

Abstract

'The history is not done yet'. Norwid in (post)modernism

Most scholars and readers view Cyprian Norwid as strongly connected with the late Polish and European Romanticism. He is representative for those artists and poets, who were inspired by Byron, Mickiewicz and Krasinski's works, but who also were sceptical of the ideology which was founded by the first generation of Romantic poets. This is why there are some scholars, who compare his works with Charles Baudelaire's achievements. This fact – his contestation of the legacy of the first Romantic generation and the connection of his major work, *Vade-mecum*, to *The Flowers of Evil* – implicates two ways of reading him as a modern and also a postmodern writer. First, he could be read as a representative of a so-called modern lyrics. This term was invented by Hugo Friedrich and describes the school of poetry created by Baudelaire. Some of the elements constitutive for this paradigm of Western lyrics, such as depersonalization of subject and sociological discursivisation of lyrics, are deep-seated in Norwid's works. However there are some major differences between Norwid and the first generation of Parnassian and Symbolic poetry. This is the reason why is the best to read his poems as not representative of early French modernism but of a great and mature modernism of Thomas Eliot. The second reason, why Norwid could be read as the first Polish (post)modern author, is related to his critical appraisal of modern society and its influences on mass culture. For this, some scholars classify Norwid with antimodern philosophers such as Walter Benjamin and René Girard. The term 'postmodernism' could be in this case understood as the time in the Western European societies when the processes, like globalization, development of mass media and taking power by the middle class, were rooted in culture. This definition of postmodernism is taken from Anthony Giddens, who saw this phenomena as essential for the second part of 19th century – the time when most of mature Norwid's works were created.

In my dissertation the most important is the second of the above-mentioned problems. I propose to read Norwid's works as the examples of first Polish postmodern poetry. His lyrics

from *Vade-mecum* are similar to the strategy which I call after Charles Taylor ‘the enchantment of modernity’. This strategy could be seen in two levels: on the semantic and also – which is the most important for me – on the level of the poetic shape of his poems. For Norwid, to enchant modernism meant to propose a new composition of lyrical language. This language should be no more treated as the most objective way of speaking about the world. It’s necessary to realize that language – due to its rhetorical strategies – implicates lies and semi-truths. To speak the truth is to destroy the shape of language, the shape, which could be no more transparent for ideas incorporated in it.