Michał Masłowski – COMPARING THE INCOMARABLE

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The volume *O Norwidzie komparatystycznie* [*Comparative Studies of Norwid*][1] is in fact the first multi-author monograph to focus on the comparative aspect of research on the poet's work, as is emphasised in the introduction by the editor of this volume, Magdalena Siwiec. This arouses curiosity and gives hope for a new methodological approach that would open Norwid studies to the wider world beyond Polish culture. This dovetails with the debate on modernity, opened over twenty years ago, from which Poland was excluded by history and politics. Norwid seems to perfectly embody the search for spiritual emancipation and dialogue with the Other, empathically exploring the struggle between Enlightenment rationalism and Romantic national metaphysics in the context of "the age of trade and industry." Who else would distinguish victims of martyrological sacrifice or uprising patriotism from universalist ethics and personal or social relations?

The volume presents a strong and dynamic team of Norwid specialists working at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków in the company of other active centres of such research in Lublin, Warsaw and Poznań. Naturally, they all cooperate, but in this book, out of a total of twenty articles, half were written by Kraków-based scholars, confirming the accomplishments of the Department of Comparative Studies, headed in the past for many years by Professor Cieśla-Korytowska, and now by the very editor of this volume – Magdalena Siwiec. Whoever invokes "comparative studies" immediately signals a specific methodology. This is particularly important with regard to the imperialism of three great national literary traditions of France, Germany, and Great Britain. As one German comparatist argued years ago (whose name would not change anything), they usually work "in their own circle" of the three said areas, not even taking account Russian literature, not to mention the Polish one… Accordingly, they have developed specific approaches, which then spread across the humanities, e.g. in the form of thematic criticism and the later French mytho-criticism, the German school of philology or reception, with the concept of mimesis at the centre, or the British anthropology and history of ideas, and finally the American focus on aesthetic relations… This catalogue itself can remind us that Norwid himself was a comparatist in his own way, while his work displays cultural self-awareness. Thus, the subject of this volume turns out to be the key to the poet's oeuvre!

[1] *O Norwidzie komparatystycznie*, ed. M. Siwiec, Kraków 2019. 470 pp.

It seems important to bring to attention that the volume does not favour any single approach. Still, in thematic terms the dominant subject is modernity and the turn of the epochs. In terms of comparative studies in the strict sense, the book explores the boundaries between arts: music and opera, visual arts, conceptual reflection, and finally – translation.

The volume is divided into several parts devoted to specific areas: the intellectual currents of Norwid's contemporary era (I), the relationship between the poet and artists active in the period (II), the context of music and visual arts (III), and finally, the approach to tradition and translation (IV). It seems that the greatest intellectual weight is carried by the first part, which addresses the variously understood "contemporaneity."

The excellent introductory article by Arent van Nieukerken from the University of Amsterdam, who closely cooperates with KUL, is titled *Norwid i scjentyzm* [*Norwid and Scientism*] and compares Norwid's views with those of Comte and Proudhon. It basically reconstructs, basing on research conducted by Barbara Skarga and Janusz Maciejewski, the confrontation between the poet and positivism as well as the question of the coming era of "trade and industry." A number of issues that remain central to this day, such as progress, are contrasted with the holy history of theologians, revealing paradoxes related to teleology, which explains Comte's fascination with theology. In the case of Norwid, this manifested in the form of turning attention to ever new modes of imitating Christ (17) since "*Nie-prze-palony jeszcze glob Sumieniem*" (PWsz II, 19) [The globe is not burnt out by Conscience yet]. Comte drew attention to "humanity" as a unity, and to the significance of the consensus made possible by "intellect" and "feeling." In one footnote, Nieukerken identifies a similar approach in the case of Norwid, e.g. in the poem *Specjalności* [*Specialities*], while the question of consensus would recur in his works in the sense of an ethical unity, e.g. in the images of "kupola" [cupola] (in *Promethidion*; DW IV, 137), "osoba" [person] or *Boskość-Ludzkość* [*Divinity-Humanity*] (DW IV, 242). The author emphasises that Norwid lent great weight to the tear as a condition of human salvation thanks to the concept of conscience (25). "Norwid does not admit any 'provisional syntheses'" because "contradictions […] can only be reconciled in the act of Word-Christ, which sacrificed itself through incarnation" (27-28).

According to Nieukerken, "Norwid became acquainted with positivist ideas through Proudhon" (31), whom he highly esteemed, but whose views he did not endorse. Still, Norwid would address key issues raised by the philosophical "left." The famous quotation "*nie ma mienia bez sumienia*" [*there is no property without conscience*] (DW IV, 29) as well as the opposition between "posiadanie" [ownership] (37) and "własność" [possession] (DW IV, 27) have this exact origin,

although they contradict Proudhon's "anarcho-socialism." As the author underscores, Norwid's idea of progress "consists in striking a dynamic balance between individual improvement ('personal progress') and historical development ('historical progress') (39). The motherland is "essentially connected with the person," which leads to the personal identity of a nation that suffers like Christ (the famous quotation in: III, 391), but does not replace it. Certainly, these matters will be broadly discussed due to their ideological and political implications, but this lies beyond the scope of this review. It is important, however, to remember in the context of interpreting the nation as a person (as suggested by Nieukerken) about the difference assumed in today's social sciences between essential and processual identity.

What Norwid considered important was the incarnation of the nation's word, not through dialectics but through some kind of a "third party" – something that Proudhon argued to be humanity (45). There are many things that the French philosopher and the Polish poet share, although they differ in terms of faith in the human-divine aspect of our nature observable since the Incarnation (46). Another element that links Proudhon with Norwid is movement, which Proudhon regarded as "itself the reality of being" (53), while Norwid saw as the incarnation of Truth. The subjectivization of knowledge as well as human autonomy (44) were emphasised by both Polish Romantics, including Mickiewicz and Norwid, as well as Comte and Proudhon (51).

It seems important that in this epistemological series significance is also attached to proceeding by way of approximations – through "przybliżenie" (PWsz VI, 226) – which Norwid understood in terms of analogies and parables. "The rise of analytical discourse has not delegitimized the parable" (56) in either Proudhon or Norwid. It still serves as "another means" of gaining knowledge (56). This leads Nieukerken, after alluding to Marx (according to whom the antinomies of reason and value can be solved only beyond human reason; 57), to the thesis about "the aporetic character of positivist thought […] [which] has allowed Norwid to continue a fruitful yet one-sided discussion" (57).

By beginning at the centre, as it were, i.e. with philosophical thought as well as poetic and religious perspective, the article introduces the question of modernity by elaborating a specific understanding of movement (progress), person, and ethics, or an anthropocentric view of humanity and evolution. There also already emerges the socio-economic dimension, central to Marx, which is addressed in the next chapter.

The chapter by Michał Kuziak, titled *Norwid – Marks. Dwie nowoczesności* [*Norwid and Marx. Two Visions of Modernity*] emphasises this juxtaposition, reminding us that the two were almost peers and share certain aspects of diagnoses

about reality, the ideal of community (*Gemeinschaft*), and humanity conquering alienation. The author aptly invokes Kołakowski's claim about the religious matrix of Marx's reflection on history. The two naturally differ in many respects, primarily in terms of Norwid's references to Christianity and morality (though perhaps we should say – ethics) as wells as with regard to perspectives on revolution and the category of the nation defended by the poet. Both stand up for human dignity: Marx through ideological de-mystification, while Norwid by revealing the emptiness of forms of life (which is not contradictory); however, the philosopher saw this dignity as autonomous, while the poet regarded it as rooted in transcendence (albeit a personal one, it needs to be added, which again creates certain correspondences).

The juxtapositions made by Kuziak are brilliant and informative. I only have reservations about the merely discursive character of the reconstructed position, while Norwid – as Nieukerken already stressed – prefers analogy and parable. Metaphoricity is rooted in experience, in incarnation, while discursive terms form abstract systems. The question of modernization, as raised by Norwid, and the comparison with Marx were already addressed in Poland by Brzozowski, Bieńkowska, Mitosek, and Trznadel, while the Polish experience of modernity is discussed in reference to Jedlicki and Sowa. Kuziak rightly associates Norwid's criticism of mistaking means for ends with Marxist alienation of labour. The two actually share an interest in labour, although Norwid focuses mostly on craftsmanship and feudal alienation, which is something we should remember about. Additionally, the poet regards labour as a function of the nation, not class (71). Still, the "utopia of labour" is viewed by the philosopher as "purely anthropological in character, and presented in the language of economy and ethics," while the poet predominantly uses the language of religion and ethics, Kuziak claims (72). Nevertheless, it should be stressed that anthropological objectivity was important for Norwid too, although he did not employ the categories of economy and class.

The proletariat does not make an appearance in Norwid, although he condemns commodity fetishism and opposes money to the Decalogue (DW XI, 158). Further, as Kuziak reminds us, he contrasts work as the path of organic development with the perspective of revolution. Still, he seeks his own way "between conservatism and progressivism" (73). Ultimately, Kuziak notes, Norwid "formulates a diagnosis of his times that is similar to the one developed by the German thinker, although he uses a different language, namely one rooted in the religious perspective" (74). Kuziak concludes by indicating that although modernity offers a chance for Poland to regain independence, Norwid's modernity "is different and remains part of Christian ethics […] it is supposed to stem from the tradition and take into account the axiological order. […] It constitutes a task for the Poles […]."

One last remark needs to be made: the poem *Na zgon śp. Jana Gajewskiego* [*On Death of Jan Gajewski*], which is mentioned in passing in this chapter, cannot be reduced to "émigré shock" (74); it rather seems to indicate the universality of the Passion and Incarnation, also in the modern perspective of the industrial age.

The next chapter, *Norwid, Czaadajew i problem europeizacji Rosji* [*Norwid, Chaadayev, and Question of Europeanizing Russia*] was written by Sławomir Rzepczyński and offers an important civilizational context in consideration of modernity. This question was already addressed in Poland by Andrzej Walicki, but the author also refers to a number of works on Slavic topics (discussed by Nieukerken, Bezwiński, Ławski, Chlebowski, Halkiewicz-Sojak, and Przebindy). His initial thesis concerns "concurrences in writings by the Russian thinker and the Polish poet" regarding Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, the essence of the Russian spirit, the place of Russia in Europe, the need to Europeanize it and acknowledge human freedom (77); in short: Europe and humanity in relation to Orthodox Christianity. According to Chaadayev, Catholicism, as the source of Christian thought, initiated a search for truth as well as progress and prosperity (83). Norwid would also confront the East and the West, underlining Russian despotism and lack of respect for individualism. The mission of Russia would be supported with Polish blood, spilled on battlefields, where nation and state would clash. While Russia is, according to Chaadayev, a nation without history, Western Christianity fulfilled a political mission as a supra-national church state, developing respect for human dignity like the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (87). And whereas Chaadayev sketched the perspective of ultimate apocalyptic synthesis, Norwid would refer to Krasiński's *Legenda* [*Legend*] and view the mission of the Polish gentry as the work of Parousia (though reinterpreted in the lectures by Mickiewicz, let us add, through the metaphor of the d o m e of the spirits of nations, an image that also appears in Norwid's Promethidion).

"Chaadayev developed an idea that opposes Pan-Slavism and Slavophilia," Rzepczyński writes (90), which must have been close to Norwid, who saw the nation as realizing goals that go beyond the ethnic horizon (91). As the author concludes, "both subordinate ethnic categories to larger visions of universal community" (92). Both view the metaphor of awakening as central (Herzen on Czaadajew; DW IV, 116) and the problem of Europeanizing Russia as an essential component in considerations of the future of the world. Rzepczyński's chapter bridges philosophical and theological discourse, reminding us that symbol and metaphor "inspire us to think" (Ricœur, Tischner) and teach about ways of "being-in-the-world."

The next, excellent article from the part devoted to "modernity" addresses these ways of being in the world. In *W żywiole towarzyskości. Arkana Norwid-*

owskiej rozmowy [*In the Element of Sociability. Mysteries of Norwid's Conversations*] Agnieszka Ziołowicz renounces concept-based discourse, allowing us to reach the very heart of the question of meaning, which is after all created in interpersonal dialogue. Norwid appears here as a figure of social life, which supplements the meaning of his poems. The chapter references *Rozmowy z Adamem Mickiewiczem* (ed. St. Pigoń) [*Conversations with Adam Mickiewicz*] and, as their counterpart, fifty-five reports of conversations with Norwid (ed. J.W. Gomulicki; PWsz XI, 447-501). Although the oral dimension of his work is not discussed extensively here (this topic is developed in detail in the article and book by Abriszewska[2]), this chapter supports Fert's thesis about the dialogical character of Norwid's approach, as well as the one about the aphoristic and gnomic nature of his poetry. Such considerations are already part of Norwid studies thanks to works by Sławińska, Łapiński, Fert, and others, but the source material is read anew here. Norwid is argued to be an "attentive observer and commentator of salon rituals, social meetings, visits, discussions" (97). In his work, word becomes a "factor in […] creating bonds, primarily as the medium of the Truth" (97-98), Ziołowicz argues, referencing works by Siewierski, Dunajski, and Toruń. "The common element [in *Rozmowy*…] is certainly the conviction about the uniqueness of Norwid, both as a man and as an interlocutor," she notes (100). As is recalled further, "he was remembered as […] cordial, empathetic – even tender or easily moved – as well as noble, good, gentle and highly agreeable, one who cultivates high spirits and personal dignity" (101). "A higher spirit," others would say, but one who is touchy, sarcastic, and sometimes even haughty. According to M. Geniusz, he was "deeply convinced about his priestly role among the people" (PWsz XI, 498). Anyway, whatever he said was certainly memorable.

Norwid "clearly had a predilection for apology and parable," Ziołowicz underscores. Still, "in conversations he was more communicative than in poetry" (106). By "listening to him, one could benefit more than from reading a book; however, when he writes something, it is difficult to understand anything," Miłkowski concludes (XI, 482). Another important aspect is his "non-verbal expression – characteristic facial expressions and gestures" (107). Further, he was "gifted with a uniquely powerful and distinctive voice" (PWszXI, 491). As the author significantly concludes, "in conversation, Norwid could evidently create an oral work approximating poetry, which others would grant the status of a written piece re-

[2] P. Arbiszewska, *XIX-wieczna tęsknota za oralnością. Przypadek Norwida*, "Studia Norwidiana" 32: 2014; Idem, *Ciało w literturze, literackie, literatury*, Toruń 2018. This subject is also discussed in: A. Ziołowicz, *Cypriana Norwida sztuka żywego słowa*, "Ruch Literacki" 2017, no. 4, pp. 359-376.

corded ex post" (108). Ziołowicz also recalls the praise of sociability in *Stygmat* (PWsz VII, 173) [*Stigma*]. All in all, "Norwid becomes a proponent of a deeply humanistic, ethical, and essentially religious character of interpersonal relations" (112). This chapter perfectly supplements and illustrates the thesis formulated by Siewierski forty years ago, justifying the role and tone of the Socratic Master in *Vade-Mecum* (which I also endorse).

Theoretically, the following chapter – *'Fraszki', 'ruiny' i 'vox populi', czyli improwizacja w tekstach Norwida* [*"Epigrams," "Ruins" and "Vox Populi," or Improvisation in Norwid's Works*] by Iwona Puchalska – should be thematically linked with the study by Ziołowicz. However, this is not the case because in this text "improvisation" is not clearly defined or convincingly demonstrated in Norwid's works, although he indeed used the concept. However, he understood it as a literary term and not as a salon practice, as was the case with Deotyma. It seems astonishing that the author at the same time recalls, several times, that Norwid "valued artistic self-consciousness and was slightly suspicious of concepts of creativity rooted merely in impulse and intuition" (120). The examples recalled here represent mostly ephemeral poetry: occasional pieces, *Improwizacja na zapytanie o wieści z Warszawy* [*Improvisation on Hearing the News from Warsaw*] (presented as a specific equivalent of silence) and finally *Improwizacja na ekspozycji* [*Improvisation on Exhibition*] – a poem constructed around the concept of "avenger-egoists." According to the author, the term "improvisation" "emphasises the spontaneous and unintentional character of a poetic reaction, which clarifies the position of the speaking subject" (116). Attitude certainly plays a specific role in Norwid's poems yet cannot be reduced to "improvisation." Puchalska uses the example of "feigned improvisation" (from the poem *Z pokładu 'Marguerity'...* [*From a board of 'Marguerita'…*]) with the strong (constructed) sense of the directness of the message. The poem *Tęcza* [*Rainbow*] is similar in this respect – although it is not called an improvisation, it is connected – by way of an anticipated polemic – with the category of "living word." Finally, the author recalls the figures of improvisers in Quidam and *Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth* [*Lord Singelworth Secret*]. Zofia is presented as an improviser who lacks persuasive power. The author argues that this regards the kind of poetry that lacks "reference to transcendence" – poetry based on combinations of given elements and play, not epiphany and "the search for the truth" (121). However, these conclusions do not take into account the fact that combination-based creative processes were not alien to Norwid (cf. *Fraszka (!) [II]* [*An Epigram (!) [II]*]) and are common in contemporary poetry. Doubts also emerge with regard to the assessment of the portrait of the improviser in *Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth*, who is reduced by Puchalska to a representative of a flat *buffo* convention (124). It seems that she fails to notice

that all elements in this story are provided with ironic distance, including the eponymous protagonist and the narrator, and that the myth of spiritual liberation, propagated by Tony di Bona Grazia, is – precisely as a myth – a serious symbol of hope among the people.

All in all, the author argues that improvisation was regarded by Norwid as the "testimony of a deeper crisis in his times" (125). It is a pity that she did not include in her analyses the dramatic monologues of protagonists like Mak-Yks from *Pierścień Wielkiej Damy* [*Grand Lady's Ring*] or Tyrtej from *Za kulisami…* [*Backstage*], which illustrate poetic improvisations, although pre-written and delivered in specific situations. This also regards other examples. A broader comparative background, recalled only in footnotes (Esterhammer, Weintraub), could also provide more space for discussion.

The next part considers Norwid in relation to other artists from his epoch. As we know, Norwid kept track of how literature and civilization were changing, but it is not easy to ascertain what he was reading.

The fascinating article by Magdalena Siwiec (the volume's editor) titled *Norwid – Baudelaire: profanacje* [*Norwid and Baudelaire. Profanations*] addresses the topic of modernity from an unexpected perspective. Let us begin at the end, i.e. from the "blurred line between the sacred and the profane, from profanations," which have led to the "dispersal of the sacred, opening the possibility or necessity to seek it in spheres hitherto inaccessible to it" (146). Basing on various examples, the author shows how modernity was born as a "profanation" in the sense given to this term by Agamben, i.e. as a disenchanted world, where the domain of the sacred must be reinstated in everyday use (134), as also argued by Adorno. Baudelaire turns to everyday life and prose, or rather seeks the modernity of poetic language (130), where idealism and banality persevere. Norwid, on the other hand, proclaimed the asceticism of words and the prose character of language. Baudelaire departs from transcendence in the name of temporality (132), and his "profanation" consists in embracing transience and impermanence (135) as well as the loss of the sacred spring (134). In Norwid's works there also often recurs the theme of the clash between the sacred and the profane ("the ideal reached the street"), but – as Siwiec argues – "holiness can be discerned in that which is low" (137). She often refers to the death of Quidam, which is a "profanation" but can also lead to moral victory. Siwiec compares Baudelaire's *Perte d'Auréole* with Norwid's *Quidam*, recalling *avant la lettre* the problem Musil's man without qualities (139). Ultimately, what the two writers share is – as Brzozowski noted – responsibility (140). The example of *Bransoletka* – which is compared with *Le peintre de la vie Moderne* – shows how "mortal and eternal life overlap and supplement each other." Eliade's hierophanies are "connected with

the subjective ability to find that which is hidden – i.e. meaning – in that which seems to be meaningless" (144).

I would also like to point out that the author uses the terms "the sacred" and "holiness" interchangeably, although the context of quotations suggests differentiating between them. Certain philosophers, poets, and theologians (Lévinas, Merton, Miłosz) contrast the former, which is fundamentally pagan, with the latter, which is personified and seems close to Norwid. The "dispersal of the sacred" would be related to the fact that in Norwid "the mundane becomes holy," as Siwiec herself observes (145). On the other hand, secularism connected with rationalism – as discussed by Nieukerken – is not contrasted with holiness but with the sacred as the domain of spiritual power. After all, in the New Testament, when Jesus dies at the cross, the veil separating the sacred space in the Temple from the secular people and the pagans was torn (Matthew 27:51). Holiness is accessible to everyone. Still, terminological force of habit is lasting, while the popularity of the distinction sacred-profane precludes hope for change.[3]

The next chapter in this part, written by Piotr Śniedziewski and subtitled "from description to epiphany," compares Norwid's *Czarne kwiaty* with recollections by August Brizeux from his journey to Italy and meetings with Walter Scott, contained in *Une Ombre*. The author compares it with the essay by Norwid and the short story "Menego," verifying the intuition expressed by J.W. Gomulicki in *Patos i milczenie*. Śniedziewski is preoccupied with structural dependencies between the two epiphanies (151). The sketch is interesting due to the parallelism of approaches and the possibility to foreground Norwid's meta-literary reflection.

Memories recalled by Brizeux regard the carnival in Naples and then the melancholy Venice with its everyday banal life underpinned with the sense that the Scottish writer will die soon, also addressing the double perspective in descriptions devoted to the sensual and the spiritual. In both Brizeux and Norwid we encounter the mystery of death and the "need to give testimony" (153). The former's precise style stands in contrast with Norwid's "stylistic neglect" justified by his meta-literary reflection. "After all, poetry constitutes a part of life experience" (150) (which sends us back to considerations contained in previous chapters). Norwid refers to daguerreotype (PWsz VI, 72), which leads Śniedziewski to conclude that "Norwid does not describe the world […] but his own memories" (157). This would concern the double perspective of "the presence of that which is absent" (Kuziak), which was also explored by Walter Benjamin. The author recalls the memory of the beautiful Irishwoman from *Czarne kwiaty* and the poet's remarks on "stereoscopes" that allow one to see more than it might seem. Literary

3 Cf. S. Sawicki, *Sacrum w literaturze*, "Pamiętnik Literacki" 71 (1980), vol. 3. In this article, the author justifies the use of the term in question.

epiphany can be thus characterized through three elements, Śniedziewski argues: "the construction of the subject as well as the attitudes to the world and to writing" (159). The poet wishes to "seek the key to truths contained in the partial, subjective experience […] a key related to the reconstruction of meanings shared by all" (160). "Romantic epiphany," Śniedziewski continues, "rehabilitates, as it were, the everyday and the ordinary, doing so in opposition to religious epiphany" (160). Śniedziewski polemicizes on this occasion with Nycz, who notes in his famous book that Norwid recorded situations deprived of significant meaning. Śniedziewski responds to this by arguing that "if we deny the meaning of these things, we therefore cast doubt on one of the main features of epiphany, namely the conviction that any sign (object, event) refers to something that exists beyond it, which comes to our attention in a sudden flash of illumination" (161). In *Czarne kwiaty*, he claims, "we can observe exactly this kind of movement – f r o m t h e e v e r y d a y, a n d p e r h a p s b a n a l, t o t h e e t e r n a l" (162). It seems appropriate to refer those interested in the topic to detailed arguments used in this engaging debate – one that is crucial for reaching an understanding of Norwid's concept of modernity, which facilitates discussion of "the metaphysical consequences of writing" (163). In his conclusion, Śniedziewski defines this kind of literature as "the basis of the experience of community" (163), which foregrounds the sagacious dimension of Norwid's works in dialogue with the French writer.

Subsequent chapters, which are interesting and inspiring, regard the discussion of the Parnassian character of Norwid's works, address generational ties with Józef Bohdan Zaleski, compare his poems with those by Keats, as well as address the concepts of democracy and equality in Norwid and Whitman.

The chapter *Norwid – parnasista?* [*Was Norwid a Parnassian?*] by Łukasz Niewczas verifies and undermines the relationship between the poet and the French Parnassian aesthetics, affirmed first by Żurowski and then by Rzońca, despite certain convergences. Differences prevail, however, as similarities are relativized. Concepts like "art for art's sake," "escapism," "aestheticism," and the autonomy of beauty cannot be really applied to Norwid. Still, with regard to poetic practice (and not creative philosophy), Niewczas draws attention to the importance of sculpting metaphors, common to Norwid and Parnassian writers (171). At the same time, the author emphasises the relation between Norwid and Słowacki. Nevertheless, his comparison of Gautier's poems with *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*] reveals certain differences. Sculpture is sometimes represented by Norwid as a "stone prayer" (*Adam Krafft*). Similarities have the character of parallel themes: in Norwid's poetry, sculptures do not realize the aims of aestheticism, but "depict the effort" oriented toward cognitive and

axiological goals (177). Norwid's modernity was clearly born within a different current than that of the later Polish modernism.

The chapter by Elżbieta Nowicka – *Cyprian Norwid i Józef Bohdan Zaleski, czyli to, co wspólne między pokoleniami* [*Cyprian Norwid and Józef Bohdan Zaleski, or what the Two Generations Shared*] – introduces an intriguing terminological differentiation with regard to the term "generations" (which seemed established since Wyka). She refers to Charles Taylor and his concept of the social imaginary, which is related to transformations of identity. Despite the fact that they were separated by twenty years, making them representatives of different generations, comparisons between Norwid and J.B. Zaleski (made famous as "the third national poet" and successor of Mickiewicz) bring out primarily their mutual recognition and shared concern for Poland and Europe ("m y d o c h r z t u m u s i m t r z y m a ć d z i e c k o e u r o p e j s k i e" [we have to present European child for baptism]; 194) as well as their fate as émigrés, which Zaleski associated with a "withered tree" (192), while Norwid – with desert and ruins. In fact, however, Nowicka shows that Zaleski and Norwid had no chance to meet in spiritual terms, although both rejected the possibility to apply for amnesty. Exchanging poems and dedications, which Nowicka finds so compelling, would indicate a debate between the two on the subjects of historiosophy and ethics, as in the case of the parable about the paralytic healed by Jesus (203). All in all, however, what dominated was their disillusionment with emigration, culture, and Europe (205). The chapter, which contrasts the two poets, is also interesting in terms of its methodology, but it primarily sketches the social background of Norwid's epoch.

The following chapter by Edyta Żyrek-Horodyska, which compares Norwid's *Jesień* [*Autumn*] with Keats's *To Autumn*, presents the second generation of Polish and English Romantic poets, foregrounding themes such as beauty and truth, which were close to both writers, as well as that of everyday speech. Norwid was depressed after the fall of the Spring of Nations, while Keats – who is mentioned in letters exchanged between Norwid and Krasiński – surrenders to the anxiety of melancholy. Both authors treat nature as a certain kind of artist's mirror. Whereas reflection on suffering dominates in the case of the Polish poet, Keats finds the aesthetic question to be crucial. In both writers, the lyrical *I* stands beyond the stage where events unfold – neither poem contains statements in the first person. Juxtaposition of the two and the interpretation of their poems enriches the repertoire of comparisons, but does not display broader ambitions to situate them in relation to Byron, for example, who was highly valued by Norwid and by Poles in general – to a much greater degree than in England.

Another chapter from this section – *Demokracja i równość w twórczości Cypriana Norwida i Walta Whitmana* [*Democracy and Equality in Works by Cyprian*

Norwid and Walt Whitman] by Jakub Czernik – expands the perspective on modernity (the major subject of the entire volume) from the perspective of the history of ideas. Although the author begins by recalling Maria Janion's reservations about objectifying literary texts by historians of ideas, one can also argue that "symbols provide food for thought" and that literature can be treated not only as a discourse but also as a means of symbolizing reality, which defines ways of being-in-the-world. Anyway, Czernik does not shy away from emphasizing idea-based options, at the same time providing appropriate interpretive mediation, which is indispensable in such cases.

There were no "real relations" between Norwid and Whitman, but a certain "affinity of thought" indicated by Miłosz, who translated the American poet into Polish. Although during his stay in America Norwid became melancholic, he appreciated the foundations of democratization, which he regarded as inevitable (233), bringing him closer to Whitman. Norwid understood this concept in separation from the notion of the nation, in which he went beyond the horizon of Polish Romanticism. Unlike Norwid, Whitman was anti-intellectual, but the two shared an attachment to human community (235). A masterfully chosen quotation from Whitman's poem illustrates the cherished notion of brotherhood, which even encompasses criminals and is related to Norwid's reaction to the case of John Brown, or the sensibility expressed in the poem *Praca* [*Labour*]. In *Rzecz o wolności słowa*, a passage about the American parliament introduces the ideal of "wysokość sfery słowa" (DW IV, 258) [the heights of word domain], as Norwid puts it, or "life in a democratized world where the highest value consists in the striving to achieve […] individual success," one that is often regarded only in financial terms (237). This aspect of Norwid's sensibility seems less appreciated despite comparisons with Whitman and the well-known study by Weintraub.

The next part of the book, which is devoted to Norwid's work vis-à-vis music and visual arts, opens with a daring essay by Maria Cieśla-Korytowska titled *Karnawał i patos* [*Carnival and Pathos*]. Basing on German-language materials – Robert Schuman's reviews of Chopin's music, featuring the famous call "Hats off, gentlemen, here is a genius" (243), and novels by Jean-Paul Richter – the author identifies surprising parallels between columnist-like or humorous discussions and characters from German works, on the one hand, and Norwid's *Promethidion* and his discussions of art on the other. There is one fundamental difference though: the Germans represent the *buffo* style, while Norwid's long poem is solemn. Still, the similarity of discussions and characters is so striking that one could even suspect Norwid of being derivative, although there are no traces of his reading or knowing these pieces, perhaps with the exception of Richter's novel *Flegeljahre*. The corresponding themes are worth recalling here due to their emblematic character:

cannons hidden in flowers, elevation of folk elements to the rank of universality, aristocracy of the spirit, Aeolian harp, and Chopin's music as poetry. These similarities revolve around certain problems, themes, motifs, and concepts (250-251). It seems particularly striking that Schuman had the idea to depict a carnival with images of people dancing set to the music of Chopin – "the thief of hearts" (252). The author of the brilliant and erudite juxtaposition resorts – given the lack of proof that Norwid knew Schuman's reviews – to the meta-aesthetic claim about reverse evolution (which was also referenced by Marx, who argued that history appears first as tragedy and is then repeated as farce) because what we are dealing with here is rather a shift from *buffo* to *serio*, naturally with a question mark.

Reading this chapter also brings about another reflection on thinking in terms of analogies – something that Norwid refers to in *Milczenie* [*Silence*]. Just like great peaks always rise from lower mountain chains, thoughts noted by Schuman must have been in the air in the period, and Norwid elevated them in *Promethidion* thanks to his *serio*...

Another comparative chapter is devoted to mystery plays. In *Wanda – między misterium a librettem* [*Wanda – Between a Mystery Play and a Libretto*] Małgorzata Sokalska takes cue from a suggestion made by Elżbieta Nowicka regarding the necessity to reflect on the relationship between Norwid and opera as well as the "musical character of parts sung by *Wanda* and *Krakus*" (257). The author also invokes a work by Elżbieta Lijewska, undertaking the subject regardless of the fact that unlike in the case of works by Mickiewicz, Krasiński or Słowacki, such studies can be only based on circumstantial evidence. Sokalska's thesis regards the composition of *Wanda*, which, she argues, "in clearly acoustic terms resembles a libretto rather than a traditional drama" (267). For this purpose, she compares Norwid's work with librettos by Dmuszewski, Olizar, Wężyk, the Czech version of Wanda by Zakrejs-Dvořák, and the piece by Bełza. Further, she compares the mystery play with Wyspiański's *Legenda I* [*Legend I*]. Norwid attempted to stylize his piece so that it would resemble a classical tragedy (as described by Szmydtowa): "it only requires to take a look at the dramatis personae, which contains as many as eight choirs and two singers, a *skald* and *Bojan*" (261). Further, "[i]n six images of the whole, the choir loses its tragic homogeneity" (262). There is also the figure of the choir leader. "We should rather imagine a differentiated, polyphonic mixture of voices […] with a strong culmination […]" (262). Finally, there is no song that the choir would deliver before making an exit (exodus), which is proper for tragedy. Thus, Norwid used the choir "to emphasise the communal dimension" (265).

The author also enumerates other features characteristic for opera librettos: the dialectic of aria and recitative, solo and collective singing, stage movement, the

height of the final scene, etc. She also notes effects that "make the language of drama more musical" (266), anaphora and repeated phrases: "we can speak here of […] a ritual approach to the word, which somewhat imposes melodeclamation as the means of vocal delivery" (267). Norwid's image V features a "ritual procession at the Vistula" (275).

The mystery-play-like character of the work is determined by the fact that it combines legend with the time when Christ made His sacrifice: "the idea of its sacrifice is united with that of Christ's death on the cross […], sources of national history are thus inscribed in the soteriological order of the history of the entire world" (276). As Sokalska concludes, "appreciation of the operatic context does not diminish the virtues of a drama that […] exists halfway between a libretto and a mystery play" (278).

The next chapter in this part of the book – Edyta Chlebowska's *Szmaragd cesarza Tyberiusza – 'prawdziwe' wizerunki Chrystusa w twórczości Norwida* [*Emperor Tiberius's Emerald – "Real" Images of Christ in Norwid's Works*] – is devoted to the face of Christ, a subject that has captivated the imagination of people for centuries and remains topical due to research and debate about the Shroud of Turin. This topic also fascinated Norwid, who is presented in Rastawiecki's mid-nineteenth-century Leksykon as a religious artist, which seems generally justified. "The mystery of incarnation is situated at the heart of Norwid's thought and work," Chlebowska argues since Christ is "that path to God which is known to man" (A. Merdas, 281). Attempts to present the figure of the Saviour by the artist are thus significant. The author discusses them one by one, referring to the album *Orbis* and the debates that have been sparked by this figure for centuries. She invokes the work by Norwid titled *Chrystus Pan z Barabaszem* [*Christ the Lord with Barabbas*], which is considered a masterpiece though it has been lost. Available documents show the desire to "represent the 'real face' of Christ" (284). The chapter discusses, among other things, the miraculous image known as the Edessa Mandylion as well as others, including the so-called *Veronica*, which presents him en face. "Norwid preferred […] profiles" (286) and this focus of his is engrossing. The author pauses over the "emerald intaglio" copied by Norwid in his album and surrounded by historical legend. English specialists note that copperplate engravings with the image of the emerald belonging to Emperor Tiberius were popular in the nineteenth century. The figure from Raphael's tapestry *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* is used as a model here since it might have been based on the famous intaglio. As Chlebowska claims, "Norwid found in this piece a combination of values that he appreciated in art above everything else: the truth of the original, the classical ideal of beauty, and the Christian spirit." According to Norwid, "the profile brings forth relations established between the individual

and the collective" (E. Dąbrowicz). Chlebowska develops this line of thought, arguing that "the profile contains both the present and the past" (291). She also refers to the seventeenth-century physiognomist Lavater, who held that "the profile externalizes the true structure of the soul" (292). Chlebowska concludes that profiles, with the exception of St. Veronica's Veil, confirm the artist's fascination with medallic art, "which rose in the poet's mind to the rank of 'eternal' art and 'eternally model-like', at the same time being 'the most human of all arts'" (VI, 347-348), thus explaining the fascination with Raphael, who filled forms with "grace understood in the Christian way" (295). What remains of this today when the image of Christ from the Turin Shroud is presented en face? It nevertheless remains compelling for Norwid studies to seek a form that synthesises character, spirit, and Christian grace.

The next chapter – *'Gdzie forma z formą mija się i pozostawia szpary…' O Norwidowskim widzeniu materialnym* [*"where forms cross one another and leave gaps…" On Norwid's View on Matter*] by Katarzyna Trzeciak – introduces comparative reflection in the modern spirit with regard to conceptual art. Starting with the famous quotation from Norwid about "szpary" [crevices/gaps] and "zgrzyt dłuta" [the scraping of the chisel] (from *Ironia* [*Irony*]), the author tackles the subject of art's materiality, referring to Blanchot, de Man, Adorno, Didi Huberman, Marion, and… Różewicz. This highly modern approach is certainly connected with Norwid's modern character and his understanding of art, specifically his "efforts to restore density and thickness to words" (304) as well as the "traces" of the creative process, the acknowledgment of the materiality of language in connection with the metaphor of weaving (*Rzecz o wolności słowa*, 305 [On the Freedom of Speech]), autonomous language (*Pióro* [*Quill*]), and the meaning associated with letters (Mitosek, to be juxtaposed with the polemical view of Abriszewska; see note 4). The possible debate with the author's theses would be connected not only with personal orality but also the modern split between print and letter (306). After all, materiality cannot obscure personality, truth, and presence – key notions for Norwid – although it it true that the whiteness of writing "facilitates making something present" (307).

The tension between matter and cognition constitutes "another knowledge" – knowledge drawn from the letter. Just like the grave is about making something present (Didi Huberman), a trace-based reading can reveal another dimension of creativity (314), which would be closer to contemporary art. In the conclusion, Trzeciak takes the example of Różewicz, since "the annihilating power of word can be opposed to the presence and directness of sculptural elements." This would be justified by a quotation from a poem by Różewicz: "rzeźby można dotknąć… wiersza nie… / rzeźbę można objąć, a nawet pocałować / kiedy nie patrzą ludzie"

(117) [sculpture can be touched… a poem cannot… / sculpture can be embraced or even kissed / when nobody is looking]. The essay by Trzeciak is debatable because materiality cannot occlude the figure of the artist. However, it introduces a new perspective on Norwid's modernity, one that is close to performance art, which thrives in contemporary art.

The last section of the volume focuses on Norwid's relationship with tradition, and translations of his works. It opens with the chapter by Grażyna Halkiewicz-Sojak titled *'Dwa męczeństwa' – edytorskie i komparatystyczne wejrzenie do poetyckiego laboratorium Norwida* [*"Two Martyrdoms" – an Editorial and Comparative Perspective on Norwid's Poetic Laboratory*], which discusses the history of the work's editions and variants: with the motto by Terence and without, with changes to internal divisions in the poem and without, as well as with new themes and without. However, it remains impossible to establish who was responsible for these changes. As a result, it is crucial to interpret the piece clearly and deeply. Halkiewicz-Sojak argues that characters emerge in this work like content since they can emanate light or evoke anxiety (322). The first image – that of Greek listeners – illustrates the New Testament. Norwid slightly modifies the *Acts of the Apostles*: there is no mention of the miraculous healing of the lame man, which shifts attention from the act to Paul's word (324). Paul does not point to the Creator (as in the *Acts*) but to Christ and the Holy Spirit. This serves to "emphasise the immanent character of God," Halkiewicz-Sojak concludes (324). The second image shows closed rooms in Rome. The contamination of the episodes "serves to underline the heroism and human dignity of prisoners," the author claims. This would be justified by the subtitle "legend," or the model of attitudes "situated on the vertical axis of values." Paul "does not allow others to idolize him or 'tie him down like an animal'" (326), which places the poet in "double opposition" to both the Romantics, who were overly spiritual, and to the naturalism that leads to Darwinism. "As a result, […] the truth about the irreducible double nature of humanity" is present both in Norwid's early and later work (327).

Conclusions drawn by Halkiewicz-Sojak facilitate comparisons with Greece, which symbolizes "the idyllic time of historical heritage," and with Rome, "the path of historical maturity" and the place of Paul's martyrdom and sacrifice (329). Given the author's immense knowledge of Norwid's work, establishing seemingly minute details leads to far-reaching claims, e.g. the one about the dual nature of humanity. Perhaps against her own intentions, this provides a more anthropocentric view of the poet's religiosity, which emerges as not only theocentric.

The chapter by Piotr Chlebowski titled *Proces Quidama w świetle prawa rzymskiego* [*The Trial of Quidam in the Light of Roman Law*] is based on solid research and supplements his other scholarly works. Chlebowski reconstructs the

legal framework during the reign of Hadrian as well as what Norwid would read around the middle of the nineteenth century, emphasising the objectivism of assessments of the Christian and Roman world as well as the distance between Roman legislation and the judged, rooted in "transparency, orality, and directness" (336). Finally, he identifies the crime that the three Christians were accused of as *Laesae majestatis*. "The poet's position diverges from early Christian sensibility, […] acknowledging the juristic perspective" (345). What arises from this is that the poet is intellectually honest: "Norwid avoids judgments entangled in strictly historical contexts" (348).

The subsequent chapter, "Norwid – polski Hafiz" [Norwid – the Polish Hafez] by Renata Gadamska-Serafin, transports us far away from Roman law and history of philosophy, towards pure lyricism and its practices. This is a long "defence" of the claim that Hafez is importantly present in Norwid's work alongside a variant of Sufi spirituality. Despite the poet's direct references to the Persian master (in allusions, mottoes, etc.), there are also similarities of poetic images and themes, which the author brings forth with great satisfaction, demonstrating the mystical and sensual side of the poet's lyrical sensibility – aspects that are usually passed over. This chapter is actually a continuation of a longer article devoted to Norwid's fascination with Persian poetry, published in volume 37 of "Studia Norwidiana".

Indeed, attention given to specific metaphors, comparisons and themes reveals a specific aspect of the poet's *The Thousand and One Nights*-like **sensibility**, which is rarely emphasised due to his reputation as an intellectual poet. Already in *Promethidion* we are struck by the theme of "rajski powiew" [paradise gust], which is associated with the smell of women's hair (DW IV, 112). The author enumerates the most significant themes: craving for presence, women's gaze, spiritualization of love, and love for people, which leads toward God (359). Finally, she refers to Norwid's direct mention of the Persian poet in *Assunta*: "Gdyby powiew, co z włosy twojemi / Igra – powiał choć chwilę, / Na Hafiza mogile / Tysiąc kwiatów wyrosłoby z ziemi" DW (III, 321) [If the gust of wind which plays with your hair / was blowing at least for a moment, / Over Hafez's tomb / Thousands of flowers would sprout up from the ground].

Was Norwid the "Polish Hafez" or a "gardener of love"? The author links these phrases with the part-friendship- and part-love-like relation between Norwid and Zofia Węgierska (364, note 47). These deliberations enrich our reading of *Assunta*, especially when Gadamska-Serafin develops the theme of the garden as an archetypal space that symbolizes Paradise (367). Images of suffering, incompleteness, cataclysms (death of the gardener), and associations with wine as a symbol of the Eucharist expand the seeming sentimentalism of the poem by introducing

the specific "captivating woman's look" (377). Norwid "reached out to the religious dimension of the Sufi heritage" (381), Gadamska-Serafin argues. She also recalls that in *Dorio ad Phrygium* Hafez is listed alongside Virgil and Dante (389). Moreover, she returns to the famous and mysterious poem *Jak…* [*As when…*] built around female gaze (384). Further erudite claims invoke the image of a gazelle as a mystical symbol of beauty (387). In the conclusions, she writes that "in the eyes of Norwid, the domain of Hafez was refinement and brittleness, grace and fire, gentleness and sensuality, hyper-sensitiveness to the senses and beauty in its highest form" (388). However, she is probably too quick to move to *Promethidion* and the famous quotation from *Do Bronisława Z.* [*To Bronisław Z.*] about "poetry and goodness," which are all that shall remain of this world. Still, she concludes with greater humility, arguing that "the Sufi 'alchemy of love' manifests primarily in *Assunta*, thanks to which Norwid became the Polish Hafez, the Polish *jardinier d'amour*" (389). All in all, the chapter is convincing and it opens new areas for exploring Norwid's lyrical imagination; in fact, his intellectualism developed on the basis of his incredible sensitivity to beauty.

The last two chapters in the discussed monograph are also highly interesting – they focus on Italian and English translations, the latter made possible thanks to the mediation of Niemen's musical compositions.

The chapter *Włoskie przekłady Norwida* [*Italian Translations of Norwid*] by Olga Płaszczewska introduces the figures of Krystyna Jaworska and Luigi Marinelli, the latter being the editor of the 2004 volume *Storia della letteratura polacca*. There are also problem studies devoted to the poet's works. In general, however, his "semantic density" makes his poems "untranslatable" (395). The article, which mobilizes an impressive methodological background, recalls the history of the journals *Irydion*, published in the years 1945-1946, and *Tempo presente* (1956-1968), one of the most important cultural journals, as well as the history of translations and studies, acknowledging the important role played in this area by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński and Andrzej Zieliński. The chapter further discusses the achievements of A. M. Ripellini, disciple of the renowned Slavist Giovanni Maver, which have been recently recounted online. It is worth remembering that Benedetto Croce "considered it to be a huge loss for European culture that no one has so far made the entirety of Norwid's work available in the West" (399).

The author recalls translations by Marina Bersano Bergey (granddaughter of the Towianiite) and the revival of interest in Norwid after Karol Wojtyła was named Pope John Paul II in 1978 because he would often quote the poet. The bilingual volume *Poesie* was published in 1981 in translation by S. De Fanti and G. Origlio (though with editorial mistakes caused by time pressure). Then, with the advent of new media, Paolo Statuti, who devoted himself greatly to Norwid,

published a range of poems and comments online in 2012, including *Fortepian Szopena* [*Chopin's Grand Piano*] and passages from *W pamiętniku* [*In a Diary*].

The author also presents the most frequently translated works in a table, specifically *Bema pamięci żałobny-rapsod* [*A Funeral Rhapsody in memory of general Bem*] and *W Weronie* [In Verona], arguing that **"**Norwid's poetry can be successfully translated into Italian in small doses if one avoids hurry" (413). She also considers that "translators are intrigued by poems containing passages that have gained the status of aphorisms in Polish" (428). Still, what is often lost in translation is the poet's characteristic irony. What seems striking are "translating series": *Bema pamięci żałobny-rapsod* has been already translated five times (also by Statutti in 2018 – the author regards this version to be perfect in terms of meter), *Fortepian Szopena* – four times, and *W Weronie* – five fives. However, Płaszczewska also reminds us that, according to Yves Bonefoy, transgression lies at the heart of poetry and therefore translations should not abandon those features that diverge from the norm because otherwise the text may appear bland. As it turns out, Norwid's poems were translated into Italian "too late" and at an inopportune time (431). Analyses contained in this chapter are convincing and impressively precise. It is only a pity that she does not mention the translations published by Rocco Buttiglione in his wonderful book on the thought of Karol Wojtyła.

The last chapter in the volume – *O Norwidzie, Niemenie, i Bemie komparatystycznie* [*On Norwid, Niemen, and Bem, Comparatively*] by Agata Brajerska-Mazur – may initially seem surprising, although Piotr Chlebowski already discussed Niemen's musical adaptations of Norwid. It is nevertheless striking how weighty this trope is: on Niemen's albums (or on the occasion of their release), *Bema pamięci…* was translated into English as many as fifteen times, *Marionetki* – nine times, and *Pielgrzym* – seven times. The Polish text of *Bema pamięci…* is then analysed in order to establish its meter and ritual character, involving movement, gesture, and symbolism. This epic character makes Bem one of the greatest heroes of European civilization (436). The use of hexameter in this poem is determined by "the march towards the future and freedom" (438), "an advancing procession […] of those fighting for freedom" (439). Brajerska-Mazur also refers to the concept of "semantic gestures" developed by Barańczak (442).

As we learn from this chapter, "in Niemen's interpretation the role of hexameter is played by rhythm and singing" (442). As Chlebowski argues, the composition has the character of a "tripartite rock suite," while the forms of rondo and march lead towards antinomy. The translation by N. Simon refers to Niemen's version and not the original. The author verifies the results by conducting a "back translation" into Polish, concluding that the musical dimension was indeed a priority for the translator. As a result, deprived of the rondo form, the composition

expresses only linear movement towards a better tomorrow (453). Consequently, listeners may find the piece "monumental, full of detailed visions and images." The other four features of the poem are "singability, rhythm, the general meaning of the text, and its naturalness." "The dominant aspects prioritized by Simon in his translation of 'Bema pamięci…' were the poem's imagery and meaning," which makes "**singability** […] and not the poetic sense itself to be the major point of reference in this translation, which was commissioned not by Norwid but by Niemen, and it is to the latter that the translator was faithful" (454).

Despite the wide range of subjects, the thick volume *O Norwidzie komparatystycznie* certainly constitutes one of those publications that shall become indispensable in Norwid studies. Its thematic axis – Norwid's modernity – is developed from many perspectives, which highlights its different aspects. At the same time, lack of a unified methodology poses a challenge for the future. Several chapters are exceptional, while others supplement discussions of partially illuminated areas, or open fields that have been poorly explored so far, e.g. comparisons with Persian or English-language works. Interpretations of individual works or their passages, conducted as part of larger arguments, are also of great importance. The body of commentary on Norwid's work has been certainly enriched.

As a postscript, one could add that despite the overall high quality of this volume, there is one drawback: the indexes do not contain names included in the footnotes, which makes it necessary to leaf through the entire book in order to find a certain translation or edition (the latter sometimes not being listed).

S u m m a r y

The presented book is a contribution to the discussion about modernity and comparatistics in Norwid's works, going on for about two decades. This publication was created by Polish specialists on Norwid, half of them affiliated with the Jagiellonian University. There is no predominant method in the volume under discussion — the range of subjects covers modernity and the transition between the epochs. What is left of the comparatistics proper is music and opera, visual arts, conceptual reflection, and translation issues.

Key words: Norwid, comparatistics.

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