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NORWID'S "TATARSKI CZYN" BETWEEN HIERARCHY AND ERUPTION (SEMANTICS, CONTEXTS, CONSEQUENCES)

In his review of Ignacy Fik's 1930 treatise *Uwagi nad językiem Cyprjana Norwida* [*Notes on Cyprian Norwid's Language*], Stanisław Cywiński appreciates the author's intuition for Norwid's "difficulties" and his ability to elucidate "dark/obscure" fragments in the poet's texts. At the same time, he criticises Fik's tendency to search for "difficulties even where there are none."¹ One example of making the reading more difficult is – according to Cywiński – explaining the verses from Norwid's *Promethidion*: "Nie on tatarski czyn, krwawa drabina / Na rusztowanie czerwone łunami / W cesarstwie tego tu świata Kaina, / Lecz konań wielki psalm z wykonaniami!" [It is not the Tatar *czyn*, the bloody ladder / On the scaffolding glowing in red / In the empire of *this* world of Cain, / But it is the great Psalm of *death* with *execution!*].² Cywiński's objection was as follows:

This phrase becomes clear when we understand that "tatarski czyn" refers to nothing more than Russian "chin" (rank), which explains both the use of the word "drabina" [ladder] (hierarchy), as well as the ensuing mention of "rusztowanie czerwone" [red scaffolding] – the end of the

¹ S. CYWIŃSKI, [rev.] „*Uwagi nad językiem Cyprjana Norwida, Ignacy Fik, Kraków 1930*,” „Pamiętnik Literacki” 27(1/4)(1930), p. 716. Emphasis used in the quotations (italics) preserved from the original sources. All translations into Polish (in the Polish version of the article) made by the author (Ch. Z.). The article was created in the framework of the scholarship granted by the Swiss National Foundation (SNF/FNS). The author expresses his gratitude to the participants of the 15th Colloquia Norwidiana, the employees of the Historical Poetics Studio of the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IBL PAN) and Michał Kuziak for their valuable comments.

² C. NORWID, *Promethidion. Rzecz w dwóch dialogach z epilogiem*, [in:] IDEM, *Dziela wszystkie* [*Complete Works*], compiled by S. Sawicki, P. Chlebowski, Vol. IV: *Poematy* [*Poems*] 2, Lublin 2011, ll. 44-47 (henceforth DWsz IV).

wandering on this ladder. However, for Mr. Fik it seems “easier” to take “czyn tatrski” for “a designation of a violent act.” However, Norwid himself definitively removes all doubt when elsewhere (in a letter to Cieszkowski from 1863) he speaks explicitly of the notion of “czyn (*tchin*), wziętem od Tatarów” [*chin* taken from the Tatars]. Thus, the principle that simpler is correct, is not not necessarily – especially in Norwid’s case – right.³

It does not follow from the review that Fik’s proposal is already a reaction to Cywiński’s interpretation – to the footnote of the verses in Norwid’s *Wybór poezji* [*Selection of Poetry*], prepared by Cywiński for the National Library in 1924. The short footnote reads: “tatrski czyn – Russian *chin* (rank).”⁴ I will not delve into possible personal threads or ideological polemics between the leading scholar within Norwid Studies at that time and the young critic.⁵ I think – this is my starting point – that Fik points to an important ambiguity,⁶ which Cywiński avoided too easily. Anyway, he could have raised the same objection a few years later against Joseph Pérard, a French translator of Norwid’s works. Pérard translated the lines as follows: “Non cet *acte* tataré, sanglante échelle / Sur l’échafaudage rougi de leurs d’incendie [...]”⁷ Of course, in this case, the translator was forced to give up ambivalence. Through his use of the word *acte*, Pérard chose an eruptive imagery. (I will use the slightly technical terms “eruption,” “eruptive,” and “eruptibility” to render the understanding of an act or a deed as a violent, military, revolutionary act, or an outbreak of irrational “energy,” as a conceptual contrast to the hierarchical understanding in terms of “ranks,” defended by Cywiński).

In Polish, “tatarski czyn” seems to be still ambiguous even if one of the readings is preferred – the hierarchical or the eruptive one.⁸ However, coming back to

³ S. CYWIŃSKI, [rev.] *Uwagi nad językiem Cyprjana Norwida*, p. 716.

⁴ Literally Fik writes: “Cywiński explains: ‘tatarski czyn – Russian *chin* (rank).’ But it will be much easier to treat ‘czyn tatarski’ literally as a term for a violent, thoughtless, bloody act of negative value, which is contrasted with a constructive and sacrificial act.” I. FIK, *Uwagi nad języką Cyprjana Norwida*, Kraków-Warszawa 1930, p. 38.

⁵ For Cywiński’s place within Norwid Studies, see M. BUŚ, *Uczeń i znawcy. Stanisław Cywiński wobec Norwida*, “Studia Norwidiana” 12-13 (1994-1995). Fik’s dissertation is discussed in detail by Waław Borowy. See W. BOROWY, *Norwidiana 1930-1935. Część I*, [in:] IDEM, *O Norwidzie. Rozprawy i notatki*, ed. Z. Stefanowska, Warszawa 1960.

⁶ In the broader perspective of the Slavic languages, one cannot speak of an erroneous poetic etymology (as in many other cases in Norwid’s works). The stem *čin-* has developed a huge number of meanings, depending on the language – from ‘order’ (in Old Russian) through ‘activities’ (in Slovak and Polish), ‘image/way’ (in Ukrainian), to ‘pretence/appearance’ (in Serbian/Croatian). Cf. the entry *Čin* in M. VASMER, *Étimologičeskij slovar’ russkogo jazka*, v četyrech tomach, perevod O.N. Trubačev, Vol. IV, Moscow 1987.

⁷ C. NORWID, *Promethidion*, introduction and translation by J. Pérard, Paris 1939, p. 58.

⁸ This applies even in those cases where a “hierarchical” reading can refer to a particular,

Cywiński, it has to be admitted that he has evidence supporting his claim, after all, not only *czyn* as a 'rank' in the tsarist empire (*čin*), but also the metaphor of a "ladder" to indicate a hierarchical concept, and the metaphor of a "scaffolding" indicates a certain structure. Furthermore, Cywiński uses the explanation given by Norwid himself. The excerpt from a letter to August Cieszkowski quoted in the review (Norwid complains here about the lack of editorial initiatives in Poland) reads as follows:

[...] u nas (jak wiesz zapewne) *czyn*, znaczy nieobecność idealnej pracy! *Vacuum* myśli jest to *czyn*. Pojęcie wzięte od ciemieżycieli Ojczyzny, tak samo jak oni wzięli pojęcie *czynu* (tchin) od Tatarów, i tak nasi znów patrioci z drugiej ręki wzięli toż samo od nich. Rzecz, dla tego mało znana, iż pisarze polscy nigdy nie grzeszyli *zbytkiem odwagi cywilnej wobec ziomków*. Zawsze cała odwaga ich wyteżać się musiała indziej.⁹

[...] for us (as you probably know) *czyn* means the absence of a perfect job! *Vacuum of thoughts* is 'czyn.' The concept taken from the oppressors of the Homeland, just as they took the concept 'czyn' (tchin) from the Tartars, and so our patriots, in turn, took the same from them. This thing is not well known, because Polish writers always lacked *civil courage towards their countrymen*. All their courage always had to go somewhere else.

Indeed, one can say that *czyn* in this sense refers to the 14-class *Table of ranks* introduced by Tsar Peter I in 1722. But does this necessarily imply that the Polish meaning of 'act' cannot be activated simultaneously? I think that such an assumption ("cannot") in Cywiński's argumentation is at least worth considering. Moreover, there is a methodological issue at play here, namely to what extent is Norwid's self-exegesis from 1863 authoritative in relation to the semantics of the term from the much earlier period of *Promethidion* (1851)? Even if one does not see a problem here and reads the poet's statements synchronously, the question remains as to how this ladder becomes "bloody" – but not without violence, not without an explosion (which is underlined by emblematically situating it in the "world of Cain," i.e. the world of fatal violence). In other words: Cywiński and Fik propose models that are unlikely to be encountered in a pure form. Nevertheless, their juxtaposition draws attention to imaginative tendencies that are not

disambiguating spelling (including "tszin"). The homonymy with deed, i.e. 'act,' and thus ambiguity, still remains. In the texts from around 1850, which I am mostly interested in here, Norwid did not yet use such spelling variants. However, attention should be drawn to the emphasis in "tatarski *czyn*."

⁹ A letter from December 1863, [in:] C. NORWID, *Pisma wszystkie*, compiled by J.W. Gomulicki, Vol. IX, Warsaw 1971, p. 121 (henceforth PWSz – the Roman numeral refers to volume, the Arabic numeral to page number).

only a matter of interpretive preference, but also constitute the central theme of Norwid's "tatarski czyn."

What mode of violence is encapsulated in this formula? What and possibly who is it arguing with? The demonstrative pronoun "nie on" [not him] seems to be quoting something/someone in a negative way, and the commentators agree that this is linked to Mickiewicz's context (emphasising it very differently). So how does "tatarski czyn" apply to Mickiewicz's poetics, performative value and propaganda of the deed (*action*)? And to what extent does it – especially through Mickiewicz – define Russia and its imperial administration? This is the issue that I want to investigate, mainly based on the material of Norwid's writings from around 1850. Using the same material, I will then discuss the question of how, unlike "tatarski czyn," Norwid's parallel vision of a positive act is built up and how the latter "is graded" in artistic "work" (*Promethidion*). Finally, I will juxtapose Norwid's valued non-Tartar act with the act understood as August Cieszkowski's 'institution.' The basic hypothesis of the second part is that "tatarski czyn" is a template according to which it is possible to determine the place of Norwid's positive "act," i.e. between Mickiewicz and Cieszkowski. (The possible effectiveness of this concept in Norwid's works such as *Quidam* or *Vade-mecum* is beyond the scope of the subsequent considerations.)

HIERARCHY OR ERUPTION? TWO WAYS OF INTERPRETATION

Cywiński's reading seems to have prevailed in the literature on the subject. I do not intend to suggest it is not correct. Instead, I would like to draw attention to the basic tension which, if read as too unambiguously, falls into oblivion. First of all, I will give some examples from this trend of reception (i.e. the trend that removes all activity from the pejorative act and its derivatives, although obviously it does not eliminate its bloody effects). Juliusz W. Gomulicki writes in his commentary on Norwid's *Dziela zebrane* [*Collected Works*] (1966) on the occasion of discussing "anti-formalistic" poems VIII to XI from *Vade-mecum* about "czynownicy" [chinovniks] (without mentioning the attribute "tatarski" [Tartar]):

Norwid used this term [*czynownik* – Ch. Z.] in a broader, figurative sense, to refer to all dull and mentally passive people, those completely insensitive to the transformations taking place around them, blind and deaf in the face of great events and assuming their position in the conventional social hierarchy as the only measure of the value of their fellow human beings.¹⁰

¹⁰ [In:] C. NORWID, *Dziela zebrane*, compiled by J.W. Gomulicki, Vol. II: *Wiersze, dodatek*

On the other hand, in connection with "czyn" and "czynownicy" (also without reference to "Tatars"), Zdzisław Łapiński speaks about the "quintessence of any formalisation of social life."¹¹ In his commentary on *Promethidion*, citing distinction with the later letter, *O tshinie i czynie* [*On the tchin and act*] from 1861, Stefan Sawicki writes: "Norwid calls it [tatarski czyn – Ch. Z.] also 'tshin' and contrasts it with 'czyn' [act], which must be characterised by originality as a condition of 'vital consequences.'¹² This later *tshin*, developed by Norwid in the context of the January Uprising, clearly contains an eruptive element (this issue would require a detailed discussion). Józef Fert, in turn, explains the attitude of the "chinovniks" as "conscious barbarism."¹³ Such an association of bureaucratism with barbarism due to "tatarski czyn" indicates an indirect understanding, i.e. at least partly eruptive.

The second, that is, definitely eruptive trend is represented mainly by Andrzej Walicki, who reads "tatarski czyn" in the sense of Fik's proposal as 'a violent act.' According to Walicki, this is a direct polemic with Mickiewicz's notion of a Romantic-explosive act. The historian of ideas writes: "A sharp opposition between the two concepts: a revolutionary, subversive 'act' and peaceful, constructive 'work' has just appeared for the first time in Norwid's writings."¹⁴ He further specifies:

Norwid, who considered himself to be a descendant of Prometheus, in *Promethidion* opted for activism, different not only from the messianic apotheosis of the revolutionary act, but also – and in equal measure – from the messianic cult of passively endured and unjust sufferings.¹⁵

While in the commentaries provided by Gomulicki, Łapiński, Sawicki and (less obviously) Fert, the focus of attention is on passive "formalism" taken from the bureaucracy of the partitioners. Walicki views "tatarski czyn" as a polemical apostrophe of Romantic activism – between the revolutionary eruption and a messianic act of passion. It must be noted that this refers to a completely different "passivity" than in Gomulicki's commentary. The publisher of Norwid's writings – in the context of *Czynownicy* – aims at ignorance, indifference and the

krytyczny, Warszawa 1966, p. 759.

¹¹ Z. ŁAPIŃSKI, *Norwid*, [in:] IDEM, *O Norwidzie. Rzeczy dawne i najdawniejsze*, Lublin 2014, p. 337.

¹² DWsz IV, p. 318.

¹³ [In:] C. NORWID, *Vade-mecum*, ed. J. Fert, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1990, p. 34.

¹⁴ A. WALICKI, *Norwid: trzy wątki myśli*, [in:] IDEM, *Między filozofią, religią i polityką. Studia o myśli polskiej epoki romantyzmu*, Warszawa 1983, p. 203.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

opportunism of the slave mentality. Walicki, for his part, when speaking about the cult of “passively endured and unjust suffering,” refers to Romantic messianism, especially Mickiewicz’s *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* [*Books of the Polish Nation and Its Pilgrimage*].

MICKIEWICZ’S GAME WITH ČIN

It is impossible to reconcile the two ways of interpreting *czyn*; they are too different. And I do not think it would make sense to try to falsify one of them because Norwid’s poetics allows for different readings. I intend to show what arguments are or are not used by commentators in both cases. My thesis is that both readings – not only the eruptive one – are based on Mickiewicz’s selective reading. Cywiński’s way of reading points to a detailed footnote by Mickiewicz in *Dziady Part III* [*Forefathers’ Eve Part III*]. Among others, this is what Gomulicki does in the aforementioned collection, *Dziela zebrane* [*Collected Works*]. Below I quote Mickiewicz’s footnote in its entirety:

The words *czyn*, *czynownik* often [but not always – Ch. Z.] are used here in the Russian sense, understandable only for Lithuanians. In Russia, in order not to be a peasant or a merchant, in a word, in order to have the privilege of being free from the punishment of scourging, one has to enter the government service and acquire the so-called *class* or *chin*. The service is divided into fourteen classes; it takes several years of service to pass from one class to another. Various exams are prescribed for chinovniks, similar to the formalities of the Mandarin hierarchy in China, from where the Mongols seem to have brought this word to Russia, and Peter I guessed the meaning of the word and developed the entire institution in a truly Chinese spirit. A chinovink is often not a clerk, he is just waiting for the office and he is entitled to strive for it. Each class or chin corresponds to a certain military rank, and thus: a doctor of philosophy or a medical doctor belong to the eighth class and have the rank of major, i.e. *kolleski assessor*; ‘frejlina,’ i.e. a maiden of the imperial court has the rank of captain; a bishop or an archpriest has the rank of general. The relations of submissiveness and obedience between the higher and lower chinovniks are observed with almost equal accuracy as in the army.¹⁶

Here Mickiewicz addresses the almost fantastic hierarchy of the *Table of Ranks* and highlights it with the help of the associative genealogy of *čin* – according to the great Romantic poet, this system resembles the bureaucratic structure of the Chinese state, therefore it was the Mongols who imported it to Russia through the

¹⁶ A. MICKIEWICZ, *Dziady. Poema*, Part III, [in:] IDEM, *Dziela*, compiled by J. Krzyżanowski, Vol. III: *Utwory dramatyczne*, Warszawa 1955, p. 311 (henceforth Dz - the Roman numeral refers to the volume, the Arabic numeral to the page number or verse) (footnote to the reply “Łotrze, a znasz mój czyn?” [Scoundrel, and do you know my deed?], Scene VI, v. 34).

Golden Horde where Peter the Great introduced his *Table of Ranks* according to their mentality. Actually, this Asian genealogy is not disputed within Norwid Studies; it functions as a kind of axiom.

As for the fantastic character of *čin*, the tone varies, but it was described in a quite similar manner to Mickiewicz's by Nikolai Gogol in his story *Diary of a Madman* (*Zapiski sumaszedšego*, 1835). Yuri Lotman summarises the problem of *čin* based on Gogol: "The *čin* is an empty thing, a word, a ghost. Fiction rules over life, it guides it."¹⁷ Interestingly, in the 1830s and 1840s Gogol, like Norwid not much later, uses *čin* in two different senses, the bad and the good. For Gogol, the good *čin* is the sacred *čin* in the heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchy according to Dionysius the Areopagite (in Polish *rzqd* [order]).¹⁸ The opposition within the same language system is therefore clearly different from that of Polish bilingual paronomastics: for Gogol, bureaucratic *čin* is simply a secularised, profane variant of the original sacral and hierarchical *čin*. In the Polish alteration between *czyn* and *čin*, there always emerges an oxymoron, i.e. the interference of hierarchy and eruption.¹⁹

Coming back to Mickiewicz, in connection with *čin*, in addition to the footnote from *Dziady*, we can mention the poem *Czyn*, nonetheless, as far as I know, played almost no role in Norwid's commentary. Mickiewicz is said to have improvised it at a soirée in St. Petersburg in 1824 to the melody of the song *Jeunes enfants* by Béranger. It is about ambitious Poles who are pursuing a career in the Russian Empire at all costs. I will quote a larger passage from the poem:

Gdy młody Polak *czynem* się zblądni,
Dopóki krzyża nie dopnie,
Pnie się na świecie, jak w ruskiej łaźni,
Na coraz wyższe stopnie.
Lecz darmo czady pije,

¹⁷ J.M. LOTMAN, *Besedy o russoj kul'ture. Byt i tradicii russskogo dvorjanstva (XVIII-načalo XIX veka)*, ed. R.G. Grigor'ev, Sankt-Peterburg 1994, p. 34.

¹⁸ For the heavenly and ecclesiastical *čins*, i.e. the *orders* of angels, saints and hierarchs, cf. Gogol's *Razmyšlenija o Božestvennoj Liturgii* (*Meditations on the Divine Liturgy*, 1840s).

¹⁹ For Norwid's paronomasia, see A. VAN NIEUKERKEN, *Ironiczny konceptyzm. Nowoczesna polska poezja metafizyczna w kontekście anglosaskiego modernizmu*, Kraków 1998, pp. 29-32. Arant van Nieukerken is the only Norwid expert known to me who explicitly allows for the possibility of the co-existence of different meanings of the word *czyn*. In a short passage he writes about *czinovníks*: "The deep chasm between the changing world and the passivity of *chinovníks* is strengthened by the fact that in the word 'czynownik' [chinovník] there resonates, on the basis of contrast, the word 'czyn,' one of the main notions of the philosophy of Romantic voluntarism (often criticized by Norwid)" (ibid., p. 31). The researcher thus refers to the ironic co-existence of passivity and activity in the poem from the 1860s, he does not address the earlier issue of the "Tatar" hierarchy.

Próżno ćwicz pieczenie:
Jeżeli zbrukał sumienie,
Dalibóg, że skręci szyję.
Tyś szlachty syn,
Nie dbaj o *czyn*,
Tak nasi mówili przodkowie.
Jeżeliś gracz,
Choć bieda, płacz,
Hej, pijmy za ich zdrowie!

Tamten astronom od nocy do rana,
Do gwiazd wyprawia połowy;
I sadi krzyże na brzuch, na pierś, na kolana,
Świeci się, jak wóz Dawidowy.
Lecz wkrótce śmierć się zbliża,
A z nią piekielna męka:
Tego jednego krzyża
Belzebub się nie lęka.²⁰

When a young Pole makes a fool of himself through his *czyn*,
Until the (order of the) cross is achieved,
He climbs in the world, like in a Russian bathhouse,
To higher and higher ranks.
But he drinks chads in vain,
To no avail he practices baking:
If he has a dirty conscience,
He shall break his neck.
You are a noble son,
Do not care about the *czyn*,
That is what our ancestors said.
If you are a player,
Even in poverty, cry,
Hey, let us drink to their health!

That astronomer from night till morning,
Goes hunting the stars;
And plant crosses on the belly, on the chest, on the knees,
Shines like the Big Dipper.
But death is coming soon,
And with it, the hellish torment:
Beelzebub is not afraid
Of that one cross.

²⁰ A. MICKIEWICZ, *Czyn*, Dz I, pp. 207-208 (vv. 7-28).

Climbing up the ladder of the *Table of ranks* established by the Imperial Power and reaching for its "stars" in the form of signs of ranks is shown as dreadful, inappropriate, and silly. In the 1844 edition of *Poezye*, Mickiewicz added the following footnote: "Czyn [chin] in Russia means a class or a rank."²¹ The fact that the poet considered it necessary to add this information, a kind of a short footnote in *Dziady*, shows that he was highly aware of the (partial) homonymy of the Russian *čin* with the Polish *czyn* and, accordingly, the possibility of confusing them (the rank with the act). Indeed, the ancestors' slogan: "Do not care about *czyn*" in this poem can, to some extent, be read as an expression of Sarmatian escapism, which prevents one from admitting to their own enslavement or from establishing the liberation movement. Of course, the footnote invalidates such a reading, but it clearly could not be excluded without this explanation.

MICKIEWICZ AGAINST MICKIEWICZ

On the other hand, according to Ignacy Fik's way of reading, the critical and satirical thread, possibly ambiguous, plays no role. Walicki consistently emphasises the pathos of Mickiewicz's Parisian lectures, in which *czyn* appears as one of the main mythologems in historyiosophy.²² Mickiewicz's image of "Tatars" is characterised not so much by a fictitious hierarchy, as an absolute submission to Genghis Khan. Only absolute obedience – explains Mickiewicz – enables the Tatar rider to defend himself almost unimaginably and gives him perseverance in armed expeditions. According to the poet-professor, the Tatar warrior fights "with the force that results from an order given to him by the Khan."²³ This kind of inspiration, based on the order of the ruler, is also supposed to characterise the "Russian soldier."²⁴ In the Parisian lectures, one can notice a similar identification

²¹ Ibid., p. 500.

²² A. WALICKI, *Norwid: Trzy wątki myśli*, p. 197. Although Mickiewicz's *Skład zasad* (1848) is important in Walicki's discussion, it is strongly criticised by Norwid. I do not include it here, because it would divert the discussion from the main theme of its "Tartar" character.

²³ "C'est par obéissance pour son Khan qu'un tartare vit et lutte." A. Mickiewicz, *Huitième leçon. [Mystères de la parole]. 5 mars 1944*, [in:] IDEM, *L'Église et le Messie II. Cours de littérature slave du Collège de France (1843-1844)*, publié d'après les notes sténographiées, deuxième partie. Religion et politique [= *Les Slaves*, Vol. 5], Paris 1845, p. 138.

²⁴ Besides, in his lectures on the Russian 18th century, Mickiewicz discusses the hierarchical organisation of cultural life, especially literary life, "the influence of the hierarchical and administrative spirit of the government" ("l'influence de l'esprit hiérarchique et administratif du gouvernement"). A. MICKIEWICZ, *Cinquantième leçon. 25 janvier 1842*, [in:] IDEM, *Les Slaves. Cours professé au Collège de France (1841-1842)*, publié d'après les notes sténographiées, tome deuxième. *Les pays slaves et la Pologne. Histoire, Littérature et Politique* [= *Les Slaves*, Vol. 2], Paris 1849, p. 443.

in Mickiewicz's remarks on the *Table of ranks*: the Russian bureaucratic system and the model of warfare turn out to be just as "Tartar-like." However, whereas analytical sarcasm prevails in his reflections on the *čin* system, Mickiewicz discusses indomitable idealism with clear admiration²⁵ and the "ideal of passive obedience,"²⁶ i.e. the thoughtless absoluteness of the Tatar-Russian combat morale. He seems to speak about the fascination the "Mongolian cry" once had for the opponents of Gyngis Khan in an analytical way,²⁷ but at the same time, Mickiewicz makes it clear that this sort of fascination is no stranger to him, that it is really him, the Polish bard, who is and will be one of those indifferent opponents.²⁸

Thus, it can be stated regardless of its interpretation, it is Mickiewicz who stands behind the "tatarski czyn." According to Cywiński's reading, Mickiewicz's reflections on *čin* are (though not exactly specified) the source for Norwid. By contrast, according to Fik's reading – Mickiewicz, an admirer of the barbaric "Vandal genius,"²⁹ embodies a false, irresponsible and dangerous from Norwid's point of view of understanding *czyn* as an armed action. We can see now how flawed the semantic combination of "the bloody ladder" and "act" is in both readings. In the first case (Cywiński), the metaphor of the ladder is described convincingly, but its blodiness rather indirectly and abstractly. In the second case (Fik), the blodiness of the act is clearly visible, but not its hierarchical origin.

Therefore, a third reading should be sought, one that would take into account the fact that "tatarski czyn" takes Mickiewicz as a "point of reference" (Zofia

²⁵ "Otez au soldat russe la terreur mêlée d'une sorte de résignation, qui lui inspire l'idée de servir son empereur, et vous verrez qu'il ne pourra supporter les fatigues et les privations de sa vie de forçat." A. Mickiewicz, *Huitième leçon*, p. 139.

²⁶ "[...] l'idéal de l'obéissance passive [...]." A. Mickiewicz, *Deuxième leçon. 19 décembre 1840*, [in:] IDEM, *Les Slaves. Cours professé au Collège de France (1840-1841)*, publié d'après les notes sténographiées, première partie. Les pays slaves et la Pologne. Histoire et littérature [= Les Slaves, Vol. I], Paris 1849, p. 20.

²⁷ "Le cri mongol exerçait une espèce de fascination sur les âmes; les armes tombaient d'entre les mains des soldats, les rois fuyaient au loin pour ne pas entendre le cri des Tartares." A. MICKIEWICZ, *Soixante-quatorzième leçon. 1er juillet 1842*, [in:] IDEM, *Les Slaves. Cours professé au Collège de France (1842)*, publié d'après les notes sténographiées, tome troisième. La Pologne et le messianisme. Histoire, Littérature et Philosophie [Les Slaves, Vol. III], Paris 1849, p. 359.

²⁸ For the contradiction in Mickiewicz's image of (tsarist) Russia – between the condemnation of the "empire of evil" and the fascination with the charisma of power, cf. J. FIECKO, *Rosja w prelekcjach paryskich Adama Mickiewicza*, [in:] IDEM, *Księga Mickiewiczowska. Patronowi uczelni w dwusetną rocznicę urodzin 1798-1998*, eds. Z. Trojanowiczowa, Z. Przychodniak, Poznań 1998.

²⁹ A. MICKIEWICZ, *Douzième leçon. Les Barbares. L'Homme Eternel. 30 avril 1844*, [in:] IDEM, *L'Église et le Messie II. Cours de littérature slave du Collège de France*, p. 233.

Stefanowska),³⁰ affirmatively and polemically at the same time: Norwid first uses wordplay with homonymy *ćin/czyn* and its Asian genealogy, but by doing so, he simultaneously creates a polemical term against Mickiewicz. Although this about-turn remains implicit, it is quite clear in the place where Norwid's attribute "Tartar" with the term *czyn* appears for the first time, namely in the treatise *Pieśni społecznej cztery stron* [*Four Pages of a Social Song*] (1848). Below I quote three verses from the first part:

*Wolność w Polsce będzie inna;
Nie szlachecko-złota,
Ni słomiana wolność gminna
Od płota do płota.*

*Ni słowieńsko-przepaścista
O tatarskim-czynie –
Ni ta, z której kabalista
Śni o gilotynie.*

*Wolność będzie z dobrej woli,
Jak w pieśni rymowej,
Gdzie i z nutą myśl swawoli,
I nuta gra słowy. –³¹*

*Freedom in Poland will be different;
Neither noble-gold,
Nor like straw community freedom
From fence to fence.*

*Nor vastly Slavic
Of the Tartar czyn –
Nor the one in which the kabbalist
Dreams of the guillotine.*

*Freedom will be of good will,
Like in a rhyme song,
Where the thought plays to the tune,
And the tune plays the words. –*

³⁰ Z. STEFANOWSKA, *Norwidowski romantyzm*, [in:] EADEM, *Strona romantyków. Studia o Norwidzie*, Lublin 1993, p. 63.

³¹ C. NORWID, *Pieśni społecznej cztery stron I*, DWsz IV, vv. 59-70.

Norwid introduces this concept of freedom, which in 1848 he still linked to the hope of a concrete influence on intellectual discussions and even on the social situation, through a polemic with Mickiewicz. Anyway, it is likely. Clearly, Mickiewicz seems to be present in the phrase “słowieńsko-przepaścist[ej wolności] / O tatarskim-czynie” [vastly Slavic (freedom) / Of the Tartar czyn].³² The Slavic “inner man” (“l’homme intérieur”) is the central concept of the Parisian lectures and is closely linked in them to Slavic “barbarism.”³³ “What is progressive in us,” says Mickiewicz, “is our inner man, our spirit,” while “proper barbarism” (“véritable barbarie”)³⁴ is identified by him with the civilised “inertia” of Western Europe. It is exactly from such Slavic-barbaric inner depths that Norwid distances himself. When he defines it by using an additional attribute “[o] tatarskim czynie” – which is then characteristically rhymed with the “guillotine” (*czynie-gilotynie*) – this vastness becomes a kind of an external sign of its own mythical interior. Thus, “tatarski czyn” here refers to not so much the tsarist bureaucracy, but to Mickiewicz’s pan-Slavic project. However, there is a connection between these aspects; Norwid suspected the utopia of the great Romantic poet to voluntarily internalise those highly external “forms” of the Russian empire.³⁵

Which of the images of *czyn* thus prevails in *Pieśni społecznej cztery stron* [*Five Pages of a Social Song*], the hierarchical or the eruptive one? I will try to get closer to the answer again through translation. The same passage is quoted by Norman Davies in *God’s Playground* in the context of Polish political history and translates it in a footnote in an analytical manner: “[...] the fathomless freedom of Slav-style (anarchy) / Brought about by some (barbarous) Tatar outrage [...]”³⁶ Davies uses the expression “[o] tatarskim czynie” the same as Ignacy Fik did with “tatarski czyn” from *Promethidion*: he interprets it as a violent act. Citing Cywiński’s objection to Fik’s reading could be referred to as a misunderstanding which manifests itself even in the syntax; “o” does not express the cause, as suggested by Davies in his translation “[b]rought about by,” but an explanative

³² The direct historical context of this place can also be the Slavic Congress from 1848 in Prague.

³³ For the sources of this concept, see M. KUZIAK, *The Slavic Barbarian in Adam Mickiewicz’s Paris Lectures*, “Rocznik Komparatystyczny” 4(2013).

³⁴ “Ce qui est progressif en nous, c’est notre homme intérieur, notre esprit [...]” A. MICKIEWICZ, *Douzième leçon. Les Barbares*, p. 232.

³⁵ This logic seems to coincide with the mechanism of valorisation of “cultural absence,” guided by resentment towards colonisers, described by Michał Kuziak (*Wartość kulturowego braku. Syndrom kolonialny w twórczości Mickiewicza*, “Porównania” 5(2008)).

³⁶ N. DAVIES, *God’s Playground: A History of Poland*, in two volumes, Vol. II: *1795 to the Present*, Revised edition, Oxford 2005, p. 57.

attribute how this "słowieńsko-przepaścista" [vast Slavic] freedom is shaped. However, there is an argument in favour of such a "false" reading, namely the "guillotine" at the end of this stanza from Norwid's *Pieśni społecznej*.... The "czynie/gilotynie" paradigm based on the rhyme is lost in translation – as one may conclude – hence this bloody element had to be transferred onto *czyn* itself.

Interestingly, Cywiński was also critical of this issue. Władysław Arcimowicz recognised Zygmunt Krasiński's influence³⁷ in the enigmatic "kabbalist" verses "Ni [wolność] ta, z której kabalista / Śni o gilotynie" [Nor the freedom in which the kabbalist / Dreams of the guillotine], and Cywiński accused him: "After all, 'śni' means: to dream, desire! Of course, the poet refers here to the terrorists [sic!]."³⁸ Without adding another domineering opinion here, one can see that regardless of the identification of the "kabbalist," the rhyming paradigm "czynie/gilotynie" assumes and realises a certain closeness to or affinity with the violent reign.

The indication of the (Jacobin?) terror in the context of Norwid's anti-revolutionary attitude is undoubtedly correct. However, it is not entirely clear whether this indication brings about an image that is still in agreement with the hierarchical reading of *czyn* by Cywiński. In a letter to Marian Sokołowski from 1864, Norwid wrote about state violence in Poland as "tatarska energia" [Tatar energy]. It seems that the eruptive meaning is more prominent: "*O pańszczyźnie i o knutach-polskich. / Było Ci przykro, iż, kreśląc różnice energii będącej-sobie-celtem-czyli-Tatarskiej, okazywałem, jak dalece jest to raczej moment niżli genealogiczna natura rasy jakowej (...)*" [About the Serfdom and about the Polish Whips. / You were sorry that by drawing the differences between the *self-purpose-that-is-Tartar energy*, I showed how much this is more of a moment than the genealogical nature of any race (...)].³⁹ According to Norwid, the state repressions – which may also be carried out partly by the Polish "chinovniks" – are "Tatar" insofar as their "energy" is an end in itself.⁴⁰ This motif has already resounded in the discussion of the "form" from *Niewola. Rapsoda* [Enslavement. A Rhapsody] (1849). Norwid

³⁷ W. ARCIMOWICZ, *Cyprjan Kamil Norwid na tle swego konfliktu z krytyką*, Wilno 1935, p. 55.

³⁸ S. CYWIŃSKI, [rev.] „*Cyprjan Kamil Norwid na tle swego konfliktu z krytyką*,” *Władysław Arcimowicz, Wilno 1935*; "Pamiętnik Literacki" 32(1/4)(1935), p. 560; IDEM, [rev.] „*Norwid*,” *Zygmunt Wasilewski, Warszawa 1935*, ibid.

³⁹ C. NORWID, Letter to Marian Sokołowski, Autumn 1864, PWsz IX, p. 148.

⁴⁰ It can be noticed that "energy" is closely linked to Tatarism and Russia in Towiański's philosophy, though in a highly ambiguous way. See D. SIWICKA, *Bezsilne dobro i ton Dżyngis-chana*, [in:] EADEM, *Ton i bicz. Mickiewicz wśród towiańczyków*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1990.

criticises state violence for not serving any purpose other than itself.⁴¹ Chaotic “energy” and bureaucratic “form,” as it turns out, coincide in this autotelicity. However, in the context of the “hierarchical or eruptive” question, even more interesting is the subordinate sentence which states that “tatarskość” [Tatarism] is not an ethnic criteria, but a “moment.” Of course, the word *moment* is ambiguous because it can mean not only “instant” but also “trend.” Here, it seems to stand for a certain unstable, changeable attribute. The “ladder” certainly does not have a clear role in this case (and this concerns a later period, to which Cywiński refers in order to prove the exclusivity of the hierarchical dimension): bloodiness lies at the centre – although the imagination of the bureaucratic organisation of this violence obviously remains present in the background.

TOWARDS A POSITIVE PROGRAMME: TELEOLOGY *VERSUS* ERUPTION

When Mickiewicz emphasises the idealism of the “Tatar,” i.e. thoughtless *act*, Norwid characterises “tatarski czyn” as “bezideowy” [idealless]. In a letter from 1861 to Marian Sokołowski, Norwid writes that “gdzie nie można działać na polu idei, myśli i prawdy, tam zostaje działanie na polu czynu bez idei, myśli i prawdy” [where one cannot act in the field of ideas, thoughts and truth, there remains action in the field of *czyn* devoid of ideals, thoughts and the truth].⁴² According to him, “czyn bezideowy” [an idealless act] means enslavement and servility. The author of *Vade-mecum* expresses the same idea in a compressed form as a mathematical equation: “(...)czyn – prawdę – myśl – ideę = niewoli i służalstwu (...)” [*czyn* – truth – thought – ideal = enslavement and servility].⁴³ Again, the question arises: does it refer to a hierarchical *čin* or an eruptive *act*? This is not entirely clear, because although “działanie na polu czynu” [action in the field of *czyn*] is associated with eruption, i.e. Mickiewicz’s “Vandal” element, the recognition of servility points to the hierarchical-bureaucratic understanding, or – from Norwid’s perspective – to the unscrupulous pursuit of one’s career.

Norwid captures the lack of idealism of an act even more generally when, in a letter to Karol Ruprecht from 1863, he addresses the tendency, which in his opinion is typical of Poles, to look for a scapegoat rather than to come up with

⁴¹ C. NORWID, *Niewola. Rapsod I*, DWsz IV, vv. 1-153; cf. S. SAWICKI, *Norwida walka z formą*, [in:] IDEM, *Norwida walka z formą*, Warszawa 1986, pp. 15-19.

⁴² C. NORWID, Letter to Marian Sokołowski, 27 February 1861, PWsz VIII, p. 440.

⁴³ Ibid.

social initiatives.⁴⁴ Norwid deplors this tendency of his compatriots which they are committed "nie wiedząc o tym, iż takie pojęcie czynu jest przejęciem tatarskiego *tchinu*, tak jak Grecy po Aleksandrze przejmowali azjatyckie elementa, nie wiedząc o tym" [not knowing that such a notion of an act is taken from the Tartar *tchin*, just as the Greeks, after Alexander, adopted the Asian elements, without knowing it].⁴⁵ The criterion of "tatarski czyn" – here in the French transcription: *tchin* – is unconsciousness, i.e. the assumption that in certain moments of their decline cultures are blind to such influences. (According to this pattern, Norwid may be postulating the causation of "Tatarism" in Russia itself. As I have already pointed out, he considers such unconscious "influence" in his Parisian lectures when he attributes an external sign of "tatarski czyn" to Mickiewicz's "inner" Slavs).

Thus far, it has become clear that "tatarski czyn" can sometimes be clearly perceived either as a metonymy of hierarchical bureaucratism or as a metonymy of irrational eruptions, but at the same time it is almost always possible to observe the fundamental interference of these two modes of imagery. This, as it turned out, is connected to a specific intertextual attitude towards Mickiewicz. Norwid faithfully updates Mickiewicz's sarcastic game with the Russian system of ranks (thereby also adopting the "Asian" genealogy) but turns it against Mickiewicz: against the irrational, eruptive imagination of renewal, rejuvenation of culture. In this sense, "tatarski czyn" has a double semantic and contextual structure.

Here, at last, we can explain Norwid's concept, which Bogumił's statements are about and for which "tatarski czyn" constitutes only a background, appearing in a negative utterance: "Nie on tatarski czyn..." [it is not the Tatar *czyn*...]. It must be noted at this point that *Bogumił*, the first part of *Promethidion*, is a dialogue or, more precisely, a treatise on beauty. The discussion about *czyn* or the allusive game with it is introduced in an aesthetic context. As Bogumił's fundamental thesis as this fragment states – art should be understood as a constructive "work" (referring to crafts, not modern industry), and though not from the Polish perspective but generally. He situates this work at the intersection between "najwyższy z rzemiosł apostoła" [the highest craft of an apostle] and "najniższa modlitwa anioła" [the lowest prayer of an angel].⁴⁶ This means Norwid's work is clearly a mixed figure. For the time being, I am focusing only on the shape of the image and not its defining content, since it turns out that, in the stanza that precedes "tatarski czyn," work is defined by its scale:

⁴⁴ IDEM, Letter to Karol Ruprecht, September 1863, PWSz IX, p. 107.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ IDEM, *Bogumił*, vv. 336-337.

Pomiędzy tymi *praca* się stopniuje,
Aż niepotrzebne prace zginać muszą;
Ze *zbudowania w duchu* się buduje,
Smak się oczyszcza i żądze się głuszą,
Przyroda niema jest uszanowaną
I rozebrzmiewa czyn długą *hosanną!*...⁴⁷

Between these, *work* may be graded,
Until unnecessary works die;
One builds through *building in spirit*,
The taste is cleared and desires are stilled,
Silent nature is respected
And the act is resounding with a long *hosanna!*...

I think that Cywiński's argument – the ladder as proof of the hierarchy of the concept – gains importance here: in parallel with the “work that may be graded.” This has been emphasised by another semantised rhyme – “stopniuje-buduje” [graded-built] – this is an architectural metaphor. The ladder is juxtaposed with “wieża” [a tower] (art as “*chorągiew na prac ludzkich wieży*” [the flag on the tower of human works]).⁴⁸ By contrast, portraying *czyn* as an ‘action’ in the last verse of the quoted stanza, to which “tatarski czyn” refers directly is of musical nature: the act, as Bogumił imagines it, resounds, not just for a moment, but as a long song of praise. In this sense, the act has its “tone.” Hence, negative parallelism with the ladder has yet another dimension; it establishes a dialogue with Towiański's philosophy and once again with Mickiewicz. After all, the “ladder” gradually leading to perfection was one of the main images in Towiański's rhetoric and members of his sect.⁴⁹ Norwid's “work” develops not only in contrast to “krwawa drabina” [the bloody ladder] as its peaceful and harmonious alternative, but at the same time incredibly closely to the themes addressed in Towiański's philosophy. As in the case of Mickiewicz's Tatarism, it is about the critical appropriation of the concept. From Norwid's point of view, the ladder of Towianism is potentially “bloody” (it was already Krasieński who warned against “fierce despotism” in Towianism.)⁵⁰ Besides the “sound” of Bogumił's act is fundamentally dif-

⁴⁷ Ibid., vv. 338-343. Cf. also the author's footnote to “stopniująca się praca” [work that may be compared/can be graded] (ibid., p. 117).

⁴⁸ Ibid., v. 334.

⁴⁹ Cf. D. SIWICKA, *Drabina*, [in:] EADEM, *Ton i bicz. Mickiewicz wśród towiańczyków*, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁰ Quote ibid., p. 170.

ferent from the search for "tone." In any case, Mickiewicz-Towiański's follower wants to master "energy" in order to gradually become a guide of creation.⁵¹ In contrast, Norwid's artist-artmaster – through his work – contributes to the common work of Poles and more broadly to all of humanity for the glory of creation. Instead of mastering the chaotic element, he wants to emphasise the teleological nature of the world to contribute to its "dopełnienie" [completion] (as he puts it, among others, in *Fortepian Szopena* [*Chopin's Grand Piano*]).

More precisely, Norwid's (Bogumił's) programme in relation to the blend of "craft" and "prayer" can be read: grading is a craft-related dimension of work, whereas sound is prayer-related. The *act*, therefore, means a "higher" aspect of permanent work rather than some temporary addition to reality. In contrast to the "Tartar," this positive act in the next stanza is described as "wielki psalm" [a great psalm]. It becomes obvious that it refers to an activity of prolonged praise and its privileged medium is language – with a specific focus on the goal, which for Norwid lies outside of this artistic activity. Unlike Mickiewicz's vision of the energetic word,⁵² in Norwid's works at the time of *Promethidion*, language has no power to realise its own meanings. It always remains a reference to reality beyond itself.

So, what is the advantage of studying the semantics of the negated "tatarski czyn" in the context of this valuation? I think there are, in fact, two aspects. First, in the negative parallelism of the "ladder" image, one can see that *czyn* – as a sum of work – is also comparable, illustrating the scale, and not a single event. Second, one may notice a kind of negative pattern of "tatarski czyn" as far as its ultimate goal is concerned. It is characteristic for it to strive for ever higher ranks in the hierarchy. A positive *czyn*, on the other hand, is adapted (in an indirect polemic with Towianism) to the full "execution" of what is achievable in the earthly-historical dimension. Both Norwid's "work" and his "tatarski czyn" involve a series of mediations. This is a common feature, but owing to *czyn* (its glorifying function) work has a strong teleology, as opposed to directionless "energy."

"TATARSKI CZYN"
VERSUS CIESZKOWSKI'S INSTITUTION OF ACT

As far as a general conceptualisation of activism is concerned, between Norwid and Mickiewicz there stands the philosopher August Cieszkowski with his

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 167.

⁵² Cf. A. MICKIEWICZ, *Huitième leçon*.

works: *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie* (1838) and *Ojczyzna* (Vol. I – 1849).⁵³ Although Mickiewicz comments on Cieszkowski's "practical" tendency to think with partial approval, there is a boundary between their positions that is not present (or not to such an extent) between the two activisms - that of Cieszkowski and that of Norwid. I would like to put forward the following hypothesis: in the concept of an act aimed at a certain goal, i.e. a teleological act, Norwid refers to the philosopher-friend.

The postponement of an act for the future results from Cieszkowski's endorsement of late Hegelianism; Hegel's philosophy could only be "completed" from the end without undermining it as a whole. Moreover, such an approach "from the end" testifies to specific Romanticism and messianism of Cieszkowski's position.⁵⁴ Interestingly, the author of *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie* uses a literary quote to trigger this shift in the act for the future. He has described the third chapter of his treatise entitled *Teleologie der Weltgeschichte* with the following motto: "Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh' ich Rath / Und schreibe getrost: *am Ende wird die That!* Goethe."⁵⁵ Clearly – probably all the more so for educated readers living in 1838 – this quotation, even though Goethe is mentioned as its author, is thoroughly modified. The verses from *Faust*, culminating in the hero's famous improvisation on the prologue to St. John's Gospel read: "Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh' ich Rat / Und schreibe getrost: Im Anfang war die *Tat!*"⁵⁶ Both the text and the emphasis are changed. The emphasis in this discreet but important revision of the drama by Cieszkowski is put not on the act itself ("Tat"), but on the *end* ("am Ende wird").⁵⁷

When Faust's version which, after all, is already a revision (of the Gospel), evokes a dynamic, modern, revolutionary worldview, Cieszkowski's rewriting of it expresses a teleological and evolutionary vision. As he writes in *Prolegomena*, the past should "develop *with its own power*" ("*eigenkräftig sich entwickeln*"⁵⁸), deriving, in a way, necessarily from the logic of history. Apart from "develop-

⁵³ I focus on the original approach to Cieszkowski's "philosophy of act" in *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie*.

⁵⁴ See A. WALICKI, *Dwa mesjanizmy. Adam Mickiewicz i August Cieszkowski*, [in:] IDEM, *Prace wybrane*, ed. A. Mencwel, Vol. I: *Filozofia polskiego romantyzmu*, Kraków 2009, p. 108.

⁵⁵ A. CIESZKOWSKI, *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie*, introduction by R. Bubner, afterword by J. Garewicz, Hamburg 1981, p. 78.

⁵⁶ J.W. GOETHE, *Faust. Der Tragödie erster Teil*, [in:] IDEM, *Hamburger Ausgabe*, ed. E. Trunz, Vol. III: *Dramen I*, Munich 1986¹⁶, vv. 1236-1237.

⁵⁷ It was briefly discussed in J. GAREWICZ (*Fichte i polska filozofia czynu* "Archiwum Historii Filozofii i Myśli społecznej" 25(1979), pp. 111-112).

⁵⁸ A. CIESZKOWSKI, *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie*, p. 20.

ment," there is the metaphor of "fabric," which the author borrows again from Goethe;⁵⁹ moreover, Cieszkowski writes about "the weave of acts" ("im Geflechte der Thaten").⁶⁰ Such a textile metaphor in the context of "philosophy of act" is unexpected. But, it is precisely in this aspect that we can see the line that connects Cieszkowski to Norwid. They both conceptualise the act in an anti-eruptive way, precisely as a complement, which results from historical "work" – as an effect that will "grow out" of the latter. At this point we should also mention Norwid's obscure image of the "branching out" of poetry "in the act" ("rozgałęzi się w czynie pieśń" [the song will branch out in an act]) or even branching out as an act ("rozgałęzione czynem słowo" [the word branched out by an act]).⁶¹

This parallel can take one step further. Cieszkowski crosses out Faust's original act ("im Anfang war die Tat!") and replaces it with one that "is just becoming." Can we find in Norwid's "brzmiący" [resounding] act a similar gesture of negation of its pattern? According to me, there are none in *Promethidion*. However, if one mentions the closeness of "tatarski czyn" to (Mickiewicz's) "innermost" Slavs from *Pieśni społecznej cztery stron* [*Five Pages of a Social Song*], one can see the objection to the – so to say – primordial-eruptive element which is assumed in the myth about barbarians. In turn, this element in Mickiewicz's works is intricately linked to poetry. The poet argues in the Parisian lectures that the commanders of the barbarians who raided Rome, with all their ignorance of the classical legacy and book culture, "felt more eloquent than all the ancient speakers, and better poets than Homer himself: they made poetry real; they remained heroes of poetry."⁶² The act replaces poetry by being its true realisation. Goethe's Faust, in turn, attributed "In the beginning there was the Word" to the European tradition – "In the beginning there was *the act!*" This modern hero, just like Mickiewicz's barbarians, invalidates the (written) word.; however, in this way, they reevaluate it. In both cases the word becomes "performative."⁶³ This is precisely the magic of the word that Cieszkowski and Norwid oppose from the position of the slowly growing act.

⁵⁹ The second chapter of *Prolegomena* is preceded by the stanza from Goethe's poem *Wie alles sich zum Ganzen webt* (ibid., p. 45).

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 49.

⁶¹ C. NORWID, *Memorial o Młodej Emigracji*, PWSz VII, p. 112.

⁶² "[...] se sentaient plus éloquentes que tous les orateurs anciens, et plus grands poètes qu'Homère lui-même: ils réalisaient de la poésie; ils restèrent héros de la poésie." A. MICKIEWICZ, *Douzième leçon. Les Barbares. L'Homme Eternel. 30 avril 1844*, p. 238.

⁶³ The performative reading of the Parisian lectures was proposed by Krzysztof Rutkowski. (*Przeciw (w) literaturze. Esej o „poezji czynnej” Mirona Białoszewskiego i Edwarda Stachury*, Bydgoszcz 1987, p. 79 passim).

However, the common features should not conceal certain difficulties of such comparisons. Cieszkowski writes as a rationalist philosopher though with clear literary borrowings. The three-stage model, consisting of epochs of feeling (Antiquity), thought (the Middle Ages) and act (the future), develops according to the logic of its concepts. Although the author of *Prolegomena* describes the epoch of act as autonomous, it can be deduced, as he stressed several times, from the past. For the future is an “integral part of history,”⁶⁴ which is open to speculation.⁶⁵ Finally, the act in this system is the highest attribute of the spirit. Cieszkowski’s idea is “autonomy of independence,”⁶⁶ such a state of mind which will practically no longer be “a subsidiary outflow of the theory”⁶⁷ as it was the case in Hegel’s philosophy, but it will exist “of itself” (“aus-sich-selbst”). In other words, the spirit will be emancipating itself from being and consciousness while simultaneously embracing them. It seems that Norwid was not interested in such a systematic philosophy of act. However, the conclusions that Cieszkowski draws from his conceptual considerations are certainly important, especially in the context of “tatarski czyn.” On the last page of *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie*, it turns out that the philosophy of act in social, political and religious terms is a project of institutionalisation. According to Cieszkowski, Hegel’s “Weltgeist”⁶⁸ is realised in the following way: initially, social forms are historically shaped as “unconscious facts” (“*unbewusste Thaten*”). Later on, “conscious acts, which are institutions”⁶⁹ are gradually created from them. Thus, it is in institutions that the highest, “concrete” freedom is realised; whereas “abstract” freedom – the “highest evil”⁷⁰ – is finally overcome by a concrete freedom.⁷¹

What is this institution? According to Cieszkowski, only two “*Institutionen-Classen*”⁷² have appeared so far: the Roman law and Christian morality. Furthermore, according to the philosopher, the third stage of spirit corresponds to the

⁶⁴ A. CIESZKOWSKI, *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie*, p. 9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶⁶ “Autonomie des Selbstthuns” (*ibid.*, p. 117).

⁶⁷ “*Filialausfluss* des Theoretischen” (*ibid.*, p. 120).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁶⁹ “[die] bewusste[n] *Thaten* der Menschheit, welche die *Institutionen* sind” (*ibid.*, p. 150).

⁷⁰ “höchste[s] *Uebel*” (*ibid.*, p. 151).

⁷¹ Andrzej Walicki writes: “This is what Cieszkowski understood as *Czyn* [act]: human actions become Acts when they are harmonised, coordinated, permeated with the awareness of a common – national and human – Goal.” A. WALICKI, *Dwa mesjanizmy. Adam Mickiewicz i August Cieszkowski*, p. 171. Walicki does not discuss Cieszkowski’s identification of an act with an institution.

⁷² A. CIESZKOWSKI, *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie*, p. 151.

third type of institution: "Sittlichkeit." This particular type of morality will be neither "external" (like law) nor "internal" (like morality), but will constitute a third dimension of general power: an individual becomes "a concrete relational person," an individual state grows into "a family of states," and the humanity as a whole gains a church-like structure.⁷³

Such an approach to free activity as universal institutionalisation may have appealed to Norwid because the figure of continuous improvement through history is clearly in line with the guiding artistic concept of "work." Meanwhile, despite all his sympathy for social progress, the demand for a modern press, modern politics etc., Norwid had never been a ruthless supporter of institutionalisation. It is precisely for this reason that the thought of the philosopher from Poznań should be considered in the context of "tatarski czyn," this highly anti-institutional formula. Cieszkowski's trust in institutions as true "czyny" [acts] is undoubtedly connected with his affinity with the Prussian understanding of statehood. It is also clear that Norwid's bitterly ironic reference to the tsar's *Table of ranks* is incomprehensible, regardless of the Russian partition context.⁷⁴ The reference to Mickiewicz's poetics of *čin* and the polemical reversal of this poetics against Mickiewicz himself function within the framework of the Russian Empire, although from the position of the emigration (Mickiewicz even writes in his footnote in *Dziady* that these realities are "comprehensible only to Lithuanians"). Realating "tatarski czyn" to Cieszkowski's institution would likely result in confusing these contexts, all the more so as the author of *Prolegomena* perceives institutionalisation in a soothing way – not bloody at all. Nonetheless, his developmental and teleological notion of act is a background for the further concretisation of Norwid's gradable act.

MESSIANISM OF ART, OTHER ACTIVISM

According to Cieszkowski, the ecclesiastical unification of humanity is undoubtedly a messianic motif which immanentizes and socialises the Kingdom of God. It is known that the utopian "universal Church" (*Église universelle*) was also a central point of reference in Mickiewicz's Parisian lectures. However, as Walicki showed, these are fundamentally different messianic styles.⁷⁵ Mickiewicz

⁷³ Ibid, p. 153.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the presence of Russian political and official affairs in Norwid's thought, see W. TORUŃ, *Rosja w myśli Norwida*, [in:] IDEM, *Obraz Rosji w literaturze polskiej*, eds. J. Fiećko, K. Trybuś, Poznań 2012.

⁷⁵ Cf. A. WALICKI, *Dwa mesjanizmy. Adam Mickiewicz i August Cieszkowski*, p. 115.

imagines the fullness of reality outside of all institutions, especially outside the official Church. Cieszkowski's vision is much more moderate and statelike.

I am highlighting this aspect not in order to discuss Norwid's ecclesiology, which, as it is well-known, was largely convergent with Roman Catholicism,⁷⁶ but rather to draw attention once again to the proper place of "tatarski czyn" in Promethidion. In that text the issue of messianism moves to another plane. The place of "tatarski czyn" is a dialogue; the treaty about beauty⁷⁷ and the concepts of praca [work] and czyn (the positive one) are, first and foremost, aesthetic terms. This is sometimes forgotten, because "tatarski czyn," when recalled in order to show contrast, points to a completely different, non-artistic area. This is perhaps the decisive factor. Through "tatarski czyn," Norwid does not distance himself from a foreign vision of art (there are many references in his work), but from the world ("the world of Cain") in which art has a different meaning than he attributes to it. In fact, Promethidion exalts art – including folk art – precisely at a time in the history of Polish literature when, as Stefan Sawicki notes, great Romantics "have already begun to doubt the possibilities and practical effectiveness of art."⁷⁸ The researcher goes on to write:

Norwid, on the contrary, has called all the more strongly for the introduction of art into all areas of national life, for its dissemination and practicing. In this he saw the most appropriate realisation of the real act postulated by many at the time, the way of salvation and liberation – through art.⁷⁹

Sawicki explains what Zofia Trojanowiczowa perfectly described as the "messianism of art" of early Norwid.⁸⁰ While Mickiewicz puts art together with a range of charismatic performances as well as social and armed activities, Norwid pro-

⁷⁶ However, Zofia Trojanowiczowa showed that "the hopeful millenarianistic concepts of man's ultimate destiny, so characteristic of Cieszkowski" in the period around 1850, especially in *Psalmów-psalm [The Psalm of Psalms]* (1850), "were not foreign to Norwid." Z. TROJANOWICZOWA, *Cypriana Norwida mesjanizm sztuki, czyli o poszukiwaniu „wszech-doskonałości,”* [in:] EADEM, *Romantyzm. Od poetyki do polityki. Interpretacje i materiały*, eds. A. Artwińska, J. Borowczyk, P. Śniedziwski, Kraków 2010, p. 41.

⁷⁷ Cf. B. KUCZERA-CHACHULSKA, *Norwida „przypowieść o pięknie,”* [in:] EADEM, *Norwida „przypowieść o pięknie” i inne szkice z pogranicza genealogii i estetyki*, Warszawa 2008.

⁷⁸ S. SAWICKI, *Wstęp*, [in:] C. NORWID, *Promethidion*, Kraków 1997, p. 26.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Z. TROJANOWICZOWA, *Cypriana Norwida mesjanizm sztuki, czyli o poszukiwaniu „wszech-doskonałości,”* p. 40; cf. also: EADEM, *Norwid wobec Mickiewicza*, [in:] EADEM, *Romantyzm. Od poetyki do polityki. Interpretacje i materiały*, p. 24.

claims the expansion of art in all possible fields. *Promethidion*'s "czyn" is his slogan for saving through art.

If this expansion of art describes the process of institutionalisation, it is different from Cieszkowski. I would like to conclude with an example from *Niewola. Rapsod* (1849). In the preface to this text, Norwid writes that after a phase of spiritual deepening, inspiration and mystical striving for "infinity," i.e. after the masterpieces of Romanticism of the Great Emigration, Polish literature "nie wątpię, czynny przyjmie kierunek" [I do not doubt, will take an *active* direction].⁸¹ As the poet says, it is supposed to enter "w sferę drugą [...], a sferę *literatury-czynu*" [the second sphere (...), the sphere of *literature-act*].⁸² The poet does not define this often quoted term of "czynności" [activeness] of literature, but it can be partly guessed. Norwid stresses that "mystical" Romanticism was primarily supposed to be an anti-formalistic school ("przeciw-formalna" [anti-formal], "przeciw-formalizm" [anti-formalism]). Thus, it can be concluded that "literature-act" will be, in a sense, a return of the form, or more precisely: giving the form, working out different forms instead of the apotheosis of the collective.⁸³ Norwid assumes that "praktyczność literatury nie zależy na ześrodkowaniu jej w myśl jedną, co, przeciwnie, mistycznym raczej jest kierunkiem, a który pod tę porę jest spełniony" [the practicality of literature does not depend on its concentration into one thought, which, on the contrary, is rather a mystical direction, and which is fulfilled at this time].⁸⁴ This practicality is to be based on "wy-pojedynczeniu (na uspecjalizowaniu), na rozpromienieniu tego węzła narodowej mądrości" [the individualisation (on the specialisation), on the de-radiation of this knot of national wisdom].⁸⁵

"Rozpromienienie" [the de-radiation/decentralisation] of art clearly has much in common with the metaphor of "stopniującej się pracy" [work which may be compared/graded]. Here, the observation which I developed against the background of "tatarski czyn" returns, and can be summed up as follows: act-work, developed as a "tower" – as a negative parallel to the "ladder" and the "scaffolding" of *čin* – defines not so much some spectacular event as comparison, structure, weave. However, the act being valued contains a motif of "momentality." Whereas in "tatarski czyn" from *Promethidion*, the eruptive element is an uncontrolled

⁸¹ C. NORWID, *Do czytelnika*, PWSz IV, p. 41.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁸³ As Sawicki explains "[...] to individualise, to speak in polyphony [...]" (*Norwida walka z formą*, p. 18).

⁸⁴ C. NORWID, *Do czytelnika*, PWSz IV, p. 41.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

outburst of “energy,” in the positive act, as the example of “literatura-czynu” [literature-act] shows, it is the culmination, the bloom at many different points, constituting a different activism.

Hierarchy and eruption are two poles of the imagery that are not mutually exclusive; they are rather differently accentuated by Norwid depending on the context. Owing to this semantic flexibility, one can even say that “tatarski czyn” has a certain pattern: its function is not only polemical – against the Russian politics and its internalisation by Poles – but also heuristic and even constructive, as it co-models Norwid’s social thought and poetic imagination.

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NORWID'S "TATARSKI CZYN"
BETWEEN HIERARCHY AND ERUPTION
(SEMANTICS, CONTEXTS, CONSEQUENCES)

S u m m a r y

Drawing on a scholarly polemic of the 1930s, this paper differentiates between two ways of understanding and translating Cyprian Norwid's formula "tatarski czyn," as 'Tatar *act*' (from Polish *czyn*) or as 'Tatar rank' (from Russian *chin* according to the Tsarist *Table of Ranks*). The aim is to show how the eruptive versus the hierarchical readings of "tatarski czyn" have influenced the opinions on Norwid's dialogic treatise *Promethidion* (1851) and, more generally, on his criticism of the utopian thought of Polish Romanticism and of Russian politics. It was Adam Mickiewicz who in the 1820s and 1830s pointed to the homonymy between *czyn* and *chin* and its potential in generating ambivalences between the seemingly incommensurable images of eruption and hierarchy. Moreover, Mickiewicz already linked both understandings of *czyn* with the stereotypical Tatar, or Mongolian, "Asianness." In this respect, Norwid's formula is fairly conventional. What is genuinely original, however, is how Norwid turns Mickiewicz's earlier ideas *against* those of the later Mickiewicz who, in his Parisian Lectures on the Slavs (1840–1844), seems to glorify "tatarski czyn." In contrast to the "bloody ladder" of Russian bureaucracy and the irrational tendency in Mickiewicz's activism, Norwid suggests "gradual work" culminating in, not erupting with, the act (*Promethidion*). This aspect of Norwid's metaphorical thought is shown in a parallel reading with the philosopher August Cieszkowski who, in his *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie* [*Prolegomena to Historiosophy*] (1838), conceptualized history as a "texture of acts" leading to institutions. Similarly, Norwid's positive notion of act, i.e. his revision of Romantic activism, should be situated beyond the alternatives of eruption and hierarchy.

Key words: Norwid; Mickiewicz; Cieszkowski; Polish Romanticism; *Promethidion*; Romantic activism; philosophy of action; Russian Empire; Orientalism.

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