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POLYPHONY IN DOSTOEVSKY'S NOVELS AND THE MULTIPLICITY OF VOICES IN NORWID'S POETRY

Bakhtin's discovery of polyphony in Dostoevsky's novels[1] became one of the most important and influential events in literary studies in the twentieth century. Although even before the publication of *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Art* and after it there appeared supplementary and polemic texts, it was the findings of Bakhtin which have become deeply grounded in the Humanities worldwide.

Bakhtin connected the novel techniques of Dostoevsky with his conviction of respect which every man deserves; respect, the fundamental expression of which is freedom of speech. This approach to this problem (although not stated by Bakhtin in these very words) is particularly intriguing from the perspective of the situation of publishing, both in the Russia of the tsars and in the Soviet Union.

> *A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels.* What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world,* combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. Dostoevsky's major heroes are, by the very nature of his creative design, *not only objects of authorial*

[1] On Bakhtin's concept and analysis of polyphony see Halina Brzoza, *Polifonia I wielostylowość czy przewrotna spójność rozpadu? Bliżej Bachtinowskiej koncepcji estetyki Dostojewskiego*, i, *Dostojewski. Myśl a forma*, Łódź 1984.

> *discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse.* In no way, then, can a character's discourse be exhausted by the usual functions of characterization and plot development, nor does it serve as a vehicle for the author's own ideological position (as with Byron, for instance). The consciousness of a character is given as *someone else's* consciousness, another consciousness, yet at the same time it is not turned into an object, is not closed, does not become a simple object of the author's consciousness. In this sense the image of a character in Dostoevsky is not the usual objectified image of a hero in the traditional novel.[2]

In the quotation above, which is an introduction to his book, Bakhtin pointed to some key issues characteristic for Dostoevsky's poetics. These are: fragmentation of the unified vision of the author's world and the complete independence of the voices of the protagonists of the novels and short stories of Dostoevsky.

Scholars have looked for different sources of this novel technique in the area of poetics of a work of literature. First of all, the religious and ideological crisis Dostoevsky suffered from for many years was pointed to as the reason for such a situation.[3] The other, alternative direction of research was the research in the teachings of the Orthodox church on man, which has lately led to the focus of the 'cardiocentric' (this is the phrase coined by Dorota Yevdokimov[4]) anthropology of Dostoevsky. It seems, however, that these two approaches to Dostoevsky's writings which were the result of Bakhtin's findings should be, as far as possible, treated in a balanced way. It is only when we combine them that more light will be thrown at the polyphonic sources of Dostoevsky's novels, which is undoubtedly connected with his concept of 'realism in a higher sense'.

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[2] Michail Bakchtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* ed. and transl. by Caryl Emerson, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984, 6-7. Emphasis—E. S.

[3] See Lew Szestow, *Dostojewski i Nietzsche. Filozofia tragedii*, trans. by. C. Wodziński, Warszawa 1987. Bohdan Urbankowski, *Dostojewski. Dramat humanizmów*, Warszawa 1994.

[4] See Dorota Jewdokimow, *Człowiek przemieniony. Fiodor M. Dostojewski wobec tradycji Kościoła Wschodniego*, Poznań 2009.

As far as the multiplicity of voices in Norwid's poetry is concerned, in 1967 Michał Głowiński published a ground-breaking paper, "Wirtualny odbiorca w strukturze utworu poetyckiego" ("A Virtual Recipient in the Structure of a Poetic Work"), in which, as it seems, for the first time there appeared presumptions to deal with some kind of polyphony in Norwid's poetry. Although Głowiński's paper was republished several times in Poland and was translated into German, its response was limited to the circle of Norwid scholars.

In 1971 Głowiński returned to the issues of specific features of Norwid's poetry in an essay, "Norwidowska druga osoba" ("Norwid's Second Person"). This text also entered the canon of Norwid scholars, but remained fairly unnoticed outside it.

It is worth tracing the development of Głowiński's writings on Norwid. At first he used Norwid's poem only instrumentally. "Ostatni despotyzm" ("The Last Despotism") was to be exclusively an illustration of his claims about the potential tensions in literary communication between a writer and a virtual recipient postulated by Głowiński. Norwid's text became for Głowiński an example of an extreme breaking of the poetic conventions in operation in the nineteenth century.

The recipient in the nineteenth century confronted with "The Last Despotism" was helpless; the text must have appeared to him/her to be written in hieroglyphs, even though each individual word was perfectly understandable.

And a bit further he added:

> This fact [...] is the result of the *dialogic character of the poem,* and its effect is that his thirteen syllable verse has little in common with earlier poems written in this metre, so popular in Polish literature. It is the result of *focus on the speech of the other* which is rare in poetry in general and was even rarer in the poetry of this period.[5]

[5] Michał Głowiński, *Style odbioru. Szkice o komunikacji literackiej*, Kraków 1977, 86. Emphasis—E. S.

Therefore, according to Głowiński, the distinctive features of Norwid's poetry are: 'its dialogic character" and "focus on the speech of the other". These phenomena were so new in the Polish poetry of the nineteenth century that it was difficult to decipher them correctly. The poetry of the earlier period, the poetry of the 'Great Romantic Poets', was almost exclusively an expression of the identity of the lyric 'I'. The recipient, like a well-tuned musical instrument, was supposed to be allowed to be carried by him, follow his experiences and admire his sensitivity. The most important plain of understanding between a writer and a reader, enabling proper literary communication, was the deep 'Romantic' sensitivity of a reader, demanding from a writer generic eclecticism, which could express more and better. Norwid was in this respect radically different. His strongly grounded religious sensitivity allowed him to respect a whole range of human emotions, but it also demanded something more from a recipient—an effort to be made during individual reading.[6]

Another source of Norwid's predilection for dialogues was (to use a slightly anachronistic term) his 'personalism', which was first of all the result of his respect for the Other. Głowiński wrote about it in his later text:

> The idiosyncrasy of Norwid's second person could be thus defined: no thinking takes place alone. It requires a partner, whose presence may influence meditation, to prompt this or that motif; a partner who may be an opponent and represent a different position, and in this way have even a stronger influence on the subject's self-identification and on the crystallization of his conceptions. The process of thinking in Norwid's poetry, and particularly in the majority of poems from *Vade-mecum*, is a 'social' process. It is not limited to the consciousness

[6] This aspect of Norwid's poetry was noticed by researchers early on and strongly (maybe too strongly) exposed. See Danuta Zamącińska, *Poznawanie poezji Norwida*, in Eadem, *Słynne – nieznane. Wiersze późne Mickiewicza, Słowackiego, Norwida*, Lublin 1985, 61.

> of the thinking protagonist; it is directed onto the outside, and to be more precise, to the other person.[7]

Głowiński's ideas, quoted here in a few points, are almost identical with Bakhtin's reflections on the polyphony in Dostoevsky's novels. Anyway, this similarity was noticed by Głowiński himself, who wrote at the end of his essay about the usefulness of categories constructed by Bakhtin to describe Norwid's poetry.

Norwid's Dialogicality in the Perspective of Earlier Polish Literary Tradition

The dialogicality of Norwid's poetry was discovered relatively late by literary scholars, although its importance from the perspective of the historical development of Polish poetry seems to be enormous. Whereas, if we compare Norwid's dialogic decisions with Dostoevsky, it is easy to belittle Norwid's poetic novelty. Therefore, it seems to be fully justified methodologically to introduce a brief overview of Norwid's poetry in comparison with the earlier Romantic lyric poetry. The most interesting, as far as intertextuality is concerned, are two poems: Mickiewicz's sonnet XVIII from the Odessa cycle entitled "Do D.D. Wizyta" («To D.D. A Visit») and Norwid's lyric poem "Czemu" ("Why?")

Both cycles of Mickiewicz's sonnets published in 1826 are characterized by a considerable degree of formal, 'external' dailogicality. It is the generic novelty which is often mentioned in the context of these sonnets, connected with the introduction of many dialogues (conversations of the Pilgrim with Mirza or dialogues of the protagonist of the Odessa cycle with a sequence of female characters) into the classical form of the sonnet. Czesław Zgorzelski even called some of these sonnets "a miniature trilogy of meetings".[8]

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[7] Michał Głowiński, *Norwidowa druga osoba*, in Idem, *Prace wybrane*, vol. V, *Intertekstualność, groteska, parabola. Szkice ogólne i interpretacje*, ed. by R. Nycz, Kraków 2000, 342.

[8] It is worth noting in the margin that external dramatization of lyric scenery had appeared in Polish literature earlier, in the poems of Karpiński, a poet so

It could be said with no exaggeration that both cycles of Mickiewicz's sonnets were popular throughout the nineteenth century. Therefore, it is not surprising at all that Norwid decided to start a poetic dialogue with one of these sonnets, which dealt with the issues so important to him: conversations in parlours, and a woman.

The key feature of Mickiewicz's "Do D.D. Wizyta" ("A Visit to D.D.») is its humorous character. The description of an endless procession of parlour visits which make it impossible for the lovers to be on their own is presented mostly from a humorous perspective. The poem is built around the hyperbolic presentation of internal tensions of the lyric 'I' to "speak few words with her". The grotesque way of presentation of means to prevent further visits is the result of this tension:

> Gdym mógł, progi wilczą otoczyłbym jamą,
> Stawiłbym lisie pastki, kolczate okowy,
> A jeśli nie dość bronią, uciec bym gotowy
> Na tamten świat stygową zasłonić się tamą.[9]

The hunting vocabulary of the first two verses is finally transformed into a wish to escape to the other side of the mythical Styx. It is quite unusual that the protagonist wants to escape on his own, without his beloved. Anyway, the protagonist and the addressee of the sonnet is referred to only once, in the first verse, which is congruent with the logic of the development of the Odessa cycle described by

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important for Mickiewicz. They could be clearly seen, for example, in the pastoral poem "Laura i Filon" ("Laura and Filon"), although we should not forget about the specific position of the lyric'I' (open to dialogues) in another pastoral poem "O Justynie" ("About Justyna"). It is obvious that it would be difficult to expect in these two poems features of poetry comparable to Norwid or Dostoevky, but they should be remembered to realize the continuity of poetic tradition.

[9] Adam Mickiewicz, *Do D. D. Wizyta*, in *Dzieła*, vol. 1., *Wiersze*, ed by. W. Borowy, E. Sawrymowicz, Warszawa 1955, 252. "If I could, I would surround thresholds with a pit/I would put up traps for foxes and thorny defences/And if they are not enough, I would be prepared to run away/To the other world and use Styx as a dam."

Zgorzelski.[10] But even this case is not direct. The poem concentrates mostly on the emotions of the lyric 'I', and is first of all the description of his impatience, about which nothing can be done in the context of social conventions.

Norwid's "Why" is very different in this aspect, although it is also a monologue, focusing on the description of the mental state of the lyric 'I", locked in a parlour and devoid of the possiblity to speak on his own with his beloved, even for a short moment. But this monologue is (in a certain way) apparent. The lyric 'I' describes "himself as the Other" and refers to himself as if he were the Other.

> Próżno się będziesz przeklinał i zwodził,
> I wiarołomił zawzięciu własnemu –
> Powrócisz do niej – będziesz w progi wchodził
> I drżał, że – może nie zastaniesz?… c z e m u !… (II, 118)[11]

Such a 'split' of self-consciousness of the author is—according to Bakhtin—an element necessary to an aesthetic 'concretization' of the lyric 'I' as a 'sensible whole'.

> After looking at ourselves through the eyes of another, we always return—in life—into ourselves again, and the final or, as it were, recapitulative event takes place within ourselves in the categories of our own life.
>
> In the case of an author-person's aesthetic self-objectification into a hero, this return into itself must not take place; for the author-other or, rather, in oneself, one must come to see another, as do so utterly.[12]

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[10] Czesław Zgorzelski, *O sonetach odeskich*, in Idem, *O sztuce poetyckiej Mickiewicza. Próby zbliżeń i uogólnień*, Warszawa 1976, 243.

[11] All Polish quotations from Norwid are from this edition, Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, ed. by J. W. Gomulicki, v. I-XI, Warszawa 1971-1976. The Roman Numbers stand for volumes; the Arabic ones for pages. In vain you will curse and deceive,/And betray your resolve-/You will return to her—you will go inside,/And tremble—maybe she is not there?...Why?

[12] M.M. Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", in *Art and Anwserability: Early Philosophical Essays,* ed. By Michal Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, transl. by Vadim Liapunov, Unviersity of Texas Press, Austin, 1990, 17. Although later

It might be assumed that according to Bakhtin's way of reasoning in the poem analysed we have such a case of "seeing another" by the author. As we can assume from Norwid's letters, many of which have been preserved, the emotional situation described in the poem was well known to Norwid himself. It is worth noting that in this poem Norwid is not speaking in the first person, but that he addresses his protagonist, from a certain distance, in which two types of moods are mixed: humorous and emphatic. The humorous vein seems to be a part of the intertextual relation with the poem by Mickiewicz discussed earlier. From the 'external' side both protagonists are in a similar situation: both are forced to observe parlour etiquette, which does not allow direct contact with a beloved. Both tend to present their emotions in an exaggerated way. This is where the similarities end. Mickiewicz's poem is in this concrete context only a kind of 'parlour complement' and an element of lovers' play. While Norwid's one aspires to present much deeper spiritual states, on which I will concentrate later on. On the humorous level, the lyric 'I' looks at his protagonist with gentle humour, which is not so easy to specify. This could be seen mostly in the anti-theses so numerous in this poem: you will not want to return but you will return, you are unhappy but "the happy ones will come, etc., etc.

This constant internal 'tussle' activates the second level of speaking—the level of the lyric 'I's' (author's) empathy with the protagonist. The picture of the spiritual turmoil, uncertainty, the feeling of lack of fulfilment and maybe also of being ignored, which is introduced in the first four verses, reaches its climax in the decision of the protagonis to leave the parlour:

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in his paper Bakhtin launches an attack at the lyric genre as such, as 'ethetically suspicious', it seems that his remarks on the issue of the relationship author—hero can be quite useful while analysing polyphony in Norwid's lyric poetry. Bakhtin wrote this on lyric poetry: . The position of the author is strong and authorative, whereas the independence of the hero and of his directedness in living his own life is mininmal; he does not really *live* a life of his won, but only *reflects* himself in the soul of an active author—the other by whom he is possessed" (ibid, 172). Emphasis—E.S.

Aż chwila przyjdzie, gdy w y j ś ć ? – lepiej znaczy,
Niżeli zostać po obojętnemu;
Wstaniesz – i pójdziesz, kamienny z rozpaczy,
I nie zatrzymasz się, precz idąc – – c z e m u ?
(II, 119)[13]

The gesture of leaving the parlour, the only meaningful gesture available to the poem's protagonist, on the one hand may be associated with the Romantic storyline solution which in Norwid's time was considered to be 'spent' (this solution was mocked even by Mickiewicz himself in the scene of the final quarrel of Tadeusz and Telimena). On the other hand, the change from the 'stuffy' parlour with numerous guests to an open and natural space allows for the introduction of extra connotations connected with the nature-God-man relation:

A księżyc będzie, jak od wieków, niemy,
Gwiazda się żadna z nieba nie poruszy –
Patrząc na ciebie oczyma szklistemi,
Jakby nie było w Niebie żywej duszy:
Jakby nie mówił nikt N i e w i d z i a l n e m u ,
Że trochę niżej – tak wiele katuszy!
I nikt, przed Bogiem, nie pomyślił: c z e m u ?
(II, 119)[14]

The closing line may be treated as a key to reading the general message of the poem. It is here that various themes (ethical, humorous, cultural and semiotic) meet. The opposition inside-outside, parlour-open space, culture-nature is strongly developed. The contrastive conjunction "but" introduced at the beginning, not justified syntactically or logically, seems to be addressing directly the hidden

[13] "Till the moment will come, to go out? – is better,/Than to stay in indifference;/ You will get up, and go away stony in despair,/And will not stop, while going away—why?"

[14] And the moon will be, as it has been for centuries, mute,/Not a single star in heaven will move-/Looking at you with glassy eyes,/As if there was not a single soul in heaven./As if no one was telling the Invisible,/That a bit lower – so much suffering!/And no one, before God, thought: why?

'cultural' and 'literary' expectations of the protagonist. After all, "for centuries" in most lyric poems the moon was an attribute of lovers, and its 'silvery moonshine' was a basic element of their (secret) meetings. So, in this sense the moon was definitely not "mute".

The next verse introduces the motif of stars. It also has been a constant element of lyric love poetry. In Norwid's poem stars do not move, so in the context of basic European cultural symbolism they simply do not want to fall down in order to fulfill the whims of an unhappy lover. Both the unfriendliness of the parlour and the silence of nature (which is more like theatrical decorations than real space) cause the protagonist to be removed for the basic sources of looking for fulfilment, or at least for consolation, which were available in the culture of the nineteenth century. In this way the lyric 'I' of the poem has a dialogue not only with the protagonist himself, talking to him about him, but also with the tradition of lyric love poetry. The gradual, slightly humorous, way of taking away from the protagonists various illusions on the issue of how youths in love 'should' behave finally makes him "look up".

The ending of the poem is ambiguous, 'dark' and therefore interesting. We should probably agree with Stanisław Falkowski, who interpreted these final lines of "Why" as recognition of God's protection of the world.

> The additional key to defining the sense of the final line should have the form of an answer to the question: in what sense did Norwid use the expression "before God". […]If […] we assume that the expression "before God" is used in the sense of 'earlier than God' or 'apart from God' or 'beyond God', then this clause is independent and means that before God no one had thought about the reasons and the sense of human suffering, but God did.[15]

The expression "as if", which is repeated twice in the final stanza, and questions the presence of God in heaven and his protection of people, has a very complex function at the level of grammar and

[15] Stanisław Falkowski, *Między wyznaniem, drwiną i pouczeniem*…, op. cit., 19-20.

dialogue. First of all, it is not known who this "as if", belongs to: was it 'taken out' from the internal monologue of the poem's protagonist and is a self-example of his spiritual state (of emptiness and loneliness)? Or is it a type of parabolic trope which the lyric 'I' uses to provoke an internal move of the protagonist? To create a sudden recovery from the horrible feeling of emptiness and rejection, to the change of the context in which the question from the title appears? To look at oneself not "in the light of mute moon", but—God's Providence? If Norwid really had introduced a parabola at the end of the poem, the dialogic whole of the poem could be seen as possessing a deeper sense. In such a case the dialogic (in the Bakhtinian sense) address of the lyric 'I' to the protagonist would be clearer and would have more sense. The description of the negative spiritual state of the Other, which is, what is more, directed to this very Other, reveals a goal which is not only emphatic ("I know what you feel, I feel empathy for you", but also could be therapeutic ("I know what you feel, I feel empathy for you, I know how I can help you to start feeling differently"). Józef Fert was considering in the opening chapter of his treatise on dialogicality in Norwid what "can exist between I and You".[16] Norwid clearly answered this question: Between I and You there can exist dialogue, a dialogue in the ethical sense, which presumes the co-existence of interlocutors and their knowledge of the same linguistic code, but also deep understanding in which sometimes (as is the case in "Why") a little provocation can be indispensable.

The Conversation with Oneself as the Other in Dostoevsky's Writings

The structural ploy of talking with oneself as if with the Other is even more common in Dostoevsky's novel than in Norwid's poems. The difference is that Dostoevsky did not force his protagonists to have soliloquies (although we may consider as exceptions here, for example, the considerations of the Underground Man or the narrator of "A Gentle Creature"), but usually he constructed concrete interlocutors for them,

[16] Józef F. Fert, *Norwid poeta dialogu*, Wrocław-Łódź 1982, 9.

whose ontological status is not always clear. Usually, Dostoevsky used a 'doppelgänger' scheme" from Older and Younger Galadkins, through Raskolnikov and Svidrygailov, to Ivan and the Devil. This last example seems to be particularly interesting. Particularly when we take into consideration the fact that the 'doppelgänger relation' in *Brothers Karamazov* is very complicated. After all, in the novel Ivan was facilitated with two 'mental doppelgängers': Smierdiakov and the Devil. The dialogue of Ivan with each of them is a different kind of conversation with himself, a direct one in the case of the figure of the Devil created by the imagination and a bit more camouflaged in the case of Smerdyakov.

Bakhtin, in his book on Dostoevsky's novels, several times stressed the specific nature of communication between Ivan and Smierdyakov. The uniqueness of their dialogues— according to Bakhtin—was grounded in the fact that the servant seems to be answering the suggestions of young Karamazov which are never directly uttered. The specificity of these conversations is not so much in the understatements and silences of Ivan, but in the deep sense of internal unterstanding between these characters, the nature of which Ivan Karamozov was probably not aware. The chapter of *The Karamazov Brothers* particularly interesting from the perspective of this 'dual' communication is the chapter entitled "Very Vague as Yet". At the beginning of it, the narrator clearly describes Ivan's attitude to Smerdyakov:

> In fact, Ivan Fyodorovich had indeed taken an intense dislike to the man [Smierdyakov] of later and especially during the past few day. He had begun to notice within himself a mounting feeling bordering on hatred for that creature. This sentiment may have been heightend because something quite different had come about at the outset when Ivan Fyodorovich had just come to our parts. He had then suddenly taken a marked interest in Smerdyakov, and had even found him highly original. He had himself encouraged Smerdyakov to talk to him […] Smerdyakov began to display and express an overweening vanity and an injured vanity at that. That

> was something Ivan Fyodorovich disliked intensly. It marked the beginning of his aversion for the man.[17]

Ivan Karamazov perfectly recognizes his mental similarity with the servant. At the same time he perceives Smerdyakov as a caricature version of himself. This type of 'carnivalesque' similarity between the putative brothers creates in Ivan an abhorance of Smerdyakov and deep admiaration of Smerdyakov for Ivan, which is the result of the internal similarity of these two characters.

The following fragment is quite characteristic:

> With a sense of squeamish irritation, he now tried to enter the wicket without a word or a glance at Smerdyakov, who, however rose from the bench in a way that on once intimated Ivan Fyodorovich, that he wanted to speak with him on an important matter. Ivan Fyodorovich gave him a glance and halted, and a very fact that he had come to a sudden standstill and not wlaked past as he had intended a moment before exasperated him unbearably.[18]

Smerdyakov was endowed with a special kind of power over Ivan Karamazov, which is probably the result of the subtle internal similarity of these two characters. Smerdyakov is, in a way, a physical personification of the most indolent ideas and desires of Ivan. Hence, the particular power of the servant over Ivan, which the former discreetly manifests, and the extreme abhorrence Ivan feels for Smerdyakov and for his relationship with Smerdyakov.

One of the most fervent desires of Smerdyakow is to send Ivan to Tcheremashnia. It is only after Ivan's departure that the scene of Fyodor Karamazov's murder will precede with no obstacles. Smerdyakov, who senses Ivan's mental agreement to the patricide, summarizes his plan of action. At the same time, nothing in this specific, double conversation is put in a straightforward way. This allows Ivan to depart quietly and to try to deceive himself that nothing

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[17] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Karamazov Brothers,* vol. I, transl. by Julius Katzer, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1980, 405-406

[18] Ibid., 407.

wrong is going to happen in the house of his father during his absence. It is worth looking closer at this 'unclear' conversation.

At the beginning, Smerdyakov reminds Ivan about the father's request "Why don't you go to Chermashnya, sir?" This question, seemingly innocent, elicits Ivan's outrage: "The devil take it, can't you speak more clearly. What is it that you are after?" Then Smerdyakov starts complaining about his tough situation, which is the result of Dymitr's and the old Karamazov's rivalry for Grushenka's favours. The father and the son have chosen Smerdyakov as their confidante, and they both threaten him with death if he is not loyal to them.

Then, it turns out that after Ivan's departure, Smerdyakov may have had a severe attack of epilepsy:

> – I mean a long epileptic fit, sir, a very long one, lasting several hours or even a day or two perhaps, I once had an attack lasting three day. I couln›t come to my senses. [...]
> But it's impossible to tell when at attack is coming on, they say, or name the exact hour. So how can you cay you'll have a fit tomorrow?" Ivan Fyodorovich inquired with keen and exasparated curiosity.
> – True enough, sir. Yo can't tell beforehand.[19]

Smerdyakov explains to Ivan, step by step, how the father's murder will be committed. Yet nothing is said in a straightforward way. This type of conversation, which is also—as may be assumed—a type of explication of the internal considerations of Ivan, allows him to preserve an external appearance of a lack of knowledge, for keeping away from himself the awareness that the considerations about the mental patricide are no longer theoretical ones and have been converted into a real plan of murder. Smerdyakov, while entering the philosophical and ethical considerations of Ivan, comits the real murder, which Karamazov himself would not probably have been capable of.

However, Smerdyakov, despite all this, remains only as a botched doppelgänger of Ivan. His desire to be absolutely connected with Ivan

[19] Ibid., 410.

through murdering Karamoazov the father, the desire to become a manifestation of all, even the most iconoclastic ideas of Ivan, ends with disaster. Smerdyakov, realizing the deep abhorrence Ivan feels for him, commits suicide.

Dostoevsky constructed Ivan's conversations with his other doppelgänger—the Devil in a much more straightforward fashion. Ivan, suffering from 'mental unbalance' is visited by the 'Devil', who

> was wearing a kind of brown coat of good cut but somewhat threadbare, made about three years ago and now quite out of fashion, in a style that had not been word for two years by well-to-do men about town. […]
> His visitor waited, and sat exactly like a hanger-on does who has just come downstairs from the room assigned to him, to keep his host company at tea, but is discreetly silent sind the host is busy and frowningly preoccupied.[20]

Throughout the conversation Ivan tries to convince himself that the Devil is only a creation of his imagination, a fantastic personifiaction of the worse version of himself:

> "Never for a moment have I taken you for reality," Ivan even cried out in a kind of fury. "You're a lie, an illness, a phantom. I only don't know how to destroy you and I'm afraid I shall have to suffer you for a time. You are a hallucination of mine. You are an embodiment of myself, but only of on aspect of me—of my thoughts and feelings, but only the most vile and stupid. From that point of view, you might even interest me, if only I had time to waste on you.[21]

The sickly mental projection of the Devil experienced by Ivan is completely devoid of the 'metaphysical thrill', as it is known from the beginning that Ivan's guest is only a hallucination. Their conversations are very interesting, particularly the second one. The basic ethical-philosophical problem of Ivan is the existence

[20] Ibid, vol. II, 456-457.
[21] Ibid., 459.

of God and the possibility of man-god appearing in the world and establishing a new morality, according to which 'everything will be permissible'. This philosophical problem is—obviously—well known from Dostoevsky's earlier novels: *Crime and Punishment* and *Demons*. However, the final novel of Dostoevsky was to be much more profound in terms of philosophy and religion. Therefore, Dostoevsky introduced some changes to the character-type of a Russian intellectual-atheist. The moral crime he commits is not so pronounced as the killing of a money lender and her sister in *Crime and Punishment,* or a number of murders committed by the protagonists of *Demons*. The act of killing Fyodor Karamazov is presented on many more levels than the 'mere killing' of one man by another. The basic issue which could allow for this sort of transgression of divine and human laws is the problem of God's existence. If there is no God, everything is permitted—says Ivan, and Smierdiakov repeats it and commits murder. Ivan becomes an 'intellectual' killer. The awareness that he became the 'author' of the murder committed by Smierdiakov and was indirectly involved in Dymitr's accusation, becomes almost unbearable. And it is at this moment that his mind creates the projection of an interlocutor-Devil. Although Ivan tries hard to remember that his intrusive guest is only a construct of his feverish mind, and that while talking with him he is in fact talking with himself, he decides to ask a key question:

> «So, you too, don›t believe in God?» Ivan again sneered with hatred.
> "Well, how shall I put it, if only you're earnest—"
> "Is that a God or isn't there?" cried Ivan again with fierce insistence.[22]

The Devil, according to the role of construction of this character (and, Ivan, after all, is to a certain extent, a 'poet'), is not keen to offer a direct answer. Instead, he tells a few stories, first of all, the one about the Grand Inquisitor. The reference to this text, which was earlier introduced by Dostoevsky in very different context (then Ivan played

[22] Ibid., 467.

to certain extent the role of the tempting devil while telling this story to Alosha), results in a change in the thinking of Ivan:

> "I forbid you to speak of *The Grand Inquisitor,*" cried Ivan colouring all over with shame.
> «Well, and what about *Geological Upheaval*? Remember? That was a lovely poem.
> "Shut up, or I'll kill you!"
> "Kill me? No, excuse me but I'll have my say. I've come to treat myself to that pleasure. Oh, I love the dreams of my passionate young friends, quivering with a thirst for life. !"[23]

Ivan, though he tries hard, can not get an unambiguous answer about God's existence from 'the devil of his subconsciousness'. However, he manages to achieve something probably more precious: a sense of shame for his earlier over-intellectual lack of faith. The devil successfully made fun of earlier philosophical and ethical ideas of his"young friend". So, in a way, Ivan's subconsciousness did a very good job. It seems that a person like Ivan is best handled through mockery, which opens his eyes to his earlier mistakes.

Dostoevsky's dialogues with oneself as the Other may, at first glance, appear to be much more sophisticated that the 'auto-dialogues' of Norwid. But, if we were to disregard the structural differences which are connected with generic differences, we would see that both the ways of constructing of such dialogues and their strategic goals are similar in the examples selected. Both the protagonist of the poem "Why" and Ivan Karamazov are in moments of their lives which are in a way crucial. The conversation with oneself as the Other allows both of them to look at themselves from a proper distance: the protagonist of Norwid's poem has a chance to notice the humorous aspect of his situation, while Ivan, under the influence of conversations with Smerdyakov and the Devil, has a chance to see his moral ugliness, starts to feel disgust for himself and to be ashamed of his pseudo-philosophical sources. Naturally, the lyric

[23] Ibid, 477.

situation created by Norwid is much 'lighter' in the moral sense. At this moment it is not the presentation of the literary aesthetics of both writers which is at stake, but pointing to the similar structural function of the polyphonic fragments of their works leading inescapably to the God-man relationship. By the way, as Bakhtin noticed, we are not Adams saying words for the first time, and each of our utterances directed to the other man always has the most important Addressee.

"The Artistic Will of Polyphony" and the Problem of Tradition

Józef Fert called Norwid: «a poet of dialogue».[24] Actually, even if one only browses through his poems, one can see (even on a graphic basis) his very frequent use of dialogues. The poem "Przeszłość" ("The Past") may serve as an example, as it is constructed mostly of contrastive sentences.[25]

1
God did not create *the past*, nor death nor pain,
But he who breaks the laws;
His days are—woes;
So, sensing evil, wards of memory, in vain!

2
Wasn't he like a child that whirs by in a dray,
Saying, "O! An oak tree
Deep into the woods…it flees!..."
– The oak stands still, the cart sweeps the children away.

[24] Józef F. Fert, op. cit.

[25] On the interpretation of this poem see, for example, Jacek Trznadel, *Czytanie Norwida. Próby,* Warszawa 1978. AntoniDunajski, *Chrześcijańska interpretacja dziejów w pismach Cypriana Norwida*, Lublin 1985. SławomirRzepczyński, *Nad „Przeszłością" Norwida*, w: *Czytając Norwida. Materiały z konferencji poświęconej interpretacji utworów Cypriana Norwida zorganizowanej przez Katedrę Filologii Polskiej Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Słupsku*, ed. by S. Rzepczyński, Słupsk 1995.

3
The *past* is here *today*, and today is even further:
Beyond the wheels the village is there,
Not—*something, somewhere,*
Where people never gathered!...(II, 18)[26]

The poem begins with a dialogic reply disagreeing strongly with the claim of the Other that "God created the past". This may at first look surprising. Mostly because the past was listed by the lyric 'I' alongside death and suffering. Such a treatment of tradition (inescapably connected with thinking about the past) was probably outside all intellectual conventions of the nineteenth century. Although, on the other hand, the past and suffering connected with it are here the work of Satan "who breaks the law". The introduction of the character of the Devil was a popular motif in Polish Romanticism. It is enough to recall the context of *Kordian* or *Irydion*. What is surprising is that Norwid might have supported the historical-philosophical version which is clearly outside the Christian approach to history. Human history cannot be the domain of the devil—such a claim goes against Catholic eschatology. However, in the following verses Norwid somewhat weakens his initial, controversial claim, introducing a subtle distinction between the past and recollections about it. In this context it might be suggested that the first line of this poem concerns not so much an objective phenomenon of the past (if such a thing as an objective vision of history exists at all), but rather various perceptions of past events. The category of recollection which appears at the end of the first stanza strongly stresses the subjective nature of our thinking about the past, particularly the recent past. Therefore, it is not the whole past as such which is an object of Satan's activities, but only its negative vision, tinged with tears and suffering as a distorted recollection.

Józef Fert, in the footnotes to the edition of *Vade-mecum,* pointed to the letter from Norwid to Marian Sokołowski (from February 1865)

[26] C.K. Norwid, *Poems,* trans. by Danuta Borchardt, Archipelago Books, New York, 2011, 21.

as a direct context of "The Past". Norwid dealt there with the issues of nineteenth century society:

> Anyway, history as far as the *past* is concerned, today is in a unique and strange position—the past is not anyhing, but *a conditional presence*, which has its ALWAYS[…] I have never had any illusions about Poland and I know that it is a big child with eyes filled with tears, which therefore sees only through the prism of its holy and accursed tears, sees rainbows multiplied by three or seven—never the truth. (IX, 166)[27]

Norwid observed in the way his contemporaries were perceiving history some strange distance, the sense of a lack of reality about events of the past. He was struck by the lack of tools Polish historians in the nineteenth century had to describe the historical heritage in such a way as to understand the present. This confusion of 'historical perception' was, according to Norwid, the result of the trauma of recent national uprisings which had distorted Poles' perception of history. Violent and bitter emotions towards the recent past and to the present make Norwid think of Poland in terms of a big, crying child.

The reference in the second stanza of "The Past" to the impression of the objects which pass by, enabled Norwid to show the fundamental 'mental' error of Polish historians in the nineteenth century. It is also worth to remember here about a philological rule which was brilliantly presented by Michail Gasparov[28] between a certain 'distance' in historical terms of the readers contemporary to the writer and later recipients, about the author's vision of his 'virtual readers' and readers in the later periods. After all, "The Past" was not written 'for us'. Without rudimentary knowledge about the ways in which people thought in this period the polyphony of the poem is totally lost. Of course, we see that some debate is going on, but we may be

[27] Józef F. Fert, op. cit.

[28] Mikhail Gasparov, „Filologia jako moralność", transl. by E. Skalińska, *Teksty Drugie,* (2) 2014, 154-157.

lacking the tools to reconstruct it in a holistic way. In this context it is no longer so important if Norwid had been right in his criticism of historians contemporary to him. What is important is the fact that the muliplicity of attitudes presented in the poem must have been clearly perceived by potential readers of this poem.

On the other hand, such a perception of this poem might be going against Norwid's own ideas. After all, he clearly states in the last stanza a specific historic continuity, of universal features which could be found in the past: "The *past* is here *today*, and today is even further". As is the case with the majority of Norwid's aphorisms, this one as well, in the current understanding, is usually identified with the popular and not very innovative formula about the continuous topicality of history. However, it seems that, taking into account the imagery from the previous stanza, this sentence could be understood in a different way: it is not the past itself which escapes from people "an oak tree […] flees" but people, through bigger and bigger distance from what existed in the past, lose a proper historical perspective. The past is created by people in the same direct way in which the present is shaped. This poem, although seemingly completely devoid of national references, in reality is embedded in the 'Polish historical magma'. In this light it might be read not so much as a somewhat strange instruction for a nineteenth-century historian, but more like an instruction to the poet's contemporaries about their role in shaping Polish reality.

It is worth noting that in such a brief poem we have two very different views of the past. The first one, covered by 'the prism of tears', is the result of the activities of one "who breaks the laws" **.** This 'past' is not far removed in time; it is covered by memories of the living, and that is why it is so easy to disturb it. The second 'past' is more distant, is more like a conversation of the present with the past in which 'people gathered' as well.

In this way, within the poetics of polyphony, Norwid wrote a reflection on God and the past. A similar layer of polyphonic imagery of the folk religious tradition can also be seen in the writings of Dostoevsky.

A Russian historian of literature, Alfred Bem, in 1934 wrote about "The Legend of an Onion", which is told in *The Karamazov Brothers* by Grushenka::

> Once upon a time there lived a very wicked old woman. When she died, she did not leave a single good deed behind her. She was seized by devils, who hurled her in a lake of fire, but her guardian angel tried hard to recall some good deed of her to report to God. He remembered and said to God: She once pulled up an onion in her kitchen garden and gave it to a beggar woman. So God said to him: Take them onion and hold it out to her in the lake, she can enter Paradise, but if the onion snaps, she will stay where she is. So the angel hastened to the woman and held out the onion to her: Take hold of it, woman, and pull, he said, and set about pulling with great caution. He was on the point of getting her out when other sinners in the lake, on seeing she was being pulled out, began taking hold of her so as to get together with her. But she was a very wicked woman and began to kick them off. It's me that's being pulled out, she said, not you. The onion's mina, not yours. Not sooner had she said so than the onion snapped, and the woman fell back into the lake, where she is burning to this day. The angel went away in tears.[29]

Bem noted the prominent place of this piece in the structure of the novel and the significant reinterpretation that Dostoevsky applied to it. According to Bem, the traditional understanding of the legend, changed by Dostoevsky into a kind of parable, was significantly widened in *The Karamazov Brothers*. Practically all the protagonists in the chapter "An Onion" are endowed with the metaphorical chance of leaving hell, understood as the lack of God's light, yet it is only Alosha who achieves this.[30]

If we were to trust Dostoevsky, it would turn out that the only version of the folk story is the one he wrote down. However, it is

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[29] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Karamazov Brothers,* op. cit., vol. II, 45-46.

[30] See Alfred Bem, *Liegienda o* łukowkie *u Dostojewskago. (Izwlieczienije* iż dokłada, *proczitannogo na Mieżdunarodnom sjezdie sławistow w Warszawie*, „Miecz" 1934, no. 23, 4.

known from elsewhere that a folk tale with a very similar storyline had been published in 1859 by Alexander Afanasyev, with the title *The Brother of Christ*.[31] Of course, Dostoevsky's honesty when he informed his publisher about his own discovery of a folk tale should not be questioned in a decisive way. As Lotman noted, there might have been various reasons for Dostoevsky not to admit his reading of Afanasyev, one of which might have been problems with the censors encountered by Afanasyev's *Legends*.

From my perspective it is the relationship existing between Dostoevsky's version of this folk tale with its first version, which might be summarized in this way:

1. A dying old man orders his son always to look after beggars,
2. The son decides to give Easter eggs to all the poor in the church at Easter. This causes the displeasure of his mean mother.
3. The son runs out of eggs and the poorest of the beggars does not get one. That is why he was invited home for Easter breakfast. The mother was again angry with her son and did not eat breakfast with them.
4. The son sees that the beggar is in rags, but that he has a beautiful, expensive cross. The beggar asks the son to exchange crosses, but the son at first refuses, explaining that the beggar will no longer be able to afford an expensive cross now.
5. The beggar gets his way and invites the son to his place on Easter Tuesday. He gives him detailed directions: the youth has to follow the path he has shown, praying: "God Bless".
6. The youth hits the road to visit the beggar, and on his way he sees several groups of people:
    a. Children asking him how long they will be suffering;
    b. Maidens continuously pouring water from one well to another; old men keeping an old fence upright with difficulty;
    c. And finally he sees the beggar, in which he recognizes Jesus Christ.

[31] See *Narodnyje russkije liegiendy sobrannyja Afanassjewym*, London 1859, 30.

7. He asks him the reasons for which these people suffer. Christ answers him in the following way:
   a. The children are suffering because they were damned by their own mothers while still in the womb.
   b. The maidens repent because they diluted the milk they sold with water;
   c. The old men are punished because when they were still alive they claimed that they preferred to live well, and then had to keep the fence upright for all eternity.
8. Christ takes the youth to paradise and shows him the place prepared just for him. Then he takes him to hell and shows him the youth's mother suffering in the boiling sulphur.
9. The youth asks Christ to forgive her the sins she committed. Christ agrees but under the condition that the youth will make a rope out of plant stalks, with which he is to pull the mother out.
10. The youth makes a rope, puts it in the boiling sulphur and starts pulling the mother out. When he manages to catch her head she accuses him of an attempt to suffocated her. The rope breaks and she plunges again in the surge.
11. Christ says that the mother could not hold her evil reflexes at bay, and that is why she will remain in hell for ever.

It is clear that Dostoevsky uses in his "Legend about an Onion" only in the last part of the folk tale. It was only this part that Dostoevsky regarded as required to strenghten the artistic whole showing Alosha's way on the edge above the abyss of sin and fall. Yet, even here Dostoevsky considerably reinterpreted the folk tale. Alosha manages to avoid the spiritual hell thanks to the little onion which Grushenka-angel gave him. On the other hand, Grushenka's behaviour also receives two dimensions: she is at the same time the one who gives and receives the specifically understood spiritual alms. After all, Alosha thanks her and tells her that she is good and offers her 'a little onion', which can save her from the hell of meeting her ex-lover. However, Grushenka breaks down and so does the onion. She goes on to meet a "seductive Pole".

In this way the final part of the folk tale about the brother of Christ is 'multiplied' by Dostoevsky; under the schematic characters of a mother and a son he placed the voices of many protagonists, concerned with their own salvation and spiritual help to the Other.

However, this is not the end of the influence of *The Brother of Christ* on Dostoevsky. In Lotman's text, referred to earlier, the attention was drawn to the unusual gesture of exchanging crosses in *The Idiot*, which Dostoevsky probably took from this folk tale. At the same time Lotman seemed to ignore totally the moral-eschatological questions present both in the folk tale and in *The Karamazov Brothers*. These are, obviously, the questions with which the Youth is confronted during the trip to his guest-beggar. It seems that one of them was particularly disturbing to Dostoyevsky—the question about the sense of suffering of innocent children, suffering not only in this life, but also in the eternal one. It is characteristic that while the punishment meted to the Maidens and the Old Men was described with details, the kind of suffering children were forced to, was not defined by the folk narrator in any way. The answer which Christ give to the Youth (these children suffer because they were damned by their mothers) creates a natural moral indignation both of today's readers of the legend and probably of the educated readers from the nineteenth century. Such an objection to the innocent suffering was used by Dostoevsky in the conversation between Ivan and Alosha. It was this argument which Ivan used and which shook Alosha's faith in the goodness of God.

Folk tales were for Dostoevsky one of the key sources of learning about the Orthodox mentality of the Russian peasants. For all his fascination with them, Dostoevsky treated them in a distanced way. He did not accept even one of these tales uncritically. As Lotman wrote,

> [...] the proces of crititcal transfromation by Dostoyevsky of artistic features of legend was complex and contradictory. Dostoevsky often challenged the folk tradition, at times he gave it new sense; he

> introduced legends into the field of literaturę in a permanent way, he considered the ethical implications of these legends.[32]

* * *

The example of 'structural polyphony' analysed here has, of course, a very different character in the writings of Norwid and Dosoevsky. A polyphonic poem of Norwid dealing with the lack of the 'historical instinct' of his contemporaries and a fragment from Dostoevsky's novel entering into a dialogue with the folk religious imagination are fundamentally incomparable. However, the basic element which connects them is the very clear attempt of both writers to enter into a dialogue with their own period and with the most important element of this period—tradition. Although the meaning of both these texts is very different, they are undoubtedly connected by attempts to introduce into their texts fragments of the 'iconic speech' of the Other in order to have a dialogue.

Impossible Dialogue

Michail Bakhtin presented the essence of dialogues in Dostoevsky's novels in this way:

> A character's self-consciousness in Dostoevsky is thoroughly dialogized in its every aspect; it is turned outward, intensely addressing itself, another, a third person. Outside this living addressivity toward itself and toward the other it does not exist, even for itself. In this sense it could be said that the person in Dostoevsky is the *subject of an address.* One cannot talk about him; one can only address oneself to him.[33]

We may assume that dialogue has similar functions in Norwid's writings, particularly in his lyric poetry. His love poems are particularly

[32] Jurij M. Łotman, *Romany Dostojewskogo i russkaja liegienda*, in Idem, *Riealizm russkoj litieratury 60-ch godov XIX wieka*, Leningrad 1974, 283.
[33] Michail Bakchtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* op. cit. 251.

interesting in this respect. Norwid's erotic lyric poems have so far been analysed relatively rarely.[34] It is worth noting that it is in this place that the desire of the lyric 'I" (and maybe of the author as well) to have holistic contact with the Other is strongest.

Barbara Stelmaszczyk pointed to a very important phenomenon: in Norwid 'parlour love poetry' there is usually no real understanding between the lyric 'I' and his female interlocutors.[35] A good example here is the poem [Co? jej powiedzieć...] [Tell her—What?].

1
Tell her—what?...Ah! win her admiration
With not much to say;
Something—of general truths; as that day
And night mean the earth's full rotation!
2
That… during a single pulse-rate
The earth orbits through millions of miles–
The axis poles eternally grate:
Time – stirs the void– –
3
That a year—means whole nature's tremor,
That the seasons—not simply
How waters melt and freeze,
And that a heart beats for only an hour!
4
Tell her that…
…then discuss the weather,
Where is it warmer? Colder where?

[34] See Dariusz Seweryn's text dealing with Norwid's erotic imagination: Dariusz Seweryn, „Śpiąc *z Epopeją". O możliwości badania wyobraźni erotycznej Norwida*, in *Jak czytać Norwida? Postawy badawcze, metody, weryfikacje*, ed. by B. Kuczera-Chachulska and J. Trzcionka, Warszawa 2008. On ways of self-presentation of the lyric 'I' towards women in selected Norwid poems seeBarbara Stelmaszczyk, *Autoportret z kobietą w tle. O liryce Norwida*, in *Rozjaśnianie ciemności. Studia i szkice o Norwidzie*, ed. by J. Brzozowski, B. Stelmaszczyk, Kraków 2002.

[35] Barbara Stelmaszczyk, op. cit., 62-63.

And add—what the fashion is this year
And not a word more.[36]

Stelmaszczyk wrote about this poem: "Here, in order to be noted, the protagonist must keep using clichés and banal statements, seemingly deep pseudo-revelations, beyond which nothing could be said."[37] It is difficult to agree fully with this opinion, particularly if we remember Norwid's statement from "Moralność" ("Morality"): "a lover is by necessity an artist". It is love which the lyric 'I' feels in this poem which makes him create a dialogue, which (as can be assumed) will never be developed, but which is so lyrical. Of course, the astronomical and natural issues he tackles are not necessarily ground-breaking. When directed (even if only theoretically) to a loved one, they could be treated as a pretext to speak about one's feelings, and moreover they fulfil a phatic function.

It is true that the first stanza remains in the sphere of the ironic distance created by the lyric 'I'. What really matters here is the very reflection on the future communicative situation (after all, such a 'construction' of a conversation is not an every-day activity and it is not neutral psychologically) and the ironic statement: "to win her admiration", which hides a drama of love not directly declared and an exemplification of "general truths." Despite these potential reservations, we can notice from the beginning of the second stanza a change in the way of modelling the lyric 'I'. The cool lyric distance is gradually replaced by lyric seriousness. It turns out that "general truths" may become—in certain conditions—quite unusual.

The parallel in the second stanza between the impetus of the speeding globe and one delicate, almost shy, heart beat introduces a reader into modern poetic imagery. This 'lyric detail' brings some associations with a fragment from Słowacki's *Listy poetyckie z Egiptu* (*Poetic Letters from Egypt*) "I can hear the clock striking and I can hear the heart. Time and life". It was exactly

[36] C.K. Norwid, *Poems,* trans. by Adam Czerniawski, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 1986, 81.
[37] Barbara Stelmaszczyk, op. cit., 66.

these words which Białoszewski so much admired, seeing in them premonitions of the terseness and thriftiness of linguistic poetry.[38] The juxtaposition of shy, perhaps not fully conscious emotions, with the cosmic impetus seems to be located in the same stream of poetic imagery as much later experimental poetry. One has to be really blind and deaf not to perceive the duality of such a way of speaking and emotional content delicately camouflaged there.

According to Stelmaszczyk, another pseudo revelation of the physical and astronomical kind appears in these verses:

> The axis poles eternally grate:
> Time – stirs the void– –

Here we can humorously claim that Norwid introduces us into the world of experimental physics. Naturally, different variations on time are a constant literary motive from antiquity, but it was clearly *novum* to connect to physical elements: space and time,[39] a concept which, after all, was invented in the twentieth century. At the level of dialogic lyric imagery what matters is the juxtaposition of tradition (continuity, duration, 'historical memory' embedded in each atom of the earth) with the speeding time, tearing the time out of reverie, troubling it with changes. Metaphorically, the time as if 'breaks into' the existing space and compels it to move and change. Having in mind the key aspects of Norwid's poetry, one might say that this is a civilizational change.

It should be remembered that this extensive philosophical deposit functions as an immanent element of a dialogic lyric love poem. This imagery is directly connected with science, but also with Dante's 'cosmogony' and with metaphysical poetry. So the 'natural treatise'

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[38] See Jan Zieliński, *Słowacki. Szat Anioł*, Warszawa 2009, 237.

[39] Such a 'spatiotemporal' fusion appeared in Norwid's poetry at least once before in a strange poem which is included in a short story entitled "Cywilzacja" ("Civilization"). It should be remembered that Bakhtin extended understanding of spatiotemporal relations (the so called chronotope) to the whole of literature and analysed the immanent presence of chronotopes in Ancient novels.

which forms the bulk of the poem becomes in this context an exquisite connection with the best traditions of European lyric poetry. At the same time, the diversity of dialogic possibilities and intertextuality must have been challenging for nineteenth-century readers.

At the end of the third stanza the motif of the "heartbeat" returns. It is once again situated by the speaking subject in the context of a passing moment. This moment is special in the way it may lead to a real meeting of two people, their full mutual understanding. It is only then that a 'not-pretended dialogue' can happen. Therefore, the whole poem may be read in terms of turning this apparently banal conversation into a real meeting. At the same time it is clear that this is a desperate attempt, doomed to failure. The verse which opens the last stanza is cut in the middle: "Tell her that…" becomes a signal (also a graphic one) of inevitable dialogic disaster. According to the concept of Bakhtin presented above, the lyric 'I' *addresses* the loved one, speaks *to her.* The proposal of a dialogue remains unanswered. The structure of the poem "Tell Her—What?" shows directly that a planned conversation will be the last attempt to start a dialogue, which in this situation is not possible.

The parlour etiquette is in Norwid's poetry to be blamed for the impossibility of a real dialogue. His poems, as well as his short stories, abound in 'negative standards' of parlour conversations. The best known texts in this respect are: "Stygmat" ("Stigma"), Bransoletka ("A Bracelet") , *Assunta* (*Assunta*), "Ostatni despotyzm" ("The Last Despotism"), "Nerwy" ("Nerves"), fragments from *Aktor* (*An Actor*) and *Pierścień Wielkiej Damy (The Ring of the Grand Lady)*. Norwid's concept of 'parlour stigma' has been researched in detail, and it could be summarized in the following way:

> The sociological order depends on artificiality [of speech – E.S.]. It consists of social structures as well as of theories, doctrines, philosophical, religious and political systems which have been created over the centuries Each of them has its own language, the development of which is conducive to the development of a doctrine. Theories, education and doctrines have their own dynamics, independent from their creators, who become their victims. The language of a doctrine

> sometimes is stronger than its sense: the linguistic form dominates over the intellectual content. That his how *Idea* is born—this despotic Idea, which with its linguistic and logical strength submits man.[40]

This quote comes from a book by the Russian scholar Yefim Etkind, which dealt, among other issues, with Dostoevsky's writings. Etkind claimed that Dostoyevsky's protagonists had no chance to present their "spiritual depths", and illustrated his argument with two examples: Raskolnikov and Myshkin. Here it is the second example which appears to be more interesting, even more so, because Etkind connected it with the sociologist's analysis of the "parlour community" and Myshkin's estrangement from it. What seems to be important is the fact that the eponymous character—with no clear social status from the beginning—gets lost in conversations which require the understanding of these social 'rules of speaking' (for example when he was proposing in the parlour of Nastasia Filopovna or during his first conversation with "the son of Pavlishchev"). Etkind claimed that this specific feature of Myshkin has the result that he, having deep respect for all people, wants to be absolutely honest with them, while the fully honest way of expressing one's deepest thoughts must be difficult and was punished by what according to nineteenth century conventions was called 'nativity' or 'incomprehensibility'. While lying in its widest ethical and philosophical understanding

> [...] comes to a speaker with ease. The difficulty of linguistic embodiment of the truth is caused by the necessity of the movement from the spiritual state, from at times unspecified emotions and complex, contrastive thoughts to more or less coherent words. Words should reflect their vocation; be a holistic external embodiment of the internal world, the materiazlization of spiritual processes. In other words, the translation into the language of words must be faithful to the original. While in the case of lying—their is no original. The linguistic shape is not constrained by rules of faithfulness or

[40] Jefim. G. Etkind, *Wnutriennij cziełowiek i wnieszniaja rech'. Oczierki psichopoetiki russkoj litieratury XVII-XIX wiekow*, Moskwa 1998, 268.

> precision. [...] Lying is an imitation of the translation from the spiritual to material language, its forgery.[41]

As almost none of the protagonists of *The Idiot* can fully oppose the conventional linguistic code, which is based on specifically understood lying, into a direct, 'naive' language (such as Myshkin uses), full, proper dialogue cannot exist in this novel.

It is obvious that this problem is not limited to such novels as *The Idiot* or *Crime and Punishment*. The same concept could be found—in a reversed form-in the monologue part of *Notes from Underground*. The protagonist and narrator expresses his will to speak fully in front of the world; he has so far been only looking at him form "underground". Such an attitude is usually connected with the wish to start a real dialogue. However, in this case the dialogue is apparent from the beginning, and is the result of describing oneself in negative terms in order to draw some attention to oneself. This may be called the strategy of a permanent liar, connected to a large extent with Lebiediev's treatment of Myshkin. The narrator of *Notes from the Underground* constantly challanges the assumed recipient. While trying—ostensibly—to avoid even the smallest misunderstanding, he keeps adding details to his negative features and mental states, trying to add humour to his story.

> I am *a sick man…I am a nasty man. A truly unattractive man. I think there is something wrong with my liver. But the again, I don't understand a damn about my sickness, and I don't know for sure what is wrong with me. I'm not seeing a doctor about it and never have.* What is more I am superstitious to the extreme; well, at least to the extent of respecting medicine. (I am sufficiently educated not to be superstitious, but I am.) No sir, it is out of nastiness that I don't want to see a doctor. You, my dear sir, probably don't understand that. Well, I do. Of course, I can't explain exactly who'll be put in a pickle in this case by my nastiness, I know full well I can in no way "foul up" even the doctors for not going to them for treatment. I know better than anyone else that all this will harm just me alone and non one

[41] Ibid., 239.

> else. But, nonetheless, if I don't get treatmens, it's from nastiness. My liver hurts, all right then—let it hurt even worse!.[42]

In this fragment the term "nastiness" appears four times. This is the key emotional frame in this novella. However, it is directed in equal degrees to the opponent-recipient and himself. "I am a nasty man", says the protagonist in the beginning and that is why I do everything exactly because of "nastiness". At first, this feeling is directed mostly in the direction of himself. His anger with himself creates a situation in which he cannot become a truly bad man.[43]

The only example of the narrator's really bad behaviour comes in the second part of the novella. It is the dialogue with Lisa, a prostitute, which is the key fragment here. At the level of dialogic construction this conversation seems to be satisfactory, it even suggests some real dialogue. The protagonist manages to approach Lisa in an adequate way; he makes her repent and wish to change her profession. The true intentions, which are the result of the narrator's internal split, are revealed only in the moments commenting his own words addressed to Lisa. It turns out that his fiery 'sermon' was only the result of the convention he chose which made real understanding impossible and allowed him to keep her at a safe internal distance. It is worth noting that 'the man from underground' moves all the time on the border between truth and fallacy, real intentions and clownish frolics.

> I turned away with disgust. I was no longer coldly philozophizing. I was beginning to feel the things I was saying and I got excited. I was burning to expound my cherished *little ideas* that I had nurtured in my corner. Suddenly something caught fire in me, a kind of goal "appeared".[44]

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[42] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notatki z podziemia. Opowieść*, tłum. G. Karski, w: tenże, *Gracz. Opowiadania 1862-1869*, Warszawa 1964, 3-4, Emphasis– E. S.

[43] Ibid., 4-5..

[44] Ibid., 88.

And then:

> *Did it mean that she too was capable of some thoughts? 'Well, I'll be damned that is curious, that is kinship,' I thought almost rubbing my hands together. 'And surely I can handle a young soul likt this!*
> *[…]*
> *'I have to find the right touch,' flashed through my mind, 'I guess I won't get very far with this sentimentality'.*
> But it was just a passing thought. I swear that I was really interested in her. Besides, I as somehow debilitated and keyed up. And furthermore, it is so easy for deceit to go hand in hand with sentiment.[45].

The ending of this story is known only too well. In order to fully open oneself to the Other, one has first to be true to oneself, and this turned out to be too much for the narrator of *Notes from Underground*. One more thing should be added to this reflection on *Notes from Underground*. Dostoevsky's authorial comment at the end. "He could not resist and continued on"[46] wrote Dostoevsky, which at the dialogic level opens the possibility of the narrator's true confession. After all, as Bakhtin wrote:

> At the level of his religious-utopian worldview Dostoevsky carries dialogue into eternity, conceiving of it as eternal co-rejoicing, co-admiration, con-cord. At the level of the novel, it is presented as the unfinalizability of dialogue, although originally as dialogue's vicious circle.[47]

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It could be undoubtedly claimed that the polyphony of Norwid's poetry and Dostoevsky's novels are very similar phenomena both in formal (poetics) and artistic (aesthetics) terms. It is difficult to overestimate Dostoevsky's innovative style of writing and its

[45] Ibid., 89.
[46] Ibid., 125.
[47] Michail Bakchtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* op. cit., 252.

influence on the novel in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The polyphony of Norwid's poetry was dormant for a long time, remaining unrecognized by poets and literary critics alike. However, lately more and more texts are published coping with this issue. Anna Kozłowska, for example, wrote an essay analysing Norwid's polyphony from the linguistic perspective:

> The mulitude of parenthetical remarks in *Vade-mecum* [...] fits very well [...] with Norwid's construction of a polyphonic text in which synactic complexities are used to expess many different perspectives of viewing and assessing phenomena. "The syntactic levelling of utterances" which is accomplished through the use of parantheses helps the internal dialogicality of texts, or—to use Bakhtin's term—polyphony, understood as the presence of "many individual and incoherent voices and consciousnesses."[48]

What matters is thatpolyphony or dialogicality are so similar. They both have dialogues with tradition, suggesting the introduction of some changes into it. Both manifest a truly Christian respect for the Other, modelling his voice in a truly autonomous way. And at the same time they both see such areas of human contact where true dialogue was not possible.

Of course, there also exist differences. One such feature is the role of polyphony in the overall structure of the text. In the case of some of Dostoevsky's novels or short-stories polophony is so intense that the main 'idea' of the text is diluted, which confused many nineteenth-century readers. Reading Norwid's poetry and short stories in this respect is different. Although the polyphony there is clear, we can always feel the overriding voice, the motif ordering other voices and resonating with them.

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[48] Anna Kozłowska, *Nawiasem mówiąc. O wtrąceniach nawiasowych w wierszach z „Vade-mecum" Cypriana Norwida*, in *Norwid. Z warsztatów norwidologów bielańskich*, ed. by T. Korpysz, B. Kuczera-Chachulska, Warszawa 2011, 65.