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**POETIC LANGUAGE OF KAROL WOJTYŁA  
(AN ATTEMPT AT THE CHARACTERISTICS)**

In my paper I attempt to conduct a preliminary analysis of the concept of the poetic language of Karol Wojtyła, and to point out the key features of this language. I will treat the term “poetic language” in the sense of the systemic and textual means employed to creative communication. I do not limit this notion to the poetic works of Wojtyła, but also use it in the context of his artistic prose works and fragments of his poetic works written in prose. I am convinced that the literary texts of Wojtyła written in prose exhibit—although in changed proportions—the same tendencies which could be found in poems and versed dramas.

I will be analyzing texts from the volume *Poezje i dramaty (Poems and Dramas)* and a long poem *Tryptyk rzymski (Roman Tryptych)*.<sup>19</sup> I totally skipped the texts published in the volume of juvenilia *Renesansowy psalterz (The Renaissance Psalter)*,<sup>20</sup> treating them, following the wish of its author, as a phenomenon of a very different kind and poetic format, requiring most probably a different research perspective than Wojtyła’s mature texts. I treat the texts I have chosen as a whole and do not differentiate within them chronologically, being convinced that the basic repertoire of Wojtyła’s poetic tools, formed already in his early long poems, remained virtually unchanged till

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<sup>19</sup> All Polish quotations from: K. Wojtyła, *Poezje i dramaty*, Kraków 1998 and Jan Paweł II, *Tryptyk rzymski. Medytacje*, Kraków 2003.

<sup>20</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Renesansowy psalterz (Księga słowiańska)*, ed. by M. Skwarnicki, Kraków 1999.

the final lines of *Triptych*... While, as far as the themes of Wojtyła's literary texts are concerned, we could speak (and some researchers have done so) about some evolution, the language of these texts seems to be relatively stable, and the differences between phases in his writing and between individual texts or types of texts seem to be differences of degree, and not of quality,

I would like to note at the beginning that in the case of Wojtyła the concept of poetic language—although it was never presented theoretically and never overtly described—is the result of a conscious considerations. This statement is supported by Wojtyła's recollections about his reflections about the Word and studies in this area, as this example about his early linguistic fascinations indicates:

[...] Right from the beginning of the first year however I found myself attracted to *the study of the language itself*. We studied the descriptive grammar of modern Polish as well as the historical evolution of the language, with a special interest in its ancient Slavic roots. This opened up completely new horizons for me; it introduced me to the mystery of the language itself.<sup>21</sup>

The interest which the student of the Department of Polish had on the Word was to bear fruit both in attempts to look for his own poetic voice, and in his frequent theoretical reflections about language. One of many example of poetic reflection on the Word is the following fragment from *Easter Vigil*:

I don't know those ancient words. When I turn to the written record  
I am still far from the living words, which  
a man in history filled with his breath and sound.  
(Death shifted this sound behind the wall of centuries.  
Record remains, the only trace for an ardent descendant  
where the path breaks off – and you know it leads further...)  
and you know it must lead to the first inspirations of language,  
those discoveries in man, to which the object responds.

<sup>21</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery, On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination*, Doubleday, New York, 1996, 10.

A. KOZŁOWSKA, "POETIC LANGUAGE OF KAROL WOJTYŁA..."

Inspiration and meaning in union.  
When did they start throbbing in the same stream of sound  
that flows in us today?  
How did they carve out their simple shapes  
that the spirit embodies?  
Clans, tribes, a nation outlined. [...]  
is the meaning bestowed by the mind and the heart?<sup>22</sup>

The questions asked in this fragment by Wojtyła about the way of giving meaning to words and about mechanisms of semantic changes are on the one hand 'philological', because answering them and even the very fact of asking them, requires specialized knowledge about linguistic changes over time, and, on the other, the deepest motif of formulating them goes beyond cognitive reasons. We discover here an important feature of Wojtyła's thinking about language: this is thinking constructed consciously. In a sense it is marked with 'professionalism', characteristic of a man who has acquired knowledge about language and the literary tradition, and at the same time thinking which would lead not only to knowledge. Wojtyła's interest in the problems of speech is not only cognitive, but mostly existential. The aim of studying linguistics is not only what the state of a language is or was. The search for a word's earlier meanings was for Wojtyła a revelation of man's descent from God and his mission, and studying the history of language is like tracing the presence of the First Speaker, as speech allows people to use the wealth of experiences, which it stores, records and passes on, and also puts a speaker in relations with the others and in a relation with Someone totally different. Studying language, understood in the proper way, leads to the exploration of the mysteries of man's spirituality and the mysteries of God Himself. John Paul II, looking back, summed up his interest in language in the following way:

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<sup>22</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, transl. by Jerzy Peterkiewicz, Random House, New York, 1982, 128.

The word [...] is already present in human history as a fundamental dimension of mans' spiritual experience. Ultimately the mystery of language brings us back to *the inscrutable mystery of God himself*. As I came to appreciate the power of the word in my literary and linguistic studies I inevitably drew closer to the mystery of the Word—that Word of which we speak every day in *the Angelus*: “And the word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14).<sup>23</sup>

What is, then, the concept of language embedded in texts of the poet fascinated so much by the mystery of the word, a trained philologist, but at the same time someone who saw in linguistic considerations a chance for contact with the Absolute?

### 1. Recurrence

The first feature of this poetry, striking to a reader, is the recurrence of elements both in the syntagmatic dimension, as a rule for texts' construction, and in the paradigmatic dimension, the rule of using the same elements of language in the whole literary output. Recurrence in Wojtyła's text is quite diverse—it may be seen on the lexical plane, but also in syntax and stylistics. Let us consider, for example, a dense network of phonetic and morphological repetitions in the following fragment:

The mystery of the beginning is born with the Word,  
is revealed by the Word.  
The Word – eternal vision and eternal utterance.  
He who created, saw – He saw “that it was good”.  
He saw with a vision unlike our own.  
He – the First to see –  
saw and found in everything a trace of his Being, of his own fullness.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*. *op. cit.*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Jan Paweł II, *Tryptyk rzymski, Roman Triptych*, transl. by Jerzy Peterkiewicz, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 2005, 15.

An even more complex system of relations based on repetition can be discerned in the often quoted fragment from the long poem *Stanislas*

The land of hard-won unity, of people seeking their own roads;  
the land so long divided between the princes of one clan,  
this land subjected to the freedom of each mindful of all.  
This land finally torn apart for six generations,  
torn on the maps of the world, torn in the fate of her sons.  
And through this tearing united in the heart of Poles,  
as no other land.<sup>25</sup>

Apart from the constant, almost persistent repetition of the lexeme "land", we also have repetitions of the morphemes "torn/tearing" syntactical structures "the land of", and, finally, a complex syntactic parallelism and numerous anaphors. One of Wojtyła's favourite compositional features is the repetition of similar stylistic figures, and even of identical tropic phrases within a relatively short text. An example of the repetition of a stylistic figure in almost unchanged form can be seen, for example, in *Meditation on Death*, where the metaphorical definition of man gets repeated:

I wander on the narrow pavement of this earth,  
traffic hurtles by,  
rockets shoot to space –  
in all this there is a centrifugal flow  
(man, a fragment of the world differently set in motion).  
this movement does not touch the core of eternity,  
it frees no one from death  
(man, a fragment of the world differently set in motion),  
so I wander on the narrow pavement of this world,  
not turning aside from Your Countenance  
unrevealed to me by the world.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, op. cit., 173.

<sup>26</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, op. cit., 157.

In *Roman Triptych* the relation between the notions of ‘the Word’ and ‘the threshold’, which at first appears as a simile, is recalled twice more, for the first time as a simile, and for the second, with more force—as a metaphor.

The Word, the wondrous, eternal Word –  
As the invisible threshold  
of all that has come into being, is or will be  
As if the Word were a threshold.

The threshold of the Word, in whom all things invisible existed,  
eternal and divine –  
beyond this threshold everything begins to happen.<sup>27</sup>

Another feature of Wojtyła’s poetry is the frequent use of independent clauses, which are built of repeated lexical elements. Here are some examples: “deeper, still deeper” (*Song of the Hidden God*, 5), “endure, endure” (*Song of the Hidden God*, 5), “in vain, in vain” (*Song of the Brightness of Water*, 38) “wśród tylu, tylu walk” (literally “so many, many struggles”, in Peterkiewicz’s translation: “seasons of struggle”, *Song of the Brightness of Water*, 38); “Silence. Silence” (*Profiles of a Cyrenean*, 89) “I wciąż, i wciąż” (“again and again”, *The Birth of Confessors*, 68)<sup>28</sup>; “wine, wine” (*The Jeweler’s Shop*, 291).<sup>29</sup> Such structures usually have an intensifying character—the repetition of the phrase is to strengthen the meaning of the first one in various ways, telling, about other things, about the speaker’s strength of expression (for example: “in vain, in vain”), or about the duration in time of a phenomenon mentioned (for example, “Silence. Silence”).

<sup>27</sup> Jan Paweł II, *Tryptyk rzymski, Roman Triptych*, op. cit., 17.

<sup>28</sup> Translator’s note: Jerzy Peterkiewicz translates this fragment as “And still, and yet”, thus losing the repetition of the original. That is why I decided to use the ‘philological’ translation here.

<sup>29</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, transl. by Boleslaw Taborski, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987, 291.

The list of Wojtyła's syntagmatic repetitions would be incomplete without whole syntactic structures, or even sentences, which return in his works, and are introduced into new contexts, seen from different perspectives and interpreted differently. Here we could use a confessor's advice as an example: "Let yourself be moulded by love"<sup>30</sup> the protagonist Adam grows to understand its meaning in *Brat naszego Boga (Our God's Brother)*, or the Latin quotation from the Book of Psalms: Psalms: "Omnia nuda et aperta sunt ante oculis Eius", a leitmotif of the poetic meditation in *Roman Triptych*.

The hardcore of Wojtyła's vocabulary remained virtually unchanged from the early long poem *Song of the Hidden God* to *Roman Triptych*, written from the perspective of a Pope. The whole of these texts could be interpreted with a few dozen keywords.<sup>31</sup> Let us enumerate some of them: "meeting", "seeing", "light", "eyes", "water", "profile", "space", "act", "radiate", "love", "thought". "man", "fatherhood", "sacrament". Each of these words appears many times in Wojtyła's poetry, included in various contexts, ceaselessly subjected to ruminations, and sometimes also to semantic modifications. How can this fidelity of the Pope-poet to a limited number of words be explained? And how can this propensity, discussed above, to repetitions on various levels, be accounted for? I believe that recurrence of the same syntactic structures, lexemes, morphemes or sentences is the result of the meditative character of Wojtyła's poetry. After all, poetry, for Wojtyła, was a way of constantly increasing his experience of God, the world and himself,<sup>32</sup> a way which is, and must be, tedious, because

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>31</sup> The possibility of using "key-words" to analyse Wojtyła's poetry has already been seen by Wiesław Paweł Szymański (see Idem, *Z mroku korzeni*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 1989). He listed the following items as Wojtyła's "key-words": *word*, *think/thinking* and *space*, while the words *opening* various poems and their fragments he listed: *space*, *tree*, *earth*, *freedom*, *maturity*, *country* and *Church*.

<sup>32</sup> Young Wojtyła wrote: "this is not art, if it is only realistic true, or play, but first of all superstructure, it is a look ahead and above, it is a companion of religion and a guide on the way to God, it has a dimension of a romantic rainbow; from the earth

it means constant returns to things seemingly known, which, in reality, need a fresh perspective, again and again.

## 2. “Deepening” and modification of meanings

The poetry of Wojtyła is organized according to another rule, which may be stated using the words of the Author: “deeper, still deeper” (*Song of the Hidden God*, 5)—on the rule of the modification of meanings. The recurrence does not suggest, after all, the identity of elements in each of its uses. In artistic texts of Wojtyła the reverse situation can be discerned: the ceaseless return of individual words or phrases is accompanied by an attempt to extend, transform or, to use the coinage from Norwid, to “deepen meanings”. Numerous semantic innovations of Wojtyła can be divided into three basic categories.

1. Giving lexemes meanings different than in the ‘general’ language, performed through different textual mechanisms.
2. Revision of etymological and/or archaic meanings.
3. Contextual word-games which trigger unexpected lexical connotations.

The lexeme “profil” (profile) may serve as an example of Wojtyła’s neo-semantic approach: In general Polish this word means “an image of a face seen from the side”, or “the contour, shape, silhouette of something”. Metaphorically, we use this word to refer to the “cross-section, range, character of something” (for example, “profile of production”, “profile of interests”, “profile of a publishing house”). In Wojtyła’s texts we have “profile” used a few times in the sense that was described by me in point 1. Such usages open the long poem *Profiles of a Cyrenean*:

A profile among trees, different among pillars  
and different again in the street, melting into its wet surface.  
Different is the profile of a man standing at his own door;  
Different a victor’s profile; a Greek demigod.<sup>33</sup>

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and man’s heart to the Eternal One.” (*Kalendarium życia Karola Wojtyły*, ed. by ks. A. Boniecki, Kraków 1993, 63).

<sup>33</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, op. cit., 75.



In the following lines of the poem the semantics of "profile" changes. Different types of people and different attitudes of men are described, in which traces characteristic of Simon from Cyrene appear. In the phrase "profiles of a Cyrenean", "profile" means an image or a shape of an evangelical protagonist 'impressed' on people of different estates, temperaments and convictions, a certain model of an existential situation, expressed in every human life. "Profile" here loses its connections with the visual sphere, becomes a specific term describing a type of a spiritual figure, which is seen, for example, in this fragment:

I know the Cyrenean's profile best,  
from every conceivable point of view.  
The profile always starts alongside the other Man;  
it falls from his shoulders  
to break off exactly where  
the other Man is most himself,  
least defenceless [...]  
Life tells me unceasingly  
about such a profile, about that other Man.<sup>34</sup>

A similar usage of "profile" can be found in Christ's words from *Song of the Brightness of Water*:

You don't walk alone, ever.  
Not for a moment, never  
is my profile separate from you  
and in you it becomes truth,  
it always becomes truth  
and the tearing so deep,  
of your living wave.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 36.

“Profile” should be interpreted in yet another way in the mysterious fragment from *Kamieniołom (The Quarry)*, which deals with unusual transformations man undergoes as a result of work:

So, for a moment he is a Gothic building  
cut by a vertical thought born in the eyes.  
No, not a profile alone,  
not a mere figure between God and the stone,  
sentenced to grandeur and error.<sup>36</sup>

If we accept that the final two sentences are connected not only by syntactic parallelism, but by synonymity understood in general terms (and the structure suggests such a possibility), then “profile” would be equated here with the “figure between a stone and God”—with man seen from the external perspective. However, in the discussed fragment such a shallow similarity is rejected: man is not only some specific shape, the “similarity” of a cathedral—this is a real cathedral, a place where the Almighty is, a place where what is earthly meets transcendence.

The clearest aspect of Wojtyła’s predilection for constant semantic modifications is the multiplicity of poetic definitions embedded in his texts which not only show his passion to get to the essence of the existing ideas, but give new meanings to the lexemes naming them; meanings which are very metaphorical and motivated contextually, but which are also used to create and propose to readers a picture of the world different than the one from general language. In Wojtyła’s texts there are many defined and re-defined ideas, which are crucial for him.

Here are some examples: “Death is only the sun’s ray/too short on the sundial of hours” (*Song of the Hidden God*, 17) “man, a fragment of the world differently set in motion” (*Meditation on Death*, 157), “Vision is love’s space” (*Redemption Seeking Your Form to Enter Man’s Anxiety*, 164), “Yearning—hunger for closeness” (*Redemption Seeking Your Form to Enter Man’s Anxiety*, 165), “Peace: the oneness

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 65.

of existence" (*Redemption Seeking Your Form to Enter Man's Anxiety*, 165), "the cross a pasture" (*The Church*, 103). "Love is constant challenge, thrown to us by God/thrown, I think, so that we should challenge fate" (*The Jeweler's Shop*, 312); "Hands are the heart's landscape" (*The Quarry*, 64). It is not only objects, but also states which are subjected to these changes, poetic and subjective in their nature: "to be a father/ it means to have the strongest bonds with the world" (*Reflections on Fatherhood*).<sup>37</sup>

We find many such structures in Wojtyła's poetry, which are not prototypical poetic definitions, but which, however, display the same, as typical authorial definitions, predilection to project new meanings, and sometimes even structurally point to typical definitions. At least several types of such peripheric examples can be presented:

1. Definitions which relativize or limit the range of a postulated meaning, for example: "Supposing this cosmos is a branch/ bent by its leafy weight/and sunshine washes over it,/Supposing each gaze is a quiet deep/held in the palm of the hand" (*Song of the Hidden God*, 19), "The cross has become for us the well of Jacob" (*Journey to the Holy Places*, 115), "Man passes, people pass – they run shouting/the battlecry of life" (*Easter Vigil*, 134),
2. Questions about meanings of ideas (for example, "Is life a wave of wonder higher than death?, *Song of the Hidden God*, 11) and about the meaning of lexemes (for example, "How did the word *God* sound on this wave, what its first/meaning", *Easter Vigil*, 128).
3. Negated formulae showing dissent to the meaning of the way of understanding of some idea, sometimes connected with projection of new meanings: "Love is not an adventure" (*The Jeweler's Shop*, 303), "History is not resurrection,/but the constant acceptance of death" (*Easter Vigil*, 131).

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<sup>37</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Radiation of Fatherhood*, [https://donboscosalesianportal.org/wp-content/uploads/Radiation\\_of\\_Fatherhood.pdf](https://donboscosalesianportal.org/wp-content/uploads/Radiation_of_Fatherhood.pdf), 21, retrieved on 03.10.2018.

4. Quasi-definitions or characteristic features of lexical elements which have individual reference, that is of proper nouns or pronouns (for example, “each man is a fortress”, *The Birth of Confessors*, 95); “We have become for them a threshold that they cannot cross/without effort” *The Jeweler’s Shop*, 314), particularly interesting are the attempts at definitions of God: “Here is your Friend,/a single spark, yet Luminosity itself” (*Song of the Hidden God*, 7), “You are the Calm, the great Silence” (*Song of the Hidden God*, 17).
5. Structures which might be called—in the way analogous to metaphors *in absentia*—definitions *in absentia*, that is definitions in which *definiendum* is not expressed. Such structures include, for example, an expression (often quoted by scholars) of an engagement and marriage from *The Jeweler’s Shop*: “two until now, but still not one, one from now on though still two” (290), and also the passage describing the Host:

A morsel of bread is more real  
 than the universe,  
 more full of existence, more full of the Word –  
 a song overflowing, the sea,  
 a mist confusing the sundial –  
 God in exile.<sup>38</sup>

Poetic definitions form a very clear and noticeable means of modifying meanings in texts. Wojtyła’s works also include many such usages which during a cursory reading we might feel inclined to treat as standard, but which turn out to be very surprising. Let us look at the seemingly obvious fragment of “Song of the Hidden God”:

For that cry: Why hast thou  
 Forsaken me, Father, Father –  
 I have redeemed on Your lips  
 Two simple words: Our Father.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, op. cit., 13.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

The fundamental problem with this fragment is the interpretation of the verb "odkupić".<sup>40</sup> In the monologue directed to Christ it cannot, after all, mean "to make amends for injustice" or simply "to save", although we could expect one of these meanings in a text dealing with Jesus's death on the cross. The key to understanding the semantics of the verb of interest for us here is its valency: the syntax of the phrase "odkupić coś za coś" ("re-buy something for something") suggests that "odkupić" was used according to the etymological meaning of: "od+kupić" ("re+buy" "buy something again which used to be ours"). In Wojtyła's long poem 'the good' was once man's, then it was lost, and, then, thanks to Christ's mission, regained is the right to call God the Father, returned to men at the price of Christ's crying from the cross, filled with despair and at the price of His Mother's pain. Man can call God the Father because he "odkupił" ("re-bought") these words on the lips of the Saviour—because that was the name that Christ called God in the moment of experiencing darkness and total loneliness.

Updating etymological meanings, we can see in this fragment a frequent procedure refreshing the semantics of words in the texts of Wojtyła. In another fragment of the same poem we read:

When You created these poor eyes of mine,  
drawing them from the deep into the open hand,  
You were thinking of that eternal gaze  
enraptured by the endless deep.<sup>41</sup>

As a result, we get an interesting effect of a superimposing of meanings, and one element carries double information: the look is at the same time over the deep and full of delight.

To draw his readers' attention to the etymological meaning Wojtyła sometimes uses hyphens, which reveal morphological structures, and in this way shows the semantics of components of words. In the long

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<sup>40</sup> Translator's note: two key and very distinct meanings of the Polish word 'odkupić' are: "to re-deem" and "to re-buy".

<sup>41</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, op. cit., 19.

poem *Redemption Seeking Your Form to Enter Man's Anxiety* the lyric addresses Veronica with these words: „Nie pragniesz ani przez chwilę, / by twój uczynek nazwano nie-codziennym” (113) (“You did not for a moment wish your act/to be seen as out of the ordinary”, 162); the use of the hyphen makes the lexeme “nie-codzienny” cease to mean “extraordinary, unusual”, which is its normal meaning, and begins to mean ‘the one which is not met every day’ (‘codzienny’ means ‘every day’). Therefore, the evaluation of Veronica’s deed is not undertaken in the categories: “zwyyczajny”—“niezwykły” (“ordinary”—“unusual”). The protagonist of this poem would like to have her deed understood as not undertaken once, done and given to be done every day. The use of the hyphen is therefore a procedure of a quasi-etymological character, introducing the old meaning of two words: the negation “nie” (“not”) and the adjective “codzienny” (‘every day’).

The effect of exposing the meaning of components is also achieved in the following fragment from *Journey to the Holy Places* in which Palestine is called “ziemia nie-narodzona” (83) (“earth unborn”, 111). Wojtyła builds here the following paradox: the land of Christ’s birth is the “ziemia nie-narodzona” (“earth unborn”). The paradox is based on Wojtyła’s specific meaning of birth, which according to him is to lead to the situation when the born one is always present: “Narodzenie nie zna już kresu, nie zna rozstania” (83) (“Birth does no longer no of the end, or of parting”).<sup>42</sup> Such a state is, obviously, attributed to the birth of Christ, thanks to which “we do not part with Him Who Is” (111), but this state cannot be ascribed to the accidental Holy Land, which in the meaning Wojtyła creates remains “nie-narodzona” (“un-born”), not given a state of everlasting existence.

The last category of semantic modifications present in Wojtyła’s poetry is that of word games, puns, and putting lexemes in contexts which give them unusual connotations. When the lyric ‘I’ of *The Quarry* speaks that in poetry one “must merge these two forces

<sup>42</sup> Translator’s note: This particular phrase “Narodzenie nie zna już kresu, nie zna rozstania” was not, for some reason, translated by Jerzy Peterkiewicz, see Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, op. cit., 111.

(that is love and anger—A.K.) into a language/simple beyond words" (67), putting next to each other of the noun "language" and the phrase "beyond words" leads to breaking of the set connotation, and as a result a reader is apt to think of simplicity as an extra-verbal feature of speech, which is not a feature which could be directly derived from the components.

Interesting examples of contextual entanglements of lexemes can also be found in this fragment from *Easter Vigil*:

[...] then it was clear: God does not live  
in the seams of the world, in human entanglements of fate,  
but speaks in his own tongue, his speech of simple sincerity.

God's sincerity suffused the seams of the world;  
(this is a speech not of investigation or searching,  
but a speech of finding).  
Someone stood up and spoke. Words were human, slavonic.  
The world in them was important and unimportant.  
Death was severe and full of promise.<sup>43</sup>

There are several moments in this fragment worthy of note: "speech not of investigation or searching" in the connection with "simple sincerity" reveals the connotation of simplicity, in the adjective "ludzki" ("human") we have the semantic component of closeness, "słowo" ("word") turns out to be connected with 'Słowianie' ('Slavs'), while the seemingly paradoxical calling of the world "ważny i nieważny" "important and unimportant" at the same time points to the relational character of both expressions, which need to be supplemented with the additional information from which or whose perspective they have been used.

### 3. Poetic value of silence

So far I have concentrated on elements which in Wojtyła's literary texts are repeated and elements which are modified. Other important elements of his poetic language are pauses and silences. Silence

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<sup>43</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, op. cit., 126.

is not only a matter of rumination of his lyric ‘I’, but also gets to the body of these poems, pointing to the limitations of all means of communications, about which he wrote in the long poem *Mysł jest przestrzenią dziwną* (*A Thought is a Strange Space*)

żadne słowo, gest ani znak – nie uniesie całego obrazu, w który wejść musimy samotni, by się zмагаć podobnie jak Jakub.

(*Mysł jest przestrzenią dziwną*, 47)<sup>44</sup>

The simplest case of silence is ellipsis, that is the elision of an element of the texts. In Wojtyła’s poetry such elisions are always functional and they usually reflect the hierarchy of importance of the components of a text. For example, in the fragment dealing with the Eucharist, Wojtyła omits an obvious theme of a sentence (“zamieszkuje”/”przebywa”/”znajduje się”) (“dwells”/”stays”/”is”) and in this way he suggests the impossibility of expressing the mystery of Christ’s living in man, and puts forward the problem of the human condition, too feeble to invite God in a dignified way.

If only someone were to sweep  
The mist from the lucid depth,  
Then it would show in what misery,  
Then it would show in whom he hides.

(*Song of the Hidden God*)<sup>45</sup>

While in *Song of the Brightness of Water* the object of an extended statement is not expressed:

Don’t think You walk alone. You have companions  
such as I, changed by your meditation  
in us, yes, your meditation in us,  
as if a word, a frail word was simply grafted,  
grafted on the brightness –

<sup>44</sup> “Not a word, gesture or sign/will carry the whole picture into which/we must enter alone, in order to/wrestle as Jacob did.”

<sup>45</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, op. cit., 23.



yes, such as I,  
raised in the dark of trampled stars.<sup>46</sup>

Here, the reconstruction of the missing component would not be as simple as in the example discussed, where the elided element could have been easily restored. In *Song of the Brightness of Water* there is no answer to the question: what or who accompanies Christ? There are a few possibilities; the name of a group may be elided (for example 'crowd', 'mass', 'multitude') and the name of a feature (for example, 'alertness', 'goodness') or an activity (for example, 'love', 'attention', 'sin', 'effort', etc). It seems that, similarly to the fragment from *Song of the Hidden God* analysed above, it was the fragment regarded as less important, and the surface of the sentence is left with what is crucial in this context. This hypothesis is confirmed by the extended characteristics of "such as I", in which the lack of the object of expression gets lost.

Another example of dissembling, often used by Wojtyła, is the passing over of relations existing between sentences. Let us see how the vision of the conclave in *Roman Triptych* is constructed:

Lo, they see themselves [the cardinals—A.K.] in the midst  
of the Beginning and the End,  
Between the Day of Creation and the Day of Judgement...  
It is granted man once to die, and thereafter, the Judgement!

Final transparency and light  
the clarity of the events –  
the clarity of consciences –  
During the conclave Michelangelo must teach them –  
Do not forget: *Omnia nuda et aperta sunt ante oculis Eius.*  
You who see all, point to him!  
He will point hm out...<sup>47</sup>

The text above is completely devoid of indicators of cohesion which normally bind individual sentences together: anaphoric

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>47</sup> Jan Paweł II, *Roman Triptych*, op. cit., 37.

pronouns, conjunctions, chains of thematic-rhematic references, etc. The only elements building relations between phrases are repetitions, while the relations existing between the sentences, and therefore the function and sense of individual components, must be revealed by the reader.

The active participation of readers is also expected in such fragments, in which although the relations between sentences are revealed and signalled, the type of relations projected by the author requires becoming aware of what is not expressed explicitly, but only implied. Such a situation happens in the speech of Teresa in *The Jeweller's Shop*. The story of Andrew's proposal is here mixed with the reminiscences about a night trek, during which both of them heard a mysterious voice:

[...] then I was thinking about signal that could not connect.  
 It was a thought about Andrew and myself.  
 And I felt how difficult it is to live.  
 That night was terribly hard for me,  
 though it was a fully glorious mountain night,  
 and full of nature's secrets.  
 Everything around seems  
 so very necessary  
 and so in harmony with the world's totality.  
 Only man was unbalanced and lost—  
 perhaps not every human being,  
 but I know for certain that I was.  
 So today when Andrew asked,  
 "Would you like to become forever my life's companion?"  
 after ten minutes I answered yes,  
 and after a while I asked him if he believed in signals.<sup>48</sup>

Let us concentrate on the surprising conjunction 'więc' ('therefore'), which appears at the beginning of Teresa's account. It clearly builds the relation of entailment, but there is no direct summoning of the element, the result of which is the girl's 'Yes'.

<sup>48</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Collected Plays*, op. cit., 283.

The presence of 'więc' ('therefore') makes sense here only when we make the assumption that a reader can, using the earlier part of the text, reconstruct and elide the link in the chain of reasoning: there are many voices which call each other in vain (and Teresa interprets a mysterious cry heard during the trip in this way and she interprets her relations with Andrzej in this way)—lack of reaction of signals leads to loneliness and lack of harmony—therefore one should answer voices and use the chance of building a union, which a deeply experienced marriage opens.

#### 4. Building a dialogue

The intensive and varied presence of elisions in Wojtyła's poetry is based on the conviction that his works should be read actively, and a reader should not be a passive recipient, but should be on the lookout for new meanings and should even be a co-author of these texts' sense, invited by the author to a creative participation in a dialogue. This leads us to another feature of Wojtyła's poetic language, which may be characterized not only as a language rich in repetitions, bent on semantic innovations and various forms of elisions, but also dialogic. In the case of Wojtyła's poetry its dialogic nature could be understood in at least three different ways.

1. As a structural feature of texts, bound to make readers active and treating them as partners in a dialogue.<sup>49</sup>
2. As a feature of a text giving more validity to dialogue and treating it as a primary form of poetical expression.
3. As a feature of a text or language which gives voice to traces of other texts and languages.

Dialogue is a basic form of expressions used by Wojtyła, both in his long poems and, obviously, in his dramas. The importance of dialogues may be seen in the introduction of 'you' in the text of *Song of the Hidden God*. The hypertext, *The Spiritual Canticle* by St. John

<sup>49</sup> The dialogic examples of the first type can be found above in the part devoted to silence, and, to a certain extent, in the fragments about modifications of meanings, which are also instances of constant invitation of a reader to co-operate.

of the Cross, tells us about what happens to the soul impersonally, which allows for the generalization of the situation, while in Wojtyła's poem the accents are placed differently. The phrases used by Wojtyła in the second person are testimony to looking at one's own personal expressions from a certain distance, and at the same time they offer the gentle suggestion that a recipient of the text understands such experiences, or maybe even shares them.

*Song of the Hidden God* joins the 'dialogue of texts', which was started by the work of St. John of the Cross. There are many examples of similar dialogic moments in Wojtyła's works—the conviction of the importance of dialogues meets here, arguably, with the philosophical re-appraisal of tradition. Apart from an echo of the voice of Saint John of the Cross, two other linguistic-stylistic traditions should be added, to which Wojtyła ceaselessly returns. These are:

1. Biblical tradition understood as the language and style of the Polish translations of the Bible, usually connected with archaization;<sup>50</sup>
2. Polish Romantic tradition (predominantly Norwid) and neo-Romantic.<sup>51</sup>

*Job* is a very good example of Wojtyła's reliance on the Biblical linguistic tradition. Let us, for example, consider the following fragments:

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name  
was Job and he was righteous before  
God and men. [...]  
he was righteous, and yet he is tried;

<sup>50</sup> See M. Dzikowski, *Wartości, wybory, parafrazy – „Jeremiasz” Karola Wojtyły*, in: *Słowo – myśl – ethos w twórczości Jana Pawła II*, ed. by Z. Trzaskowski, Kielce 2005, 25-26; Z. Trzaskowski, *Anamneza – aktualizacja – antycypacja. Biblijne oblicze „Hioba” Karola Wojtyły*, op. cit., 49-69.

<sup>51</sup> See J. Dąbrowska, *Aluzje literackie w poezji Karola Wojtyły na przykładzie „Renesansowego psalterza”*, in *Karol Wojtyła – poeta*, ed. by J. Gładzewski i W. Sadowski, Warszawa 2006, 165-170.

he was upright, and yet he is oppressed  
so that his arms lose their strength,  
so that his wrists turn limp.  
Behold, my people.  
Behold my people—  
and listen to the Word of the Lord,  
you who are downtrodden,  
you who are flogged,  
sent to camps, you—  
Jobs—Jobs.[...]  
There I see Him—my soul welcome Him.  
He speaks to You, Father, I hear;  
I hear through the open door,  
He speaks in humility, not pride;  
He calls You the Master of His life.<sup>52</sup>

In these texts archaization is connected with the Biblical style. We have inflexional archaisms here (short forms of participles: "doświadczon" (experienced) and "pogńebion" (oppressed), old form of verbs "słabiej" (feels weak) joining verbs with conjunctions and pronouns more frequently than in contemporary Polish ("coście biczowani") (you who are flagellated), lexical archaisms (for example "baczyć" (to heed), "pomnieć" (remember), "gotować się" (to get ready), "kędy" (whither), "lica" (faces", phonetic (Hijob) and syntactic ("wyznawać kogoś czymś") (to confess someone with something). They refer not directly to the Bible, but to its Polish translations. The Bible Wojtyła refers to is the Polish Bible, which is rooted in the vernacular linguistic tradition.

The presence of Norwid's voice in Wojtyła's writings is a separate and very complex issue—this presence is unquestionable and unquestionable multifaceted. I will point to just a few of the linguistic and stylistic motives important in the dialogue of these two poets and thinkers. 1. It is impossible not to see 'common spots' in the lexis of both writers. I have already discussed one of them above: "profile". Here are others: "sacrament", "word", "person", "thought", "work"

<sup>52</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Collected Plays*, op. cit., 27, 28-29, 65.

“conscience”, “song”, “love transcending understanding”. It should be noted, however, that the identity of the lexemes both writers used is often accompanied by semantic difference.

1. Wojtyła’s word formation is strongly indebted to Norwid. I have in mind both models of neologisms and ways of focusing on morphemes through the usage of hyphens.
2. Both writers have a predilection for variously used elisions and the conviction that what is elided is an integral part of a text.
3. Both Norwid and Wojtyła, in different ways and on many levels, stress dialogue, understood as a relation between characters in a text, but also as a relation between a sender and an addressee, or as a relation between texts (senders of different texts).

Which leads to the conclusion that Norwid and Wojtyła have a similar concept of poetic language. Although this issue requires more research, it seems adequate to treat Wojtyła as a writer ‘of Norwid’s spirit’, which was also noted by Wojtyła himself, who many times and on different occasions indicated Norwid as a patron of his poetic art. The inspiration of Norwid can be easily traced to almost all features dealt with in this paper. Let us conclude with them:

1. Repetitions of various elements on all linguistic and textual levels
2. Semantic modifications, creation of ‘neo-semantics’ and unique etymological interpretations
3. Appreciations of ellipsis and elision.
4. Dialogism.