because it contains an important interpretative key for understanding Różewicz's attitude towards both the Gospels and Norwid's work.

In the Gospel according to St John in Chapter 21, there is a very realistic description of how Jesus appeared to his disciples after being raised from the dead...

– When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

– Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three, but even with so many the net was not torn..." As many times as I read the story, I am always amazed by John's realism and accuracy. There were one hundred and fifty-three fish caught in the "Sea" of Tiberias. Someone must have counted these fish, was it Peter or John? The realism of this scene, which takes place in the most metaphysical "dimension," after Jesus' resurrection, is astounding. John is the author of the most mysterious and self-contained Gospel, which begins in an understated way. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made..." This is the beginning of the Gospel... and at the end there is a bonfire, bread, baked fish. The fish were large and there were one hundred and fifty-three... not one hundred and fifty or one hundred and fifty-two... the fish were counted accurately. An astonishing image. Very moving in its realism⁵⁴.

What attracted Różewicz's attention to this passage from the Gospel of St John was the combination of realistic precision in the description of the event with the revelation of a miracle in the face of which the mundanity of the results of the catch might seem irrelevant. The miracle was the appearance of the risen Jesus at Lake Tiberias, and the fact that, after a fruitless catch, he instructed the apostles to cast their nets once more, and the abundance of fish that were then caught. However, the writer focuses not on the supernatural character of the events, but on that aspect which relates to the experience available to man. He is not so much interested in the Word – the Logos – Christ of the *Prologue* and the theological interpretations,

⁵⁴ T. RÓŻEWICZ, "Kartki wydarte z dziennika," in: idem, *Proza 3*, pp. 364, 365.

but rather in the word with a small letter,⁵⁵ because it embeds the details of existence – things and gestures, fleeting emotions and situations. And the conviction that they are worthy of attention unites both poets. This is why Norwid so meticulously recorded colourless episodes in *Białe kwiaty* [*White Flowers*], why he recreated the details of residential interiors in *Czarne kwiaty* [*Black Flowers*], why in his late poetic letter “Do Bronisława Z.” [To Bronisław Z.] he so faithfully tried to describe the realities and atmosphere of St Casimir’s House. He emphasised that “w tej powszechności” [in this commonness] there are “wiele mistycznych rzeczy i nieodgadnionych” [many mystical and unfathomable things] (PWsz I, 255). He also believed that “żadna łza, i żadna myśl, i chwila, i rok / Nie przeszły, nie przepadły, ale idą wiecznie” [no tear, and no thought, and no moment, and no year/ Have passed, are lost, but go on forever] (PWsz I, 266). Such beliefs motivated the effort of memory and prompted careful observation of people, places and things. On this point, the artistic attitudes of Różewicz and Norwid converge. Their similarity may have stemmed from both artists’ sensitivity to plastic qualities, linked to their habit of looking at the world through the eyes of a painter, a graphic artist, a sculptor or a photographer. Norwid was a visual artist by training; Różewicz studied art history just after the war⁵⁶. For both of them, the visible world was worthy of the poet-realist’s attention. The only difference is that, in Norwid’s case, this conviction has a metaphysical basis. Christianity is a religion founded by God Incarnate; for Norwid, this implied the need to recognise the value of matter, corporeality, the world of things, and to see God’s signs in the visible realm. It is God who continually sustains reality in existence and is the guarantor of its meaning and duration. In the referenced poem “Do Stanisławy Hornowskiej” [*To Stanisława Hornowska*], evangelical time permeates the present time and “records” each “now” in the dimension of eternity.

A Pani cóż ja powiem?... oto, że w tym życiu
Nic *straconego* nie ma na jawie, ni w skryciu,
[...]
I nie ma grobów... oprócz w sercu lub w sumieniu,
I nie ma *krzyżów*... oprócz na zimnym kamieniu,
Albowiem *krzyż jest życie*. Już wiek dziewiętnasty:

⁵⁵ It seems significant that although in the Prologue, in all Polish editions of the Bible, the Word is written with a capital letter, Różewicz uses a small one. Perhaps he does so to emphasise that he is interested in the linguistic rather than theological aspect of the word.

⁵⁶ Norwid studied in the Warsaw studios of Aleksander Kokular and Jan Minasowicz, and in Florence he studied sculpture under Luigi Pampaloni. In Kraków, Różewicz befriended artists from the Kraków group; he felt a particular affinity with the paintings by Jerzy Nowosielski.

Nowina! – którą przecie z *najweselszym żalem*
 Maryje i Salome, trzy święte niewiasty,
 Przyniosły były jeszcze – tam, do Jerosalem!...⁵⁷
 [vv. 11-16]

And what can I tell you, Madame? that in this life
 Nothing is *lost* in reality, nor in the hidden,
 [...]
 And there are no graves... except in the heart or in the conscience,
 And no *crosses*... except on cold stone,
 For the *cross is life*. It is already the nineteenth century:
 News! – Which, however, *with the greatest regret*
 Mary and Salome, the three holy women,
 Had brought – there, to Jerusalem!...

For Różewicz, who from the outset wants to save in his poetry the crumbs of existence of those who have passed away, this is an appealing but unattainable prospect. The 20th century poet stops at its threshold, the crossing of which would require such faith as that remembered from the inner experiences of childhood and the example of his mother, but which was later lost. The longed-for return to the beginning proves both desirable and impossible. However, this does not preclude the search for ways of creating time that allow its different strands to be overlaid onto each other in a palimpsest manner. The lack of hope, the experience of which is also exacerbated by reading Norwid, becomes the source of Różewicz's experiments with words and memory, for which he will seek support from other artists and thinkers who are closer to him because, like him, they are struggling to understand the rhythm and sense of the 20th century events.

Norwid, nonetheless, remains one of the important patrons of the two thematic strands in *Plaskorzeźba* – one related to the essence of poetry and the other linked to meditation in the face of transience and death.

⁵⁷ C. NORWID, "Do Stanisławy Hornowskiej" [To Stanisława Hornowska]; quoted according to the author's own editorial work for Vol. I of *Dziela wszystkie* [Complete Works] by Norwid (edition in progress). See T. CHACHULSKI, "Grób z marmuru. Wokół dwóch wierszy do Stanisławy Hornowskiej," *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 35, 2017, pp. 141-161.

NOŻYK PROFESORA AND THE FINALE OF *RECYKLING*
IN THE BACKGROUND

The volume *nożyk profesora* [*The Professor’s Knife*], published in 2001, was written while Różewicz was still struggling with the unfinished “book on Norwid.” Direct references to this subject appear in the eponymous work, which combines features of a storytelling and digressive poem. In any case, it is not worth over-specifying the text genre here, as it will only be approximate anyway. What is important in *nożyk profesora* is the recording of everyday life, associatively confronted with episodes from the past. The title professor and the poet’s interlocutor is Mieczysław Porębski. The second part of the work (entitled *Jajko Kolumba* [*Columbus’ Egg*]) is filled with a dialogue about ways of preparing dishes from eggs. It is quite practically justified in the situation presented, as the friends talk while preparing breakfast; culinary remarks are intertwined with war memories, digressions on contemporary culture, anecdotes. In the course of their conversation, Mieczysław in passing asks Tadeusz a question about his work on Norwid and receives an answer that ends with a quotation from *Promethidion*:

no właśnie... ale jak ci idzie z Norwidem
nie idzie... a właściwie idzie jak z kamienia
Sztuka jest jak chorągiew na prac ludzkich wieży

On jest niesamowity...⁵⁸

well that’s just it... but how is it going with your work on Norwid
it isn’t going... in fact it is going like a stone
Art is like a flag on the tower of human work

He is amazing...

The association of an ordinary situation with a conversation about high art, without highlighting its sublimity, the combination of ‘serio’ and ‘buffo’ – as Norwid might have put it – produces a humorous effect here, but not an ironic one; poetry turns out to be an element of everyday life; the interlocutors naturally show that both art and the preparation of breakfast are naturally intertwined aspects of existence. Różewicz’s dialogues with Porębski have the character of a friendly wandering through various topics evoked by free associations.

⁵⁸ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *nożyk profesora*, Wrocław 2001, p. 15.

The 2001 volume, like the earlier *Płaskorzeźba*, is also an artistic artefact; a booklet whose visual side does not merely serve an illustrative function, but is an integral part of the poetic message. On the first page of the cover, a photograph of the title item is placed against a graphite background. The professor's knife is the main "protagonist" of the fourth part of the poem, in which Różewicz tells the story of this object, simultaneously reconstructing the process of creating a work about it. The first impulse was to draw attention to a strange object that was lying between the books on Mieczysław Porębski's desk. The professor told the poet that it was a knife made from the rim of a barrel in a concentration camp, and that it had initially been carefully hidden "in the hem of a striped coat," because, despite its potential usefulness, its owner could face serious consequences. Such a war souvenir stimulated the poet's imagination and became a catalyst for a surge of war memories and images. Another visual motif that updates them is the photograph of a dead, naked female prisoner, abandoned in the snow. And when the readers finish the volume and close the book, on the fourth page of the cover they can see the visual point of the whole – a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust from Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, depicting a wartime cattle car standing on the arm of a crane high above the precipice. This image directs back, to the beginning of the reader's journey – to the motif of trains from the first part of the poem. And it is with this motif that the most important reference to Norwid in the poem is connected. It does not appear as free association or poetic encrustation; it plays an important role in the creation of time throughout the work. The source of Norwid's allusion is the poem "Przeszłość" [The Past]:

1

Nie Bóg stworzył p r z e s z ł o ś ć, i śmierć, i cierpienia,
Lecz ów, co prawa rwie;
Więc – nieznośne mu dnie;
Więc, czując złe, chciał odepchnąć s p o m n i e n i a!

2

Acz nie byłże jak dziecko, co wozem leci,
Powiadając: „O! dąb
Ucieka!... w lasu głąb...”
– Gdy dąb stoi, wóz z sobą unosi dzieci.

3

P r z e s z ł o ś ć – jest to d z i ś, tylko cokolwiek dalej:
Za kołami to wieś,
Nie jakieś tam c o ś, g d z i e ś,
G d z i e n i g d y l u d z i e n i e b y w a l i!...

(C. Norwid, "Przeszłość" [The Past], PWsz II, 18)

1

God did not create *the past*, nor death nor pain,
But he who breaks the laws;
His days are – woes;
So, sensing evil, wards off memory, in vain!

2

Wasn't he like a child that whirs by in a dray,
Saying: “Oh! An oak tree
Deep into the woods... It flees!...”
–The oak stands still, the cart sweeps the children away.

3

The *pastis* here *today*, and today is even further:
Beyond the wheels the village is there,
Not – *something, somewhere*,
*Where people never gathered!*⁵⁹

Several focal points of reflection in this poem caught Różewicz's attention who simultaneously worked on *nożyk profesora* and a book on Norwid. Firstly, the unresolved question present in the first stanza: *Unde malum?* Secondly, the motif of the illusion experienced during a high-speed journey, when it seems to the rider that space, not the vehicle, is moving and, finally, the transposition of time onto space.

stoję w ostatnim wagonie
Inter Regnum – pociągu do Berlina
i słyszę jak dziecko obok
woła
„O, dąb ucieka!
w lasu głąb...”
wóz z sobą unosi dzieci
wyjmuję zakładkę z książki
wiersz Norwida
przerzucam
most
który łączy przeszłość
z przyszłością

*Przeszłość jest to dziś
Tylko cokolwiek dalej...*

⁵⁹ English translation by D. BORCHARDT, in collaboration with A. BRAJERSKA-MAZUR, C. NORWID, *Poems*, New York 2011, p. 21.

*Za kołami to wieś,
Nie jakieś tam coś, gdzieś,
Gdzie nigdy ludzie nie bywali!*

pociągi towarowe
wagony bydłęce
koloru wątroby i krwi
długie „składy”
naładowane banalnym Złem
banalnym strachem
rozpaczą
banalnymi dziećmi kobietami
dziewczętami
w samej wiośni życia

słyszycie ten krzyk⁶⁰

I am standing in the last car of
Inter Regnum – train to Berlin
and I can hear a child next to me
crying out
“Oh! An oak tree
Deep into the woods... It flees!...”
A child that whirs by in a dray
I am taking a bookmark out of a book
Norwid’s poem
I am building
a bridge
connecting the past
with the future

The *past* is here *today*, and today is even further:
Beyond the wheels the village is there,
Not – *something, somewhere,*
Where people never gathered!

goods trains
cattle cars
in the colour of liver and blood
long “train formations”
loaded with banal Evil
a fear

⁶⁰ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *nożyk profesora (Pociągi)*, pp. 7, 8.

despair
banal children women
girls
in the very springtime of life

can you hear that scream

The question from the first stanza of Norwid’s “Przeszłość” – about the origin of evil – is passed over by Różewicz. The silence here may be regarded as an expression of polemic. Is it worth inquiring whether it is Satan or man who has nullified God’s laws and is the cause of suffering, since the existence of Evil/evil is at hand? It fills the trains of war evoked from memory to the brim, and its imposing feature turns out to be its banality, in the face of which the metaphysical question sounds inappropriate. Emphasising the banal dimension of evil, Różewicz juxtaposes Norwid’s distanced reflection with cries of despair and helplessness. He supports his perception of the problem with the observations of Hanna Arendt, who in the wartime explosion of evil noticed the lack of a demonic element and precisely banality – a certain combination of routine and ordinariness⁶¹. Perhaps Różewicz did not address Norwid’s question here also because he had already given a decisive answer to it in the poem *Unde malum*, which closes the narrative poem “recycling” [Recycling].

Skąd się bierze zło?
Jak to skąd

z człowieka
zawsze z człowieka
i tylko z człowieka
[...]

zło nie bierze się z braku
ani z nicości⁶²
Where does evil come from?

⁶¹ H. ARENDT, *Eichmann w Jerozolimie. Rzecz o banalności zła*, transl. A. Szostkiewicz, Kraków 2004. More on the subject, cf. J. ADAMOWSKA in: *Różewicz i Herbert. Aksjologiczne aspekty twórczości*, Kraków 2012 (here esp. Part III: “Unde malum? Różewicz i Herbert wobec zła”).

⁶² T. RÓŻEWICZ, *zawsze fragment. Recycling*, Wrocław 1998; quoted in: idem, *Poezja 4*, Wrocław 2006, p. 65. The poem provoked a dispute in which Czesław Miłosz took part; in his poetic reply, he accused Różewicz of succumbing to the Romantic concept of “good nature” and “evil man.” This polemic was reconstructed by Andrzej Skrendo (see idem, *Tadeusz Różewicz i granice literatury. Poetyka i etyka transgresji*, Kraków 2002).

It is obvious

from man
always from man
and only from man
[...]

evil does not come from lack
or from nothingness

Różewicz rejects St Augustine's conception of evil, professed by Norwid, who defined it as the absence of goodness⁶³.

The polemic, however, did not determine Norwid's trace in *nożyk profesora*. The transposition of time onto space, taken from "Przeszłość," proved particularly inspiring. It became the catalyst for the palimpsest composition of the poem. This poetic device allowed Różewicz to bridge "the past and the future." The situation of the poet riding in the compartment of a contemporary train to Berlin is superimposed on the images of a transport of slaves being taken away to labour camps in the Reich, while the passengers travelling to Treblinka at the end of the 20th century unknowingly represent the fate of those who made this journey half a century earlier in cattle cars bound for an extermination camp. If space becomes the image of time, then time does not disappear, it "is," like the village viewed in passing from the train windows. And just as it takes effort to retrieve from memory an image of space viewed for a moment, so it does take work of memory and imagination to recall and concretise the past. The poetic anamnesis is aided by trifle things— a camp knife, a stanza from a poem by Norwid, a chance conversation on the train. Let us analyse such a travel dialogue to see how the poet superimposes successive layers of identity on the images of the protagonists, extracted both from the archive of individual memory and from the repository of collective memory.

czy to już Treblinka
pyta mnie młoda
w pełnej wiosnie lat
Dziewczyna

⁶³ The thesis that the Augustinian conception of good and evil was acknowledged by Norwid was persuasively put forward by Jacek TRZNADEL (see idem, *Czytanie Norwida*, Warszawa 1978). Elżbieta FELIKSIĄK drew attention to the co-existence of this conception in Norwid's poetry with others, with the broader patristic current (Alexandrian school, St Thomas Aquinas), see eadem, *Poezja i myśl*.

przypominam sobie
jej usta
i oczy jak garść fiołków
to Róża z Radomska
“zwałem ją Różą
Iż trzeba było nazwać
więc jest nazwana”
jak miała na imię
nie pamiętam
[...]
Przecież to Alina myślę

Alina rzeźbiarka
uczennica Xawerego Dunikowskiego
w wagonie bydłęcym
otwiera okno
wychyla się całuje wiatr
zamyka okienko okaleczone
drutem kolczastym
[...]
pani pozwoli że się przedstawię
mam na imię Tadeusz
a ja Róża... jedziemy z mamą do Treblinki
Mama jest w wagonie restauracyjnym
rozdzielili nas
tamten wagon jest na końcu
[...]
... a Pan gdzie jedzie? jeśli można wiedzieć

Ja? ja tak sobie! do lasu
na grzyby na jagody
na świeże powietrze

jestem Satyr
dziewczyna roześmiała się

teraz już mogę pani zdradzić
wsiadam na najbliższej stacji
miejsce postoju oddziału nazywa się
“wysokie drzewa”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *nożyk profesora*, pp. 22, 23, 24-25.

is this already Treblinka
asks me the young
Girl
in the very springtime of life
I recall
her mouth
and eyes like a handful of violets
it is Rose from Radomsko
“I called her Rose
Since it was necessary to give a name
so she is named”
what was her name
I don’t remember
[...]
After all it is Alina I think

Alina the sculptor
a student of Xawery Dunikowski
in a cattle car
she opens a window
leans out kisses the wind
closes the little window mutilated
with barbed wire
[...]
allow me to introduce myself
my name is Tadeusz
and I am Rose... we’re going with my mother to Treblinka
Mum is in the dining car
they separated us
that car is at the end
[...]
... and where are you going? if I may know

Me? I just so! into the forest
to pick mushrooms or berries
outdoors

I am Satyr
the girl laughed

now I can tell you
I’m getting off at the nearest station
the place where the troop is stationed is called
“tall trees”

The anonymous girl met on the journey has some kind of real identity, she is a person inscribed in the circle of some kind of existence, but at the same time – owing to the poet’s memories and associations – she has been endowed with several layers of other identities. Treblinka, as the destination of her journey, suggests the association of a fellow passenger with the female prisoners transported to the concentration camp fifty years before. Róża [Rose] – the name given to her by the author, which may not be her real name at all – refers back to two literary sources – a self-reference to the author’s own poem from the collection *Niepokój* [Unease], entitled “Róża” [Rose] (“Róża to kwiat / albo imię umarłej” [Rose is a flower / or the name of the dead one]⁶⁵) and Norwid’s poem *A Dorio ad Phrygium*. The heroine of this unfinished poem is a beautiful girl from Serionice, the epitome of ethereal feminine charm, the addressee of a passage which, published as a separate lyric, is one of the most beautiful Romantic erotic poems. The confession of feelings here stops at the brink of silence, as in “Czułość,” and the presentation of the character is lined with uncertainty:

.... zwano ją Różą –
Iż trzeba było nazwać...
.... byłaż nazwana?

...she was called Rose –
Since it was necessary to give a name...
.... was she named?

And this is immediately followed by the aforementioned impressionistic description of the phenomenal girl in a series of comparisons, each of which is open-ended and understated:

Jak gdy kto ciśnie w oczy człowiekowi
Garścią fijołków i nic mu nie powie...

*

Jak gdy akacją z wolna zakołyszę,
By woń, podobna jutrzennemu ranu,
Z kwiaty białymi – na białe klawisze
Otworzonego padła fortepianu...

*

Jak gdy osobie stojącej na ganku
Daleki księżyc wpląta się we włosy,

⁶⁵ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “Róża,” in: idem, *Poezje zebrane*, p. 7.

Na pałającym układając wianku
Czoło – lub w srebrne ubiera je kłosy...

*

Jak z nią rozmowa, gdy nic nieznacząca,
Bywa podobną do jaskółek lotu,
Który ma cel swój, acz o wszystko trąca,
Przyjście letniego prorokując grzmotu,
Nim błyskawica uprzędziła tętno –
Tak!...
... lecz nie rzeknę nic – bo mi jest smętno.
(DW III, 379-380)

Just as one throws a bunch of violets
Into another's eyes without a word...

*

Just as one slowly sways an acacia,
So its aroma falls like an early dawn,
With its white bloom, onto the white keys
Of an opened piano...

*

Just as the distant moon weaves
Through her hair, as she stands on the porch,
Arranging into its glowing wreath
Her brow – or adorning it with silver sheaf...

*

Just as a talk with her – devoid of meaning,
Is like the swallows' flight,
Which has an aim, but collides into all,
Foretells the arrival of the thunder,
Before the lightning forestalls its beat –
So...
...yet I'll say nothing – for I am full of grief.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ English translation by D. BORCHARDT, in collaboration with A. BRAJERSKA-MAZUR, C. NORWID, *Poems*, New York 2011, p. 49.

The images of both Roses in the texts by Norwid and Różewicz are linked not only by analogy, but also by the contrast of spatial background. The girl from Norwid’s poem appears on the porch of a manor house, set in the space of a blooming garden and the idyllic landscape of the Polish countryside, over which clouds may be gathering, but the storm (both in nature and in social life) has not yet arrived. Różewicz’s Rose “inherits” the literary beauty of its predecessor, but it is shown against the cruel background of the interior of a cattle car rushing towards a place of extermination and associated with the photograph of a dead girl on the inside cover of the volume. The snowy emptiness and the young woman’s corpse provide an extreme counterpoint to the floral background from *A Dorio ad Phrygium*. This is not the end of Różewicz’s visual allusions and play with the heroine’s different identities. The line “przecież to Alina myślę” [after all it is Alina I think]⁶⁷ evokes from memory the figure of the sculptor Alina Szapocznikow, a prisoner in the concentration camps during the war⁶⁸. Perhaps the multiplication of the identity of the co-passenger from the poem is related to the artist’s sculptural series “Multiple Portraits.” Such a supposition is suggested by the analogy of motifs in the poem and in the sculptures, whose author multiplied images of mutilated human bodies or faces, using materials that are not associated with the permanence of noble works of sculptural art. In the poet’s self-creation we are also confronted with a multiplied image. The “I” in the present tense of the poetic world is superimposed on the “I” of the past. The old poet, a friend of the sculptor, by way of memory, is also a partisan with the pseudonym Satyr, looking for an encampment called “tall trees,”⁶⁹ because “The *past* is here *today*, and today is even further.”

The creation and perception of the world in *nożyk profesora* is accompanied by the awareness that also the present time – the time of the poem’s birth – is escaping with each moment and freezes, reflected in the multiplied mirrors of individual memory and in the collective memory composed of these fragments. The latter petrifies; sometimes even literally, taking the shape of monuments. The figure of petrified memory in Różewicz’s poem is a stone car suspended over a precipice and... over the future. The motif of petrification appears in yet another allusion to

⁶⁷ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *nożyk profesora*, p. 23.

⁶⁸ Alina Szapocznikow (1926-1973) – deported from the ghetto in Łódź to the camps in Auschwitz Birkenau and later Bergen-Belsen. After the war she studied sculpture in Prague, Łódź and Paris. The most intense period of her artistic work was in the early 1960s.

⁶⁹ The name of the encampment, it appears in many places in Różewicz’s works, inter alia, in: *Echa leśne* [Forest Echoes], partisan short stories (e.g. “Opadły liście z drzew” [Leaves Fell from Trees], “Pragnienie” [Thirst]), the drama *Do piachu* [Into the Sand].

Norwid in this collection – in the poem “Deszcz w Krakowie” [Rain in Kraków].
The following words:

czytam Norwida
słodko jest zasnąć
słodziej być z kamienia⁷⁰

I read Norwid
it is sweet to fall asleep
sweeter to be made of stone

are taken from Norwid’s translation of Michelangelo’s epigram. Both in the original and in Norwid’s free translation into Polish, these words express the yearning of the weary artist for eternal rest, free from the hustle and bustle of the world. The literary allusions link distant places and eras – Renaissance Florence, 19th century Paris and Kraków – at the dawn of the new millennium.

Z BUONARROTIEGO

Słodko jest zasnąć, słodziej być z kamienia
Dziś, gdy tak wiele hańb i poplamienia;
Nie czuć, nie widzieć, leżąc jak w mogile –
Cóż z tak uroczą porównałbyś N o c ą?

– Przeto, zaklinam, ucisz się na chwilę,
Mógłbyś przebudzić mię... na co? i po co?⁷¹
(PWsz II, 225)

FROM BUONARROTI

It is sweet to fall asleep, sweeter to be made of stone
Today, when there is so much dishonour and stain;
Not to feel, not to see, lying as if in a grave –
What would you compare to such a charming Night?

⁷⁰ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “Deszcz w Krakowie,” in: idem, *nożyk profesora*, p. 41.

⁷¹ In his commentary on the poem, Gomulicki states that Michelangelo’s epigram was a response to Strozzi’s epigram dedicated to the sculpture *Night* from the Medici Chapel in Florence, and notes that Norwid inscribed a fragment of the Italian original on his portrait, painted by Pantaleon Szyndler, depicting him in a dream (see PWsz II, 404).

– Therefore, I beseech you, be quiet for a while,
You could wake me up... what for? and why?

This reference, however, is not the point of Norwid’s trace in Różewicz’s poetry. Contrary to the longing for death expressed in the quoted poem, it is rather the motif of awakening that will return in Różewicz’s further dialogue with Norwid.

SZARA STREFA AND WYJŚCIE OR THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

The volume *szara strefa* [*Grey Zone*] (2002) was published a year after *nożyk profesora*. Not surprisingly, there are many continuations in it, returns to motifs and thoughts recorded in the previous collection. The circular rhythm, the circulation of themes and poems is in general a significant feature of Różewicz’s late poetry. According to the poet’s own declarations, it signalled a longing for the beginning of life and the hidden, or perhaps lost, sources of the living word.

Taken from Norwid, the epigram from Buonarrotti must have corresponded with the elegiac mood and reflection on the world of the author of *szara strefa*, since allusions to it recur in two different poems in this collection – first by way of a quotation, and the second time in the form of a cryptic periphrasis. The first two lines of the epigram are quoted by the poet in the poem “Jest taki pomnik” [There Is Such a Monument]. In this piece, he combined spare descriptive lyricism with poetic prayer and meditation. The lyrical situation is set in a clearly indicated place in the space of Wrocław– Ostrów Tumski, in front of the monument to Pope John XXIII, erected on a neglected square. The poet, whose sensitive eye of an art connoisseur first notices the striking ugliness of the stone block, stops in front of the pedestal. He concludes his examination of the monument by expressing neither indignation nor fascination with the ugliness of the object, which was erected to commemorate the saint.

sen mara Bóg wiara
jest we Wrocławiu
kamienna poczwara

dream spectre God faith
in Wrocław there is
a stone monstrosity

Unexpectedly, however, it turns out that contemplation of this “monstrosity” leads to a prayer:

ale w moim sercu
 masz
 pomnik najpiękniejszy w świecie
 mówię do Ciebie
 jakieś wiersze Norwida
 (według Buonarrotiego
 Michała Anioła)

but in my heart
 you have
 the most beautiful monument in the world
 I say to you
 some poems by Norwid
 (according to Buonarroti
 Michelangelo)

This announcement is followed by a two-line verse from the epigram by Buonarroti/Norwid. The evocation of Michelangelo, the brilliant sculptor, in the context of a description of the doubtful aesthetic qualities of the Wrocław monument, reinforces the ironic dissonance. The poem's climax, however, is a prayer devoid of irony; well, perhaps with a hint of self-irony. It is neither a request, nor a record of illumination; rather it is an expression of trust both in the Pope and in God.

Ty pozostałeś sobą nie tracisz
 dobrego humoru i kamienną
 ręką z brzucha wystającą
 jak z granitowej beczki
 błogosławisz mi
 Tadeuszowi Judzie z Radomska
 o którym mówią że
 jest "ateistą"

ale mój Dobry Papieżu
 jaki tam ze mnie ateista

ciągle mnie pytają
 co pan myśli o Bogu
 a ja im odpowiadam
 nieważne jest co ja myślę o Bogu
 ale co Bóg myśli o mnie⁷²

⁷² T. RÓŻEWICZ, "jest taki pomnik," in: idem, *szara strefa*, pp. 33-35.

You have not lost yourself still having
good humour and with a stone
hand sticking out of your belly
as if from a granite barrel
you bless me
Tadeusz Juda from Radomsko
of which they say that
he is an “atheist”

but my Good Pope
what kind of atheist am I

they keep asking me
what I think of God
and I answer them
it doesn’t matter what I think of God
but what God thinks of me

The poet’s prayer needed a material medium in order to resound, and this role was fulfilled by the monument, which was not particularly beautiful, and the poem, which attracted attention with its brevity.

So perhaps there is value in stones and words –the signs of a culture seeking values that unite the chaos of the world, even when they only clumsily refer to what is beyond them and beyond the realm of the visible? And if this is the case, the poet can also come to terms with the frailty of his word. He speaks of its inadequacy somewhat jokingly in his poem “Regression in die Ursuppe;” a piece dedicated to an otherwise serious reflection on the contemporary civilisation.

The periphrasis referring to the epigram also appears here in connection with an everyday, real-life situation.

nagle wychodzi
z kuchni moja żona

jest coraz piękniejsza
[...]

gdybym był Salomonem
to stworzyłbym dla Ciebie
pieśń nad pieśniami
ale z pustego i Salomon
nie należy a co dopiero

poeta z Radomska
(nie z Florencji Paryża
tylko
Z Radomska...)⁷³

suddenly my wife
comes outfrom the kitchen

she is getting more and more beautiful
[...]

if I were Solomon
I would create for You
song of songs
but even Solomon cannot pour
from an empty cup let alone
a poet from Radomsko
(not from Florence Paris
but
from Radomsko...)

The poet seems to say that he could not rival the heroes of his imagination and cultural memory, but love and tenderness are more important than aesthetics.

In the title poem of the collection *szara strefa*, he points to yet other tropes, influenced by Norwid, that are important to him. Here, Norwid is no longer the origin of the motif of the “stone dream,” but of “awakening” – and we should add – another awakening to reflect on the appropriateness of words and things.

moja szara strefa
powoli obejmuje poezję

biel nie jest absolutnie biała
czerń nie jest absolutnie czarna
brzegi tych nie-kolorów
stykają się

[...]

czarne i białe kwiaty
rosły tylko w poezji Norwida

⁷³ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “Regression in die Ursuppe,” pp. 16, 17.

Mickiewicz i Słowacki
Byli kolorystami
świat w którym żyjemy
to kolorowy zawrót głowy
ale ja w tym świecie nie żyję
zostałem tylko niegrzecznie przebudzony
czy można przebudzić grzecznie⁷⁴

my grey area
slowly embraces poetry

white is not absolutely white
black is not absolutely black
the edges of these non-colours
meet

[...]

black and white flowers
grew only in Norwid’s poetry
Mickiewicz and Słowacki
were colourists

the world we live in
is a colourful head-turner
but I don’t live in this world
I was only rudely awakened
can you wake one up politely

“Black and white flowers” is a clear allusion⁷⁵ to the titles of Norwid’s two essays from 1856. *Czarne kwiaty* [*Black Flowers*] consist of episodes taken from the author’s memoirs, the common theme of which is the narrator’s last meetings and conversations with people who died shortly after. The figures recalled from memory are the creators of Romantic culture: Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Fryderyk Chopin, Stefan Witwicki, Paul Delaroche. Norwid focuses his attention on their last

⁷⁴ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *szara strefa*, *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁵ Although the definition of the genre of these works by Norwid has been the subject of discussion in *Norwid Studies* (it was inspired by Gomulicki’s use of the metaphorical formula of the “obituary suite” in relation to *Czarne kwiaty*), I believe that they are essays and fit unreservedly into this genre category (see G. HALKIEWICZ-SOJAK, “Żywioł eseistyczny w prozie Norwida,” in: *eadem, Nawiazane ogniwo*, Toruń 2010, pp. 91-102). See also: D. PŁUCIŃSKA, *Norwida koncepcja literatury. Obszary dyskursu i interpretacji: gatunki, kategorie, konwencje*, Pułtusk – Warszawa 2013.

remembered words and looks in these sentences for a prophetic foreshadowing of his interlocutor's imminent demise. "Black" here points to the mystery of death, the mystique of the threshold, the passage. The narrative, however, does not direct attention towards the concealed "there;" on the contrary, it exposes the material "here." For instance, Norwid describes with reverence the details of Słowacki's and Chopin's residential interiors, Delaroche's painting studio, focuses attention on the external description of the characters, discovers "mystical lights" in everyday life. This is an attitude close to Różewicz's postulate that the artist should seek the sources of creativity in the effort of memory and careful observation. By contrast, *Białe kwiaty* [*White Flowers*] are also woven from episodes, but this time ones that do not carry the drama of impending death and have no plot potential. We find here a memory of a country girl's song heard years ago, an image of one of the many mountain hikes, a motif of contemplation of the silence of the sea... The white-flowered episodes are reminiscent of film stills that have been momentarily snatched from the stream of events and experiences by memory and frozen. The narrator suggests that their floating to the shore of memory involves some trace of infinity shining through them, a parabolic indication of another dimension of reality. To perceive this requires contemplation of detail and meditation, which opens the path of anamnesis. The condition for achieving such a state is silence and stillness. In this way, white has been associated with silence, has become the visual equivalent of this acoustic state.

The episodes in both essays by Norwid are told in a similar way and the narrator's account leads to an analogous creation of the represented reality. The only difference is that in *Czarne kwiaty* the represented world is confronted with the mystery of death, and in *Białe kwiaty* – with everyday life. Różewicz emphasises the sharpness of Norwid's juxtaposition of black and white, relating it both to visual and axiological qualities. Furthermore, the history of art and the tradition of symbolic interpretations of this opposition strongly supports the drawing of a line of such sharp conflict between white and black.

Starting from Antiquity, white was for a very long time identified with light. As Maria Rzepińska writes, "the Greeks did not distinguish between the concepts of white-black and brightness-darkness, for them they were synonyms."⁷⁶ This identification has to do with the fact that white is the colour of undiluted light. The proximity or synonymous treatment of white and light continues in culture until at least the Renaissance period, and even later it did not die out completely, entrenched in language. The proximity of the two qualities is also rooted in the New Testament⁷⁷ and in

⁷⁶ M. RZEPIŃSKA, *Historia koloru w dziejach malarstwa europejskiego*, Kraków 1983, p. 83.

⁷⁷ One vivid example of that is the transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor: "There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light"

Christian liturgy. The biblical symbolism of white points to purification, approaching moral perfection and holiness (“I will be whiter than snow” Ps 50:9), but also – to the fullness of knowledge. Black carries contrary meanings – associated with evil, sin, ignorance, demonic forces. It is the colour of night, death, the realm of the dead⁷⁸.

Pure white and pure black appear extremely rarely in painting. In all centuries and periods of European art, these two colours have been shaped and modified in various ways in order to suppress their unambiguity and bring chromatic values into play⁷⁹.

Różewicz also escapes from the plastic and axiological unambiguity of black and white towards greyness, which he already suggests in the motto from Wittgenstein (“Grey lies between two extremes [black and white]”)⁸⁰. At the same time, however, with the help of Wittgenstein he performs here a semantic “deviation” of Norwid’s thought, reinterpreting the opposing titles of his essays not quite in accordance with the author’s intention. One can understand this procedure through Harold Bloom’s concept of revisionary procedures.⁸¹ Perhaps we encounter the process of the younger poet’s freeing himself from the undue influence of the precursor. The search for independence in the face of entanglement in the poetry of a strong predecessor also involves the invocation of other authorities for counterbalance – the philosopher and the painter.⁸² It turns out, however, that the interest in the philosophy of language and the semantics of silence, as well as the concepts of white in painting, directs Różewicz’s attention again towards Norwid, this time – as the author of *Milczenie* [*Silence*]. In the above-quoted excerpt from *szara strefa*, the words about “rudely

(Matt 17:2).

⁷⁸ I mention this vast topic here contextually; see D. FORSTNER, *Świat symboliki chrześcijańskiej*, transl. W. Zakrzewska, P. Pachciarek, R. Turzyński, Warszawa 1990; M. LURKER, *Prześlanie symboli w mitach, kulturach i religiach*, Kraków 1994.

⁷⁹ M. RZEPIŃSKA, p. 63. The author goes on to point out that it is only in contemporary abstract painting that white has gained the status of an independent colour.

⁸⁰ Różewicz became interested in the person of Ludwig Wittgenstein and his philosophy of language much earlier; this is evidenced both by his reading of Norman Malcolm’s book on Wittgenstein and by his note on it; see T. RÓŻEWICZ, “Notatka na marginesie książki Normana Malcolma ‘Ludwig Wittgenstein,’” in: T. RÓŻEWICZ, *Proza*, Wrocław 1973, pp. 550-552.

⁸¹ H. BLOOM, *Lęk przed wpływem. Teoria poezji*, transl. A. Bielik-Robson, M. Szuster, Kraków 2002.

⁸² In the lyric *szara strefa*, Różewicz refers to the conception and artistic realisations of the Wrocław based artist Eugeniusz Get-Stankiewicz (“painter Get” – in the poem). Quite many examples of experimentation with white can be found in plastic works, including Polish works created in the second half of the 20th century, e.g. in the works by Mark Tobey, Hans Hartung, Robert Rauschenberg, Stefan Gierowski.

waking a sleeping person” refer back to this “testament-like” essay by Norwid devoted to multifaceted reflections on silence. The artist wrote this piece in 1882, a few months before his death. The motif of “awakening” in Różewicz’s poem is an allusion to the opening paragraph of Norwid’s work:

Czy śpiącego można przebudzić g r z e c z n i e?... Podobno, że nie: gdyby albowiem budziło się go upadkiem na twarz najlżejszego listka r ó ż y, jeszcze byłoby to tylko bardzo wykwintnie, albo poetycko pomyslanym, lecz nie byłoby g r z e c z n i e, bo, końcem końców, trzeba śpiącemu przerwać snowania myśli jego – i to przerwać doraźnie, nie powoli, lecz nagle, przenosząc go jednym ruchem w rzeczywistość i oczywistość inną. (PWsz VI, 221)

Can a sleeping person be awakened politely...? Apparently not; if one were to awaken him by falling on the face of the lightest rose leaf, it would still only be very exquisitely or poetically conceived, but it would not be polite, because, at the end of the day, a sleeping person must be interrupted in his dreaming thoughts – and this interruption must be immediate, not slow, but sudden, transferring him with one movement to another reality and obviousness.

In *szara strefa*, a number of poems illustrate how the poet is “rudely” awakened by the hustle and bustle of a reality laden with an excess of words, sounds and colours. This theme recurs in different variants both in the title work and, for instance, in the poems: “dodatkowe korzyści z książek” [Extra Benefits of Books], “21 marca 2001 roku – Światowy dzień poezji” [21 March 2001 – World Poetry Day], “Zła muzyka” [Bad Music], “budowanie wieży Bubel” [Building the Tower of Bubble]. The postulated defence of freedom against the invasion of advertising, noise, words thrown mindlessly into space and on screens, turns out to be such work on words that they express existential truth as concisely as possible and indicate values on which man can base his identity.

Norwid’s semantics of ‘silence’ is ambiguous and reveals a paradox. On the one hand, silence is a condition for the pursuit of truth for both the writer and the reader. Learning the truth is always only an act of approximating it, and the language of poetry should inspire and perpetuate this process. This is why poets and mystics, who are aware of the mystery of the “inner” word, treat parable and silence as necessary means of expression. Such conclusions arising from the reflection on the history of the word had been formulated by Norwid earlier in *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*] (1869), and he returned to them in *Milczenie* [*Silence*]. They were closely in line with Różewicz’s understanding of poetry. On the other hand, however, ‘silence’ appears in Norwid’s works as a negative category – as an oxymoronic term for the voice of contemporaneity.

Czy ten głos jest harangą parlamentarną, czy filozoficzną apostrofą, czy niewinną romansu formę przybierze, wsłuchaj się weń głębiej i spokojniej, a nie napotkasz nic innego, oprócz monologu pasji swojej i swego tylko interesu,

[...]

Zaiste, nie nazbyt wysoko trzeba się wznieść, ażeby, nie usłyszawszy tam ani jednego słowa dla prawdy bez-względnej i dla bez interesu uczucia podniesionego i wygłoszonego, pomyśleć słusznie: jakże wielkim jest albo bywa m i l c z e n i e m ten, lubo taki ogromny, gwar i zamęt?! (PWsz VI, 241-242)

Whether that voice is a parliamentary harangue, or a philosophical apostrophe, or it takes the form of an innocent romance, listen to it more deeply and quietly and you will encounter nothing else but the monologue of your passion and your interest alone,

[...]

Indeed, one has to rise not too high in order to, having not heard a single word raised and uttered there for absolute truth and for the disinterest of feeling, think rightly: how great silence is or tends to be this, otherwise so immense, hubbub and confusion!

Let us compare this opinion with Różewicz’s words written in the afterword to a selection of his poems published in 2000:

Politics devours poetry and poets... The word of the journalist and the activist is dead, it is a zombie language. The problem of the “dead” but incredibly active, living-dead people has become the subject of many of my poems and stories. Dead words, dead ideas, dead people are – in our time – increasingly active, aggressive, vicious, energetic.⁸³

Despite the century separating the poets, both arrived at two similar meanings of silence – as an oxymoronic metaphor for the profound crisis of a civilisation that gives up on the search for and expression of truth. Its creators and victims are hollowed-out people who corrupt language by flooding public space with meaningless words. Both poets recognised that in such a situation, poetry can and should move towards silence in the first sense, because corrupted language destroys its material. However, as long as this process still continues, it remains the poet’s duty to make the catastrophe evident. Norwid diagnosed this situation by referring to its sources, while Różewicz focused his attention on describing the “fall” of contemporary man into an axiological “bottomless” abyss. In the case of both of them, this shaped the attitude of a powerless moralist, except that in Różewicz’s case, the feeling of powerlessness is expressed more often and more emphatically because, unlike Norwid, he lacks a coherent point of reference and criterion for his own evaluations. For Norwid, this is Catholic moral teaching and the Bible. Różewicz longs to return to such values, but this longing is lined with deep-rooted doubt. There is thus no convergence of attitudes here, but a series of approaches by Różewicz to Norwid’s thought and poetics, and subsequently distancing from

⁸³ T. RÓŻEWICZ, *Proza 3*, p. 139.

them. This is accompanied by ambivalent reactions from the younger poet – from admiration to rebellion and emphasis of differences.

Różewicz's most expressive lyrical image of his predecessor is contained in the poem "Taki to mistrz" [Such a Master], included in the volume *Wyjście* [Exit]. It is a strange poem, filled with a dialogue with "Fortepian Szopena" [Chopin's Grand Piano] and the poetic letter "Do Bronisława Z." [To Bronisław Z.]. Różewicz portrays the old "master" in St Casimir's House as a loser – both as artist and man.

budzi się
rozgląda dokoła
z rzeczy świata tego
powinno coś zostać
ale co?

odfrunęły anioły

Trochę pijany
snem winem
napojony żółcią
i octem
stary poeta
usiłuje sobie przypomnieć
co miało pozostać
z rzeczy tego świata

poezja i miłość
a może poezja i dobroć
bezzębny przeżuwa słowa
dobroć chyba dobroć
i piękno?
a może miłosierdzie?⁸⁴
he wakes up
looks around
of the things of this world
there should be something left
but what?

angels have flown away

A little drunk
with sleep with wine
inebriated with bile

⁸⁴ T. RÓŻEWICZ, "Taki to mistrz," in: idem, *Wyjście*, Wrocław 2004, p. 18.

and vinegar
an old poet
tries to remember
what was supposed to remain
of the things of this world

poetry and love
or perhaps poetry and kindness
toothless he chews on words
goodness probably goodness
and beauty?
or perhaps mercy?

The above fragment of the poem is a kind of note on Norwid’s letter “Do Bronisława Z.” [To Bronisław Z.]. Through the power of memory and imagination, Różewicz wants to recreate in his work the circumstances and process of creating that elegiac poem, especially the best-known quote, which now belongs to the canon of poetic “winged words.”

Zniknie i przepelźnie obfitość rozmaita,
Skarby i siły przewieją, ogóły całe zadrzą,
Z rzeczy świata tego zostaną tylko dwie,
Dwie tylko: p o e z j a i d o b r o ć... i więcej nic
(PWsz II, 238)⁸⁵

Varieties of opulence will crawl away and vanish,
Treasures and powers blow away, whole communities shake,
Of the things of this world, only two will remain,
Two only: *poetry and goodness...* and nothing else⁸⁶

In Norwid’s lyrical portrait, Różewicz exposes the traces of old age, abandonment, drunkenness, problems with memory⁸⁷. However, the portrait of a fallen old

⁸⁵ The addressee of the poem was Bronisław Zaleski (1819-1880), a historian, librarian, engraver and publicist who had been Norwid’s friend since the 1860s. The bold font distinguishing the couplet was added by the author of the study (G. H.-S.) to mark the passage which acts as “winged words” and is one of the recurring quotations from Norwid.

⁸⁶ English translation by A. CZERNIAWSKI, in: C. NORWID, *Selected Poems*, London 2004, p. 92.

⁸⁷ J. ROSEN, *Wspomnienia. 1860-1925*, written down by A. Leo, Warszawa, 1933. Szyndler, Piątkowski, Rosen were all émigré painters associated with the Munich school, later interested in French impressionism. They were guests at Norwid’s studio in Ivry. Szyndler painted the poet’s portrait. They were a generation younger than the resident of St Casimir’s House. Only Rosen

man is only one side of the creation. The other is introduced by motifs of the Passion (“inebriated with bile and vinegar”), situating the “master” in the perspective of the suffering and defilement of Jesus described in the Gospels⁸⁸ and the right to ask questions about the fundamental values that can save the spiritual, vertical dimension of being human in the world. Norwid chooses “poetry and goodness,” but Różewicz, reconstructing his possible hesitations, suggests still other possibilities: “love,” “beauty,” “mercy” and, due to the question marks used, leaves the list open.

The second part of the poem refers to two other works by Norwid and one biographical thread.

oddala się
żeby lepiej zobaczyć Warszawę

Tamta była piękna i zła
Jej “siostra” dobra i brzydka

taki to mistrz
co gra choć odpycha
zaciemnia aby wyjaśniać

zamyka oczy widzi stopy dwie
gwoździem przebite

te odlatują z planety⁸⁹

he moves away
to get a better view of Warsaw

That one was beautiful and bad
Her “sister” good and ugly

left such an image of the old artist. See J. ROSEN, *Wspomnienia*, pp. 65-66. Rosen’s book was published in the year of the 50th anniversary of Norwid’s death, when interest in his person and work was very high and this one-sided image became widespread.

⁸⁸ Such creations of fallen figures, through which the icon of the suffering Son of God shines through, appear more frequently in Różewicz’s late lyric poetry. The most prominent example is the poem “Widziałem go” [I Saw Him]. See the interpretation of this work in J. M. RUSZAR’S study “‘Widziałem Go.’ Epifania współczesnego Pilata,” in: *Różewicz: dodawanie*, eds. E. Bartos, M. Cuber, Katowice 2012. This is a theme that corresponds with Norwid’s anthropology (cf. for example the poem “Larwa” [Larva]).

⁸⁹ T. RÓŻEWICZ, “Taki to mistrz,” in: idem, *Wyjście*, pp. 18, 19.

such a master
who plays though repels
obscures to clarify

closes eyes and sees two feet
pierced with a nail

these are flying from the planet

The phrase “oddala się / żeby lepiej zobaczyć Warszawę” [he moves away/ to get a better view of Warsaw] announces a reference to Fragments VIII and XIX of “Fortepian Szopena,” but this is a misleading clue. In Norwid’s poem, after the words:

Oto – patrz, Fryderyku!... to – Warszawa:
Pod rozplómienną gwiazdą
(C. Norwid, “Fortepian Szopena” [Chopin’s Grand Piano], PWSz II, 146)

Here – look, Fryderyk!... this is – Warsaw:
Under a blazing star

there is a broad panorama of a capital city gripped by manifestations from the time of the January Uprising, with the destruction of the Zamojski Palace in Krakowskie Przedmieście and the looted piano in the flat of Fryderyk’s sister, Izabela Barcińska, constituting the apogee of this image.

In Różewicz’s poem, the recollection of Warsaw is associated with the lyrical hero’s alleged recollection of two important women in his life – his youthful love, Maria Kalergis (she is the “beautiful and evil” one), and her friend and Norwid’s persistent correspondent (“the good and ugly” Maria Trębicka). The motif of Warsaw is thus shifted by the author of the poem from a historical and historiosophic dimension to an existential and personal one. But the reflection on love does not close this lyrical conversation with the 19th century predecessor. The antonym of love is death; Norwid’s poem opens with a recollection of Fryderyk’s death and closes with the motif of the “death” of the piano. The title of Różewicz’s lyric and the lines “taki to mistrz / co gra choć odpycha” [such a master / who plays though repels] allude to the first motif. Upon developing the image of the composer’s death, Norwid masterfully encapsulates it in a brilliant metaphor of music going silent:

I rozmawiają z sobą struny cztery,
 Trącając się,
 Po dwie – po dwie –
 I szemrząc z cicha:
 “Zaczął że on
 Uderzać w ton?...
 Czy taki Mistrz!... że gra... choć – odpycha?...
 (PWsz II, 146)

And the four strings kept
 Talking as they flew,
 Jostling two by two
 And seeming to say:
 ‘Has he struck us? Has he
 Such mastery
 That he can play... as he flings away?’⁹⁰

Różewicz repeats Norwid’s question about the universal and Polish significance of Chopin’s music a century later in relation to the author of the poem. The premise of the answer is a reference to the third poem of the “master” – the poetic miniature “Do zeszcłej (Na grobowym głązie)” [To the Deceased (On a Tombstone)]. This poetic epitaph and, at the same time, poem LXXXV in the *Vade-mecum* cycle is one of the most mysterious poems on death in Polish poetry; it opens up a perspective on the Christian vision of the beyond and the hypothesis of eternity, but at the same time it does not hide the inadequacy of the word, it points to the aporia of speech in the face of eternal life, it comes close to the perspective of apophatic theology, but it does not transgress it.⁹¹

Sieni tej drzwi otworem poza sobą
 Zostaw – – wlećmy już dalej!...
 Tam, gdzie jest N i k t i jest O s o b ą:
 – Podzielni wszyscy, a cali!...

*

Tam – milion rżęś, choć jedną łżą pokryte;
 Kroć serc, łkających: “G d z i e T y?”
 – Tam – stopy dwie, gwoźdźmi przebite,
 Uciekające z planety...

 Tam – milion moich słów; tam – lecą i te.

⁹⁰ English translation by K. BOSLEY, *Comparative Criticism*, 1984, vol. 4, p. 309.

⁹¹ See S. SAWICKI, “‘Tam gdzie jest Nikt, i jest Osobą’ (O wierszu ‘Do zeszcłej...’)”, *Ruch Literacki* 1985, Issue 4, pp. 295-302.

(C. Norwid, “Do zeszęlej” [To the Deceased], PWSz II, 120)

Leave this door of the vestibule open
Behind you – let’s fly up higher!...
There, where *No-body* is, lingers a *Person*:
- Divided all, yet whole!...

There, a million eye lashes, though under one tear,
Myriad hearts, sobbing: “*Where art Thou?*”
– There, two feet, pierced by nails –
Fleeting – from the planet...

There, a milion of my words – there, fly also these⁹².

CONCLUSION

In Różewicz’s attitude, the gesture of breaking with the inherited poetic tradition, characteristic of avant-garde poets, is rather weak. The author of *Spadanie* [*Falling*] emphasised that he was a link and an heir in the shaping of the treasury of Polish poetry. This did not prevent him from creating a new pattern of poetic speech and proposing a new form of drama. He was an avant-garde writer and found numerous imitators, he did not strive to create a new literary school and mostly chose to remain on the fringes of literary life, its fashions and polemics.

Różewicz’s innovation did not stem from a concept of new aesthetics, but from a sense of ethical necessity to meet the challenges of a social world that the writer perceived as sinking into axiological chaos. Here, the context of Norwid’s works he read in his youth proved important, for it was his works such as *Milczenie* [*Silence*] or *Ad leones!* created in the Parisian asylum that perceptively captured the beginning and dynamics of this process.

However, it was not only a similar social sensitivity and observation of processes in the cultural space that brought Różewicz and Norwid together. Numerous points of convergence can be found in their understanding of artistic creation, in which they regarded the element of work and the perfecting of craftsmanship as essential. Already in the conception of art formulated in the poem *Promethidion*, Norwid strongly pleaded for a balance between the vertical element (song, striving for the ideal) and the horizontal element (work). He regarded this harmony as a condition of

⁹² English translation by D. BORCHARDT, in collaboration with A. BRAJERSKA-MAZUR, C. NORWID, *Poems*, New York 2011, p. 59.

mature creativity. In *Spadanie* and the entire collection *Regio*, Różewicz visualised a catastrophe that results from the destruction of this balance. Both poets regarded creativity as a moral obligation to proclaim the truth, although they chose different paths in their search for it. However, they were unanimous in raising the problem of effort and independence in artistic work, both were convinced that imitation leads to works that only add to the informational noise. Jan Stolarczyk, a publisher and for many years a close associate of the poet, recognised the “19th-century” features of Różewicz’s literary technique.

It is important to know that Mr Tadeusz closes the 19 century in the sense of an artist-craftsman. Prus was already handing over his typewritten texts. Mr Tadeusz hands over his manuscripts (often with small drawings, curlicues and notes), which I transcribe on the computer. He makes corrections on the printouts with wider spacing. He has remained a craftsman – the line of writing, the movement of the hand are like a personal confirmation of the content. The manuscript is an image of the poem⁹³.

The similarity between the manuscripts of the two poets is indeed striking, and it is not so much their ductus as the direction of the work on the poem and the attention to its visual shape. The poem, the volume becomes an artefact, a thing, an object of visual art⁹⁴. The presence of this aspect in both poets stems from their interest in visual arts and, in Norwid’s case, his practice of them. From his time in Kraków, Różewicz was surrounded by the circle of painters and art historians; his friendship with Jerzy Nowosielski, Jerzy Tchórzewski and Mieczysław Porębski became an inspiration for his poetic ideas and a source of motifs. If one takes a closer look at the criss-crossed manuscripts of both poets, one can often discern a similar direction of change – striving for conciseness, aphoristicity, acceptance of incompleteness, fragmentariness. Both returned repeatedly to their earlier texts, edited them for a second time, incorporated into new contexts – most often lyrical pieces into dramas.

From the canon of Polish poets of the 19th century, Różewicz most often chose Mickiewicz and Norwid and, unconcerned with the tendencies in literary theory separating the creator from the work, focused his attention both on their biographies and on their poetry. He emphasised that for him, too, writing was “a percentage from life.” He paid particular attention to those works and biographical moments

⁹³ “Anioł w majtkach Polixeny.’ O Miłoszu i Różewiczu rozmawiają Jan Stolarczyk i Przemysław Dakowicz,” in: P. DAKOWICZ, *Nauka znikania. Wiersze i rozmowy z lat 2006-2018*, Warszawa 2018, p. 447.

⁹⁴ With regard to Norwid, this was pointed out by Zofia MITOSEK, “Przerwana pieśń. O funkcji podkreśleń w poezji Norwida,” *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1986, Issue 3.

in which the word moves towards silence, expiring on the edge of a hard-to-grasp existential experience.

Agreeing to take lessons from the old masters of Polish poetry, did not preclude criticising them. “Lesson on or in Norwid” was not completed by Różewicz, or perhaps could not be finalised. This was significantly influenced by the religious aspect. The memory of a living faith recurring in childhood memories, and the image of his mother as the medium of this memory, led the author of *Kartoteka* to test the possibility of a return. A simple way back was obviously impossible. At the same time, however, the writer was aware that the reconstruction of modern man needs moral signposts that do not work without a transcendental justification. He therefore tested the extent to which Norwid, a poet of unshakable faith, could be a guide on this path. And it turned out that the 19th century master was not quite up to this task. There were various reasons for this; they were related both to the difference in biographical experience, and to the memory shaped by it, and to the cultural context of the era. They also had their sources in the different preferences of imagination, which can be best seen in the way evil is pictured. Różewicz is able to show it in a shocking way in its various forms – from images of war massacres to the destruction of human dignity, but he was unable to develop a distance from it. For him, suffering always remains an open wound that cannot heal. Norwid, on the other hand, identified evil in a piercing way, understood its sources and mechanisms, but was very rarely able to visualise it convincingly. He tended to obscure the drastic nature of suffering with oblique statements, symbols, and indications of evangelical consolation. This dissimilarity has a direct influence on a meandering rhythm of Różewicz’s departures and returns to Norwid. Nonetheless, the poets’ shared desire to “give things the right word” has resulted in an inspiring poetry that is open to continuation.

Transl. Rafał Augustyn

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„TAKI TO MISTRZ...” OBECNOŚĆ NORWIDA
W PÓŻNEJ LIRYCE TADEUSZA RÓŻEWICZA

Streszczenie

Na początku lat dziewięćdziesiątych XX w. Tadeusz Różewicz przygotowywał swój autorski wybór wierszy Norwida. Antologia nie powstała, ale śladem pracy nad nią jest Różewiczowski szkic pt. *To, co zostało z nienapisanej książki o Norwidzie*, a głębszym rezultatem – intensywna obecność nawiązań do poezji i biografii Norwida w liryce Różewicza z ostatniego ćwierćwiecza twórczości. Tematem artykułu jest rekonstrukcja dialogu poety z dziewiętnastowiecznym prekursorem podjętego w późnej twórczości (analizowana przy zastosowaniu niektórych aspektów koncepcji badania wpływów literackich Harolda Blooma): wskazanie miejsc wspólnych i kwestii polemicznych. Materiałem skupiającym uwagę autorki, poddanym analizie i interpretacji, są przede wszystkim wiersze ze zbiorów poetyckich Różewicza szczególnie wyraziście nasyconych nawiązaniem do Norwida: *z Plaskorzeźby, szarej strefy, nożyka profesora, recyklingu, wyjścia*. Konkluzje wynikające z szeregu szczegółowych, komparatystycznych interpretacji pozwoliły odnaleźć współbrzmienia tematyczne (temat egzystencjalnego braku i niedopełnienia, które dotykają i podmiot wierszy, i lirycznych bohaterów, predylekcja do kreowania postaci niezrozumianych, niepozornych, ale i wewnętrznie wydrążonych...), pokrewne predylekcje warsztatowe (np. eliptyczność, oszczędne i precyzyjne obrazowanie, przywiązywanie wagi do graficznego kształtu wiersza). Różewicz znajduje jednak w poezji Norwida i takie cechy, które go odpychają, jak np. poetyka wzniosłości czy zmysłowa powściągliwość i przestanianie symbolicznymi obrazami dosłowności zła.

Słowa kluczowe: liryka polska; Cyprian Norwid; Tadeusz Różewicz; słowo i milczenie; komparatyka literacka.

“SUCH A MASTER...” NORWID’S PRESENCE
IN LATE LYRICS BY TADEUSZ RÓŻEWICZ

Summary

At the beginning of the 1990s, Tadeusz Różewicz prepared his own selection of poems by Norwid. Although this personal anthology was never published, a trace of it lingers in the form of the essay “*To, co zostało z niepisanej książki o Norwidzie*” [What remains of the book on Norwid I never wrote], and more deeply – in the shape of numerous references to Norwid’s poetry and biography in Różewicz’s lyricism from the last quarter of his literary career. This article attempts to reconstruct Różewicz’s dialogue with his 19th century precursor, which he initiated in his later life. The analysis incorporates several aspects of Harold Bloom’s theory of literary influence, indicating shared elements and polemical issues. Interpretations revolve primarily around works from those poetry books by Różewicz that contain particularly clear references to Norwid: *Plaskorzeźba* [Bas-Relief], *szara strefa* [Grey Zone], *nożyk profesora* [The Professor’s Knife], *recykling* [Recycling], and *Wyjście* [Exit]. Conclusions drawn from a number of detailed, comparatist readings make it possible to establish thematic similarities (e.g. existential lack and

incompleteness affecting both the lyrical subject and the poems' protagonists, a predilection for developing figures who are misunderstood, inconspicuous, and hollowed out etc.) and informal literary preferences (e.g. the use of ellipsis, terse and precise imagery, and consideration for the poem's visual dimension). However, Różewicz also identifies in Norwid's poetry certain things that repel him, e.g. lofty poetics, self-restraint with regard to sensuality, and the tendency to obscure the literal character of evil with symbolic images.

Key words: Polish lyricism; Cyprian Norwid; Tadeusz Różewicz; word and silence; comparative studies.

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