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CYPRIAN KAMIL NORWID
IN THE EYES OF HIS “GRANDSONS YET TO COME”¹
From Rejection to Recognition
On the Reading Styles of “Vade-mecum”

The inability to understand the language used by Norwid, which critics referred to as obscure, bizarre or even incomprehensible, made his readers reject his proposal of a new form of poetic expression. Moreover, the poet himself would frequently adopt a provocative manner: he was a proud artist, unwilling to compromise. Being an individualist and a loner, he did not attract a reading audience. Rather, he was off-putting by calling for action and expressing substantial criticism aimed at his compatriots, readers, his critics, and publishers alike.

ROMANTIC MISAPPREHENSION

Cyprian Kamil Norwid (1821–1883), born in the Masovian Province, spent much of his life in exile. It was also in exile where he died—more specifically, in l’Œuvre Saint Casimir in Ivry near Paris, France.² He is known as the author of, among others, an innovative series of poems entitled *Vade-mecum*,³ “Quidam,”⁴ a poem thematically referring to ancient Rome, and *Pierścień wiel-*

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¹ See Cyprian Norwid, “XCIX: Chopin’s Grand Piano,” in Cyprian Norwid, *Poems*, trans. Danuta Borchardt in collaboration with Agata Brajerska-Mazur (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), 73. Norwid would occasionally use the word “grandson” or the phrase “our grandson yet to come” to describe his future readers who would find his message appealing and be capable of understanding it. See, e.g., Cyprian Norwid, “I: Vademecum,” in Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Józef Fert (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk and Łódź: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich—Wydawnictwo, 1990), 19.

² For a recent biography of Cyprian Norwid, see Józef F. Fert, *Życie Cypriana Norwida: Pamiętka dwusetnej rocznicy urodzin Poety; 1821–2021* (Kielce and Warszawa: Pewne Wydawnictwo and Fundacja Museion Norwid, 2020).

³ For the first edition of the volume, see Cyprian K. Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Kazimierz Sowiński (Tunbridge Wells, Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy, 1953). For an extensive selection from the volume, see Norwid, *Poems*. See also Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Józef Fert.

⁴ See Cyprian Norwid, “Quidam,” in Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, ed. Juliusz W. Gomulicki, (Warszawa: PIW, 1983), vol. 2, *Poematy*, 67–194.

kiej damy (The noble lady's ring),⁵ known as a white verse tragedy. His message was impacted, among others, by the fact that, during his lifetime, Norwid traveled widely and stayed for longer periods of time not only in European cities, such as Berlin, Dresden, Munich, Paris, Rome, Florence, Venice or London, but also in New York in America. Indeed his poems are marked by his experience of the lifestyles characteristic of the places he visited. Moreover, while Norwid was above all a poet, he was also an epistolographer, a visual artist and a sculptor, one might say a "master of arts."⁶ It was the unity of his message, among others, that contributed to the opinion, prevailing among literary critics up to this day, that he was the most original Polish artist of the nineteenth century. Wiesław Rzońca writes: "His work reflects all the important aesthetic tendencies characteristic of the European literature of the second half of the nineteenth century. This work is also a poetic synthesis of the nineteenth century."⁷

Despite Norwid's immense dedication to literary work, it was his artistic accomplishments, i.e., his drawings, watercolors, engravings, and paintings, that not only gave the poet relative financial stability (although throughout his life he lived on the verge of poverty), but also provided him with a sense of artistic fulfilment. Thus, Cyprian Norwid's oeuvre interestingly combines works of fine arts with literary insights, which makes him a truly prolific and original artist of his time. The subject matter articulated in the title of the present considerations will be analyzed in reference to his most outstanding work of poetry, namely, the series of poems entitled *Vade-mecum*: "The discovery of Norwid's work ... enabled access to events from the history of Polish culture. In history, there have not been many great writers and artists who, having passed away, reemerged after many years, as if emerged from the shadows. Perhaps Vermeer? Perhaps Leopardi? One might say that as much as the nineteenth-century Polish literature was marked by Mickiewicz, it was the message of the author of the *Vade-mecum* collection that significantly impacted the twentieth-century Polish literature. Indeed, for our contemporaneity, Norwid has become the intellectual ground to look up to: the point of reference for our national and social aspirations."⁸

Norwid wrote *Vade-mecum* between 1865 and 1866, at the time when the positivist attitudes began to spread among the Poles.⁹ In a poem titled "Finis,"

⁵ See Cyprian Norwid, "Pierścień Wielkiej Damy, czyli Ex-machina Durejko: Tragedia w trzech aktach," in Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 3, *Dramaty*, 367–475.

⁶ On Norwid's concept of the unity of artistic experience, see Cyprian Norwid, *Wędrowny Sztukmistrz*, in Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 2, *Poematy*, 57–64.

⁷ Wiesław Rzońca, *Norwid a romantyzm polski* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2005), 231. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

⁸ Piotr Chlebowski, "Wprowadzenie," in *Poeta i sztukmistrz: O twórczości poetyckiej i artystycznej Norwida*, ed. Piotr Chlebowski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2007), 5.

⁹ Positivism was the dominant movement in Polish literature and philosophy of the period beginning with the collapse of the January Uprising of 1864 and lasting until the early 1890s. For a discus-

which he saw as a poetic *summa* of all his accomplishments, the poet spoke metaphorically: "I end something of life in ending "mecum-vade," / Made up of a hundred pearls threaded / Logically, shed tear into tear."¹⁰

Due to the novelty of the intellectual and aesthetic message it manifests, *Vade-mecum* goes beyond the nineteenth-century concept of art. When analyzing the evolution of the reception of the volume, one can distinguish several stages of its reading and assessment. After the Romantic misapprehension came the time when the collection was critically recognized and more widely published, concluding with the highest praise from Mieczysław Ingot, who called it "a masterpiece of Norwid's poetry."¹¹

In the present considerations, three stages of *Vade-mecum*'s changing reception will be discussed. The evolution of the critical response to the cycle, whose initial reception in the second half of the 19th century was unfavorable or even hostile, illustrates the changing image of reading and evaluating poetry in the 20th century and today. A change in the critics' opinions was triggered by their sudden "discovery" and acknowledgement of the innovative ideas the collection represented. However, it was only in the modernist period, known as Young Poland, and owing to the figure of Zenon Przesmycki, that a sensational discovery of Norwid's legacy was made. Its great promoter was Juliusz W. Gomulicki, whose commitment to "reviving" Norwid resulted in numerous critical editions of his works in Poland. Among them, *Vade-mecum* received great recognition and began to be considered a poetic work of the highest order, which opened the third stage of its reception. In the 1980s, a separate philological discipline called Norwid Studies emerged and is being developed to the present day. It is worth noting that not only has *Vade-mecum* received the highest praise from its readers and researchers studying Norwid's literary legacy, but that it is now considered as pioneering in its formation of the foundations of modern Polish as well as European poetry.¹²

In April of 1866, Norwid submitted the poetry collection in question for publication in Leipzig, Germany. However, the editor chose to ignore his work, and, as a result, the poems were published only several decades later, after the passing of the poet. The critical reception of the volume was far from enthusi-

sion of the main intellectual currents of Polish positivism, see, e.g., Janina Kulczycka-Saloni, *Pozytywizm* (Warszawa: Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych, 1971; *Programy i dyskusje literackie okresu pozytywizmu*, ed. Janina Kulczycka-Saloni (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, 1985); Jan Tomkowski, *Mój pozytywizm* (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich, 1993).

¹⁰ Cyprian Kamil Norwid, "Finis," in Cyprian Kamil Norwid, *Selected Poems*, trans. Adam Czerniawski (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2004), 81.

¹¹ Mieczysław Ingot, *Cyprian Norwid* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1991), 62.

¹² See Paulina Abriszewska, "Cyprian Norwid i Zbigniew Herbert – o wspólnocie poetyckiego ideału," in *Cyprian Kamil Norwid – polskość, europejskość, uniwersalizm*, ed. Danuta Dąbrowska (Szczecin: Książnica Pomorska, 2006), 128–38.

astic: it was either completely disregarded or denied any literary value, unlike Adam Mickiewicz's *Ballads and Romances*¹³ of 1822, which were considered as the proclamation of the era of Romanticism. Addressing the issue of the collections of poetry which, respectively, opened and concluded Polish Romanticism, Bernadetta Kuczera-Chachulska observes: "The *Ballads and Romances* are written by a young poet who discovers and establishes new standards for creativity in the initial era of the new literary period; the novelties of his style result from his going beyond the existing rules of creation. Norwid, in turn, chooses a separate path: having abandoned the Romantic ideas, he turns towards universal values rooted, on the one hand, in antiquity, and, on the other, in Christian axiology. He paid for the creative path he had chosen with years of solitude and rejection, which Mickiewicz never experienced. The publication of the *Ballads and Romances* immediately attracted keen attention of the critics, while Norwid's *Vade-mecum* did not receive any recognition."¹⁴ Józef F. Fert in turn brings out the fact that the initially negative reception of *Vade-mecum* was no different from the negative response to Norwid's earlier output of poetry: "And one more aspect of time, quite important in the perspective of Norwid's drama as a poet who took his vocation extremely seriously, and at the same time was almost completely disregarded by his contemporaries, not just by Sunday readers ... but by the most eminent actors of Polish culture of the time, including Adam Mickiewicz, Zygmunt Krasiński, Józef I. Kraszewski or Poznań facilitators of the intellectual life such as Marcei Motty, Władysław Nehring, Jan Koźmian or Władysław Bentkowski."¹⁵

The Romantic misapprehension of Norwid's work resulted, among other things, from the existing aesthetic tastes and conventions of the epoch which made the readers unprepared for an absolutely new model of poetics and aesthetics proposed by the poet. "It is worth remembering that *Vade-mecum* is, to a large extent, if not in essence, on the one hand, a programmatic work, but on the other hand a genuine authorial selection from his poetic output between 1848 and 1866, subjected to a specific programmatic function, in which the problem of moral obligations comes to the fore as a poetic response to the essential demands of the present moment as an artistic act intended to serve his times. Hence the great sense of unfulfillment experienced by Norwid

¹³ See Adam Mickiewicz, *Ballads and Romances*, trans. Charles S. Kraszewski (London: Glagoslav Publications, 2022).

¹⁴ Bernadetta Kuczera-Chachulska, "Pierwszy i ostatni cykl polskiego romantyzmu: Komunikat," in *Literackie ogniwa: Norwid i inni; Prace ofiarowane prof. Grażynie Halkiewicz-Sojak*, vol. 1, eds. Paulina Abriszewska, Magdalena Kowalska, Dariusz Pniewski, and Radosław Sioma (Kraków: Instytut Literatury, 2023), 87.

¹⁵ Józef F. Fert, "Vade-mecum in the Perspective of Time: Topic Outline," *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 39, English Version (2021): 38–39.

experienced as an 'nadkompletowy aktor' [extra actor] in this theatre of the age of 'trade and industry.'"¹⁶

Among the reasons for the initial disapproval of *Vade-mecum*, compiled between 1865 and 1866, was the twilight of the Romantic age both in Poland and in Europe in general. The ideas promoted by Polish Romantics, which were to encourage the Poles to actively fight for independence,¹⁷ were, at the time, no longer potent or fresh. The political situation of the Poles, the oppression they suffered because of the partitions of the Polish state, and the failure of the November and January Uprisings of, respectively, 1830 and 1863 made the model of the so-called prophetic literature seem void. While the Polish writers and poets in exile, among them the world-famous ones: Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, and Zygmunt Krasiński,¹⁸ remained the spiritual leaders of the Poles and comforted them with their belief that Poland would soon regain its political independence, the very idea of prophetic poetry and of the poet as the nation's leader became obsolete and no longer appealing. However, while writing his *Vade-mecum*, Norwid also saw himself as a guide of his readers, which is apparent on the semantic level of the collection's title, a clear reference to the Bible, in particular to the words of Jesus Christ, "Come after me" ("Venite post me"—Mt 4:19; Mk 1:17) spoken to his disciples Peter and Andrew. And this is precisely what Norwid meant: "Come after me, follow me."¹⁹ In that, he also made a reference to Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*²⁰, where Virgil guides the poet through afterlife into Inferno, Purgatory, and, finally, Paradise, having told him, "Follow me. And I shall lead you."²¹

However, since at the time Norwid was compiling his *Vade-mecum* the model of visionary, prophetic poetry was already considered as outdated and the expectation of many Poles that the "chosen one" would help the Polish state regain independence had already waned, a new volume of poetry meant to "lead" the nation would not easily find appeal. In any case, the Poles already had their great three prophetic poets, and there was no room for the fourth one. And yet Norwid saw himself as a guide whose objective was a reconstruction of Polish literature and setting new directions for its further development.

And yet Norwid's critique of his times went beyond that of the literary realm. He saw the nineteenth century as the age of industry and trade, a new

¹⁶ F e r t, "Vade-mecum in the Perspective of Time: Topic Outline": 58.

¹⁷ See Alina W i t k o w s k a, *Mickiewicz: Słowo i czyn* (Warszawa: PWN, 1986), 281–96; Jerzy F i e ć k o, "Czy Mickiewicz był 'mistycznym politykiem'?" in *Mickiewicz – wieszcz i przewodnik*, eds. Andrzej Fabianowski and Ewa Hoffmann-Piotrowska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa UW, 2019), 177–95.

¹⁸ See Wiesław R z o Ń c a, "Cyprian Norwid wobec wieszczów romantycznych," in *Cyprian Kamil Norwid – polskość, europejskość, uniwersalizm*, 65–72.

¹⁹ See Józef F e r t, "Wstęp," in Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, lxxv–lxxvi.

²⁰ See D a n t e A l i g h i e r i, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. J.G. Nichols (n.p.: Alma Classics, 2013).

²¹ Ibidem, v. 113, 8.

capitalist universe with its administrative center in London, which he described in a poem entitled "Larva":

Such is Mankind—a witchlike crud
That weeps today and finds things funny;
—Its history?... knows only "*blood!*..."
Its institutions?...— only: "*money!*..."²²

Needless to say, his negative view of the nineteenth-century society did not help enhance the appreciation of his work by his contemporary readers.

There were also other reasons why Norwid was misunderstood by his epoch. Among them was his incompatibility with the Polish readers of the time, who were used to patriotic poetry coming from Romantic pro-independence aspirations and referring to their valiant uprisings and to the belief in the messianic and Promethean role of the Polish nation. Still another barrier for the nineteenth-century reader was the language of Norwid's poetry: full of novel forms such as neologisms, fragmented thoughts, ellipses, irony, and parables. Unlike the poetry of traditional Romantics, his poems demanded an intellectual rather than emotional reading. Jan Koźmian, a literary critic and a contemporary of Norwid, described him as "a poet of capricious form."²³ Koźmian argued: "Cyprian Norwid belongs to the category of poets who suffer, are concerned and see so much in their mind's eye; poets who wish to express their thoughts and feelings to all brothers and mates—but somehow cannot seem to find the right form or way of communication.... So far all we have had is merely attempts: numerous and frequently engaging ones ... but attempts nonetheless.... What is even sadder: the more Norwid works—especially in the field of poetry—the more his thought becomes hesitant, his form capricious and mannerism more and more stubborn."²⁴

The inability to understand the language used by Norwid, which critics referred to as obscure, bizarre or even incomprehensible, made his readers reject his proposal of a new form of poetic expression. Moreover, the poet himself would frequently adopt a provocative manner: he was a proud artist, unwilling to compromise. Being an individualist and a loner, he did not attract a reading audience. Rather, he was off-putting by calling for action and expressing substantial criticism aimed at his compatriots, readers, his critics, and publishers alike.²⁵ On numerous occasions he wrote, with pride, that he was cutting himself

²² Norwid, "Larva," in Norwid, *Poems*, 29.

²³ See Jan Koźmian, *Poeta kapryśnej formy*, in Mieczysław Inglot, *Cyprian Norwid* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1991), 241–42.

²⁴ Ibidem, 242.

²⁵ See Marek Adamiec, *Oni i Norwid: Problemy odbioru twórczości Cypriana Norwida w latach 1840–1883* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991), 224–47.

off from tradition, an act which was not to the liking of the Polish readers. The poet was more than aware of his failure. Provocatively, he would emphasize in *Vade-mecum* that only the future generations would appreciate his poetic effort: that only his grandsons yet to come would comprehend it. *Vade-mecum* is an artistic expression of a moment in history when the old ideas have worn off, and the new ones must energetically emerge in order to transform the human being, the world, society, and civilization. In the nineteenth century, Norwid, with his ideas, was a complete outsider. His vision surpassed all thought patterns of the time, being so different, original, and pioneering that the critics found it difficult to accept or appreciate, let alone properly prepare the readers for it. Scholars pursuing Norwid Studies often say, ironically, that Norwid wrote for himself: there was nobody else in the world who could appreciate his output.

"Who was Norwid, then?"²⁶ asks one of the scholars of Romanticism, "and what is his place in the literature of the nineteenth century?"²⁷ Then she gives the following answer: "He was a Romantic, but one completely different from his great predecessors. If he does not match the traditional model of Polish Romantic poetry, it is not because he was a bad Romantic.... it is because the said model was bad. So rather than exclude Norwid from the cannon of Polish literature, we should expand our understanding of Romanticism to make room for him. We should seek for a literary context in which he will no longer be a solitary phenomenon, but a poet and writer who epitomized more general tendencies."²⁸

THE DISCOVERY OF NORWID'S OEUVRE IN THE MODERNIST PERIOD

The discovery of the output of Norwid in the modernist period, identified in Poland with the Young Poland movement, was accompanied by the rise of new artistic trends and techniques which were manifestations of the new intellectual currents and attitudes such as symbolism, decadence or Parnassianism, which marked the turn of the twentieth century.²⁹

While discussing Norwid's attitude to the Romantic Age, Zofia Stefanowska points to the fact that, while he nevertheless followed certain Romantic tropes, Norwid showed a largely negative attitude to the times in which he lived and worked: "One might risk the opinion that Norwid, who never abandoned the attempt to perceive his life in objective terms and frequently succeeded in distancing himself from his own problems, well recognized the concessions his

²⁶ Zofia Stefanowska, *Norwidowski romantyzm*, in Inglot, *Cyprian Norwid*, 286.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Ibidem, 286.

²⁹ See, e.g., Anna Krasuska, Wiesław Rzońca, *Parnasizm francuski a poezja Cypriana Norwida* (Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2018).

contemporary times demanded. As a writer who wanted to overcome his status of an epigone, he was fully aware that what he needed was precisely contact with his own times. That was why he needed to clearly demarcate his own work, to draw a sharp line between his oeuvre and that of the previous generation of Polish Romantics, why he needed to define his artistic standpoint as distinct.”³⁰

However, the turn of the century set a new role for artists, who were now to oppose and challenge “the crowd,” or various social groups: the role of an artist began to be conceived as that of an individual misunderstood by the masses. Art itself was in turn to become a vehicle for the freedom of expression accomplished by means of novel techniques. It was the transformation in question, which took place primarily in the sphere of ideas, that made it possible for Norwid’s literary output to gain appreciation from members of the Young Poland movement, who spread its popularity beyond the Polish culture. “As early as the end of the 19th century—writes Fert—translations of Norwid’s works began to appear; his works were translated into many languages, including English, Bulgarian, Czech, French, Lithuanian, Russian, Romanian, Slovak, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Italian, and even Chuvash.”³¹ Among Norwid’s poems, “Chopin’s Grand Piano”³² received the widest recognition and was most frequently translated.³³

Thus, the twentieth century brought Norwid fame and, subsequently, the fourth position in the pantheon of Polish prophets of the literary world. A substantial turn in the evaluation of the poet’s legacy took place in the first half of the twentieth century, owing to Zenon Przesmycki, known under his pen name Miriam, and his innovatory discovery of Norwid’s literary and art legacy. Przesmycki published the art magazine *Chimera* in which he featured Norwid’s poems. He also published two volumes of Norwid’s poetry: *Pisma zebrane* (Compiled works)³⁴ and *Wszystkie pisma* (Collected works),³⁵ but he did not succeed in publishing the poet’s entire output. The publishing mission started by Przesmycki was continued after the Second World War by Waław Borowy³⁶. In Przesmycki’s opinion, Cyprian Norwid was a “great prophetic

³⁰ Zofia Stęfanońska, *Strona romantyków: Studia o Norwidzie* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego KUL, 1993), 30–31.

³¹ Fert, “*Vade-mecum* in the Perspective of Time: Topic Outline,” 59–60.

³² See Cyprian Norwid, “XCIX: Chopin’s Grand Piano,” 71–73.

³³ See Zdzisław Łapiński, “Pieśń zwycięska: O ‘Fortepianie Szopena.’” *Studia Norwidiana*, nos. 12–13 (1994–1995): 137–55; Władysław Stróżewski, “Chopin i Norwid,” in Władysław Stróżewski, *Wokół piękna: Szkice z estetyki* (Kraków: Universitas, 2002), 289–307.

³⁴ See Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma zebrane*, ed. Zenon Przesmycki (Warszawa and Kraków: J. Mortkowicz, 1911).

³⁵ See *Wszystkie pisma Cypriana Norwida po dziś w całości lub fragmentach odszukane*, ed. Zenon Przesmycki (Warszawa: Zenon Przesmycki, 1937).

³⁶ See Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum: Podobizna autografu*, ed. Waław Borowy (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie, 1947).

creator"³⁷: one capable of combining various arts within the space of a single work. Przesmycki emphasized that what we see in the case of Norwid's works is a constant intertwining of his skills of a poet and his general mastery of arts. Moreover, the writers involved in the Young Poland movement strongly needed new guidance to pursue their objectives, and Norwid perfectly fulfilled that role. Indeed, the model of artist he describes in his *Vade-mecum*, that of a creator combining various arts in his works, is reminiscent of European modernism. It was in that vein that Zenon Przesmycki would describe Norwid as a "precursor"³⁸ whose contribution was significant not only in the field of poetry, but also in those of painting, music, and sculpture:

When looking at the long lost and re-discovered writings, we could suddenly see a glorious image of a great, prophetic creator who, in the past, when Romanticism was dominant, was already starting a new, next—this...—epoch. One who, already several decades ago, preceding not only Polish but European intellectual trends, was developing in his art, not only by intuition but with full awareness and consistency, the foundations of spiritual culture which we have just developed or are in the process of developing.... In this first collective and, to a large extent, the very first edition of his writings and art ever, Poland finally regains its great creator: in a form which is as comprehensive as it was feasible for now. The rest is left to be done by the future generations.³⁹

With his interest in Norwid, Przesmycki encouraged debates on the aesthetics Norwid's poetry expressed which are continued to this day. Other literary scholars of the period, such as Ignacy Fik,⁴⁰ Władysław Arcimowicz,⁴¹ Stefan Kołaczkowski,⁴² and Zofia Szmydtowa,⁴³ were similarly enthusiastic in their commentaries on Norwid's output. In 1933, Kazimierz Wyka put forward his original concept concerning Norwid and referred to him as "the culture's poet."⁴⁴ The re-discovery of the artist by members of the movement of the Young Poland was a true break-through moment in the history of Norwid Studies and made it possible to introduce his output to the world, simultaneously emphasizing his role in setting new directions for art. In that aspect, it was not

³⁷ Zenon Przesmycki, "Prospekt," in Zenon Przesmycki, *Wybór pism krytycznych*, vol. 2, ed. Ewa Korzeniewska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967), 261.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Ibidem, 263.

⁴⁰ See Ignacy Fik, *Uwagi nad językiem Cypriana Norwida* (Kraków: Skład Główny w Kasie im. Mianowskiego, 1930), 55.

⁴¹ See Władysław Arcimowicz, "Norwidowe Obit... hic natus est: Z dziejów konfliktu poety z krytyką," *Droga*, no. 11 (1933): 1086.

⁴² See Stefan Kołaczkowski, "Ironia Norwida," *Droga*, no. 11 (1933): 997.

⁴³ See Zofia Szmydtowa, "Nowele Norwida," *Przegląd Współczesny*, nos. 196–197 (1939): 97.

⁴⁴ Kazimierz Wyka, *Cyprian Norwid jako poeta kultury* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967), 17.

without significance that Norwid spent a large part of his life in exile, outside his homeland, and his poetry represented values deemed as universal in the European culture. Indeed, numerous scholars point to both Polish and universal dimensions of his poems. In particular, the ideas worked out by Norwid coincide in his philosophy of history.⁴⁵ The fascination of the members of the Young Poland movement with Norwid and the general enthusiasm about the poet they spread set the path for the future Norwid Studies.

Researchers and readers alike focus on Norwid's innovatory means of poetic expression, for instance, on the stylistic devices he used, such as irony or the parable, which had been absent from earlier Polish poetry. Stefan Kołaczkowski, for instance, puts Norwid's concept of irony in the context of its understanding by Søren Kierkegaard: "In his 1841 treatise *On the Concept of Irony*, he writes about prophetic figures at the turn of the ages who, unable to implant new concepts about the world in their surroundings, express their negation of the old world through irony. In order to win, the ironist must become the same victim as the tragic hero. The analogy in the attitude towards an era that is already foreign to him explains Norwid's exceptional sympathy for Socrates."⁴⁶

The stylistic and rhetorical devices used by Norwid contributed to the establishment of new aesthetic horizons for European and, perhaps, even world literature. For instance, he used irony to create a distance between himself and the world, the corrupted reality of the nineteenth century, as he saw it,⁴⁷ as well as his contemporary readers and critics.⁴⁸ In all that, he followed the belief, shared by members of the Young Poland movement, about the need for an artist inspired by the spirit and consumed by art only,⁴⁹ as well as about the need of the Poles for their national hero and savior.⁵⁰ Some poems included in *Vade-mecum* in particular reflect Norwid's poetic skill of expressing universal truths and concepts.

After the Second World War both scholars and readers of poetry became increasingly interested in Norwid's *Vade-mecum*, which was reflected in its subsequent editions.⁵¹ In 1947, Waław Borowy published a collection of Nor-

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Paulina Abriszevska, *Literacka hermeneutyka Cypriana Norwida* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2012), 212.

⁴⁶ Kołaczkowski, "Ironia Norwida": 1002.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Norwid, "XIII: Larva," 29; Norwid, "XCV: Nerves," in Norwid, *Poems*, 61–63.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Cyprian Norwid, "Obscurity," in Norwid, *Poems*, 25; Cyprian Norwid, "Recipe for a Warsaw Novel," in *Five Centuries of Polish Poetry: 1450-1950*, trans. Jerzy Pietrkiewicz and Burns Singer (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960), 81; Cyprian Norwid, "XL: Cenzor-krytyk," in Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Józef Fert, 83.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Cyprian Norwid, "XCIX: Chopin's Grand Piano."

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Cyprian Norwid, "To Bem's Memory—a Funeral Rhapsody," in Norwid, *Poems*, 91–93.

⁵¹ For a discussion of the issue, see, e.g., Piotr Chleboski, "Problem ustalenia podstawy krytycznego wydania *Vade-mecum*," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 3 (2021): 179–209.

wid's poems entitled *Podobizna autografu* (A portrait of the autograph),⁵² which had a print run of three thousand copies. Borowy's edition was followed by the already mentioned one prepared by Kazmierz Sowiński in Great Britain. Another renowned Norwid scholar was Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki, who, in 1962, published an annotated edition of *Vade-mecum* and added an extensive introduction to the volume.⁵³ Gomulicki prepared several other editions of Norwid's poetry, among them his *Pisma wybrane* (Selected writings)⁵⁴ and *Pisma wszystkie* (Collected writings).⁵⁵ He would describe Norwid's life and the phenomenon of his poetry, initially rejected by the readers, as tragic. It is when we think not only about his potential Polish readers, writes Gomulicki in his remarks on Norwid's poetry, but also about the language barrier which prevented him from reaching members of other cultures and linguistic communities of Western Europe, that we can "fully envision Norwid's tragedy of the one whose output made him absolutely transcend the poetry of his compatriots."⁵⁶

While Norwid was born at the time when the most famous Romantics were still active: George G. Byron in Greece, William Blake in England, and Edgar A. Poe in the United States, Gomulicki juxtaposes those times, the age of industry and merchants, with that after the Second World War, promoting the Soviet ideology, the cult of work, the faith in progress, and glorifying action as opposed to contemplation. Indeed, certain poems from the *Vade-mecum* collection, such as "III: Socialism,"⁵⁷ "LXIII: Prac-czoło" (LXIII: Work in brow's sweat),⁵⁸ and "LXXX: Wielkie słowa" (Great words),⁵⁹ fit in the Polish post-war context. The poet's words, for instance, "Ojczyzna to wielki-zbiór-ówy-Obowiązek" (Motherland is a great—collective—duty)⁶⁰ and "O, nie skończona dziejów jeszcze praca, Nie przepalony jeszcze glob sumieniem!..." ("—Oh nay! History's

⁵² See Norwid, *Vade-mecum: Podobizna autografu*, ed. Waław Borowy.

⁵³ See Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Juliusz W. Gomulicki (Warszawa: PIW, 1962).

⁵⁴ See Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, vols. 1–5, ed. Juliusz W. Gomulicki (Warszawa, PIW, 1983). For the first edition, see Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, vols. 1–5, ed. Juliusz W. Gomulicki (Warszawa: PIW, 1968).

⁵⁵ See Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, vols. 1–14, ed. Juliusz W. Gomulicki (Warszawa: PIW, 1971–1976).

⁵⁶ Juliusz W. Gomulicki, "Uwagi o poezji Cypriana Norwida," in Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 1, *Wiersze*, 9.

⁵⁷ See Cyprian Norwid, "III: Socialism," trans. Tymoteusz Karpowicz, *The Polish Review* 28, no. 2 (1983): 78.

⁵⁸ See Cyprian Norwid, "LXIII: Prac-czoło," in Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Józef Fert, 116–19.

⁵⁹ See Cyprian Norwid, "LXXX: Wielkie słowa," in Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Józef Fert, 139–41.

⁶⁰ Cyprian Norwid, "Memoriał o Młodej Emigracji. W odpowiedzi na zapytanie Szanownego P. Gałęzowskiego," in Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 4, *Proza*, 394.

Work is still not done / The world not all-consumed by conscience yet!),⁶¹ even became clichés of the communist program expressing faith in the progress of humanity. Due to their aphoristic resonance, such lines of Norwid's poetry could just as well be taken as adages, or words of wisdom.

Sententiousness, as Dorota Plucińska argues, is among the traits of the poetic craft of *Vade-mecum*:

The sententiousness of Norwid's poetic utterances in *Vade-mecum* takes on dimensions and shapes that influence the semantics and structure of the lyrics of the entire cycle of poems. Thanks to this, *Vade-mecum* stands out from the poet's other pieces and from the rest of his output, as well as from the poetry of his predecessors as much as that of his successors.... In the case of this poetry sententiousness provides its contextual form. Sententiousness exists implicitly in the work, contributing to its multi-genre and polymorphic nature.... In the author's mind, it was its numerous sententious formulations that were to make *Vade-mecum* (should it be published) interpreted and remembered by its readers."⁶²

It is because of this aspect that in the countries behind the Iron Curtain the collection was interpreted in a different light than in Western Europe. Unlike there, it was seen as an example of literature functioning within the adopted model of the transformation of the political and social systems, of the nation, and ultimately the world. Not only the language, but also the message of Norwid's poems was being incorporated in the ideology of the communist system. The reason was that Norwid used words such as "oppression,"⁶³ "motherland,"⁶⁴ "nation,"⁶⁵ "civilization,"⁶⁶ and "progress,"⁶⁷ which could easily be manipulated: his poetry was in this sense easily made servile to the communist system. To quote Gomulicki: "Oppression and labor were probably two most important problems and issues to deal with in Norwid's social and political agenda, in which they were closely intertwined and interdependent: the poet, having counted oppression among the most tragic social disasters, was well aware that it had a paralyzing effect on the essence and results of labor, making it an absolutely unbearable and most hated burden."⁶⁸

However, after the Second World War, Norwid's poetry was also considered as addressing and expressing the Catholic worldview. Stefan Sawicki⁶⁹ and

⁶¹ Cyprian Norwid, "Czasy," in Norwid, *Wiersze*, 409. See also Norwid, "III: Socialism."

⁶² Dorota Plucińska, *Sentencjonalność Norwida: O "Vade-mecum" i "trylogii włoskiej"* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2005), 23–24.

⁶³ See, e.g., Cyprian Norwid, "XIV: Mercy," 31.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Cyprian Norwid, "Moja ojczyzna," in Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 1, *Wiersze*, 435.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., *ibidem*.

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Cyprian Norwid, "XXIV: Sieroctwo," in Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Józef Fert, 53.

⁶⁷ See, e.g., *ibidem*, 52.

⁶⁸ Gomulicki, "Uwagi o poezji Cypriana Norwida," 26.

⁶⁹ See Stefan Sawicki, "Drugie Amen Norwida," in *Wartość – Sacrum – Norwid: Studia i szkice aksjologiczno-literackie*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1994, 229–35.

Marian Maciejewski⁷⁰ interpreted the *Vade-mecum* collection in the context of the sacred as it is manifested within the Christian tradition, and they focused on poems such as "The Pilgrim,"⁷¹ and "LXXXII: Death."⁷² Their approach was a counterbalance to the apparent appropriation of the message of Norwid's poetry by the communist ideology then dominant in Central and Eastern Europe. In that vein Stefan Sawicki argued:

Norwid was constantly attracted to the paradox inherent in Christianity. This was naturally connected with his mentality.... The paradox of the Gospel liberates us from the patterns tradition imposes upon us which think and speak through us. Such a condition of ours makes us pursue true greatness in what is apparently unsubstantial and insignificant, simultaneously encouraging axiological reevaluations. It is paradoxes that provide the guiding force of Norwid's ideas and poetry.... In Norwid's oeuvre as such we encounter the spirit of opposition and struggle: it surfaces in relation to everything that is marked with the stigma of automatically absorbed tradition ... with the stigma of narrow social or national structures. Norwid's output is a magnificent "non possumus" declared in the face of anything that prevents human flourishing or introduces oppression.⁷³

There is also a third tendency distinguishable among the ways of the reception of Norwid's poetry, namely, that of focusing on his mastery of all arts. Kazimierz Wyka was an advocate of that aspect of Norwid's artistry and discussed it in his monograph *Cyprian Norwid: Poeta i sztukmistrz* (Cyprian Norwid: A poet and a master of arts)⁷⁴ of 1948, thus setting up an important current in Norwid Studies, later pursued by scholars such as Waław Borowy,⁷⁵ Mieczysław Jastrun,⁷⁶ Zdzisław Łapiński,⁷⁷ and Jacek Trznadel.⁷⁸ Interestingly, Łapiński attempts to tackle the question of who the addressee of Norwid's writings was and writes: "The answer is following: By appealing to his reader ... the writer does so through his philosophy of life, which is usually a joint work of philosophers, theologians, historians, critics, moralists, scholars, etc.... The poet

⁷⁰ See Marian Maciejewski, "Fatum ukrzyżowane," *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 1 (1983): 31–47.

⁷¹ See Cyprian Norwid, "XI: The Pilgrim," in Norwid, *Poems*, 26. See Stefan Sawicki, *Norwida walka z formą* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1986), 37.

⁷² See Cyprian Norwid, "LXXXII: Death," in Norwid, *Poems*, 57. See Sawicki, *Norwida walka z formą*, 83–92.

⁷³ Sawicki, *Norwida walka z formą*, 14–15.

⁷⁴ See Kazimierz Wyka, *Cyprian Norwid: Poeta i sztukmistrz* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1948).

⁷⁵ See Waław Borowy, *O Norwidzie: Notatki i rozprawy* (Warszawa: PIW, 1960).

⁷⁶ See Mieczysław Jastrun, *Gwiazdzisty diament* (Warszawa: PIW, 1971).

⁷⁷ See Zdzisław Łapiński, *Norwid* (Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 1971).

⁷⁸ See Jacek Trznadel, *Czytanie Norwida: Próby* (Warszawa: PIW, 1978).

was constantly looking for a real audience, but he would not make concessions regarding the very principles of the artistic organization of his poems.”⁷⁹

The scholars mentioned above focus on Norwid’s language, in particular on the neologisms he created and on the rhetorical devices recurring in his works, such as irony, parables, so-called dark allegories, symbols, ellipses, and understatements, which they consider as the foundations of a new aesthetics of Polish poetry and of modern poetry in general. In their interpretation of *Vademecum*, these scholars emphasize the pioneering role of the collection.

“A MASTERPIECE”⁸⁰ OF NORWID’S POETRY

The Rise of Norwid Studies Since the 1980s

When describing the phenomenon of Norwid’s artistry and its evolution in the historical and literary process, one must not fail to notice that the history of Polish literature does not know any other as highly specialized discipline as Norwid Studies. In this context it is worth pointing to the significance of the academic journal *Studia Norwidiana*,⁸¹ published by the Center for the Study of Cyprian Norwid’s Oeuvre at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland,⁸² and Pracownia Słownika Języka Cypriana Norwida (Center for the Study of Cyprian Norwid’s Literary Language).⁸³

Within the field of Norwid Studies, a separate discipline focused on the scrutiny of the translations of his works into other languages, specifically

⁷⁹ Łapiński, *Norwid*, 165.

⁸⁰ Michał Masłowski, “Miejsce Norwida w kulturze,” *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 39 (2021): 6.

⁸¹ See *Studia Norwidiana*, <https://repozytorium.kul.pl/communities/276f19be-01d2-4efe-8a18-4485be137009>. The scholarly journal *Studia Norwidiana*, launched in 1983 by Stefan Sawicki, publishes articles and reviews focused on Cyprian Norwid’s biography and his oeuvre, as seen in the broad context of Polish, European, and world literatures.

⁸² The Center for the Study of Cyprian Norwid’s Oeuvre at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin was founded in 1985 on the initiative of Stefan Sawicki. It originally served as an inter-faculty scholarly unit, and in time became autonomous. Its library collection holds, among others, microfilmed copies of both Norwid’s handwritten manuscripts and the first editions of his works, as well as other materials on the poet’s output and the Romantic age in general. Among the projects undertaken by the Center are a seventeen-volume critical edition of Norwid’s collected works (still in progress), the publication of *Studia Norwidiana*, and the organization of “Colloquia Norwidiana” national and international seminars. See Ośrodek Badań nad Twórczością Norwida KUL, https://www.kul.pl/osrodek-badan-nad-tworczoscia-cypriana-norwida,art_144.html.

⁸³ The Center was founded by Jadwiga Puzynina, a renowned Polish philologist, who then became its long-term director. The main project launched by the Center, currently under the leadership of Tomasz Korpysz, is a compilation of the vocabulary items used by Cyprian Norwid. Some results of the project are available online as Internetowy Słownik Języka Cypriana Norwida at <http://www.slownikjezykanorwida.uw.edu.pl/>.

English, has emerged. Agata Brajerska-Mazur, a Polish scholar who analyzes and extensively discusses translations of Norwid's poems into English, has addressed the issue in numerous papers.⁸⁴ In her monograph *O angielskich tłumaczeniach utworów Norwida* (On the English translations of Norwid's works),⁸⁵ she discusses the problem of the nineteenth-century reception of the poet's work and contrasts it with its appraisal in the twentieth century, showing the full scale of the critical assessment of his oeuvre: from unfavorable opinions and fierce criticism to great appreciation:

Norwid's "grandchildren in the future to come" now see the intricacies of the structures of his works and the depth of thought inherent in them as an advantage rather than a disadvantage.... Norwid's genius outgrew his epoch by over a hundred years, so it is no wonder that his contemporaries did not understand him. He is much better comprehended and much more appreciated by his audience living in the late twentieth century, although even now the opinion prevails that Norwid's oeuvre is not easy to read.... It is difficult, because it is original: in language, in style and in thought, anticipating the era to come at least one century later. It is difficult, finally, because there is no artist equal to him in any European literature of the Romantic age.⁸⁶

Since the last decades of the twentieth century, Norwid's *Vade-mecum* has been translated into several languages, among them German,⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Agata Brajerska-Mazur has extensively discussed problems encountered by translators trying to render Cyprian Norwid's works in English. See, e.g., Agata Brajerska-Mazur, "Bibliografia przekładów utworów Norwida na język angielski," *Studia Norwidiana*, nos. 17–18 (1999–2000): 385–93; Agata Brajerska-Mazur, "Norwid's Semantic Techniques in English Translation," *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego: Seria Filologiczna; Studia Anglica Resoviensia* 2, no. 14 (2003): 107–18; Agata Brajerska-Mazur, "O przekładzie na język angielski wierszy Norwida 'Śmierć,' 'Do Zeszłej...,' 'Finis,'" *Pamiętnik Literacki* 97, no. 4 (2006): 229–37; Agata Brajerska-Mazur, "Bibliografia przekładów utworów Norwida na język angielski II," *Studia Norwidiana*, nos. 24–25 (2007): 387–91; Agata Brajerska-Mazur and Patrick Corness, "Translating Cyprian Kamil Norwid's: 'Generalities': A Case Study of Cooperation," *Sarmatian Review* 34, no. 3 (2014): 1875–77; Agata Brajerska-Mazur and Patrick Corness, "Translating Cyprian Kamil Norwid's: 'Generalities': A Case Study of Cooperation; Part II," *Sarmatian Review* 35, no. 1 (2015): 1900–1903; Agata Brajerska-Mazur, "Polskość a europejskość Norwida w przekładzie na język angielski," in *Norwid – spotkania kultur*, ed. Edyta Chlebowska (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2015), 219–36; Agata Brajerska-Mazur, "Ekwiwalencja i akceptowalność anglojęzycznych tłumaczeń utworów Norwida," *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 40 (2022): 99–116.

⁸⁵ See Agata Brajerska-Mazur, *O angielskich tłumaczeniach utworów Norwida* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2002).

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 15–16.

⁸⁷ See Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum: Gedichtzyklus (1866); Polnisch-Deutsch*, trans. Rolf Fieguth (München: W. Fink, 1981). The volume is the first bilingual (German and Polish) edition of *Vade-mecum* and it includes an introduction by Hans Robert Jauss. For another bilingual, German and Polish, edition, see also Cyprian K. Norwid, *Vade-mecum: Gedichtzyklus*, trans. Peter Gehrisch (Leipzig: Leipziger Literaturverlag, 2017).

French,⁸⁸ Italian,⁸⁹ and English.⁹⁰ Interestingly, an interest in Norwid's poetry can be seen among local cultures using regional languages: for instance, selected pieces from *Vade-mecum* (thirty six of them) were translated into Kashubian.⁹¹ In Poland, the most noteworthy editions of *Vade-mecum*, including introductory essays, notes, and commentaries are published by Józef Fert.⁹²

A closer scrutiny of the reception of Norwid's poetry shows two major currents in its interpretation. The first one is related to the contexts of philosophy and religion and crystallizes either as the Christian-kerygmatic or as the philosophical-cultural approach. The other is anchored in the study of the history of literature, and assumes various shapes, among them those characteristic of classical-positivist philology, of the structuralist method⁹³ which consists in working with the text, of thematic criticism,⁹⁴ and of the post-structural paradigm.⁹⁵ Some of these models may interpenetrate each other.⁹⁶

In the case of *Vade-mecum*, the principle of world construction is executed on the basis of an original concept of language which resorts to the ideas of dialogism, irony, the art of ellipses and approximations, as well as to parables. The leading motifs and literary themes of the poems included in the collection

⁸⁸ See Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, trans. Christophe Jeżewski et al. (Paris: Noir sur Blanc, 2004). The volume includes an introduction by Józef Fert, as well as notes and comments by Christophe Jeżewski.

⁸⁹ See Olga Płaszczewska, "Włoskie przekłady poezji Norwida." *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 36 (2018): 141–64.

⁹⁰ See Cyprian K. Norwid, *Poezje: Poems*, trans. Adam Czerniawski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986). See also Norwid, *Poems* and Norwid, *Selected Poems*.

⁹¹ See Cyprian K. Norwid, *Wębróné wierzte*, trans. Ida Czajinô and Janusz Mamelsczi (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Pewne, 2021).

⁹² See, e.g., Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Józef Fert (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 2003; Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Józef Fert (Lublin, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2004).

⁹³ See, e.g., Kazimierz Cysewski, "Uwagi o listach Cypriana Norwida." *Studia Norwidiana*, nos. 3–4 (1985–1986): 131–52; Sławomir Rzepczyński, *Wokół nowel "włoskich" Norwida: Z zagadnień komunikacji literackiej* (Słupsk: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, 1996), 20 and 23.

⁹⁴ See, e.g., Grażyna Halkiewicz-Sojak, *Wobec tajemnicy i prawdy: O Norwidowskich obrazach "całości"* (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 1998), 67–76; Płucińska, *Sentencjonalność w poezji i prozie Cypriana Norwida: O "Vade-mecum" i "trylogii włoskiej"*, 25–42.

⁹⁵ See, e.g. Wiesław Rzońca, *Norwid – poeta pisma: Próba dekonstrukcji dzieła* (Warszawa: Semper, 1995), 14–23; Wiesław Rzońca, *Postmodernizm Norwida – na tle symbolizmu literackiego XIX wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2013), 7–9.; Karol Samseł, *Inwalida intencji: Studia o Norwidzie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 2017), 163–65.

⁹⁶ For a broader discussion of the issue, see Adela Kuik-Kalinowska, *Piórem i stylem: Norwidowskie toposy i techniki artystyczne* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2019), 183–206 (chapter "Oblicza Norwida: Współczesne modele odbioru").

encompass social, cultural and patriotic issues,⁹⁷ ideas related to ancient history,⁹⁸ the Christian symbolism,⁹⁹ as well as issues regarding love¹⁰⁰ and political concerns.¹⁰¹ All of the above make this poetry special. Norwid scholars frequently focus on relations between literature and visual arts, music, and sculpture, exemplified, for instance, respectively, in his "Wierny portret" (Faithful portrait),¹⁰² "Chopin's Grand Piano," and "Posąg i obuwie" (Statue and footwear).¹⁰³ In this respect, Cyprian Norwid appears, also among his contemporaries, as a highly original and creative artist.¹⁰⁴ For several decades now, numerous studies of Norwid's poetic works have focused on issues pertaining to philosophy or religion and offer Christian and kerygmatic renditions of his message.¹⁰⁵ Others

⁹⁷ See, e.g., Marek Buś, *Składanie pieśni: Z dziejów edytorstwa twórczości Cypriana Norwida* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1997), xi-xiv.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Edward Kasperski, *Dyskursy romantyków: Norwid i inni* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra, 2003), 213–14; Marian Śliwiński, *Norwid wobec antyčno-średniowiecznej tradycji uniwersalizmu europejskiego* (Słupsk: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, 1992), 3–11; Maciej Junkiert, *Grecja i jej historia w twórczości Cypriana Norwida* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2012), 40–42; Magdalena Karamecka, *Antyczny Rzym Norwida* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2016), 7–18.

⁹⁹ See Stefan Sawicki, "Sacrum w badaniach literatury," in: *Wartość – Sacrum – Norwid: Studia i szkice aksjologiczno-literackie*, ed. Stefan Sawicki (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1994), 181–86; Jadwiga Puzynina, *Słowo Norwida* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1990), 95; Teresa Skubalanka, *Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Norwid* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1997), 144; Józef Fert, *Poeta sumienia: Rzecz o twórczości Norwida* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1993), 29; Alina Merdas, *Ocalony wieniec: Chryścijaństwo Norwida na tle odrodzenia religijnego w porewolucyjnej Francji* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1995), 175–88; Antoni Dunajski, *Teologiczne czytanie Norwida* (Pelplin: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1996), 13–52; Antoni Dunajski, *Najstarszy po Kościele obywatel* (Pelplin: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1996), 37–54.

¹⁰⁰ See Grażyna Halkiewicz-Sojak, *Byron w twórczości Norwida* (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 1994), 85–97.

¹⁰¹ See Sławomir Rzepczyński, *O Norwidzie: Syntezy i zbliżenia* (Słupsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pomorskiego, 2017), 157–167.

¹⁰² See Cyprian Norwid, "Wierny portret," in Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*. Vol. 2. *Wiersze*, Part 2 (Warszawa: PIW, 1971), 52.

¹⁰³ See Cyprian Norwid, "Posąg i obuwie," in Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 1, *Wiersze*, 314.

¹⁰⁴ See Piotr Chlebowski, *Romantyczna silva rerum: O Norwidowym "Albumie Orbis"* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2009), 11, 19–20; Anna Borowiec, *"Album Orbis" Cypriana Norwida jako księga sztukmistrza* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2016), 125; Aleksandra Melbetchowska-Luty, *Sztukmistrz: Twórczość artystyczna i myśl o sztuce Cypriana Norwida* (Warszawa: Neriton, 2001), 5–12. See also Kuik-Kalinowska, *Piórem i stylem: Norwidowskie toposy i techniki artystyczne*.

¹⁰⁵ See Marian Maciejewski, "Literatura w świetle kerygmatu," in *Inspiracje religijne w literaturze*, ed. Alina Merdas (Warszawa, Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1983), 333–41; Sawicki, *Norwida walka z formą*, 42–52; Fert, *Poeta sumienia: Rzecz o twórczości Norwida*, 29.

propose a reading of his oeuvre in the light of insights into philosophy and culture,¹⁰⁶ as well as through the lens of history.¹⁰⁷

It is an interesting intellectual venture to scrutinize Norwid's pioneering collection *Vade-mecum* in the perspective of the new subjectivity and new language which provided the foundations for modern poetry. In the methodology of new comparative studies, Norwid's creative output is interpreted in the context of English poetry, particularly the works of Thomas Stearns Eliot.¹⁰⁸ The latest research also includes works that put Norwid's oeuvre in the context of European and world literatures. Tomasz Bilczewski writes: "In searching for the beginnings of epiphanic discourse in the history of Polish poetry, bringing together Norwid, Hopkins, and Dickinson, I am not seeking to convince anyone that the first is just like or unlike the others. My intention is rather to ponder whether one can benefit from placing Norwid in the context of two other unique poetic innovators who had to face similar obstacles and who articulated their religious beliefs and doubts, renewing existing poetic practices and finding a new place for ordinary objects within their body of work."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ See Piotr Chlebowski, *Rzecz o wolności słowa* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000), 237–49; Adela Kuik-Kalinowska, *Cypriana Norwida "Czarne kwiaty" i "Białe kwiaty": Konteksty – poetyka – idee; Studium monograficzne* (Słupsk: Wydawnictwo Pomorskiej Akademii Pedagogicznej, 2002), 152–54. Włodzimierz Szturek, *Archeologia wyobraźni: Studia o Słowackim i Norwidzie* (Kraków: Universitas, 2001), 175 and 178; Magdalena Woźniewska-Działak, *Poematy narracyjne Cypriana Norwida: Konteksty literacko-kulturalne, estetyka, myśl* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2014), 255–57; Edward Kasper ski, "Kulturologia Norwida: Ramy, istota i zastosowania," in *Norwid – spotkania kultur*, 11–41.

¹⁰⁷ See Alicja Lisiecka, *Norwid poeta historii* (Londyn: Veritas, 1973), 57 and 60.

¹⁰⁸ See Arent van Nieukerken, *Ironiczny konceptyzm: Nowoczesna polska poezja metafizyczna w kontekście anglosaskiego modernizmu* (Kraków: Universitas, 1998), 97–100.

¹⁰⁹ Tomasz Bilczewski, "'Patch and diamond': Norwid, Hopkins and Their New Poetics," *Wielogłos: Pismo Wydziału Polonistyki UJ*, no. 4 (26) (2015), 72.

Another scholar who writes about Norwid in the context of comparative references to the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins and other poets is Agata Brajerska-Mazur. "Looking carefully at Hopkins' and Norwid's original 'scores,' one may also spot differences in the way they expressed their ideas. Norwid surpassed Hopkins in the use of irony, understatement, silence and graphic solutions, while Hopkins was unparalleled (even by Norwid) in creating neologisms. The distinction between the two poets was also based on different emphases on the main topics of their works: Hopkins dealt with God, nature and man, while Norwid: with God, man and all that is human—history and man's work.... Comparing the life and works of Norwid to the biography and writings of Hopkins and other precursors of modern literature, although it serves mainly the purpose of helping English language readers understand the personality and works of the Polish poet, also shows the extent to which he is in line with European literary tradition." Agata Brajerska-Mazur, "A Starry Diamond," trans. Aleksandra Niemirycz, in: *On Cyprian Norwid: Studies and Essays*, vol. 1, eds. Agata Brajerska-Mazur and Edyta Chlebowska (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019), 24–25.

Karol Samsel in turn juxtaposes the poetry of Cyprian Norwid with that of Emily Dickinson,¹¹⁰ whereas Arent van Nieukerken analyzes his works in the literary context provided by other artists of the Romantic age, such as Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Zygmunt Krasiński, Antoni Malczewski, and Johann W. Goethe, and by their philosophies.¹¹¹ In a similar vein, Piotr Śniedziwski indicates conceptual and artistic connections of Norwid's output with that of the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé,¹¹² while Anita Jarzyna puts Norwid's works in still new interpretative contexts, such as the poetry of, respectively, Arthur Rimbaud and Reiner Maria Rilke.¹¹³ Culturewise, Rolf Fieguth juxtaposed Norwid's *Vade-mecum* with the poetry of Charles Baudelaire and with Victor Hugo's output.¹¹⁴

A reading of *Vade-mecum* is a specific process involving dialogue with an artist who demonstrates a demanding existential and conceptual attitude, a creator who devoted his life to art and who described his aesthetic and conceptual views in poems such as "As Introduction (Generalities),"¹¹⁵ "I: Vade-mecum," "Liryka i druk" (Lyric and print)¹¹⁶ or "Mother Tongue,"¹¹⁷ in which he expressed, with conviction and faith, his vision of the tasks of literary works. He summed it up by saying: "Of the things of this world only two will remain, / Two only: p o e t r y a n d g o o d n e s s... and nothing else..."¹¹⁸

In modern day Norwid Studies, a frequently recurring question is: "Which Norwid?" The formulation of this question manifests the scholars' awareness of both the fluid nature of the reception of Norwid's oeuvre and of its historical and cultural complexity. The poems compiled in *Vade-mecum* break with the Romantic tradition, activating connections with the ideas and aesthetics that define the culture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this context, Rolf Fieguth writes:

¹¹⁰ See Karol Samsel, "Persona liryczna w wierszach Cypriana Norwida i Emily Dickinson," *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, no. 4 (2017): 93–101.

¹¹¹ See Arent van Nieukerken, *Perspektywiczność sacrum: Szkice o Norwidowskim romantyzmie* (Warszawa: Fundacja Centrum Międzynarodowych Badań Polonistycznych and Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2007).

¹¹² See Piotr Śniedziwski, *Mallarmé – Norwid: Milczenie i poetycki modernizm we Francji oraz w Polsce* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2008).

¹¹³ See Anita Jarzyna, "Pragnienie miejsca bez brania z przestrzeni miejsca," in: *Cyprian Kamil Norwid – polskość, europejskość, uniwersalizm*, ed. Danuta Dąbrowska (Szczecin: Książnica Pomorska, 2006), 102–12.

¹¹⁴ See Rolf Fieguth, "Vade-mecum C. Norwida w kontekście Wiktora Hugo i Charles'a Baudelaire'a," in *Norwid – spotkania kultur*, 283–303.

¹¹⁵ See Cyprian Norwid, "As Introduction (Generalities)," in Norwid, *Poems*, 13.

¹¹⁶ See Cyprian Norwid, "VIII: Liryka i druk," in Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Józef Fert, 27.

¹¹⁷ See Cyprian Norwid, "Mother Tongue," trans. Adam Czerniawski, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 61 (2021): 76.

¹¹⁸ Cyprian Norwid, "To Bronisław Z.," in Norwid, *Selected Poems*, 92.

It seems more convincing to me to place this cycle of poems, compiled by the author for the first edition in 1866, not in the current of literary realism (while such ideas have been put forward to consider), but in the context of an epoch dominated by realism, namely, among various, perhaps not always interconnected, germs of poetic opposition to realism.... One should rather accept the possibility that *Vade-mecum* has also aspects that do not refer to realism in any significant way and do not answer the questions it poses, but from the very beginning remain in a functional—positive or negative—relationship with literary trends other than realism and alternative to it. One might point out here, on the one hand, to the strong aversion *Vade-mecum* demonstrates to Polish Romantic literature, already declining at the time, and on the other hand, to its references to French Parnassianism or Symbolism, which are so much discussed in Polish comparative studies of Norwid.¹¹⁹

Therefore, depending on the aspects of his writings on which the particular Norwid scholars have focused, they refer to him as a “poet and master of arts,”¹²⁰ a “poet of conscience,”¹²¹ a “poet of dialogue,”¹²² a “poet of writing,”¹²³ and a poet with “discourse of irony, moral commitment and civic religiousness”.¹²⁴

Michał Masłowski wonders whether it would be possible to read Norwid’s entire output using one interpretative key, stressing, in conclusion, that dialogicity is inherent throughout Norwid’s oeuvre, which means that its reception can by no means be reduced to a single pattern. “Even in today’s ‘postmodern’ world Norwid cannot be reduced to a single formula. He is rather a ‘constellation,’ requiring that readers join the ‘continual discussion’ on issues specific to a given era. His focus is on humanity, which he regards from a dualist perspective that necessitates pursuing a synthesis of matter and spirit under the sign of ethical universalism. Norwid refers to the ‘cupola of a monologue-that-keeps-parabolizing-itself’ and regards culture as the parable of the world.”¹²⁵

In recent works devoted to *Vade-mecum*, Norwid scholars focus on categories such as the concept and imagery of virtue,¹²⁶ time (e.g., the relationship

¹¹⁹ F i e g u t h, “Poezja w fazie krytycznej: Cykl wierszy Cypriana Norwida *Vade-mecum*,” trans. Jan Gotfryd, *Studia Norwidiana*, nos. 3–4 (1985–1986): 53–54.

¹²⁰ See Edyta C h l e b o w s k a, *Norwid – sztukmistrz nieznan* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2013).

¹²¹ See F e r t, *Poeta sumienia: Rzecz o twórczości Norwida*.

¹²² See Józef F. F e r t, *Norwid – poeta dialogu* (Wrocław: Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1982).

¹²³ See Wiesław R z o Ń c a, *Norwid – poeta pisma: Próba dekonstrukcji dzieła* (Warszawa: Semper, 1995).

¹²⁴ See Arent v a n N i e u k e r k e n, “Norwid europejski,” *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 11 (1993): 30.

¹²⁵ M a s ł o w s k i, “Miejsce Norwida w kulturze”: 35.

¹²⁶ See Agnieszka Z i o ł o w i c z, “Paths of Virtue in *Vade-mecum*: Cyprian Norwid’s Poetic Aretology,” *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 39, English Version (2021): 5–34.

between time and movement),¹²⁷ epistolography,¹²⁸ and language (sentence formation practices).¹²⁹ They also offer a comparative reading of the collection.¹³⁰ Yet another recent scrutiny of *Vade-mecum*, including its comprehensive presentation, is *Studia o "Vade-mecum" Norwida*,¹³¹ a monograph including papers delivered at the 19th Norwid Colloquia Norwidiana Conference in Kazimierz Dolny, Poland, in 2019. The authors focus on particular aspects of the poetics of the collection, adopting either synthetic or detailed approaches and discussing its rendition of concepts such as time and history. They also scrutinize linguistic issues involved by the poems and the successive editions of the cycle. They interpret the poems from a predominantly anthropological perspective and point to their philosophical and cultural aspects.

Some scholars, among them Rolf Fieguth, propose openness in the reading of *Vade-mecum*. Fieguth argues: "According to Norwid, the author does not 'create' anything, but merely 'fabricates' something not once or for all defined or ready; as such, it remains open to the possibility of obtaining new meanings. From this truth, he drew visible consequences for his own cycle of poems, introducing, in advance, a semantic mesh which would constantly demonstrate to the readers its susceptibility to future readings."¹³² In a similar vein, Tomasz Mackiewicz described *Vade-mecum* as an "open" work.¹³³ Such an approach makes diverse readings of the collection possible and justified; moreover, it rests on the belief that its inherent semantic potential was "written" into the cycle by the poet himself.

Today, the phenomena of Norwid's oeuvre as such and particularly of his *Vade-mecum* are still relevant and inspiring for literary scholars who constantly reread the rootedness of this poetry in the native and individual human experience as a manifestation of the poet's universal, collective and general, human perspective. They see in it a poetry of fundamental values, showing the path of human development which transcends all egocentrism towards a universal moral perspective. One might venture to say that in the case of Norwid we are

¹²⁷ See F e r t, "Vade-mecum in the Perspective of Time: Topic Outline."

¹²⁸ See A r e n t v a n N i e u k e r k e n, "Vade-mecum and the Poeticization of Epistolography," *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 39, English Version (2021): 65–91.

¹²⁹ See A n n a K o z ł o w s k a, "Problems with Norwid's Utterances (Not Only) in *Vade-mecum*: Interpretative and Methodological remarks," *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 39, English Version (2021): 93–111.

¹³⁰ See K a r o l S a m s e l, "Vade-mecum vis-à-vis the English-Language Poetry Cycles of the Second Half of the 19th Century," *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 39, English Version (2021): 112–34.

¹³¹ See *Studia o "Vade-mecum" Norwida*, ed. Łukasz Niewczas (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2024).

¹³² F i e g u t h, "Poezja w fazie krytycznej: Cykl wierszy Cypriana Norwida *Vade-mecum*": 52.

¹³³ See T o m a s z M a c k i e w i c z, "Vade-mecum Norwida jako 'dzieło otwarte,'" in: *Genologia Norwida*, ed. Adela Kuik-Kalinowska (Słupsk: Pomorska Akademia Pedagogiczna, 2005), 295.

dealing with an ethically engaged and responsible poetry and that the reason is that the poet places poetry next to the value of goodness.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Adela KUIK-KALINOWSKA, Cyprian Kamil Norwid in the Eyes of His “grandsons yet to come”: From Rejection to Recognition; On the Reading Styles of *Vade-mecum*

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Cyprian Kamil Norwid (1821–1883) is considered the last of the four most important Polish Romantic poets. The history of the reception of the literary and artistic accomplishments of the author of *Vade-mecum* shows its nineteenth-century rejection by critics and readers alike. Norwid was then described as unwanted and “dark” a writer, as well as an “incomprehensible” poet. The question “Which Norwid?” frequently posed in modern day Norwid studies, indicates the variability potential of the reception and of the reading of his oeuvre, which cannot be unambiguously classified as representing a single, whether Polish or European, literary current. In early twentieth century, heated controversies were held over the significance of Norwid’s legacy. Zenon Przesmycki, known as Miriam, who discovered the then forgotten works of Norwid, simultaneously encouraged debates on the aesthetics his poetry expressed. In recent years, Norwid’s oeuvre is interpreted by literary scholars as model work of the nineteenth century, yet going beyond “its era,” regardless of whether it is seen as representing Polish or European literature. Today, Norwid is counted among the most important Polish authors. His unquestionable accomplishment is laying the foundations for contemporary poetry. The scope and richness of his oeuvre has inspired a growing interest in its study, which contributed to the rise of Norwid Studies as a separate discipline.

Keywords: nineteenth-century literature, Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, reception of a poetic work, criticism and recognition, tradition and innovation

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Adela KUIK-KALINOWSKA – Cyprian Kamil Norwid widziany oczami swoich “późnych wnuków”. Od odrzucenia do uznania. O stylach odbioru *Vade-mecum*

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Cyprian Kamil Norwid (1821–1883) uważany jest za ostatniego z czterech najważniejszych polskich poetów romantycznych. Historia recepcji tak jego spuścizny literackiej, jak i osiągnięć artystycznych obejmuje dziewiętnastowieczne odrzucenie jego twórczości zarówno przez krytyków, jak i czytelników. Był twórcą „niechcianym” i „mrocznym pisarzem”, poetą „niezrozumiałym”.

Często dziś stawiane w badaniach norwidologicznych pytanie „Jaki Norwid?” wskazuje na zmienność modelu recepcji i sposobu lektury twórczości autora *Vade-mecum*. Poeta – niezwiązany do końca z żadną z epok literackich i nie dający się jednoznacznie przypisać do wybranych nurtów polskiej ani europejskiej literatury – nie pozwala na jednoznaczne sklasyfikowanie. W pierwszej połowie dwudziestego wieku miały miejsce gorące dyskusje na temat znaczenia spuścizny Norwida. Zenon „Miriam” Przesmycki, który bezdyskusyjnie i trwale zapisał się w polskiej kulturze jako „odkrywca” poety, rozpoczął trwającą do dziś debatę nad walorami estetycznymi poezji Norwida. W najnowszych badaniach twórczość poetycka Norwida uznawana jest za dzieło wzorcowe dziewiętnastego stulecia, wykraczające jednak poza „jego epokę” w kanonie literatury zarówno polskiej, jak i europejskiej. Dziś Norwid określany jest jako jeden z najważniejszych polskich autorów, który w dziewiętnastym wieku położył podwaliny dla współczesnej poezji. Cykl *Vade-mecum* uznawany jest za dzieło prekursorskie, stanowiące zapowiedź współczesnej poezji – nie tylko polskiej, a badania nad twórczością poety stanowią dziś odrębną subdyscyplinę – norwidologię.

Słowa kluczowe: literatura dziewiętnastego wieku, Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, recepcja dzieła poetyckiego, krytyka i uznanie, tradycja i innowacja

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