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## REMARKS ON A FEW MOTIFS IN THE WORKS BY NORWID AND BAUDELAIRE\*

In the introduction to the German edition of Norwid's poetry, Hans Robert Jauss states that "*Vade-mecum* and *Flowers of Evil* were created in the coordinate system of the same time"<sup>1</sup>. By bringing the two poets closer together, he also emphasizes the differences between them: "Recognizing the spiritual kinship shared by Baudelaire and Norwid's critical attitude towards the utopia and self-deception of their time and their common views on the tasks and boundaries of future poetry will soon lead to the point where their paths diverge in aesthetic practice"<sup>2</sup>. Let us put it right – the views of both poets on the tasks of art are not convergent, although they are united by their recognition of the current situation of literature, and – we shall add – the differences concern not only aesthetics, but also axiology, which a comparative literature researcher will encounter at every step of his or her reading. This article is part of comparative research on Norwid's work, which recently has been postulated more and more often, although such a need had already been signalled earlier<sup>3</sup>. While writing about Norwid and Baudelaire, it

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\* Scientific work financed under the programme of the Minister of Science and Higher Education entitled "National Programme for the Development of Humanities" in 2016-2019 (No. 0046/NPRH4/H2a/83/2016).

<sup>1</sup> H.R. JAUSS, *Przedmowa do pierwszego niemieckiego wydania "Vade-mecum" Cypriana Norwida*, transl. by M. Kaczmarkowski, "Studia Norwidiana" 3-4: 1985-1986, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> See earlier works: J.W. GOMULICKI, *Norwid-poeta Europejski*, "Nowa Kultura" 1958, vols. 21 and 22; K. WYKA, *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz*, [in:] IDEM, *Cyprian Norwid. Studia, artykuły, recenzje*, Kraków 1989; M. ŻUROWSKI, *Norwid i Gautier*, [in:] *Nowe Studia o Norwidzie*, eds. J.W. Gomulicki, J.Z. Jakubowski, Warszawa 1961. Recently, reflecting on the current state of research on Norwid, P. Chlebowski wrote about the importance of comparative research – see IDEM: *O sytuacji w badaniach nad Norwidem. Preliminaria*, [in:] *Jak czytać Norwida? Postawy badawcze, metody, weryfikacje*, eds. B. Kuczera-Chachulska, J. Trzcionka, Warszawa 2008, p. 71.

is impossible not to mention the tradition initiated by Juliusz Gomulicki of comparing the two poets born in the same year 1821 and creating at the same time, in the same Paris. The so-called “Baudelaire’s thesis” had once aroused a lot of discussion and controversy, but it will not be the focus of this article<sup>4</sup>. Norwid and Baudelaire are presented as pioneers of modernism, setting future directions in literature. However, the question of how exactly the breakthrough was realized in their works, whether it can be read from the texts themselves and on what levels they are comparable is still open. The number of detailed comparative analyses is in fact very small.

The title of my article is an obvious reference to Walter Benjamin’s essay on Baudelaire<sup>5</sup>. The problems Benjamin is interested in are related to the inhospitable experience of the great industrial era, which forced changes in poetry. These problems involve the reader’s integration in the text, involuntary memory, the experience of a shock that becomes the norm, the big city crowd, *flâneurie*, eradication, a specific approach to time, and finally, alienation. I would like to show some of the problems addressed by Benjamin from a comparative perspective. Was Norwid, “the writer of the age of trade and industry” – as Zofia Stefanowska once wrote about him (after all, following Norwid himself) – also a writer of the big city in which he lived and worked?<sup>6</sup> Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* in relation to Norwid’s work was recently referenced by Krzysztof Trybuś and Michał Kuziak, who stressed the specific “transparency” of Paris in the poet’s work<sup>7</sup>. What trace has this urban life imprinted on his texts? Probably it is not possible to exhaus-

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<sup>4</sup> See: J.W. GOMULICKI, *Norwid-poeta*, and IDEM, *Aneksy*, [in:] C. NORWID, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. XI, ed. J. W. Gomulicki, Warszawa 1976, pp. 83, 91, 103, 168, and: M. ŻUROWSKI, “*Larwa*” na tle porównawczym, “Przegląd Humanistyczny” 1963, vol. 6; A. LISIECKA, *O baudelaizmie “Vade-mecum”*, “Twórczość” 1968, vol. 3; J. PRZYBOŚ, *Próba Norwida*, [in:] *Norwid: z dziejów recepcji twórczości*, ed. M. Inglot, Warszawa 1983, p. 75; J. TRZNADEL, *Czytanie Norwida. Próby*, Warszawa 1978, pp. 20-21 (fn. 9), 242-243, 288-289; E. FELIKSIĄK, *Poezja i myśl. Studia o Norwidzie*, Lublin 2002, p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> W. BENJAMIN, *O kilku motywach u Baudelaire’a*, [in:] IDEM, *Konstelacje. Wybór tekstów*, transl. by A. Lipszyc, A. Wołkowicz, Kraków 2012; IDEM, *Pasaże*, ed. R. Tiedemanna, transl. by I. Kania, afterword by Z. Baumann, Kraków 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Z. STEFANOWSKA, *Norwid – Pisarz wieku kupieckiego i przemysłowego*, [in:] EADEM, *Literatura, komparatystyka, folklor*, Warszawa 1968. For Norwid’s modernism, including his identification with civilisational phenomena leading to a sense of alienation from the world, see also S. RZEPczyński, *Norwid a nowoczesność*, [in:] *Romantyzm i nowoczesność*, ed. M. Kuziak, Kraków 2009.

<sup>7</sup> See M. KUZIAK, *Norwid i pejzaż nowoczesności. Wokół Paryża poety*, “*Studia Norwidiana*” 32: 2014; K. TRYBUŚ, *Benjamin komentatorem Norwida*, [in:] *Wokół Pasaży Waltera Benjamina*, eds. P. Śniedziewski, K. Trybuś, M. Wilczyński, Poznań 2009.

tively read Norwid's texts in the Baudelaire's context alone<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, this context seems to be important precisely as the one revealing what in Norwid's texts is present in a concealed way, what is left unsaid or oblique, and what in Norwid's case is always important.

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In the forewords opening the two most important poetic collections analysed here: *The Flowers of Evil* and *Vade-mecum*, the starting point is the feeling of the cultural turning point. Norwid begins his preface by referring to Byron's writing about the state of poetry in the age of decline. The author follows this path, calling the state of contemporary literature a critical state: "poezja polska, wedle mojego uważania, znajduje się w krytycznej chwili"<sup>9</sup> [Polish poetry, according to my opinion, is at a critical moment<sup>1</sup> (*Vade-mecum*, "Do czytelnika" ["To the Reader"], PWSz II, 9)]. Baudelaire opens one of his preface drafts to the poetic cycle with the following words: "France has entered the vulgarisation phase. Paris – the centre and emanation of universal stupidity"<sup>10</sup> and links this degeneration to progress, transferring it to the issues of art. It is not without reason that Pierre Brunel writes about Baudelaire as a poet of defeat<sup>11</sup>. Similarly to Norwid, the author of *Paris Spleen* asks what poetry is and what its purpose is, but does not give a clear answer to these questions. Like the Polish poet in *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*], he rejects the path of vulgarisation of art when he declares in the draft preface that nothing will force him to speak in a jargon of that century incomparable to anything else. Both writers are coping with the process of the commercialisation of literature, in which the Muse must be

<sup>8</sup> See, *inter alia*, A. LISIECKA, *O baudelairyzmie*, p. 79.

<sup>9</sup> On Norwid's recognition of the "critical phase", see R. FIEGUTH, *Poezja w fazie krytycznej. Cykl wierszy Cypriana Norwida "Vade-mecum"*, [in:] IDEM, *Poezja w fazie krytycznej i inne studia z literatury polskiej*, transl. by K. Chmielewska, Izabelin 2000.

<sup>10</sup> "La France traverse une phase de vulgarité. Paris, centre et rayonnement de bêtise universelle." Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Reliquat et dossier des "Fleurs du mal"* [*Projets de préfaces*], [in:] IDEM, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, Texte établi, présenté et annoté par C. Pichois, Paris 1975, p. 182. Due to the specificity of the poetic language, original citations from Baudelaire's poems and other works are given additionally for comparison.

<sup>11</sup> P. BRUNEL, *Charles Baudelaire. Les Fleurs du Mal. Entre "fleurer" et "défleurer"*, Paris 1998, Chapter "Fleursmaladives", p. 43. J.E. Jackson writes that the evidence of Baudelaire's modernism is the definition of modernism as a crisis in poetry manifested by the metaphors of disease. Poetry also becomes a confession of the inability to write. See *La question du moi. Un aspect de la modernité poétique européenne*, Neuchâtel 1978, p. 17.

a “venal Muse” (*Muse venale*)<sup>12</sup> to survive, the masterfulness “zniewoli do pługa / Świat i nowy duch kupiecki” [will be enslaved to the plough / By the world and the new merchant spirit] (*To rzecz ludzka* [*Tis a Human Matter*], PWSz I, 64). In both poets’ opinion, the sense of crisis in which poetry had found itself imposed new obligations on it and forces it to face new challenges, but each of them would understand these tasks differently.

The second element linking the two forewords is pointing out to a phenomenon that can be described as stigmatization by Romanticism – to the necessity of situating one’s own poetry in relation to the one that occupies the central place in Poland and France<sup>13</sup>. Paul Valéry wrote about Baudelaire’s specific situation – the title of his essay is precisely *Baudelaire’s Situation* – defined by the question “how to become a great poet who nevertheless would be neither Lamartine, nor Hugo, nor Musset”:

Let us put ourselves in the position of a young man who in 1840 reaches the age when he starts writing. He grew up with those whom his own instinct makes him irrevocably overthrow. His literary existence, which takes its origin from them and is fed with them, excited by their fame, determined by their works, is, however, necessarily dependent on negation, on rejection, on replacing those people who seem to him to fill the whole sphere of literary fame and prevent his entry: one to the world of shapes, the other to the world of feelings, the third to what is picturesque, the fourth to what is profoundly deep<sup>14</sup>.

In the planned introduction to *Les Fleurs du mal*, Baudelaire himself talks about the difficulty of creating when “The most flourishing provinces of the land of poetry have long since been divided between great poets by themselves”<sup>15</sup>. One can say that “Baudelaire’s situation” has its equivalent in “Norwid’s situation”, who also writes with the awareness of the necessity to define himself vis-à-vis great predecessors, “laurowych ojców” [laureate fathers] (*Rzeczywistość i marzenia* [*Reality and Dreams*]) and to create poetry different from their poetry – “n a s - t r o j e n i a h a r f y s ł o w a , b o n i e m a A d a m a , Z y g m u n t a , J u l i u s z a . . . ” [ t u n e d

<sup>12</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *La Muse malade* (*The Sick Muse*) and *La Muse vénale* (*The Venal Muse*), transl. by J. Opęchowski, [in:] IDEM, *Kwiaty zła. Les Fleurs de mal*, compiled by M. Leśniewska, J. Brzozowski, Kraków 1994. This edition is henceforth referred to by the abbreviation KZ.

<sup>13</sup> I wrote about it in the article: M. SIWIEC, *Ze stygmatem romantyzmu. O Norwidzie i Baudelaire’u z perspektywy nowoczesności*, “Teksty Drugie” 2014, vol. 4.

<sup>14</sup> P. VALÉRY, *Sytuacja Baudelaire’a*, [in:] IDEM, *Estetyka słowa*, selection by A. Frybesowa, introduction by M. Żurowski, transl. by D. Eska, A. Frybesowa, Warszawa 1971, p. 143.

<sup>15</sup> “Des poètes illustres s’étaient partagé depuis longtemps les provinces les plus fleuries du domaine poétique”. Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Reliquat et dossier des “Fleurs du mal”* [*Projets de préfaces*]..., p. 181.

to the harp's word, because there is no Adam, Zygmunt, Juliusz...] (a letter to Bronisław Zaleski, PWSz IX, 408)<sup>16</sup>. In the foreword to *Vade-mecum* the writer states: "Wielcy i słynni poprzednicy moi, zaiste, że jeżeli nie więcej, niż mogli, to dopełnili wszystkiego, cokolwiek można było" [My great and famous predecessors, indeed, if not more than they could, they completed everything that was possible] (PWSz II, p. 9). However, in a letter to Józef I. Kraszewski, he refers to them as "ludzie genialni, ale łgarze" [brilliant people, but liars], "szanowni i kochani łgarze" [honourable and beloved liars] (PWSz IX, 221)<sup>17</sup> – the ambivalence is all too pronounced. The declarations by both authors include both the recognition of the "wielkoludy" [giants] and the conviction of one's own distinctiveness related to the depletion of the Romantic paradigm and the challenge of creating a new poetic language. For Baudelaire it would be a way to recognise beauty in things that are painful and transient, for Norwid this would be what he describes as the "moral side".

Finally, the third element, present in both forewords and in the whole collections, is the recipient orientation. Norwid's foreword is addressed *To the Reader*, words addressed directly to him can also be found in individual parts of *Vade-mecum*<sup>18</sup>. Baudelaire also repeatedly addresses the recipients of his poetry, and he opens the volume with a lyric entitled *To the Reader* (*Epigraph to the condemned book* from the 1868 edition is also addressed to them).

The "situation" of both poets is connected with the sense of being next to, separated, and therefore with autonomy, but also with alienation. This issue is particularly pronounced in their relationship with the reader who is already a reader of the "pantheistic-printing" era and who, precisely for this reason, has problems with understanding poetry. In this context, the most symptomatic are the poems *Klaskaniem mając obrzękle prawice...* [*Their Hands Swollen with Clapping...*] and *Ciemność* [*Obscurity*], though not only, because Norwid often refers to readers as the audience (which is often an insult – "Tyś... jak... publiczność")

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<sup>16</sup> Z. Łapiński rightly writes about Norwid: "What made him different from his great predecessors was above all the fact that he wrote after them. They were the main legacy against which he had to define himself: Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński"; Z. ŁAPIŃSKI, *Norwid*, Kraków 1984, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> In the lectures *O Juliuszu Słowackim* [*On Juliusz Słowacki*] (PWSz IV, 197) Norwid touches upon the problem of a Romantic lie, understood as the fact that the words of Mickiewicz and Krasiński fail to meet the current situation.

<sup>18</sup> The dialogical nature of Norwid's work has been the subject of many scholarly works. For instance, see J. FERT, *Norwid, poeta dialogu*, Warszawa 1982; Z. ŁAPIŃSKI, *Norwid*, pp. 9-48; E. NOWICKA, *O dialogowości "Vade-mecum" C. K. Norwida*, "Ruch Literacki" 1979, vol. 5, pp. 313-328.

[“You are.... like... the audience”] – the poet will say bitterly to the woman in *Beatrix*, PWSz I, 315), with whom the writer is fundamentally in conflict, who by “czytając pędem” [reading with rush], misses the writing. Baudelaire also negatively evaluates the readers who did not understand his volume, ironically exposing the accusations he encountered and claiming the glory of being misunderstood. The sphere of existence of such readers is “La sottise, l’erreur, le péché, la lésine” (“Stupidity, error, sin, miserliness as an unsated monster”) in Baudelaire and *Babylon* in Norwid<sup>19</sup>.

“Piszę – ot! czasem... piszę na Babilon / Do Jeruzalem! – i dochodzą listy” [I write – eh! sometimes.... by way of Babylon / To Jerusalem! – my letters arrive] (*Klaskaniem mając obrzękłe prawice...* [*Their Hands Swollen with Clapping...*], PWSz II, 17). The address is not wrong – one can say that the letters reach Jerusalem via Babylon, that otherwise they cannot reach it, that the poet is aware of the rooting of his own creation in this hell. The address is double also in the sense that next to the intended recipient (the grandson who will find the meaning of poetry which is underestimated today), equally important is the imperfect addressee – the contemporary one, who shares time and place with the author: “Tak znów odczyta on, co ty dziś czytasz” [“This is how he will read what you are reading today”] (PWSz II, 17, emphasis added by M.S.). Upon writing this, Norwid as it were is suspending time, giving his text a dimension that is constantly updated every time it is read. The desire to be read reveals itself even more clearly in *Ciemność* [*Obscurity*], which features a direct address to the recipient stinting on “chwila marna” [“miserable moment”] for poems: “Ty, skarżysz się na ciemność mojej mowy” [“You protest the obscurity of my speech”] (PWSz II, 26). The same desire is characteristic of the subject of *The Flowers of Evil* in the poem *To the Reader*, about which Benjamin writes:

Baudelaire took into account readers who find it difficult to read lyrics. [...] Their willpower, and most probably also their ability to concentrate is not the best; they put sensual pleasures first; they know very well the spleen that kills curiosity and the ability to perceive. [...] Baudelaire wanted to be understood; he devotes his book to those who are similar to him<sup>20</sup>.

Both artists are therefore united by their desire to be understood by those who do not understand. However, each of them adopts a different strategy. Baudelaire confesses: “Despite the most glorious efforts, I could not resist the desire to please

<sup>19</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Au Lecteur* (*Do Czytelnika*), Polish translation by J. Opęchowski, KZ, pp. 6-7.

<sup>20</sup> W. BENJAMIN, *O kilku motywach*, p. 263.

my contemporaries”<sup>21</sup>. On the contrary, Norwid identifies the desire to please people with vulgarization, submission to a fleeting and worthless fashion, popularity. This perspective returns in many works, *inter alia*, in *Szczesna, Pięć zarysów* [*Five Sketches*], *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*], *W pamiętniku L.A.* [*In L.A.'s Diary*], Norwid establishes the relationship between the reader and the poet which is not horizontal like in Baudelaire's works, but vertical. The poet teaches, persuades, guides, saying *vade-mecum*<sup>22</sup>. It is not so much fraternity in suffering, as in *The Flowers of Evil*, that is important here, although it also plays a role, but the guidance itself. The French poet uses the first person plural to identify himself with his recipient, to look for communion with him. This community would be based on the experience of the modern, broken world, but also on a particular predilection for the imperfect: “Aux objets répugnants nous trouvons des appas” [“in awful things we find strange charms”]<sup>23</sup>. Death, abomination, darkness, and – in particular – boredom connect the reader and the poet who calls: “Hypocrite lecteur, – mon semblable, – mon frère!” [“Hypocrite reader, my fellow, my brother!”]<sup>24</sup>. This does not mean that such a state of affairs has been ruthlessly affirmed. In Baudelaire's poems there is a strong sense of alienation from him, which is also so important in Norwid's poetry. Writing about the reader, the subject of *The Flowers of Evil* also writes about himself, it is he who is wandering along the streets of Paris and turning away from the city in his dream of the ideal, and especially he suffers from boredom. The subject of *Vade-mecum* does not suffer from boredom, although it is also present in Norwid's work, and this is a separate problem that needs to be discussed. However, he calls his poetry “pamiętnik artysty” [the artist's diary], certifying that it bears his trace, the trace of his “I” [self]. “Oblędny!... ależ – wielce rzeczywisty!” [“Errant!... but of course — utterly true!”] (“Klaskaniem mając obrzękłe prawice...” [*Their Hands Swollen with Clapping*], PWsz II, 17). The subjective character of the work, which makes the reader wander around, not only does not undermine the truth of the message, but also confirms this truth. Thus, each of the poets assumes that his own experience becomes the object of poetry. This does not change the fact that in both cases it is

<sup>21</sup> “[...] malgré les plus louables efforts, je n’ai su résister au désir de plaire à mes contemporains...” Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Reliquat et dossier des “Fleurs du mal”* [*Projets de préfaces*], p. 184.

<sup>22</sup> More on this see, *inter alia*, S. SAWICKI, *Z zagadnień semantyki poetyckiej Norwida*, [in:] IDEM, *Poetyka, interpretacja, sacrum*, Warszawa 1981, p. 63; J. FERT, *Wstęp*, [in:] C. NORWID, *Vade-mecum*, compiled by J. Fert, Wrocław 1990, pp. LXXV-LXXXII. For the recipient of Norwid's works, see also Z. ŁAPIŃSKI, *Norwid*, pp. 152 -162; J. TRZNADEL, *Czytanie Norwida*, Chapter I: *Jeden wiersz*.

<sup>23</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Au Lecteur (To the Reader)*, KZ, pp. 6-7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 8-9.

difficult to talk about lyricism of confession. The Romantic expressive concept is no longer enough. Hugo Friedrich rightly wrote about the borderline character of Baudelaire's lyricism<sup>25</sup>. The same can be said about Norwid, although the variant of modern lyricism will be different for each of the poets.

Although the hero of *Spleen and the ideal* is a man of the city, he remains a stranger to it, surprised by it, otherwise the moments of small epiphany would not be possible. Throughout the whole collection we can observe the tension between the identification with and a definite disconnection from the life of the metropolis, escapism. By contrast, Norwid's works are dominated by a critical tone, yet he writes from the inside of civilisational transformations<sup>26</sup>. He was also described as the "poet of the city" and his works are claimed to include "urbanized vision of the world"<sup>27</sup>. Even researchers who are strongly opposed to Baudelaire's thesis, such as Alicja Lisiecka, point to the experience of big city reality shared by both poets<sup>28</sup>. Jacek Trznadel, who once criticized Gomulicki's thesis, which he described as "critical fiction", is inclined to juxtapose the works of both poets, but not on the basis of an analysis of influence, but based on evoked meanings. He refers to *Klaskaniem mając obrzękle prawice...* and *Don Juan in Hell* (p. 29), showing that the subject of both poems is the hell of the present day through a reference to Dante<sup>29</sup>. The work of the Polish poet does not lack the perspective of a man thrown into the motion of a big city, although researchers are right that one will not find many descriptions of the city in Norwid's works.

In *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire gives the following characteristic of the *flâneur*:

To possess a crowd – that is his passion and vocation. A great delight for a true *flâneur* and a beloved observer – to settle in a multitude, waving, movement, in that which escapes, that which is infinite. To be away from home, and yet to feel at home everywhere

<sup>25</sup> H. FRIEDRICH, *Struktura nowoczesnej liryki od połowy XIX wieku do połowy XX wieku*, introduction and transl. by E. Feliksiak, Warszawa 1978, p. 51f. For Norwid's subject and his relation with modernism, see M. KUZIĄK, *Norwid – zmagania z podmiotowością (wokół epifanii poetyckich autora "Vade-mecum")*, "Pamiętnik Literacki" 106 (2015), vol. 4; S. RZEPCHYŃSKI, *Norwid i nowoczesność (perspektywa podmiotowości)*, [in:] *Jak czytać Norwida? Postawy badawcze, metody*.

<sup>26</sup> It is worth mentioning the juxtaposition of two types, or rather two aspects, of civilisation in the poem *Sieroctwo* [*Orphanhood*]. M. Inglot writes about the juxtaposition of the civilisation, which was negatively valued by the poet, and culture, which he valued positively; see IDEM, *Rękawiczki Norwida. Między kulturą a cywilizacją*, [in:] IDEM, *Wyobrażenia poetycka Norwida*, Warszawa 1988.

<sup>27</sup> Z. STEFANOWSKA, *Norwidowski romantyzm*, [in:] EADEM, *Strona romtyków. Studia o Norwidzie*, Lublin 1993, pp. 79-80.

<sup>28</sup> A. LISIECKA, *O baudelairyzmie*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>29</sup> J. TRZNADEL, *Czytanie Norwida*, p. 29.

[...] This is the self eternally unsated with all non-self, giving and expressing it at any moment in images more vivid than life, always unsteady and fleeting<sup>30</sup>.

Then, in the *Paris Spleen*, the writer would elaborate directly on the relationship between urban life and poetry, but also on its dangers:

Not everyone can swim in a big city crowd, it is an art to enjoy it; and only this one can take a gulp of vitality for the human race into whom the fairy has breathed in the cradle the predilection to the mask and masquerade, hatred for one's own home and passion for traveling. Crowd, loneliness – these are equivalent and interchangeable concepts for an active and creative poet<sup>31</sup>.

The subject of *The Flowers of Evil* and *Paris Spleen* immerses himself in a throng of people compared to an anthill, opening himself up to what the city offers him:

Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,  
Où le spectre, en plein jour, raccroche le passant!  
Les mystères partout coulent comme des sèves  
Dans les canaux étroits du colosse puissant.

[Teeming, swarming city, city full of dreams,  
Where spectres in broad day accost the passer-by!  
Everywhere mysteries flow like the sap in a tree  
Through the narrow canals of the mighty giant]<sup>32</sup>.

The multitude, in which one can get lost, brings fear, but also the gift of infinite possibilities, which are nourished by the poet's heart suffering from melancholy.

Norwid's wanderer from *Vade-mecum* has little in common with the *flâneur*<sup>33</sup>. He is not attracted by the beauty of big city reality, which does not mean that he does not notice it and that there are no traces of this vision in his poetry.

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<sup>30</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *The Painter of Modern Life*, [in:] IDEM, *Rozmaitości estetyczne*, introduction and transl. by J. Guze, Gdańsk 2000, p. 317.

<sup>31</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Paryski spleen. Male poematy prozą*, transl. and commentary by R. Engelking, Gdańsk 2008, XII: *Thumy*, p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Les sept vieillards (The Seven Old Men)*, transl. by J. W. Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil*, Fresno 1954.

<sup>33</sup> M. Kuziak also evokes other literary and epistolary statements about metropolitan life and crowd, which are rare in the work of the poet. At the same time, he points to the cultural codes to which Norwid reached when speaking of the city, aware of the anthropological dimension of space; see *Norwid i pejzaż*; IDEM, *Norwidowskie "przedstawienie" w "Vade-mecum"*, [in:] *Liryka Cypriana Norwida*, eds. P. Chlebowski, W. Toruń, Lublin 2003, p. 521.

Nie lubię miasta, nie lubię wrzasków,  
 I hucznych zabaw, i świetnych blasków,  
 [...]
   
 Miasto – złocony kraniec przepaści!  
 Stań na nim, spojrzysz, a dreszcz lodowaty  
 Zatrząsie ciałem i członki namaści.  
 Miasto – to przedsień piekielnej zatury;  
 Patrz – tam zjawiska gmatwiają się tłumne,  
 Tam cudów siła – tam głupstwa rozumne [...].  
 (PWsz I, 11)

[I don't like the city, I don't like its screams,  
 Loud games, and glamour,  
 [...]
   
 The city – the golden edge of the precipice!  
 Stand on it, look at it and the ice shudder  
 Will shake the body and anoint the limbs.  
 The city is the vestibule of the hellish perdition;  
 Look – numerous phenomena get complicated there,  
 Mighty miracles happen there – and rational stupidities [...].]

*Wspomnienie wioski* [*The Memory of the Countryside*], Norwid's early poem, from which this quote derives, clearly defines the aversion of the lyrical "I" to the city<sup>34</sup>. Let us note that the poet stresses the same features as Baudelaire: the overwhelming multitude and unexpectedness of phenomena, their confusion, which makes the selection difficult, their illusory character, constant chaotic motion. The subject longing for the village is immersed in urban life and can return to the village – like Schiller's sentimental poet – only in his thoughts. It is impossible to regain naivety, but it is possible to gain self-awareness. This poem proves that Norwid's characteristic approach to urban issues revealed itself before the publication of *The Flowers of Evil*.

Norwid almost always uses negative terms in relation to the city: "przesionek piekielnej zatury" ["the vestibule of hellish perdition"], "piekło" ["hell"], "grób" ["grave"]. Also for Baudelaire, the city has an infernal and demonic character. The Dantean references in *The Flowers of Evil* and *Vade-mecum*<sup>35</sup> have been pointed

<sup>34</sup> For the analysis of this poem, see E. RYBICKA, *Modernizowanie miasta. Zarys problematyki urbanistycznej w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej*, Kraków 2003, p. 63f.; M. KUZIĄK, *Norwid i pejzaż*, pp. 67-70. Kuziak emphasises the ambivalent attitude of Norwid to both the archaic village and the modernity.

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. J. TRZNADEL, *Czytanie Norwida*, p. 29. A. Nieuwerkerken writes about Norwid's and Baudelaire's references to *The Divine Comedy*, emphasizing that both poets refer to irony and spleen; see IDEM, *Ironiczny konceptyzm*, Kraków 1998, p. 51, fn. 51.

out. The very word *hell* in the French collection – originally conceived as *Limbo* – returns many times. The thing that exhilarates the poet, at the same time fills him with fear and disgust and, as a result, leads to alienation<sup>36</sup>. Paris becomes a source of inspiration, often painful, negative, leading to identity disorders, undesired and abject states. The subject's reaction to the city is important – as Benjamin argues, it is always shocking<sup>37</sup>. Cognitive, aesthetic shock, the sense of being overwhelmed by “dirty” reality also determines Norwid's point of view. In *Wspomnienie wioski* [*The Memory of the Countryside*] this is “dreszcz lodowaty” [“the ice shudder”]. Such a shiver of disgust, physical repulsion to the city is not foreign to Baudelaire either. In *Les sept vieillards* (*The Seven Old Men*) the sight of hideous beggars forces the subject to flee, being “Malade et morfondu, l'esprit fiévreux et trouble, / Blessé par le mystère et par l'absurdité! [“Sick and mortified, feverish and troubled, / Wounded by mystery and absurdity”]<sup>38</sup> he cannot free himself from the shock.

The city's own imperfect and transient contemporary beauty returns in *The Flowers of Evil*: in *Horreur sympathique* [*Reflected Horror*], *J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues* [*I Love to Think of those Naked Epochs*], *Les Petites Vieilles* [*Little Old Women*], *Les sept vieillards* [*The Seven Old Men*], *Les Aveugles* [*The Blind*], *Le Crépuscule du soir* [*Evening Twilight*]. They are filled with lack, about which Gérard Frodevaux writes<sup>39</sup>. In particular, many pictures of fascinating ugliness, and the city is conducive to the emergence of these, can be found in *Tableaux parisiens*. A passer-by expects it and encounters it everywhere, though he never knows when: “Dans les plis sinueux des vieilles capitales, / Où tout, même l'horreur, tourne aux enchantements” [“In the eternal capitals of the world the serpentine labyrinth, / Where everything, even horror transforms into admiration”]<sup>40</sup>. Poetry – like the sun – enters “Dans tous les hôpitaux et dans tous

<sup>36</sup> For the discussion of Baudelaire's modern alienation, see, for instance, J.E. JACKSON, *Baudelaire sans fin. Essais sur Fleurs du Mal*, Paris 2005.

<sup>37</sup> W. Benjamin devotes a lot of attention to *The Man of the Crowd* by E.A. Poe. It is a story based on the hyperbolisation of the urban crowd, revealing its uncanny character, especially the changes it makes to the human psyche. It undoubtedly had an impact on Baudelaire, who was Poe's translator. It was Gomulicki who stated that Norwid knew the short stories by Poe through Baudelaire's translations (PWsz X, 575). Thus, Poe – with whom Norwid shared aesthetic kinship, which he willingly admitted (see All VIII, 552; XI, 84) – can, I believe, be a kind of intermediary between Polish and French poets, especially as the author of *The Man of the Crowd*.

<sup>38</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Les sept vieillards* (*The seven old men*), KZ, pp. 234-235.

<sup>39</sup> G. FRODEVAUX, *Baudelaire. Representation and Modernity*, Paris 1989, p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Les Petites Vieilles* [*Staruszczyki*], transl. J. Opęchowski, KZ, p. 236-237.

les palais” [all barracks and all palaces]<sup>41</sup>, making everyday life and the abomination of miserable suburbs its subject. Baudelaire’s *Le Soleil* [*The Sun*] brings to mind Norwid’s work *Piękno* [*Beauty*] from the poem *Wita-Stosa pamięci estetycznych zarysów siedem* [*Seven Aesthetic Sketches in Memory of Wit Stos*] (1856), which artistically appreciates ugliness. The frailty of the city, although not attractive but compassionate, is also characteristic of *Vade-mecum*. Let us recall the beginning of *Larwa* [*Larva*] (juxtaposed by Maciej Żurowski with the poems by Baudelaire and William Blake<sup>42</sup>):

Na śliskim bruku w Londynie,  
W mgle, podksiężycowej, białej,  
Niejedna postać cię minie,  
Lecz ty ją wspomnisz, struchlały.  
(PWSz II, 30)

[On slippery London pavement,  
In fog, moonlit, white,  
Many a creature will pass by,  
You’ll remember her, terrified.]

A frightening figure met and lost among many others on the London pavement, whose intent cannot be identified, leaves a permanent mark in the consciousness of the subject, as in *Les sept vieillards* [*The Seven Old Men*]. Both poets believe in degeneration, the fall of man and turning towards him. In Norwid’s expression “Biblii księga / Zataczająca się w błocie”<sup>43</sup> [The Bible / reeling in mud] one can see both the opposition to the desecration of the *sacrum* and the discerning of sanctity in a fallen man.

For both Norwid and Baudelaire, the crowd is the determinant of urban life. It shapes the *flâneur*’s attitude. In the *Paris Spleen* (*Crowds*), it is precisely by immersing oneself in the human mass that the poet acquires “the extraordinary privilege of being himself or someone else according to his preference”<sup>44</sup>. For Baudelaire, the ability to identify with the crowd and with anyone who contributes to it is an advantage for the artist. However, this privilege may be dangerous. Therefore, the tendency to escape from the hustle and bustle of the city is present in the cycle with equal force. In the poem entitled *Loneliness*,

<sup>41</sup> IDEM, *Le Soleil* (*Sun*), transl. by M. Leśniewska, KZ, pp. 222-223.

<sup>42</sup> M. ŻUROWSKI, *Larwa na tle*.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>44</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Thumy*, [in:] IDEM, *Paryski splin*, XI, p. 35.

the striving for the unification with the mass appears to be an expression of cowardice of people who “run to forget themselves in the crowd, probably in fear that they will not endure their own company”<sup>45</sup>. The poem “One A.M.” tells about the threat to an individual’s identity with the “tyranny of the human face” and the perverting, demoralizing role of the city in human life<sup>46</sup>. Hence the need to build barricades against the city, the “fatal haze of the world”, the need to defend one’s individuality, which is threatened by the city. The image of an artist isolating himself from the world is also contained in “Double Room”, where it becomes impossible to achieve peace because the city penetrates the pleasurable, timeless land of the artist’s dreams and forces him to return to the grey reality.

In the context of urban masses, Norwid less often notices its potential (the beginning of *Quidam*<sup>47</sup>), more often its danger. For example, in “Stolica” [“Capital City”]:

Przechodniów tłum, ożałobionych czarno  
(W barwie stoików).

<sup>45</sup> IDEM, *Samotność*, ibidem, XXIII, p. 78.

<sup>46</sup> IDEM, *O pierwszej w nocy*, ibidem, X, p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> I am thinking in particular about one of the initial fragments of *Quidam*:

„Jest coś wśród wielkich miast i naokoło,  
Zwłaszcza pod wieczór, zwłaszcza dla pielgrzyma,  
Co wypogadza lub zachmurza czoło,  
Ziejąc nań niby westchnienie olbrzyma –  
Jest coś w tym szmerze, co pierwszy dolata,  
Skoro się miejskich bram rozemknie krata”

(DW III, 122)

[There is something about big cities and around them,  
Especially in the evening, especially for the pilgrim,  
That makes your forehead brighten up or cloud over,  
Belching on it like a sigh of a giant –  
There is something about this murmur, that comes first,  
As the city gates open.]

It is worth remembering about other places in the poem where this negative description of a crowded city which deprives the individual of meaning is revealed, described for example in *Milczenie* [*Silence*] (for instance, in the scene of a trial against Christians, witnesses adopt the voices and gestures of the majority, i.e. those belonging to others, who lied, pretending that they are their own). For the analogy between Rome and Paris at the time of the Second Empire in *Quidam*, see K. TRYBUŚ (*Benjamin*, p. 196 and IDEM, *Epopeja w twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, Wrocław 1993, p. 82).

Ale wydaża każdy, że aż parno  
Wśród omijań i krzyków.

(PWsz II, 38)

[A Crowd of passers-by, in mourning black  
(In the colour of the Stoics).

Heat rising, they duck  
Each other and squawk]<sup>48</sup>.

Paradoxically, the crowd becomes here a non-human mass, because despite the crowd, physical closeness, there is no real contact between passers-by, everyone is left to themselves, when isolated people lose distinctive and individual features, they lose themselves. In *Próby* [*Attempts*] conceived as an introduction to *Pięć zarysów* [*Five Sketches*] we can find a negative characterisation of the *flâneur*:

O! miasto wielkie – serc i kwiatów grobie ? –  
Gdzie, oddychając, cudze chłoniesz tchnienia,  
Kroku niemocnyś zrobić pierworodnie.  
Myślisz, żeś wesół – to nie twe wrażenia,  
Cnoty nie twoje i nie twoje zbrodnie:  
„*Nie jesteś!* – z bruku wołają kamienie –  
*Przechodź!*”

(DW IV, 143)

[Oh! Big city – the grave of hearts and flowers ? –  
Where, while breathing, you absorb the breath of others,  
You are unable to make a firstborn step.  
You think you're cheerful – it's not your impressions,  
Virtues and crimes are not yours:  
“*You are not!* – the cobblestones are shouting –  
*Go by!*”]

One can talk here about the perspective of a non-situated subject, the perspective of a passer-by devoid of his personal experience by the crowd, losing autonomy, erased<sup>49</sup>. The modern man is a man robbed from experience. Benjamin writes about it, analysing *Le Jeu* [*Gambling*] by Baudelaire, where the subject envies “de ces gens la passion tenace / De ses vieilles putains la funebre gaieté” [the stubborn passion of those people, The dismal merriment of those old

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<sup>48</sup> English translation by D. BORCHARDT, C. Norwid, *Poems*, New York 2011, p. 35.

<sup>49</sup> E. RYBICKA, *Modernizowanie miasta*, p. 63.

prostitutes]<sup>50</sup>. This is also the case in Norwid's *Próby* [*Attempts*] – the man has no longer his own experiences, he only collects other people's experiences, he loses his "self". This issue also appears in the prose of the Polish writer. In his essay *Milczenie* [*Silence*], Norwid exposes the destructive and absorbing impact of the city, creating the figure of a friend living in "jednej z najgłośniejszych stolic cywilizacji" [one of the loudest capitals of the civilisation], and enslaved by the lifestyle of this capital city. The walk allows you to take a look down on the city (this perspective resembles the description of the infernal capital from Słowacki's *Paryż* [*Paris*):

[...] znaleźliśmy się na wyniosłości, pod której piersią szeroką przepływało lub wrzało całe ogromnego miasta życie. Imponującym bywa, bo upajającym, ów gwar szeroki, który, urabiając się ze wszech wydzźwięków wszystkich działalności i energii, śpiewa sam sobie nieustannie: „Takich to, jak ja, pięć, sześć na świecie dziś... to – cała cywilizacja jego, i wartość, i siła!” (PW VI, 238)

[...] we found ourselves in the highland under the vast breast of which the whole life of the huge city was flowing or boiling. This huge hubbub can be impressive, because it's intoxicating, made of all the tones of all activities and energy. It sings constantly to itself: "There are five, six of them, like me, in the world today.... this – this is the whole civilisation, and value, and strength!"]

Norwid notices this fascinating, bonding – as he writes – character of the metropolis which lives, boils, draws its strength from the crowd, from multidirectional actions. Above all, however, he sees the dangers associated with unification, caring only for one's own interests and not for the truth. The hustle and bustle of big cities is only an illusion, an "acoustic illusion", just as its motion is an "optical illusion". There is no place here for the exchange of thoughts and dialogue, which are so important for Norwid; the noise is not a polyphony, but rather a cacophony.

Baudelaire's poetry is an attempt at capturing here and now, things that deserve to be preserved simply because it happens and inevitably becomes a thing of the past. Anne-Marie Amiot defines the modernism of *The Flowers of Evil* as *inscription dans la temporalité*, adjusting oneself to the present<sup>51</sup>. The poet captures Paris in a permanent change, to which he surrenders himself and which he pursues, because, like in the famous *The Swan*: "Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville / Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel)...." ["Old Paris is no more (the form of a city / Changes more quickly, alas! than the human heart)"] This is an inevitable change that leads to melancholy: "Paris change!

<sup>50</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *Le Jeu (Gra)*, transl. by W. Gomulicki, KZ, pp. 254-255.

<sup>51</sup> A.-M. AMIOT, *Les fleurs du mal. Baudelaire. Un Romantisme fondateur de la modernité poétique*, Paris 2002, pp. 7-8.

mais rien dans ma mélancolie / N'a bougé!" ["Paris changes! but nothing in my melancholy / Has stirred!"]<sup>52</sup>. Also In Norwid's work, the contemporaneity connected with the city means living only in the present – which is now valued absolutely negatively – beyond “bezwidny filar kościoła” [“the invisible pillar of the church”] (*Próby (jako wstęp do Zarysów obyczajowych pięciu)* [Attempts (as an Introduction to Five Moral Sketches)], (DW IV, 143). In the poem *Do księgarza* [To the Bookseller], the poet cries out: “O! Evénement-bóg, ten Paryżowi / I Europie dziś zastąpił Pana” [“O! This Evénement-God has today replaced in Paris / And Europe THE LORD”] (PWSz I, 152). In his essay on Paris of the Second Empire, Benjamin writes in connection with Baudelaire about fashion as “an indefatigable agent of false consciousness”<sup>53</sup>. Norwid would agree with such a diagnosis. Following “moda czasu swojego” [“the fashion of one's time”] is presented in *Milczenie* [Silence] as “beźświadoma albo przemysłowa a s y m i l a c j a” [“unconscious or industrial assimilation”] which takes away one's independent thinking. In *Pięć zarysów* [Five Sketches] Norwid discusses the functions and character of literature, criticizing the state of contemporary culture subordinated to transience, changeability, instability and fleetingness. „Mody – mniemanie – i czasów-ukazy” [“Fashions – opinions – and periodic dictates”], “bałwany różnych szkół i różnej doby” [“idols of different schools and different epochs”] supplant permanent values with “Wyrazem jednym, jednym słowem: teraz” [“One word, in one word: now”] (DW IV, 143-144). The contemporary author and reader are “niestały przechodzień” [“an unstable passer-by”], “jednodzienny sługa” [“a one-day servant”] (DW IV, 154) subjected to the terror of a subjective and constantly changing taste. Norwid's poetry is created on such a basis, or more specifically, in opposition to such thinking. Readers with weak memory, careless, chasing novelty, referred to by the poet severely as “motłoch” [“the rabble”] are, after all, also readers of his works. One can say that they can be described in this way at the starting point, because the effort put into reading is supposed to change them.

Momentality, concentration on the present, which were limiting for Norwid, because it hinders “zachwycenie w wieczność” [“delight in eternity”], for Baudelaire will be a source of inspiration, though difficult and painful<sup>54</sup>. The poem *Les Petites Vieilles* (Little Old Women) and the sonnet *À une passante* (To a Passer-by) are

<sup>52</sup> See J. STAROBINSKI, *La Mélancolie au miroir. Trois lectures de Baudelaire*, Paris 1989, Chapter III; M. BIENIŃCZYK, *Melancholia. O tych, co nigdy nie odnajdą straty*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 5-14; P. ŚNIEDZIEWSKI, *Melancholijne spojrzenie*, Kraków 2011, pp. 205-230.

<sup>53</sup> W. BENJAMIN, *Paryż – stolica dziewiętnastego wieku*, [in:] IDEM, *Twórca jako wytwórca. Eseje i rozprawy*, transl. by R. Reszke, Warszawa 2011, p. 330.

<sup>54</sup> For the importance of fashion in Baudelaire's work, see G. FRODEVAUX, *Baudelaire*, pp. 77-106.

symptomatic examples of Baudelaire's capturing of time in its momentality. The latter begins with placing the subject in the middle of the urban hustle and bustle and the sudden emergence of a woman from the hustle and bustle of the city: "La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait. / Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse, / Une femme passa" ["The street about me roared with a deafening sound. / Tall, slender, in heavy mourning, majestic grief, / A woman passed"]<sup>55</sup>. This piece is analysed by Benjamin because of the shocking, in its essence, enlightenment guaranteed by the crowd, containing birth and, simultaneously, immediate death of the feeling: "Un éclair... puis la nuit! – Fugitive beauté / Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître" ["A lightning flash... then night! – Fleeting beauty / By whose glance I was suddenly reborn"]<sup>56</sup>. Benjamin writes that "the sonnet is an image of shock, or even more, a catastrophe" and proves that shock is the central category by which Baudelaire's *flâneur* perceives the world. It is associated with constant potentiality, but also with uncertainty of one's own place, lack of settlement<sup>57</sup>.

This poetics, although characterised by a different qualifier, is not foreign to Norwid<sup>58</sup>. I will only refer to *Larwa* [*Larva*], *Stolica* [*Capital City*] or *Grzecność* [*Politeness*]. We are dealing here with the imaging technique similar to that found in *À une passante* – it involves identifying by the subject-observer of one person who stands out from the crowd and giving that person a meaning. The mechanism of such a catching gaze can only be activated in a situation of immersion in the city space (although naturally more important here is – evoking the perspective of the cross – looking upwards, towards the sky, fundamental in *Assunta*). The poem *Stolica* opens with an apostrophe to the street ("O! ulico, ulico... / Miast, nad którymi krzyż" ["Oh! street, street... / Of cities above which hovers the cross"]), which stands metonymically for the city crowd. This "Przechodniów tłum, ożałobionych

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<sup>55</sup> Ch. BAUDELAIRE, *À une passante (Do Przechodzącej)*, transl. by J. Opęchowski, KZ, pp. 244-245.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem. See W. BENJAMIN, *O kilku*, p. 279.

<sup>57</sup> W. BENJAMIN, *O kilku*, p. 272.

<sup>58</sup> For an excellent comparative analysis of a cognitive journey in Norwid's works (especially in *Assunta*) and in *The Flowers of Evil*, revealing the structural similarity and fundamental differences in the presented worldviews, connected with the understanding of transcendence, see A. van NIEUKERKEN, *Perspektywiczność sacrum. Szkice o norwidowskim romantyzmie*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 160-180, esp. pp. 170-175 (here the comparison of the importance of metaphysical gestures – breaking the uniformity of urban traffic and opening up to the Other – in *Stolica* [*Capital City*], *Assunta*, *Les Aveugles (The Blind)* and *À une passante (To a passer-by)*). In Norwid's works, it is the subject himself that gives symbolic meanings to what he sees, referring to the *sacrum* or, as Nieukerken writes, allowing its perspective to be revealed.

czarno” [“crowd of passers-by, in mourning black”] (PWsz II, 38), indifferent to each other, anonymous, crowded, allows for identifying of the figure of a white Arab or a funeral procession walking “niepogwałconym krokiem” [“at an unhasty pace”]. The same initial situation can be found in the already mentioned *Larwa* [*Larva*] or in the poem *Grzeczność* [*Politeness*]: “Znalazłem się był raz w wielkim Chrześcijan natłoku, / Gdzie jest biuro lasek, płaszczów i marek” [“I found myself once in a great crowd of Christians, / Where there is the lost property office with walking sticks, coats and brands”] (PWsz II, 104). And the mechanism of subjective extraction from the crowd of someone who stands out (“Jeden tylko Mąż zwrócił moją uwagę” [“One Man only drew my attention”], *ibidem*), the guardian of wax figures, is the same. Thus, in his poetry Norwid also includes the specificity of the city.

The anthropomorphisation of the city also seems important – Norwid applies this technique in *Stolica* [*Capital City*], where he compares the metropolitan street to a cat hunting for a mouse, Baudelaire in *Le Crépuscule du matin* [*Morning Twilight*], where “sombre Paris [...] vieillard laborieux” [“sombre Paris ... laborious old man”] wakes up and collects tools for work. The difference is all too clear. *Vade-mecum* shows the predatory, inhuman face of the city, *The Flowers of Evil* – not so much ingenuous, although it might seem so (in the original it is “sombre Paris, hard-working old man”) – because Parisian morning is the suffering of people: sick, dying, wretches, prostitutes – while ambivalent, not devoid of certain tenderness. One could say that Baudelaire identifies himself with his city, accepting its imperfections, while Norwid maintains a distance that allows him to conduct a moral evaluation.

“Kiedy błądziłem w Piekło, o którym nie śpiewam” [“When I was wandering around the Hell, about which I do not sing”] (PWsz II, 132) – these words from the poem *Źródło* [*Source*] are words of extraordinary importance, because they define the perspective of the subject as the one who admits to wandering around the hell, but refuses to sing about it. And this refusal seems to be most important. The subject of the lyric turns away from certain aspects of reality, but mentions them in detail (on a *preaeteritio* basis): colonnades of boredom, vestibules of whims, hallways of stupid nerves, a threshold of misery, a doorway of lies, a maze of crimes. Thus, the hell of the city manifests itself even if only in the linguistic layer and in negation. It is most probably for this reason that Maciej Żurowski even considered *Źródło* [*Source*] to be a poetic review of *The Flowers of Evil*, expressing “ruthless and irritating condemnation”<sup>59</sup>. I would be rather more cautious, although it is difficult not to appreciate the similarities he noticed, in particular referring them to Zofia

<sup>59</sup> M. ŻUROWSKI, “*Larwa*” *na tle*.

Węgierska's article *Poezja Karola Baudelaire* [*Poetry by Charles Baudelaire*], written – according to Żurowski – under the influence of Norwid (this text deserves a separate analysis)<sup>60</sup>. What matters, however, is not whether Norwid consciously refers to Baudelaire or not. It is important that he rejects the model of poetry proposed by Baudelaire. He declares that he takes a completely different path – searching – as the title of the poem indicates – for a source that is still unchanged and life-giving, though trampled and discredited. Norwid's poetry movement will be a conscious opposition to this discrediting.

It can be said that in the case of Norwid the city is a test of the value of art. The poet writes in *Próby* [*Attempts*]:

Dopiero – wśród tego miliona,  
 Dopiero w takim obozie ludzkości,  
 Dopiero tutaj, jeżeli nie skona  
 Pieśń twa – nie skona z niedokończoności –  
 Jeżeli anielstwo jej wyżywić zdołasz  
 Na każdą dobę, co jest przypadkowe  
 Rzucając na bok [...]  
 O! wtedy będę wierzył muzie twojej,  
 (DW IV, 477)

[Not until – among one million of them,  
 Not until in such a human camp,  
 Not until here it does not die  
 If the song lives – it will not die of being incomplete –  
 If you are able to feed its angelicity  
 For each day and night, while throwing aside  
 The incidental [...].  
 Oh, then I will believe your muse,]

The fact that in this passage the verses start three times with “dopiero” [not until] is a proof that this strong poetry, to which the lyrical subject would give faith,

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<sup>60</sup> [Z. WĘGIERSKA], *Kronika paryska. Literacka, naukowa i artystyczna*, vol. III, “Biblioteka Warszawska” 1869, pp. 440-442. Węgierska writes about Baudelaire's poetry as a pursuit of originality, nerve pulling and awakening bestiality, giving artistic value to repulsive images, which from her perspective should be condemned (p. 442). See A. KŁOSKOWSKA, *Francja i Paryż drugiego cesarstwa na łamach “Biblioteki Warszawskiej”*. “Kronika Paryska” *Zofii Węgierskiej (1853-1869)*, [in:] EADEM, *Z historii i socjologii kultury*, Warszawa 1969. It is interesting that while discrediting Baudelaire's poetry, Węgierska was also an advocate of progress. See T. KIZWALTER, *Nowoczesność i polityka – dyskusja w zaborze rosyjskim połowy XIX w.*, “Przegląd Historyczny” 1990, vols. 1-2, pp. 121-123. The hypothesis put forward by Gomulicki about Norwid's influence on Węgierska's text is criticized by J. Trznadel (*Czytanie Norwida*, pp. 242-243).

can arise only in these, not other circumstances. This swarming city creates the conditions for its existence. Norwid's recipe is to immerse oneself in the crowd, but not be a *flâneur*, not to give in to it. In Norwid's works, surrendering to the coincidence associated with the big city life appears to be a mistake, an expression of weakness; in Baudelaire's case, by contrast, it is the crowd that allows, due to its randomness and potentiality, to be oneself, to experience oneself in what is the best and, especially, in what is the worst. However, for both poets the starting point is the situation of the man of the crowd.

Norwid's diagnosis of the contemporary time is therefore the same as in Baudelaire's case, but the answer to it is extremely different. The same are the urban phenomena described by both poets who are aware of the changes and who implement this awareness into their works. The techniques used to describe them are also similar, although the reactions to them are different. It can be said with much certainty that in both cases the attitude of the writers to urbanization and modernization processes in general is ambivalent, ambiguous, requiring the confrontation with both the city and oneself. Both Norwid and Baudelaire, though in different ways, integrate this heroic struggle into their texts.

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## O KILKU MOTYWACH U NORWIDA I BAUDELAIRE’A

### S t r e s z c z e n i e

Artykuł stanowi propozycję lektury pism Norwida i Baudelaire’a jako przekraczających romantyzm, choć z niego wyrastających, prekursorów nowoczesności, dotkniętych – jak pisał W. Benjamin – niegościnnym doświadczeniem epoki wielkiego przemysłu. Analiza porównawcza skupia się na diagnozie współczesności, zawartej w tekstach obu poetów, związanej ze zjawiskami wielkomijskimi, tłumem, *flânerie*, wyobcowaniem. Autorka eksponuje techniki opisu tych zjawisk przez obu pisarzy i różne na nie reakcje. Dowodzi, że Baudelaire identyfikuje się ze swoim miastem, akceptuje jego ułomność, choć dostrzega w nim także zagrożenie dla autonomii jednostki, Norwid natomiast zachowuje dystans pozwalający na moralną ocenę. Artykuł wydobywa te podobieństwa i różnice, ukazując stosunek pisarzy do urbanizacji i w ogóle do procesów modernizacyjnych jako ambiwalentny, niejednoznaczny, wymagający zmierzenia się z miastem, i z samym sobą.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Norwid; Baudelaire; nowoczesność; miasto.

REMARKS ON A FEW MOTIFS IN THE WORKS  
BY NORWID AND BAUDELAIRE

S u m m a r y

The article is a proposal to read the writings of Norwid and Baudelaire as works going beyond Romanticism, although they arise from it, as precursors of modernity, affected – as W. Benjamin wrote – by the inhospitable experience of the era of great industry. The comparative analysis focuses on the diagnosis of the present as demonstrated in the texts of both poets, associated with urban phenomena, crowd, *flânerie* and alienation. The author exposes the techniques of description of these phenomena by both writers and various reactions to them. She proves that Baudelaire identifies himself with his city, accepts its imperfections, although he also sees in it a threat to the autonomy of an individual, while Norwid keeps a distance allowing for moral evaluation. The article brings out these similarities and differences, showing the writers' attitude towards urbanization and, generally, to modernization processes as ambivalent, ambiguous and demanding to confront both the city and oneself.

**Key words:** Norwid; Baudelaire; modernity; city.

*Translated by Rafał Augustyn*

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