

COLLOQUIA NORWIDIANA XII: *LETTERS, LETTERS...*

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This year's already 12<sup>th</sup> Colloquia Norwidiana in Kazimierz Dolny were devoted to Norwid's epistolography. More than 40 researchers came to the town upon the Vistula River and just as many papers were delivered addressing the subject of the poet's letters from many different perspectives. These were also three days of fruitful, sometimes turbulent discussions, private conversations, as well as the memory of those Norwid Studies scholars who are no longer among us. The event abounded also in plans for the future and joyful social gatherings. The conference proceedings themselves, due to the multitude of papers, had to be organised in parallel sessions, but owing to some changes, the organisers managed to integrate them into a single session on the last day.

In the plenary session, which began the proceedings, Piotr Chlebowski was the first to take the floor by greeting all the participants and presenting the conference agenda. The first paper was delivered by Barbara Stelmaszczyk who revealed a picture of Norwid at the "turn of time" arising from his letters – the paper discussed the important events and phenomena of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as viewed through the prism of the poet's correspondence. The second speaker – Agnieszka Ziółowicz convincingly showed how Norwid's letters deviated from the autobiographical tendencies typical of Romantic epistolography, but rather sought to create the feeling of community through internal dialogue, various ways of creating bonds via letters and consistent building of sender-receiver relationships. The next paper by Jacek Brzozowski concerned the works and the person of Juliusz Słowacki emerging from Norwid's letters. The author of the paper classified Norwid's mentions of Słowacki in his correspondence, with particular emphasis on those "non-obvious" as well as postulated a thesis that Słowacki appeared on Norwid's horizon in response to Klaczko's lectures on Mickiewicz (1849). The session closed with Piotr Chlebowski's paper in which he protested against the editorial tradition, which classified an excerpt from *Do Z. K. Wyjątek z listu* [To Z.K. An excerpt from the letter] as part of Norwid's correspondence. The speaker argued that this is exclusively a literary work.

The proceedings on the next day were conducted in separate sections. The speakers presented their papers in two groups.

## “RAJCHERTÓWKA” GROUP

The morning session opened with a paper by Bernadetta Kuczera-Chachulska who addressed the subject of text genre of Norwid's letters. She pointed to literary means present in the poet's work, which are common to lyrical and epistolary forms, compiling them in a key characteristic of Norwid's imperative of understanding. The next paper concerned the place of Norwid's letters against the background of Romantic epistolography. Wiesław Rzońca, who proposed this juxtaposition, noted that in Norwid's works there is no poetry of complaint and confession is an intellectual statement. The poet makes his thoughts and feelings universal, which in the process became a kind of reflection. Both the dialogic character of letters as well as moralism used as a formal means, but also the symbolism of life-realistic images – all this, according to the speaker, should be considered as already modernist features. The next paper slightly changed the viewpoint. Anna Kozłowska raised the problem of self-reference of Norwid's letters, searching for fragments from the correspondence of the poet – mainly his early correspondence, and, interestingly, letters to women – which testify to his attitude towards this form of writing. The paper presented many aspects of Norwid's correspondence culture (even its appearance!), specific rhetoric and correspondence strategies. The next two papers dealt with the subjects of the poet's aesthetics and critical-literary discourse in this correspondence. The first, proposed by Renata Gadamska, raised the question as to whether Norwid, who wanted to attribute beauty even to objects, refused it to his letters, the amorphism of which is difficult to deny. In the next part of her talk, the speaker proved that it would be a misunderstanding to apply the classic criterion of beauty to Norwid's correspondence. Norwid himself put the apostle Paul's letters as a model, emphasising not so much the smoothness of the style, but giving testimony of faith and truth. Thus, loftiness is the right category for describing this epistolography, in which ethics dominates over aesthetics. The last paper in the morning session, delivered by Marek Stanisz, was aimed at raising questions about Norwid – a literary critic. It collected data about the most important periods, the most frequent recipients and the main themes of Norwid's critical remarks on literature – usually old, non-contemporary to the poet, to finally be able to conclude whether and why Norwid needed literary critic skills.

The afternoon session began with papers on the relationship between Norwid and the addressees of his letters. Jan Zieliński delivered a paper entitled *Between Cyprian and Felicjan*. Starting with Stempowski's essay, the speaker proposed an expanded reading of Norwid's letter to Maria Trębicka, which contained remarks on Faleński's poem *Termopile*, while analysing the specificity of the mutual ref-

erences between the two poets. Then, on the basis of three letters of Norwid to Kraszewski from the time of the outbreak of the January Uprising, Karol Samsel concluded that the subsequent deterioration of the poets' friendship had its origins in the misunderstandings surrounding the creation of Polish Daily. In turn, Elżbieta Dąbrowicz undertook to look at the letter as an instrument of expressing opinion in the correspondence of *Quidam's* author and Zygmunt Krasiński. Kraszewski's opinions on the power of the written word depending on who admits to authorship was a point of departure for the author to show differences in this respect between Norwid, who was striving for appreciation, and Krasiński, who was publishing his works anonymously. The last session of presentations within the group "Rajchertówka" started a paper addressing spatial issues in poet's letters. Pelagia Bojko followed the epistolary reminiscences of homeland and wandering places. She pointed out that, depending on where Norwid was living at a particular time, the proportions between the description of the interiors and his current situation and the reminiscences of the country from his childhood considerably differed. The final paper in the whole section belonged to Adam Cedro, who presented a handful of motifs appearing in Norwid's correspondence in the years 1855-1856, which were less obvious traces of his poem *Quidam*. According to the speaker, the material seemed to confirm the hypothesis that the poem (or at least its main foundation) was written at that time in Paris.

#### "POD WIANUSZKAMI" GROUP

The morning session of this group was opened by Sławomir Rzepczyński with his paper on Norwid's project of a journal for the year 1863. It also involved postcolonial contexts. The speaker showed Norwid's negative rhetoric and his exposition of shortcomings. The speaker pointed to the diary as an ideological, intellectual project in which the poet called for political realism and demanded that Christianity be properly understood while raising the Polish question. Subsequent paper by Włodzimierz Toruń continued the topic. It focused on the insurrectionist epistolography of the author of *Czarne kwiaty* [Black flowers], in which the truth, idea and thought were to coexist, in contrast to – as the poet argued – what dominated the Polish uprising, namely the lack of clear values and imitative nature. Following that, Zofia Dambek introduced fragments of the history of Norwid's lost, undelivered or unanswered letters. The speaker noted that sometimes Norwid himself provoked such situations or simply neglected the correspondence. She elaborated, among others, on the fate of Norwid's correspondence with Zygmunt Krasiński, August Cieszkowski or Maria Trębicka, noting in the end that Norwid

was not able to bring the readers into the world of his thoughts. The conference could not miss the artistic accent. Edyta Chlebowska elaborated on the place of sketch and caricature in Norwid's letters, stating that they are but a substitute for a particular scene. In this context, letters to Sophia Radwanowa were mentioned. Then, Marek Buś went on to propose a category of epistolary essay. The speaker discussed also editorial issues, including the proposal to record text genres and use of abbreviations in the edition of Norwid's *Dzieła wszystkie* [Complete works]. At the end of the morning session, Grażyna Halkiewicz-Sojak and Józef Fert reported on the progress of editorial work on the second volume of *Dzieła wszystkie* by Cyprian Norwid. It turns out that this very editorial aspect caused a stirring discussion, which continued over the break and then was resumed at the beginning of the afternoon sessions. Particularly stirring was Józef Fert's suggestion concerning the changes in the ordering of *Vade-mecum* cycle.

The first papers delivered as part of the afternoon session dealt with religious themes in Norwid's letters. In her contribution, Marta Ewa Rogowska classified the biblical references found on the pages of Norwid's epistolography, while Father Antoni Dunajski drew the image of the Church emerging from the poet's epistolary allusions. He distinguished between the remarks on the Church in the personal experience of the poet, as well as the Church as an institution, the relationship of the Church to the art and the world. Subsequently, Arent van Nieuwekerken, coming from the quote from a letter to Joanna Kuczyńska: "Ja pochodzę od Jafetowego wnuka [...] od dziada mego Prometeusa" [I come from Japheth's grandchild [...] from my forefather Prometheus] (PWsz IX, 388), described the problem of race as viewed by Norwid in his characteristic genealogy. The next paper by Agata Brajerska-Mazur juxtaposed Norwid's correspondence with the letters of the forgotten English poet and Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins. The speaker convincingly presented the similarities between the silhouettes of these two creators underestimated during their lifetime, as well as the differences that became visible in the letters written by each of them. The proceedings of the group "Pod Wianuszkami" concluded with a paper by Łukasz Niewczas on Norwidian metaphor in the lyric and epistolography. The speaker introduced the concept of "invisible" metaphor, hidden in Norwid's poems behind other stylistic figures. He then transferred his observations onto the epistolary field.

After the whole day of scientific deliberations, a meeting was scheduled at which Edyta and Piotr Chlebowski presented a proposal for the fourteenth conference - Colloquia Norwidiana: *Italiam, Italiam ...*, devoted to Italian period of the poet's biography and artistic work. The conference was scheduled for 2015 and the participants were invited to the charming Tuscan town of Sansepolcro. The idea was enthusiastically welcomed and preliminary organisational arrangements were made.

## THE LAST DAY OF PROCEEDINGS

To the joy of all participants, the conference proceedings on the last day were again held with the participation of all, without division into sections. The session opened with the paper by Michał Kuziak who depicted Norwid's impressions of the contemporary Paris. The speaker argued with the idea (put forward by Zofia Stefanowska) of defining Norwid as the "poet of the city", pointing to the lack of poetic images of cities in the poet's works, but there is a description of his own atelier, and even sometimes in his works there emerges an infernal picture of cities (*Larwa* [Larva]). The next speaker, Ewangelina Skalińska, in her characterisation of Norwid's letters to women, she pointed to the specific autocreation and sometimes paternalistic tone of the poet's letters addressed to the representative of the beautiful sex. The next paper was delivered by Dorota Plucińska who elaborated on the presence of intertextual comedy in Norwid's correspondence – this always emerged on the border – between the meanings of the texts cited and their readings. The speaker noted that positioning of the letters in different contexts gives the impression of a non-accidental form that is created on purpose for the recipient. Subsequently, Julia Kalińska delivered a linguistics-oriented paper, in which the author set the goal of demonstrating the plurality of contexts in which the lexeme "flower" appears in Norwid's correspondence. In his talk, Tomasz Korpysz discussed the subject of Norwid's language from a different perspective. He convinced the audience of the presence of humour in the poet's works, also in his letters, but almost absent in research on his artistic output, while in fact, in addition to frequently analysed irony, in his work also typical comic devices can be found. Norwid was spicing up his letters with anecdotes, but was also reaching for various means of strictly linguistic humour: inflectional, lexical, phraseological and stylistic. In all these, however, Norwid's humour was linked to his vision of the world. The morning session finished with Dominika Wojtasińska's paper, which presented the diagnosis of a "completely opposite and by all means different and foreign" society depicted in the poet's letters to women. The speaker drew attention to this interesting relation where Norwid addresses his most important comments on the society precisely to his female friends, thereby assigning them in the letters a particular role and place in his own image of the society.

The entire afternoon session belonged to younger Norwid researchers. It started with Anna Krasuska's talk about possible connections between Norwid and the French parnassianists as well as their traces in the poet's correspondence. The paper covered, among others, such issues as the autonomy of the art and harmony in the art. The juxtaposed positions of parnassianists and Norwid was confronted with classical aesthetic theories. The next paper entitled *Roman correspondence*

of *Norwid* was delivered by Magdalena Karamucka. The speaker presented the results of her research on the form of letters sent by the author of *Ad leones!* She showed, among other things, that the initial and final greetings often relate directly to Roman epistolography, and Norwid himself liked attributing himself Roman origins. The paper by Krzysztof Cieřlik showed intricate course of Norwid's polemic about evolution. Starting with *Aktor* [Actor] to the very last fruits of his pen, the poet argued with Darwin's theory, putting it in opposition to Christianity, and often joking about it. Agnieszka Komorowska, the penultimate speaker of this year's conference, drew attention to the possible epistolographic sources of the characters from Norwid's "Slavic" dramas. She showed the relationship between the poet's sharp reaction to Mickiewicz's *Skład zasad* [Composition of principles] and the whole polemic against Towianism, and the idea underlying the dramas *Wanda* and *Krakus*. The final paper closing *Colloquia Norwidiana XII: Letters, Letters ...* fell to Eliza Kačka, who started with presenting the poet as a figure of existence *sui generis*. She showed how different Norwid's letters depict the relationship between the living word and the dead letter and that the scale turning in favour of one of these has consequences, and though, not only textual but also ethical. Meanwhile, in his writing, Norwid pointed to the eventualisation and the ethically uncertain status of this activity.

This is how the twelfth *Colloquia Norwidiana* devoted to Norwid's correspondence came to an end. The time of joyful meetings, turbulent discussions and exchange of scientific research results remained in the memory of the participants, the photo chronicle and the anticipation of a post-conference publication gathering the results of the two-and-a-half-day conference in the charming mansion upon the Vistula River.

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