

KAROL SAMSEL

ORCID: 0000-0002-2047-4508

VADE-MECUM VIS-À-VIS THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE POETRY CYCLES OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

INTRODUCTION (OR QUALMS, DOUBTS AND RESOLUTIONS)

“Synthetic comparatistics” of the *Vade-mecum* cycle seems an intellectual activity doomed to failure from the very outset, which is hardly surprising. Cyprian Norwid created a work that – if indeed conceived as a whole, a dissonant-polyphonic whole, as Rolf Fieguth once called the cycle¹ – is extremely difficult to juxtapose with any European or non-European *tertium comparationis*. *Vade-mecum* is a non-parallel text, its peculiar idiomatycity is amplified to such an extent that I find it difficult to imagine that full juxtapositional unity with Norwid’s title could be achieved otherwise than *ex post*, i.e. after having become acquainted with the poet’s proposal and being able to creatively paraphrase it in one way or another. If we believe otherwise, however, we owe it, in my opinion, to the effective interpretative simplifications that have influenced the reception of Norwid and his cycle for years.

This introduction is a signal that I do not aspire, through this statement, to practise – as I put it – “synthetic comparatistics,” even though, in the external dimension of my study, I seem to fulfil all the conditions to be considered a “synthetic comparatist.” “Synthetic” means here combining multiple comparative horizons within a single collating optic, which in my case will become the perspective

¹ R. FIEGUTH, “Poezja w fazie krytycznej. Cykl wierszy Cypriana Norwida ‘Vade-mecum,’” in: R. Fieguth, *Poezja w fazie krytycznej i inne studia z literatury polskiej*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 167-172.

of the English-language poetic cycle of the second half of the 19th century. I am interested in analysing the *Vade-mecum* cycle in the light of (firstly) Alfred Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, (secondly) Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and (thirdly) Gerard Manley Hopkins's regular volume of *Poems (1876–1889)*. I believe that framing Norwid in this (rather non-obvious) triple Tennyson – Whitman – Hopkins prism will expose not only the internal antinomies of the cycle but also define somewhat more closely what its “subversive” (as Fieguth put it) monumentalism might be. However, I do not feel that I am thereby responding to this scholar's substantive call to “relate Norwid's cycles and poems to the Polish and European context”² of 2008. My article – despite all the methodological appearances employed here – cannot, in my view, be considered a comparatistic text, or at least a synthetic-comparatistic one.

TENNYSON

In Memoriam is a seminal work marking the caesura of the great religious crisis of Victorian poetry. “Next to the Bible, it is *In Memoriam* that is the source of my spiritual comfort,” Queen Victoria was supposed to tell Tennyson – standing beside him, as John Barry Steane reports – with an expression of “dignified innocence.”³ Her words can be read in a wider context that resonates across Victorianism. When we think of the religious cross-section of the poet's cycle, Tennyson's *In Memoriam* is characterised by a kind of desidaimonia that brings him close to such liberal religious thinkers of the Victorian era as Matthew Arnold, author of “An Essay Towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible,” *Literature and Dogma*. Desidaimonia, we should add, is the absence of the fear of God. As Justyna Pacukiewicz writes, Arnold “puts himself in the role of an interpreter instructing how to read the Bible ‘correctly’ so that it becomes a source of pleasure.”⁴ And to my mind, there is something Arnoldian about the famous sentence that the British Queen is supposed to have addressed to Tennyson, something here that – no

² R. FIEGUTH, “Ruchy konikiem a łagodne przejścia. Modele ewolucji cyklu lirycznego (na przykładzie J. Kochanowskiego, F. D. Książnina, A. Mickiewicza, C. Norwida),” in: *Polski cykl liryczny*, eds. K. Jakowska and D. Kulesza, Białystok 2008, p. 26.

³ J. B. STEANE, “‘In Memoriam’. ‘Next to the Bible...’ (Queen Victoria),” in: J. B. Steane, *Literature in Perspective. Tennyson*, London 1966, p. 87.

⁴ J. PACUKIEWICZ, “Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892): Oswajanie śmierci,” in: J. Pacukiewicz, *Poezja wiktoriańska a wielki kryzys religijny*, Kraków 2013, p. 78. “Esej ku lepszemu zrozumieniu Biblii” [*An Essay Towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible*] is the subtitle of *Literature and Dogma*.

doubt transferred unconsciously into communicative reality – could nevertheless serve as a stamp of the era whose needs were recognised by Tennyson through his *In Memoriam*:

Unlike Carlyle, who in “Signs of the Times” criticises the treatment of religion in terms of “profit,” Arnold subscribes to the utilitarian thought of the age and makes the postulate of the Bible’s usefulness the basis of his argument. The purpose of getting to know the Bible is the joy of reading. *God and the Bible*, according to the preface, was written to show “the truth and necessity of Christianity and its charm,” *Literature and Dogma*, on the other hand, to “obtain a sure and secure basis for the uninterrupted use and enjoyment of the Bible.”⁵

However, Arnold’s desidaimonia leading him to delineating eudaimonic ways of interacting with the Bible is different from Tennyson’s desidaimonia, whose psychomachia of the 131-link cycle of 1850 is much closer to Søren Kierkegaard than to Christian liberalism. Of course, this is not the time to discuss the possible inclination of *Vade-mecum* towards Kierkegaard, but an interpretative hypothesis of this kind is by all means possible, especially today – after Elżbieta Lijewska’s study on the possible traces of existentialist irony of the author of *Fear and Trembling* in Norwid’s *Quidam*⁶. In *Vade-mecum* itself, the tracing of “Kierkegaard’s spectres” would boil down to a detailed tracing of Norwid’s ways of modelling the cycle subject’s liminal states – in close connection with the progressive cyclical diegesis of the work as a whole.

When considering *Vade-mecum* and *In Memoriam* in terms of innovation of style, one cannot help but mention the difference in degree of pioneering character. As Laurence Lerner points out, “*In Memoriam* places itself clearly between the long poems of the early 19th century and the deliberate ‘creation-mosaic’ we encounter in such modern poems as *The Waste Land* or Pound’s *Cantos*.”⁷ In Norwid’s case, on the other hand, the figure of the “creation-mosaic” seems already completely obvious, and is the basic, exegetical starting point in talking about the cycle, whose ostentatious modernity here clearly distances Tennyson’s “non-ostentatious modernity”:

⁵ J. PACUKIEWICZ, “Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892): Oswajanie śmierci,” p. 80.

⁶ E. LIJEWSKA, “Profetyczny ironista na przełomie epok – o możliwych śladach koncepcji ironii Kierkegaarda w poemacie Norwida ‘Quidam,’” *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze*, 2016 Issue 3 (7), pp. 81-99.

⁷ L. LERNER, *Poetry*, in: *The Victorians. The Context of English Literature*, ed. L. Lerner, London 1978, p. 26.

The composition of the cycle and the composition of the individual poems presents itself as extremely fragile and hybrid; the meta-poetic or critical moment towards poetry, potentially immanent in every cycle, is particularly emphasised here, intertextuality is openly demonstrated, itself becoming the subject of compositional construction⁸.

It should be stressed that what I have termed the “modern ostentation” contained in the very intention of *Vade-mecum* (can we even speak of a cycle structure here?) leads to a problematisation of the Norwid’s project that almost paralyses all reflection. In the case of “unostentatiously modern” Hopkins, the cyclical diegesis is fluid, continuous and stable in the plan of all 131 links (one of the first readers of *In Memoriam*, Charlotte Brontë even calls the cycle “mournfully monotonous”). In Norwid’s work, meanwhile, the diegetic-associative line is so permuted and disturbed that it even makes Fieguth think of reading *Vade-mecum* anarchistically: in a cycling-decycling and decycling-cycling manner.

Whatever one may say about the “scattered” or even “splintered” structure of Norwid’s cycle (I refer here to the metaphors that organise Fieguth’s thinking about the non-standard nature of the cycle in general), the poet’s intention is, in the researcher’s opinion, coherent: Norwid wants to make *Vade-mecum* an auto-thematically critical, if not already auto-thematically revisory cycle (because “he arranged his cycle in such a way that the cyclic composition reflects poetically the dynamics and instability of the historical poetic process itself”). After the loss of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam in 1833, Tennyson writes an extensive consolatory cycle which also contains (as in Norwid’s work) a critical, auto-thematic potential. Here, the so-called taming of death becomes a tool for the metaphysical healing of the substitute themes – English literature. Justyna Pacukiewicz writes:

It is poetic language that is to become the remedy for overcoming sadness and is to re-evaluate the poetic model of the world towards the model proposed by Christian ontology [here we must not forget the reservation made by the editors of the Anglican magazine “Christian Remembrancer” about Tennyson. This was formulated after the writer had published the poem *Princess* and read “No one would call him a Christian poet” – after Steane: K. S.]¹⁰.

⁸ R. FIEGUTH, “Cykl poetycki jako model historycznej ewolucji poetyckiej. ‘Vade-mecum’ Norwida (1866),” in: R. Fieguth, *Rozpierzchłe gałzki. Cykliczne i skojarzeniowe formy kompozycyjne w twórczości Adama Mickiewicza*, transl. M. Zieliński, Warszawa 2002, p. 42.

⁹ R. FIEGUTH, “Cykl poetycki jako model historycznej ewolucji poetyckiej. ‘Vade-mecum’ Norwida (1866),” p. 42.

¹⁰ J. PACUKIEWICZ, “Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892): Oswajanie śmierci,” p. 126; see also: J. B. STEANE, “‘In Memoriam’. ‘Next to the Bible...’ (Queen Victoria),” p. 87.

However, *In Memoriam* is primarily an elegiac cycle and it is on an elegiac basis, as Steane points out, that Tennyson's solemnity, often quite peculiar, is born. For instance, as George Malcolm Young observes, "in his most solemn mood, Tennyson sometimes speaks like an archangel reassuring us that the universe *will muddle through it all*"¹¹. In incidents of this kind, hope and emotionality become far more central to *In Memoriam* than to *Vade-mecum* – otherwise so clearly immersed in the "poetry of feelings" (as Danuta Zamaćńska has emphasised many times¹²). I would like to take this opportunity to make it clear that without seeing emotional poetry in Norwid's great cycle, it would not be possible at all to compare *Vade-mecum* with the cycles by Tennyson, Whitman or Hopkins. Here, accepting the assumption of an emotionality psychologically inscribed in the experience of the subject of *Vade-mecum* even seems a *sine qua non* condition. However, this does not mean that by crystallising the emotionality of his cyclic subject, Norwid (aiming, for instance, at the regeneration of eroding absolute values) would, like Tennyson, give vent to peculiarities of feeling.

It would be valuable – I believe – to examine in this respect the consolatory element of *Vade-mecum* and its contribution to the structure of the cycle. What is the consolatory character of *Vade-mecum* – conceived as an intra-textual phenomenon – (stretching from obvious cases such as the poem *Pamięci Alberta Szeligi Hrabiego Potockiego...* [*To the Memory of Albert Szeliga Count Potocki...*] to extremely complex cases such as *Do Walentego Pomiana Z.* [*To Walenty Pomian Z.*]) and can it in any way be linked to that of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*? Before doing so, a basic reflection remains – on the elegiac nature of the Norwid cycle and the elegiac nature of the Tennyson cycle. On the ground of Norwid Studies, the former has been most accurately described by Bernardetta Kuczera-Chachulska. Her opinion corresponds to that of Justyna Pacukiewicz on Tennyson, already cited here. The elegiac poeticism of Norwid's cycle and the elegiac poeticism of Tennyson's cycle are attempts to structure the entire poetic constructions proposed by the poets. To put it poetically: elegy and elegiac nature here permeate the structure of the whole and – at least – co-determine it¹³.

¹¹ J. B. STEANE, "‘In Memoriam’. ‘Next to the Bible...’ (Queen Victoria)," p. 82.

¹² D. ZAMAĆŃSKA, "Poznawanie poezji Norwida," *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 1: 1983, pp. 5-30.

¹³ B. KUCZERA-CHACHULSKA, "Wokół ‘Czarnych...’, ‘Białych kwiatów’ i ‘Vade-mecum.’ Elegijność Norwida," in: B. Kuczera-Chachulska, *Przemiany form i postawy postawy elegijnych w liryce polskiej XIX wieku. Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Norwid, Faleński, Asnyk, Konopnicka*, Warszawa 2002, pp. 175-221.

WHITMAN

Walt Whitman – put in the context of Cyprian Norwid and his *Vade-mecum* – is an even more complicated example than Alfred Tennyson. In the Polish reception of Whitman, which has been thoroughly researched by Marta Skwara, the most striking thing is the criticism of the American poet that reveals itself forcefully in the early writings of Norwid’s publisher Zenon Miriam-Przesmycki and in the essays by Stanisław Brzozowski, who is the first to link the ecstaticism of the author of *Leaves of Grass* with the (seemingly) very distant ecstaticism of the author of *Vade-mecum*: “When Whitman sends greetings and blessings to Paris, to Europe, to all the states, to the whole world, this geographical ecstasy seems to us a little too easy,” “what comes to mind is Norwid’s heroic butterfly that was sure it was pulling the chariot of the world beyond him.”¹⁴

For Miriam-Przesmycki, Whitman’s fatal infatuation with what Brzozowski called “geographical ecstasy” was reflected in the quality of his poetic cycles, regarded by Norwid’s editor as almost pulp. “His pseudo-poetical rhapsodies, published in cycles christened with the most bizarre titles ‘*Leaves of Grass*’ or ‘*Drum taps*’ despise all the rules and limitations of rhyme, rhythm and metre.”¹⁵ But let us return to the question of “geographical ecstasy.” Miriam suspects that its vision may have been formulated by Whitman based, among others, on the works of Victor Hugo, “[for here] he sees the realisation of Victor Hugo’s style of proclamation to Paris and ‘the globe around it’, taken to its ultimate limits.”¹⁶ Skwara recalls how extensively in his time the author of *Leaves of Grass* may have drawn on Hugo’s aesthetics and ethics: “towards the end of his life, Whitman encouraged comparisons of his poetry with Hugo’s work, defending his own poetics. For him, Hugo was an artist who, like himself, sought to liberate literature from the taboo of carnality.”¹⁷

A number of important analogies emerge here in relation to Norwid. First, however, let us recall those that directly relate to the essence of the cyclical nature of

¹⁴ Brzozowski builds his own association with Norwid on the basis of Whitman’s poem, *Salut Au Monde!* M. SKWARA, “Whitman poetów i pisarzy polskich. Brzozowskiego ,poeta życia,” in: M. Skwara, “*Polski Whitman.*” *O funkcjonowaniu poety obcego w kulturze narodowej*, Kraków 2010, p. 219.

¹⁵ Z. PRZESMYCKI-MIRIAM, “Poeci północno-amerykańscy,” *Życie*, 1887, Issue 19, Issue 20, p. 313. See also: M. SKWARA, “Whitman poetów i pisarzy polskich. Miriama ‘poeta surowy,’” in: M. Skwara, “*Polski Whitman.*” p. 164.

¹⁶ M. SKWARA, “Whitman poetów i pisarzy polskich. Miriama ‘poeta surowy,’” p. 164.

¹⁷ M. SKWARA, “Whitman poetów i pisarzy polskich. Miriama ‘poeta surowy,’” p. 164-165.

Vade-mecum. When Fieguth, who has already been mentioned here many times, signals the need to reconstruct “the closest European literary contexts” for *Vade-mecum*, he thinks, for instance, of Victor Hugo’s “abundant ‘cyclical’ work”¹⁸. For Norwid, in *Dwie aureole* [*Two Halos*], the writer – let us recall – “ma nieśmiertelną zaletę, że francuski język podniósł może do ostatecznych wyżyn estetycznych” [has this immortal virtue that he raised the French language perhaps to the ultimate aesthetic heights], with great talent – let us add – “po-głównie na kontrastach i wytworności opartym” [mainly based on contrasts and refinement] [emphasis added – K. S.] (VI 534). Does the ductus here really lead through Hugo to Whitman? The encirclement of America with a globe or the encirclement of France with a globe, geographism and pangeographism themselves as expressions of the manifestation of a creative worldview, an all-embracing of the world through the work – seem to shine through in the figures of the poem *Za wstęp. (Ogólniki)* [*As an Introduction. (Generalities)*]. And it would be possible, in my view, to read *Za wstęp. (Ogólniki)* in the Hugolian-Whitman spirit, as a specific response (conscious or involuntary) given by Norwid to the proponents of the peculiar cult of “geographical ecstasy.”

Anyway, when we read the preface to the *Leaves of Grass* cycle, it is hard to refrain from the impression that we are dealing with double reception: both of the then young Whitman and of Norwid’s “ducha-Artystę pojącego się jak motyle” [spirit-Artist drinking like butterflies] – “Wiosną życia” [the Spring of life], aiming, in his own way, “odpowiednie dać rzeczy – Słowo” [to give the right Word to the thing]. Norwid’s poem is a poem about the incarnation of the Artist’s personality in creation. Following this path, one can almost use the same language to speak about *Za wstęp. (Ogólniki)* and about Whitman’s vision of the American bard, the poet as the “stretching” body of America. Both Whitman and Norwid are interested in the sense, a kind of transcendental *Gefühl*, that makes it possible to speak at just the right moments both of “sphericity” and of “flattening” of the world – and thus to react vividly to the transformations of the “spirit of the country” as if it were transforming something corporeal and belonging biologically to the artist. According to Whitman, only an expanded poet-bard, a poet-rhapsode can create a cycle. Only the poet, expanded in a spiritual-bodily sense, can “respond in words to things.” This is exactly how Whitman explains artistry and the artist:

His spirit corresponds to the spirit of the country, it embodies the geography of the country and the life of nature, and the rivers and the lakes. The Mississippi with its annual flooding and changing bed, the Missouri River, and Columbia, and Ohio, and the St. Lawrence River

¹⁸ R. FIEGUTH, *Ruchy konikiem*, p. 26.

with its waterfalls, and the beautiful manly Hudson River – they flow into their estuaries in the same way – they flow into him too. [...] If the long Atlantic coasts were to extend still further and the Pacific coasts were to extend still further, he would easily extend north and south with them. He also extends between these coasts from east to west and reflects on what lies between them [emphasis added – K. S.]¹⁹.

We should return once more to *Dwie aureole* [*Two Halos*] and to the dialectic of “contrasts and refinement” in Hugo’s writing. When writing down these words, did Norwid perhaps have in mind his own letter from many years before – to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski from around 15 May 1866? At that time, he similarly described his own authorial aspiration, embedded in the structure and form of *Vade-mecum* – his cycle (the poet maintained) “jest opracowany na głębiach prawd i różnostronności form i bogactw języka prześladowanego i podupadłego” [is elaborated on the depths of truths and diversity of forms and riches of the persecuted and decadent language]. Whitman, quite similarly to Norwid – if I may say so – has no fear of descending into the abyss of concepts and meanings, has no fear of the catabasis of language, because (as in the case of Norwid) the catabasis of this kind is done in search of truth. For the author of *Quidam*, it is a descent into a world of “persecuted and decadent” meanings. For Whitman, the same movement is to form part of his transcendental ethos, as he emphatically expressed in the preface to *Leaves of Grass* in an extensive, delayed and evocative sentence:

[...] and there never grew up in any of the continents of the globe nor upon any planet or satellite or star, nor upon the asteroids, nor in any part of ethereal space, nor in the midst of density, nor under the fluid wet of the sea, nor in that condition which precedes the birth of babes, nor at any time during the changes of life, nor in that condition that follows what we term death, nor in any stretch of abeyance or action afterward of vitality, nor in any process of formation or reformation anywhere, a being whose instinct hated the truth²⁰.

And just as Norwid can speak of two faces of Hugo at once, so Whitman sees a Janus face in every face of the creators of literary masterpieces. And still very much like Arnold, he openly considers the issues of ambiguity rooted in the Bible, reading it, for instance, in an Ossianic key. Howard J. Waskow writes about this:

Dante’s “economy” [Waskow is referring to the economy of words – K. S.] is simultaneously “sparse,” “devoid of joy” and “magnificent;” Shakespeare’s “dilly-dallying” remains alternately

¹⁹ Translated by Juliusz Żuławski. Cit. after: J. ŻUŁAWSKI, “Pośród źdźbeł trawy. Wizja poety-Amerykanina,” in: J. Żuławski, *Wielka podróż Walta Whitmana*, Warszawa 1971, p. 64.

²⁰ W. WHITMAN, *Leaves of Grass*, (Preface), <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69391/from-preface-to-leaves-of-grass-first-edition>.

“florid,” “artfully tangled” and “prolific,” multiplying like nature itself. The works Whitman criticizes in his selection are never left alone. The Bible at one time associated with Ossian’s “scattering” and “vagueness” is at the same time praised for its “simplicity.” Nature itself, which often seems a model of precision and balance, is invoked to explain Shakespearean redundancy. For Whitman, everything has two faces²¹.

The bipolar unity of the world, as Waskow notes, is for Whitman a source of constant cognitive optimism. Antinomy, in turn, becomes a tool of the theatre of characters, which Whitman presents to moralise the reader. If we think of Romantic personology, Norwid in *Vade-mecum* is definitely closer – as one might suspect – to Emily Dickinson’s rather than to Walt Whitman’s theatre of characters, because the latter does not feel that he is descending into the depths of a “persecuted and decadent language,” he is not, like Norwid, marked by a crisis of the fulfilment of his literary mission. He is no Ezekiel, no desert prophet.

From this derive the fundamental differences between the Polish and American cycle metaphors, on top of which, perhaps – the cyclical diegesis of *Leaves of Grass* and the intermittent, unseen, uncharacterised, unrevealed, constantly problematic cyclical diegesis of the subject of *Vade-mecum*. However, it must not be forgotten that the diegesis of *Leaves of Grass* is the diegesis of the cycle, which is represented here as (at least to some extent) a function of being a poem, if not the American “great dynamic epic” (as Żuławski writes). The triumphalism of Whitman’s thinking about the cycle is accompanied by an interesting organic metaphoricality. Whitman explains:

The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form²².

Vade-mecum, bound together by “misterna nić wewnętrzną” [an intricate internal thread] – as Norwid explains to Henryk Merzbach in his correspondence – and if we are to believe the subject of the poem *Finis* – even by “nić logiczna” [a logical thread], is a necklace made of tears and logical, “międzyperłowe spojenia” [inter-pearl bonds], where infinite complexity is expressed through the metaphor of “logiczne wciekanie łzy we łzę” [the logical trickling of a tear into a tear]. I do

²¹ Based on the Polish translation by K. S. H. J. WASKOW, “Whitman’s habit of mind. ‘Bipolar unity’ in poetic theory,” in: K. S. H. J. Waskow, *Whitman. Explorations in Form*, Chicago – London 1966, p. 55.

²² W. WHITMAN, *Leaves of Grass*, (Preface), <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69391/from-preface-to-leaves-of-grass-first-edition>.

not know about others, but I always imagine this necklace as composed of a huge number of *barocco* (irregularly shaped, fanciful pearls, from which the entire epoch takes its name). This image, I think – very elegiac and also somewhat Tennysonian – would be worth contrasting with the American flower-fruit metaphor, because perhaps the best basis for talking about the cyclical diegesis is precisely its metaphor.

It must not be forgotten, however, that there are distant, even reverberating echoes of Whitman's diegetic metaphors from *Preface to Leaves of Grass* in Norwid's works. For if one thinks of the three degrees of naturalist metaphors of the cycle, Norwid is on the lowest third (though he is not an anti-vitalist), while Whitman hits the highest of the thresholds. For the latter, after all, the process of being in a cycle (of being an author or reader) is a process of inner flowering, of letting out the sap. The second degree is to see the cycle as still life, which might be called a collectivist, if not a collector's vision of cycle-making. Finally, the third degree, which I would like to identify with Norwid through the poem *Finis*, should adopt the herbarium as its organising metaphor, because the whole cycle in *Finis* becomes precisely "zielnikiem badacza śmierci Tworów" [the herbarium of the researcher of the death of Creations], in which lies the recognition of the tragedy of such creative processes as cycle-making or cycle-creation. Norwid – one might say using great metaphor and no less abbreviated thought – "tames" Whitman with Tennyson's sadness, but it is not clear whether he finds a deserved consolation.

It is worth juxtaposing this quiet, almost inaudible lament by Norwid over the mummifying desiccation of the cycle and its history already belonging to the past with an ostentatious passage from Whitman's *Preface to Leaves of Grass*. I hope the impression remains striking, as Whitman writes:

America does not repel the past or what it has produced under its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old religions . . . accepts the lesson with calmness . . . is not so impatient as has been supposed that the slough still sticks to opinions and manners and literature while the life which served its requirements has passed into the new life of the new forms perceives that the corpse is slowly borne from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house . . . perceives that it waits a little while in the door . . . that it was fittest for its days . . . that its action has descended to the stalwart and wellshaped heir who approaches . . . and that he shall be fittest for his days²³.

And perhaps the most moving of Whitman's sentences, which comes immediately after the passage just quoted: "The Americans of all nations at any time upon

²³ W. WHITMAN, *Leaves of Grass*, (Preface).

the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature”²⁴. When I read this, I have (as a Norwid Studies researcher) a strange impression that this is exactly how Caesar from *Kleopatra i Cezar* [*Cleopatra and Caesar*] might have spoken, seeing, for example, the Egyptian queen dining with a mummy, or looking more broadly at the declining – a little decadent and a little necrophiliac – culture of Norwid’s Egypt. And yet... it is probably no coincidence that Norwid’s ancient tragedy was being written at exactly the same time as Friedrich Nietzsche was publishing his first, legendary work, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*.

HOPKINS

As Maciej Żurowski argues, “it would be strange if Hopkins’s and Norwid’s religiosity, different for various reasons, did not happen to adopt the same poetic tone.”²⁵ The parallelism – as finally resolved (many years after Żurowski) by Agata Brajerska-Mazur²⁶ – was based on the co-identity of literary ontogeny in the poems of both poets, an ontogeny to be contained in the *inscape* device, characteristic above all of Hopkins. Pointing to the existence of devices similar to Hopkins’ strategy of lyrical imagery in Norwid’s poetry nevertheless remains (in my opinion) rather risky. Behind *inscape* – conceived of in accordance with the poet’s authorial commentaries and literary realisations – there is a much deeper content than that which would indicate that it is merely a means of artistic expression. Żurowski seems to consider this theme in a much safer manner, in an unhurried, essayistic mode demonstrating strong, but non-imposing on further, detailed reflection, parallels between Norwid’s poem *W pamiętniku* [*In a Diary*] (from *Tyrtej* [*Tyrtaeus*], 1865–1866) and Hopkins’ sonnet *That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection* (1888):

Its beginning, says Donald McCheney, presents *inscape* in its typical form – the images of clouds, lights and shadows on houses and trees reveal the Heraclitean energy of nature, but no less important is the poet’s own work in the matter of words, “language raised to the heights of ecstasy,” “language for language’s sake.” It should also be added that *inscape* is not entirely foreign to impressionism and predates Joyce’s theory of imagism and epiphanies²⁷.

²⁴ W. WHITMAN, *Leaves of Grass*, (Preface).

²⁵ M. ŻUROWSKI, “Hopkins, Mallarmé i Norwid,” *Poezja*, 1983, Issue 4-5, p. 188.

²⁶ A. BRAJERSKA-MAZUR, “Los geniuszów, czyli niezwykle paralelizmy w życiu i twórczości Gerarda Manleya Hopkinsa i Cypriana Kamila Norwida,” in: *Symbol w dziele Cypriana Norwida*, ed. W. Rzońca, Warszawa 2011, pp. 299-310.

²⁷ M. ŻUROWSKI, “Hopkins, Mallarmé i Norwid,” p. 189.

Firstly, however, for Stanisław Barańczak, the translator of the poet's *inscape* poems (the same that Brajerska-Mazur noticed in Norwid), it is not just a gimmick or device, but a metaphor organising the whole intellectual reality of Hopkins' poetry, especially the areas of philosophy of nature and language. This, in turn, is a very different take from the one presented by Żurowski, who links the strategy of imagery to imagism-impressionism. *Inscape* for Hopkins means, in this broader perspective, exactly as much – Barańczak risks a bold comparison – as *haecceitas* for John Duns Scotus. The comparison is indeed bold, but it seems justified. As William Henry Gardner explained:

The decisive influence of Duns Scotus's thought was that "this theologian, as it were, gave him [Hopkins] positive sanction to reveal his individuality – which Hopkins could by no means do as a Jesuit, but which he could do as a Christian poet."²⁸

Gardner's observation seems binding also in the perspective of Norwid's *Vade-mecum*. For whenever one sees reminiscences of Hopkins' *inscape* in the Polish poet's lyrical imagery, one should probably consider a significant caveat: Norwid never equipped himself with an aesthetic conception that sublimated the internal costs of his beliefs, including – sublimating the sacrifice of religious convictions. Finally, Norwid never, like Hopkins in relation to Duns Scotus, put his faith in any philosopher – either one who would, similarly to Duns Scotus, oppose Thomism, or one who would synthesise Thomism.

Secondly, precisely because *inscape* is not just a gimmick, but also – the effect of a particular philosophy of language and nature, Barańczak is able to put forward at the end of his study the striking thesis that "in Hopkins's poems it is possible to discern, a profound fundamental correspondence and appropriateness of 'thematized information' with 'implied information.'"²⁹ In Norwid's case, meanwhile, the structure of the lyrical message seems to be exactly the opposite, as I have attempted to demonstrate primarily by drawing examples from characterisation of Emily Dickinson's lyric and showing that the author of *Vade-mecum* and the "hermit of Amherst" share an analogous use of poetic function. This is another caveat in finding similarities between Norwid's imagery and Hopkins' strategy of

²⁸ S. BARAŃCZAK, "Wstęp. Nieśmiertelny diament," in: G. M. HOPKINS, *33 wiersze*, selection, translation, introduction and editing by S. Barańczak, Kraków 1992, p. 10. A different perspective on the issue is presented by Christopher Devlin, who suggests that "the philosopher and the poet confronted each other as *fellow-pilgrims* rather than as a master with a disciple." Ch. DEVLIN, "Hopkins and Duns Scotus (1936)," in: *Gerard Manley Hopkins "Poems." A Casebook*, ed. M. Bottrall, Macmillan Press Ltd 1975, p. 116.

²⁹ S. BARAŃCZAK, "Wstęp. Nieśmiertelny diament," p. 21.

description – when it comes to the depth and complexity of the lyrical message, in the perspective of the English-language *tertium comparationis*, Norwid seems to bear more affinity to Dickens than to Hopkins. I wrote on this subject:

What Cyprian Norwid's and Emily Dickinson's poems have in common is the unity of poetic function developed in their texts, manifested in the fact that, while amplifying the meaning of poetic utterance, they do not reveal its erosion brought about by the cost of *language-making* that is continually renewed and carried out afresh. Language is cracked, but Jakobson's poetic function – if, of course, it is performed authorially by Dickinson or Norwid – is to sharpen it in such a way that the cracks and fissures remain not only invisible but “filled” with substitute material³⁰.

To sum up, what connects Norwid to English-language poetic semantics is, in my view, not a fairly linear unity of “thematized” and “implied” information (including the *inscape* device working in favour of such unity), but a sophisticated, unifying semanticising tendency – resisting in various ways the erosion of classical, poetic semantics. However, it is not that there are no areas of similarity between Hopkins and Norwid (at Dickinson's expense). To prove otherwise, however, one would have to return to his theoretical programme.

Thirdly, the “over-represented” *inscape* in works about Hopkins would not have fulfilled its representational role without the influence of the so-called *instress*. As Barańczak stresses, it is only “these two terms that would play a fundamental role not only for the formation of Hopkins's notions of the natural world, but also for the formation of his poetic theory.”³¹

From an *instress* perspective, Hopkins already appears much more like an imaginalist *avant la lettre*. He is also, in (and through) his formal explorations, closer to the multi-faceted Norwid, including his poetic summa, the *Vade-mecum* cycle, since the poet equips his term with a peculiar – as Barańczak maintains – energetic-existential interpretation: “*instress* (literally: pressure directed inwards) denotes the complementary notion of existential energy that defines and moves *inscape* to life.”³² It is in this spirit – the dialectic of *instress* with *inscape* – that one of Hopkins' most rhythmically and architecturally monumental poems, *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, could be read. The resemblance with Norwid that is unveiled in this case can lead deep into *Vade-mecum* in only one direction in my opinion – to *Fortepian Szopena* [*Chopin's Grand Piano*].

³⁰ K. SAMSEL, “Persona liryczna w wierszach Cypriana Norwida i Emily Dickinson,” *Przełąd Humanistyczny*, 2017, Issue 4 (459), p. 96.

³¹ S. BARAŃCZAK, “Wstęp. Nieśmiertelny diament,” p. 9.

³² S. BARAŃCZAK, “Wstęp. Nieśmiertelny diament,” p. 9.

As early as 1935, it was quite obvious to Bernard Kelly that “reading *The Wreck of the Deutschland* without special preparation for the ‘spiritual mass’ of the text is devoid of the slightest sense.”³³ Kelly has shown how Hopkins’ inclusion of his own arch-poem into the Passion structure determines the intelligibility of the text taken in – to put it simply – with all the senses and the fullness of the intellect. To put it a little more subtly, Passionism in poetic structure was united in *The Wreck of the Deutschland* on completely idiomatic rights with the transcendental unity of apperception³⁴. Similar laws of sensual-intellectual synaesthesia seem to underlie *Fortepian Szopena* [*Chopin’s Grand Piano*], and a similar role in achieving this kind of synaesthesia is played by Passion in it, as I have tried to prove in a separate study³⁵.

The array of similarities between Norwid’s and Hopkins’ arch-poems may also derive from the fact that both texts represent the peaks of rhythmicity and poetic musicality in the style of both authors. Barańczak (for instance) considers the so-called *sprung rhythm*³⁶ the most outstanding rhythmic achievement in Hopkins’ poems. However, certain similarities to sprung rhythm may also be seen in trans-stressing procedures in *Fortepian Szopena*. In my study of the “presumed” Passion-like nature of Norwid’s poem, I tried to show that the mechanism of these trans-stressing treatments is the mechanism of the unresolved dissonance of the major septimal, so called *parrhesia* figure, characteristic of cantata-oratorio Passions³⁷.

CONCLUSION

Situating *Vade-mecum* in the English-language triangle encompassing the poetic cycles of Tennyson, Whitman and Hopkins leads to peculiar – not so much conclusions as – conjectures. Firstly, the sceptical view proposed in the introduction should be more nuanced. The point is not that a “synthetic comparatistics” of *Vade-*

³³ B. KELLY, “The Wreck of ‘Deutschland’” (1935), in: *Gerard Manley Hopkins “Poems.” A Casebook*, p. 117.

³⁴ However, Hopkins seems to aestheticise rather than intellectualise this unity. “A simultaneous delight of the intelligence and the senses,” Kelly writes on the subject. B. Kelly, “The Wreck of ‘Deutschland,’” p. 123.

³⁵ K. SAMSEL, “Domniemany pasyjny aspekt ‘Fortepianu Szopena’ Cypriana Norwida,” w: *Kantata – oratorium – pasja. Odmiany form literacko-muzycznych w kulturze XVIII i XIX wieku*, eds. A. Borkowska-Rychlewska and E. Nowicka, Poznań 2019, pp. 123-132.

³⁶ S. BARAŃCZAK, “Wstęp. Nieśmiertelny diament,” p. 30.

³⁷ K. SAMSEL, „Domniemany pasyjny aspekt ‘Fortepianu Szopena’ Cypriana Norwida,” p. 127; see also: J. CHOMIŃSKI, K. WILKOWSKA-CHOMIŃSKA, “Pasja,” in: J. Chomiński, K. Wilkowska-Chomińska, *Wielkie formy wokalne*, Vol. 5, Kraków 1984, p. 447.

mecum is impossible, but rather that it produces a paralysis – of both synthetists and comparatists alike. From the fact, in turn, that it is not a competence-driven powerlessness, it is easy to draw (false) conclusions about the “non-comparativity” of *Vade-mecum* in general. Meanwhile, Norwid’s *Vade-mecum* requires not so much a new type of literary comparatistics as a new mechanism of comparison – one might say a conditional comparatistics in which the relevance and integrity of the *tertium comparationis* is maintained despite even revoking the validity of the opposition of what is comparative and what is not (this juxtaposition in the case of such an idiomatic work should, in my view, no longer be considered).

The example of my comparative study of Norwid – (Tennyson – Whitman – Hopkins) naturally illustrates my own *modus operandi*; in order to suspend the opposition: comparative – non-comparative, I am inclined towards comparatistics of many other kinds rather than the standard, synthetic one. In parts of this article I have thus used both analytical comparatistics and microphilological methods (microanalysis, microsynthesis, microanalysis-microsynthesis). All of this, combined with an intertextual-interdisciplinary sensibility, may result in delivering at least provisional answers to the question about the intertextual shape of these “stu poezji dorywczych” [one hundred casual poems] (PWsz IX 386) – “stu argumentów” [one hundred arguments] (PWsz IX 217).

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VADE-MECUM WOBEC ANGLOJĘZycznego CYKLU POETYCKIEGO DRUGIEJ POŁOWY XIX WIEKU

Streszczenie

Celem studium jest zainicjowanie rozważań nad systemowymi sposobami czytania *Vade-mecum*, które zarazem stanowią mogłyby punkt wyjścia do uporządkowania porównawczego namysłu nad cyklem i jego prekursorstwem. Możliwości lektury podobnego typu wydaje się stwarzać tzw. komparatystyka syntetyczna i to w jej duchu ustanawiana jest w niniejszym artykule podstawowa linia zestawiania, a także porównywania: *Vade-mecum* z *In Memoriam* Alfreda Tennysona, *Leaves of Grass* Walta Whitmana, a także *Poems* Gerarda Manleya Hopkinsa. Rezultatem konfrontowania tych ujęć stają się konkretne wnioski, m.in. silna tendencja

semantyzacyjna cyklu obecna zarówno u Norwida, jak i u Tennysona, Whitmana albo Hopkinsa, a także eksperymenty w zakresie utrzymywania i zrywania ciągłości diegezy cyklu pojętego jako całość, widocznie zarysowujące się w obrębie cyklów Norwida i Whitmana. Badanie i porównywanie aspektów strukturalnych cyklów Norwida, Tennysona, Whitmana oraz Hopkinsa może więc w kierunku ostrożnego ustalania nowego punktu wyjścia w badaniach: komparatystyki, którą można by naraz określić mianem warunkowej i analitycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: *Vade-mecum*; *In Memoriam*; *Leaves of Grass*; *Poems*; cykl poetycki; komparatystyka.

VADE-MECUM VIS-À-VIS THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE POETRY CYCLES OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Summary

The aim of the study is to initiate the reflection over the systemic ways of reading *Vade-mecum* that at the same time could be the new starting point to rearrange the comparative reflection on the cycle and its pioneering character. Similar possibilities seem to be provided by so-called synthetic comparatistics, and it is in that spirit that this article juxtaposes and compares *Vade-mecum* with Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as well as Gerard Manley Hopkins's *Poems*. The result of confronting of those perspectives has been expressed in specific conclusions, among others – the strong semanticising tendency of the cycle in Norwid's, Tennyson's, Whitman's and Hopkins's cases as well as the experiments in the area of maintaining and breaking the continuity of cycle's diegesis – clearly outlined within the Norwid's and Whitman's cycles. Studying as well as comparing the structural aspects of the cycles by Norwid, Tennyson, Whitman and Hopkins may lead to the cautious determining the new starting point of research – literary comparatistics, which could be simultaneously referred to as conditional and analytical.

Keywords: *Vade-mecum*; *In Memoriam*; *Leaves of Grass*; *Poems*; poetic cycle; comparatistics.

KAROL SAMSEL – PhD, assistant professor at the Department of Romantic Literature, Faculty of Polish Studies, University of Warsaw. Since 2019 he has been the head of the Department of the History of Drama 1864–1939. PhD candidate at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Warsaw. Author of the books: *Norwid – Conrad. Epika w perspektywie modernizmu* (2014), *Inwalida intencji. Studia o Norwidzie* (2017); co-editor of the volumes: *Uniwersalność komizmu. Aleksander Fredro w 220. rocznicę urodzin* (2015), *Poeci-studenci podziemnego Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego wobec romantyzmu* (2018), and *Dramaty Cypriana Norwida. Teksty – konteksty – interteksty* (2019). His current research (besides the study of Cyprian Norwid's works and their reception) centres on the Polish background of Joseph Conrad's writing, especially the Polish-Romantic intertextuality of his writings. He has published papers in *Pamiętnik Literacki*, *Studia Norwidiana*, *Yearbook of Conrad Studies* (Poland), *Prace Filologiczne*, *Literaturoznawstwo* and *Philo-Sofija*.