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Teodor Parnicki and Friedrich Nietzsche— How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable in A New Tale Cycle

1 A New Tale and How the “true world” finally became a fable

A *new tale* (Pol. *Nowa baśń*) is one of the most unusual and complex experiments not only in Polish literature but in world literature as well. The geographical, temporal, ideological, and cultural breadth of the cycle is so huge that one could argue that, for a long time, it will still attract a following of faithful readers, trying to comprehend its scope. And, even though Małgorzata Czermińska’s¹ observation that the six-volume work lies in the centre point of the entire structure of Teodor Parnicki’s *opera omnia* seems justified, it has never had a monograph of its own, and even the number of articles on this text is quite limited.² The causes of this fact may lie in the very complexity of the matter. A seemingly simple plot—for the author of *The word and the flesh* (Pol. *Słowo i ciało*)—becomes more complex and palimpsest

¹ M. Czermińska, *Czas w powieściach Parnickiego*, Wrocław 1972, p. 88.

² Only Jan Kurek wrote about the whole cycle; see: J. Kurek, *O wątku Stanisławowym w “Nowej baśni” Teodora Parnickiego*, in: *Inspiracje Parnickiego. Materiały z konferencji historycznoliterackiej “Inspiracje Parnickiego,” Katowice 2–3 grudnia 1999*, Katowice 2000. Some other scholars examined individual volumes, e.g., J. Sokolski, *Geografia “Nowej baśni,”* in: *Świat Parnickiego. Materiały z konferencji*, (ed.) J. Łukaszewicz, Wrocław 1999; F. Mazurkiewicz, *Powieść dziejowa Teodora Parnickiego. Na przykładzie I tomu “Nowej baśni,”* in: *Inspiracje Parnickiego. Materiały z konferencji historycznoliterackiej*; E. Rybicka, “Gubić się w domysłach rozumu: *Labirynt* Teodora Parnickiego,” in: *eadem, Formy labiryntu w prozie polskiej XX wieku*, Kraków 2000; or M. Gołuński, “Wiecznie powracające słowo. Mit walijski w *Robotnikach wezwanych o jedenastej* Teodora Parnickiego,” in: *Mity słowa, mity ciała*, ed. by L. Wiśniewska and M. Gołuński, co-ed. by A. Stempka, Bydgoszcz 2007.

in form with each volume.³ Newly noted factors force the verification of hypotheses which seemed already accepted. It is worth, therefore, to return to the basics and begin the interpretation of the work from its title.

It has troubled the critics. The only one who attempted the interpretation of the first element of the two-word title was Teresa Cieślukowska, even before the whole work saw the light of day: "The epithet comprised in the word 'new' (Pol. *nowa*) is, perhaps, a reference to the title of Kraszewski's novel and, simultaneously, a paraphrase of the idea of history it contains."⁴ She was the only one who pointed at the obtrusive allusion to *An ancient tale* (Pol. *Stara baśń*) and yet she used a hedging phrase doing so. Such caution is not accidental, since it is hard to find any relationships in the text of the cycle to the 19th-century novel; and even though the last volume of the cycle contains some allusions to the novel in question [NBVI: 419, 498, 535, 536, 540],⁵ they do not explain anything, in fact. Other researchers focused above all on the (fairy)-tale quality present in the title. The multiplicity of views on this element seems to be symptomatic for the way of thinking about this novel and Parnicki's works in general.

The one who went the furthest in his interpretations of the "tale" was Andrzej Kijowski, who saw in this part of the title the message and meaning of the whole work, which was to be the clash between myth and history, while it is in myth that the final meaning of human existence is realised.⁶ Some critics remarked, following the train of thoughts of one of the protagonists of the novel, that all history is written as a tale,⁷ and Antoni Chojnacki proposed a metaphor, derived from the subtitle of the third volume of the novel, according to which historical truth is the Minotaur in the labyrinth.⁸

³ Some critics remarked on the palimpsest way of creating the cycle, work, and perception of history; Cf. Z.D., "Parnicki poszukiwacz absolutu w historii," *Kierunki*, 1968, No. 9; J. Piechowski, "Parnickiego cybernetyka dziejów," *Kierunki*, 1968, No. 12.

⁴ T. Cieślukowska, *Pisarstwo Teodora Parnickiego*, Warszawa 1965, p. 217. In the context of the novel, but without any direct connection to the title, Kraszewski is also mentioned by Michał Sprusiński in his review; see: M. Sprusiński, "Antykwarusze i pobudziciele," *Poglądy*, 1971, No. 5, p. 12.

⁵ To simplify references, citations to Parnicki's novel refer to the following editions: *Nowa baśń*, Vol. I, *Robotnicy wezwani o jedenastej*, Warszawa 1972 (as NBI); *Nowa baśń*, Vol. II, *Czas siania i czas zbierania*, Warszawa 1963 (NBII); *Nowa baśń*, Vol. III, *Labirynt*, Warszawa 1964 (NBIII); *Nowa baśń*, Vol. IV, *Gliniane dzbany*, Warszawa 1966 (NBIV); *Nowa baśń*, Vol. V, *Wylegarnia dziwów*, Warszawa 1968 (NBV); *Nowa baśń*, Vol. VI, *Palec zagrożenia*, Warszawa 1970 (NBVI). [All quotations from Parnicki translated by AP.]

⁶ A. Kijowski, "Nowa baśń Parnickiego," *Twórczość*, 1962, No. 10, pp. 104–105.

⁷ W. Billip, "Opowieść o heroizmie myślenia," *Nowe Książki*, 1964, No. 3; A. Chojnacki, "W labiryncie historii," *Współczesność*, 1970, No. 25.

⁸ A. Chojnacki, *op. cit.*

Alicja Grajewska, in turn, called attention the borderline between tale and history as the space where the action of the work takes its place.⁹ A similar remark can be found in Cieślukowska: “The tale, or interpretation, which Parnicki creates grows out from the interconnection of historical facts and legends, from filling with legends the places about which history is silent.”¹⁰ What is revealed by this short review is that the title of the cycle in progress suggested to the critics first and foremost the common understanding of the tale as fiction, a fantasy, albeit enmeshed in history.

Once a work is finished, researchers look at it from a different angle. The hexalogy was tersely summed up by Jacek Łukasiewicz, who said that *A new tale* is an attempt to understand the world, undertaken again and again.¹¹ A broader interpretation can be found in Czermińska:

A new tale ends where it had begun. There is no other way out but to return to the beginning and commence everything anew again. It was foreshadowed already by the 3rd volume, *Labyrinth* (Pol. *Labirynt*), the exit from which turned out to be the same as its entrance, the final sentence was the repetition of the first. The circle symbolises fullness. The new-tale world becomes so full that one who stays within does not perceive anything which could be outside, which could also be included or would have been rejected and therefore felt as missing or given up.¹²

The researcher does not hide that what she indicates as the organising principle of that novel can apply to the writings of the author of the *Circles in the sand* (Pol. *Koła na piasku*) in general. It is difficult to accept such an interpretation indiscriminately, as even the *mise-en-abyme* of the final volume is not enough to explain the fullness assumed by Czermińska. Another remark she made, however, proves to be more interesting: “in the fictional world nothing is impossible, for it is the imaginary world, created with words, and different from the empirical reality, which is subjected to the laws of nature.”¹³ Thus, she directs attention to the particular nature of *A new tale*, in which the textuality of the world becomes more and more visible with each subsequent volume, to be finally revealed in the conclusion of the cycle, *The Finger of menace*, and become a significant element of the plot. Next, relationships with the works of Juliusz Słowacki, especially *The Ghost King* (Pol. *Król-Duch*; metempsychosis of Parnicki’s characters as analogous

⁹ A. Grajewska, “Labirynt—i co dalej?,” *Kierunki*, 1964, No. 41.

¹⁰ T. Cieślukowska, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

¹¹ J. Łukasiewicz, “Baśń o naszym nie naszym świecie,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 1968, No. 37.

¹² M. Czermińska, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

to the ghosts of history of the author of *Kordian*) were brought to attention in the context of the discussed cycle by Jan Kurek.¹⁴

Jacek Sokolski leads his interpretation in another direction: “Six books of the cycle correspond to the six days of Creation. It is a *hexaëmeron* then, a record of a literary cosmology.”¹⁵ The latter remark is particularly valuable, in my opinion, since it is the only one known to me which tries to answer the question of the sense and meaning of the number of the volumes of the novel. The writer himself, in one of the interviews he gave while he was writing the cycle, mentions its length and, having already finished the 4th volume, implied (albeit indirectly) that it was planned to have exactly six parts.¹⁶ The six-part composition of *A new tale* is the key to the interpretation of the title I propose and its so far unnoticed relationship with the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche.

The author of *The Will to Power* is very rarely mentioned in the context of Parnicki’s writing,¹⁷ yet it seems that the problems explored by the author of *Identity* lie within the circle of ideas inspired in the 20th century by the German philosopher. It is worth to confront *A new tale* with a meaningful passage from the *Twilight of the Idols* entitled “How the ‘true world’ finally became a fable. History of an Error.”¹⁸

This passage led to a great number of commentaries by the critics of the writings of the author of *Zarathustra*.¹⁹ The way the thought of the German

¹⁴ J. Kurek, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ J. Sokolski, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ “Zwierzenia powieściopisarza historycznego czyli rozmowa z Teodorem Parnickim”—interview by A. Piotrowski, *Kierunki*, 1965, No. 39.

¹⁷ Not even a single article from the book, significantly entitled *Parnicki’s inspirations* (Pol. *Inspiracje Parnickiego*), does refer to the relationship between the works of our writer and Nietzsche’s philosophy. It is only Mazurkiewicz who, writing about *A new tale*, adduces the name of the German philosopher; cf. F. Mazurkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 112. There are works on Parnicki in this collection that—which just supports my intuition—refer also to the German philosopher.

¹⁸ F. Nietzsche, *Zmierzch bożyszcz czyli jak filozofuje się młotem*, translated by S. Wyrzykowski, Warszawa MCMV–MCMVI, pp. 29–30. All quotations in the original come from this edition, further referred to as “FN.” [For the translation, the following edition was used: *idem*, *The twilight of the idols and the Antichrist*, translated by Thomas Common, Digireads.com 2009, p. 17 (source: http://books.google.pl/books?id=p-b2Jn8qg_AC&dpq=PP1&vq=true%20world&hl=pl&pg=PA2#v=onepage&q=true%20world&f=false) (accessed: 23 Aug 2013). The quotations in the translation refer to the latter edition.]

¹⁹ The broadest commentary on this passage was provided by Martin Heidegger; cf. M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. 1, translated by A. Gniazdowski, sci. ed. and introduction by C. Wodziński, Warszawa 1998, pp. 229–237. [Quotations in and citations in the translation refer to: *idem*, *Nietzsche*, Vol. I and II, translated by David Farrel Krell, San Francisco 1991 (source:

philosopher was interpreted underwent many changes during the past century; a short characteristic of these changes was given by Leszek Kusak:

In different periods of time, Nietzsche was considered as a metaphysicist or an anti-metaphysicist. The main proponent of the first notion was Martin Heidegger. He recognised Nietzsche exclusively as a representative of the decline of metaphysics, the final form of which was his philosophy.²⁰

This simple opposition, sketched by the researcher, is a convenient way of approaching this problem and a prime example of thinking about this philosophy in general. I believe, however, that the treatment of Nietzscheanism by Parnicki is much more complex, and therefore it should be considered in the terms proposed in the 1960s and 1970s by, among others, Gilles Deleuze²¹ and Pierre Klossowski.²² I do not assume here that the author of *Identity* knew these essays directly; however, there are some terms of thought he employed and which stem from our writer's perspicacity. Therefore, I will make use also of the book by Michał Paweł Markowski, *Nietzsche. The philosophy of interpretation*²³, since his interpretations of the philosophy of the author of *The Will to Power* are, in my belief, at least in some places convergent with the Polish writer's strategies.²⁴

Heidegger refers to the adduced passage from the *Twilight of the Idols* as follows:

The title, “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable,” says that here a history is to be recounted in the course of which the supersensuous, posited by Plato as true being, not only is reduced from the higher to the lower rant but also collapses into the unreal and nugatory.²⁵

It is beyond doubt that Nietzsche shows a kind of a historical process, in which the man was gradually losing contact with the truth, which led straight to the loss of the notion of reality. It seems that—to which the author of *Being*

http://archive.org/download/HeideggerNietzscheIII/Heidegger%20-%20Nietzsche%20%20I,%20II_text.pdf (access: 24 Aug 2013).

²⁰ L. Kusak, *Fryderyk Nietzsche. W poszukiwaniu utraconego ideału*, Kraków 1995, p. 85.

²¹ G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, translated by B. Banasiak, Warszawa 2000.

²² P. Klossowski, *Nietzsche i błędne koło*, translated by B. Banasiak and K. Matuszewski, Warszawa 1996.

²³ M.P. Markowski, *Nietzsche. Filozofia interpretacji*, Kraków 1997.

²⁴ The adducing of various interpretations of the thoughts of the author of the *Dawn* (Pol. *Jutrzenka*) follows one of the essential characteristics of Parnicki's poetics, which is, in my opinion, consistent making use of and exploring various readings of both historical events and other cultural phenomena.

²⁵ M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

and Time pays no attention—the perspicacity of the “slayer of God” reached beyond his times and anticipated the essential characteristics of our times. This perspicacity was then called to attention by Markowski, in the context of the relationship between truth and history, which is the basic material of Parnicki’s world after all, who wrote the following, simultaneously giving an exegesis of Foucault’s view on Nietzscheanism:

...history is an unclearly laid out arena of a clash between forces which are random and cannot be neutralised, which means that a genealogist cannot find any regularities within it, nor impose any stable rules upon it. The clashing forces produce events, are events themselves, thus utterly depriving history of its transcendental dimension.²⁶

This sense of unattainability of truth in understanding history is the final stage of the development of European thought. It is obviously there that Nietzsche anchors himself, at the same time seeking not only the answer to the question of the future fate of philosophy but also how it came to pass. The answer to the latter problem, which Markowski derives from his analyses, pertains to the matter, which is fundamental for Parnicki as well:

Among the greatest reading errors, Nietzsche ranked the confusion of two orders, the order of text and the order of explanation, the confusion which leads to the “disappearance” of text “under the interpretation.” The text has disappeared under the interpretation: this is the transgression of a dishonest philologist who, instead of reading a text as text, strives to read himself into it..., interpret..., seek within...that which is not there.²⁷

This passage could well serve as a motto for many, especially late, novels by the author of *Identity*. The problem of the interpretations, given by Parnicki’s characters, of the texts which themselves were interpretations of earlier commentaries, is perhaps the simplest framing of the structure of these novels. *A new tale* plays a peculiar role in this structure, as it allows us to observe *in statu nascendi*, so to say, the accumulation of interpretations which distance the protagonists (readers) more and more from the facts, not only in terms of time, but also from their initial—true—meaning. The distribution of this process into six volumes and introduction of the word “tale” into the title of the whole cycle is, in my assumption, a reference to the passage from the *Twilight of the Idols* adduced above. Together with the earlier attempts to find the common denominator for the whole of that work, it is a proposition which combines historicalness and the problem of truth.

²⁶ M.P. Markowski, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

2 Workers called at eleven and “The true world attainable by the wise, the pious, and the virtuous man,—he lives in it, he embodies it. (Oldest form of the idea, relatively rational, simple, and convincing. Transcription of the proposition, ‘I, Plato, am the truth.’)” [FN: 17]

Discussing the first step of the formation of a fable, Heidegger pays attention mostly to the attainability of truth. According to him, the “true world” is an “ideal” but not an “idea” in strictly Platonic terms: “The ‘true world’ is not yet the object of a doctrine; it is the power of Dasein,”²⁸ it is therefore a concrete, not an abstract thing. The author of *Being and Time* also remarks that the true world is attainable to a virtuous man. It ought to be remembered, too, that Nietzsche adds two more traits, wisdom and piety.

From this angle, it is worth to examine the first volume of *A new tale*. Beyond doubt, Aron appears to the world as the bearer of all traits assumed by the author of the *Dawn*. He is a priest whose piety and virtuousness became almost proverbial. Indeed, other protagonists of this volume, Stanisław (future saint) and Łukasz Żydzięta (and later also Eryk, the alleged killer of Stanisław), are not far from this state, either. Since the basic motive of their actions is to convince the dying monk that he does not possess the traits of a wise man (notably virtuousness), and therefore that he cannot say about himself, “I, Aron, am the truth” (to paraphrase the words of Nietzsche), an attempt to describe, in the form of fiction, the beginnings of the process of the loss of access to the truth becomes one of the discourse levels present in this volume.

It seems at this stage, that the truth is fully cognisable and that the effort assumed by Heidegger the exegete is enough to attain it. This is, for instance, the case of the level of the Celtic myth of Pwyll-Perdeur and Arawn, evoked by Łukasz, in which, from beneath the layer of myth, folk commonness, and historical events, a complex image of a political and personal game appears, the intentions of which can be recreated in relatively much detail²⁹.

The question of truth recurs many a time in the novel, regarding both what the individual characters say and the meaning of the term itself. The following passage from the dialogue of Aron and one of his adversaries seems to be of a special significance:

‘Let the truth choose itself from among the options you presented to me.

²⁸ M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

²⁹ Which, as a matter of fact, I did in another paper; cf. M. Gołuński, “Wieżnie powracające słowo. Mit walijski w *Robotnikach wezwanych o jedenastej* Teodora Parnickiego,” in: *Mity słowa, mity ciała*.

‘And again! You have lived for close to a hundred years in the chains of poetry (for one can by no means say, philosophy) of Origenites or other Platonics, will you not be able to—even at the very threshold of death—free yourself of those chains?! The truth! It is in God, not outside of God. Human truth, all the possible human truth, it is...do you know what? It is no more, no less, but an argument so intricately formulated that there is no way someone—anyone at all—could refute it.’

‘Should you live longer, twenty more years or so, you will find the human truth to be something incomparably greater than just an argument, albeit most ingenious...’ [NBI: 74]

Elements indicated by both German philosophers can be seen here. Łukasz Żydzięta reproaches the dying monk in the spirit of Heidegger, who believed Nietzsche to be an anti-Platonic in his thinking³⁰. Of course, the Khazar is a Christian, and his accusations relate to these same tendencies within the Church. The main charge is, however, that Aron’s truth is only the truth of a man, which is imperfect and incomplete by the nature of the thing. The reply of the Irish monk seems fundamentally Platonic and anti-utilitarian. He attempts to go beyond the belief of his interlocutor (or both interlocutors, as Stanisław remains under a strong influence of the bishop of Kiev, a dozen or so years his senior), verbalised in the quoted passage, that only truth in its utilitarian sense has meaning. This is closely related to the plot of the novel.

In his later reminiscences, Łukasz, himself dying then, dictates a peculiar note related to the night of Aron’s death:

Had not Stanisław, on the night before Saint James Day, hauled me too early to the chamber where he tried to force the truth from the old man, while Aron was still among the living, whether or not he was his son, they would certainly have told each other—just the two of them—that one more thing.... [NBI: 160]

Thus, Łukasz himself believes that the truth is near, almost in the reach, yet each time something prevents attaining it fully. This time it was the haste of his younger companion. It is worth to note that Łukasz does not ultimately settle the case of Stanisław’s fatherhood, although it was he who claimed to have been the prime witness of the romantic intercourse between Aron and Przedśława, in the result of which the future saint was to be conceived. The

³⁰ “Nietzsche once says..., ‘My philosophy an *inverted Platonism*: the farther removed from true being, the purer, the finer, the better it is. Living in semblance as goal’ (IX, 190). That is an astonishing preview in the thinker of his entire later philosophical position. For during the last years of his creative life he labors at nothing else than the overturning of Platonism” (M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, pp. 153–154).

monk’s resistance, however, which his interlocutors strove to overcome in manifold ways, must have left him with a mark, a kind of doubt about the evidence of his own memory. All the passages adduced so far strongly support the existence of truth, and an attainable truth at that. Another indication of this is the following quote from the final parts of the novel:

‘...he can do without Servian adaptations of Homer, who knows Greek and would find access to the true text of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*...’

‘Indeed, this time your statement is beyond reproach: one has to know Greek, but this also is not enough: the true text has to be found...’ [NBI: 230]

This dialogue fragment clearly corresponds to, and complements, the first of the adduced quotes. The true text exists, therefore one of the options presented to Aron is certain to be true. Attaining it is difficult and can be achieved only through deep reflection, knowledge of the appropriate language, and finding the right text. Should we assume that the reference to Homer is a metaphor of cognition, it turns out to be surprisingly close to the Nietzschean thinking at the first step of the “history of an error.”

3 Time of sowing and time of reaping and “The true world unattainable at present, but promised to the wise, the pious, and the virtuous man (to the sinner who repents). (Progress of the idea: it becomes more refined, more insidious, more incomprehensible,—it becomes feminine, it becomes Christian.)” [FN: 17]

No other volume of *A new tale* does in such a clear way refer to the ideas of the author of *The Will to Power*. If we look at the plot of the novel from this angle, we will see characters there who are near personifications of Nietzschean thought. The protagonist himself, Ivan (Pol. *Iwan*) Bacon,³¹ is a former knight doing penance for the sin of the lack of courage in the Battle of Grunwald. In order to gain redemption, he sets off on a journey to another world, or South America (which, in the course of the novel, is consistently named Anti-Earth; Pol. *Przeciwziemia*). He was supposedly accompanied on this journey by Joan of Arc, saved from the stake, who was in any case

³¹ Regardless of the historicity or not of this character, what comes to mind is an etymological fusion of a medieval knight (Ivan, from Ivanhoe?) and a somewhat more recent philosopher (Francis Bacon). The interplay of violence and thought plays a significant role in the action of the novel. In the context analysed here, it points out the philosophical facets of the protagonist’s personality.

sentenced to this kind of voyage (he was to seek the Grail in the other world). The matter of dialogues held in the novel (more often in the spoken than written form) is the attempt to attain the truth about both the protagonist's journey itself and the authenticity of the identity of the woman who travels with him, and whom Bacon believed to be the French national heroine.

The loss of attainability of truth is revealed in a seemingly marginal remark about one of the protagonists of the first volume, who functions in this one as a text known to the majority of characters: "Eryk, known as (and no one, perhaps, has known the truth for a long time: right or wrong) the archbishopslayer..." [NBII: 138] According to this interesting parenthetical remark, it is impossible to settle the veracity of connections, crucial for the plot of the *Workers...*, between the characters. It stems from the inability to confirm this information in any sources whatsoever. This parenthetically expressed thought returns as an unspoken presumption in a complex metaphor, which begins as follows:

Obviously, it would be more convenient for the pretender, if he were acquainted with the truth beforehand, or realised that I do not hold as reliable the only source which can provide me with comparative material; thenceforth he would be able to make up, with no need to take precautions any more, however much he would or could; and whatever he made up—whether it seemed suspicious to me or not—I would be helpless, at least so much as a man who cannot read and has never seen an African camelopard himself; for what would such a man have to say on the subject whether he lies or does not lie, if the other tells him that there is an animal, of a trunk similar to that of a camel, albeit with no hump, whose skin is spotted like that of a leopard, that has legs longer than a horse, and neck—ending in a tiny head with small horns—much longer yet, and that when it begins to run before a lion, it leaves the latter invariably far behind. [NBII: 89]

The truth of the story about the giraffe is unverifiable unless one is in possession of tools which can verify the relations about it; therefore, it is shifted into the area of belief or disbelief, and not of logical thinking. This part of Nietzsche's thought is interpreted by Heidegger in the following way:

The supersensuous is no longer present within the scope of human existence, present for it and its sensuous nature. Rather, the whole of human existence becomes this-worldly to the extent that the supersensuous is interpreted as the "beyond."³²

It is clear that Parnicki understands the *History of an Error* in a much more historical way than the author of *Being and Time* and is much less interested in its connections with metaphysics. Simultaneously, this

³²M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

“physical” interpretation takes notice of similar changes to those noted by the “anti-metaphysical” one. It seems that *A new tale* shifts the view on the portion of *The Will to Power* from a theological to a teleological perspective. A confirmation of such a view can be found in another passage from the novel:

First, every human personality is composed of not only the truth but also figments of one’s own imagination, such as deliberate lies. Second, to employ a comparison which must appear to you, dearest father, most sharp and telling, there is someone—no matter who—who holds a profound belief that human nature (and thus his own as well) is not subject to annihilation, that is, a belief only in the appearance or transience of the state of death; and then comes someone else (I shall not name who, even for the sake of example) who says that, of course, human immortality is a fact, yet one that is inevitably determined by the union of body and soul, that is, attainable after death only as a result of Christ’s second coming; and it is so because of a total lack of evidence, whether ascertainable by anyone’s experience or accepted as ascertained by the authority of Holy Scripture, that soul could exist bodiless, as the Platonists say, disturbers of the truth, that is before the day of the resurrection of the flesh, could experience either joy in heaven, or torment in hell or purgatory. [NBII: 161–162]

Indeed, in the example adduced by the character, theology³³ is but a metaphor which follows the explicit statement that the human duality is not metaphysical, in the Platonic way, but rather logical. The question is, obviously, how to tell truth from falsehood. The previous quotation indicates that it is nearly impossible. The reason of this impossibility is the lack of tools to verify the presented narrations. It is worth to remark here, that while the truth remains unequivocal, distortions result from both deliberate and involuntary actions, which makes the true interpretation even more difficult. Also the situation in the latter case is similar: a theological heresy is essentially a solution alternative to the official one and its being a “heresy” is decided by a human gesture, not the ability to ascertain how it really is. In this case, it lies outside the world. It should be remembered, however, that it is a simile (metaphor). And it is not only the character protecting himself

³³ On the other hand, the thesis proposed by the character, which contradicts the basic dogmas of the Catholic Church, is closely related to early Christianity and is not, therefore, that unlikely; it also refers to Martin Luther, who appears as a character at the end of the novel and who during its events absolutely could not have advanced his theses yet. There is another passage which corresponds with the considerations here: “Where is the truth about Doctor Luther’s mission? ‘In thousands of places. Even in thousands of thousands. And you could say about each of them, “It is more likely right here than anywhere else. Most likely—since you’re pondering it now—in your conviction and feeling”” [NBII: 42]. It is yet another venture into a different world, this time into the future in a temporal sense.

from the accusation of heresy but, in my view, a gesture of distancing himself from theology.

In the final parts of the novel, there is a dialogue which directly refers to what is being considered here:

‘One seeks the truth to preach it afterwards.’

‘That is, to tell it?’

‘Yes, exactly.’

‘Just like a tale is told?’

‘No, not like that. Who tells the truth...’

‘...tells that about which he believes that there (in what he tells) is the truth, not somewhere else. Yet he can believe so (it is what so often happens to the tellers), mistaking for the truth what is but...’

‘...yet another tale?’

‘Precisely. And it’s different from other tales only in this one sense that it would be a new tale.’ [NBII: 434]

This is one of the most distinct explanations of the title of the cycle in the text, which also evokes a passage from *The Will to Power*. According to it, the truth is unattainable already at this stage. It should always be remembered that the dispute in *A new tale* is about the truth of history, both great (the fate of Joan of Arc) and individual (whether Eryk was the “archbishopslayer” or not). What is perhaps the most interesting is that truth cannot be told. An attempt to narrate it turns into a “new” tale each and every time. Beyond doubt, Bacon still believes that, since he claims with conviction that he sailed to Anti-Earth with Joan of Arc, it had really happened. His opponents do not entertain such illusions anymore. Of course, at this stage they are only able to falsify Iwen’s tale in the historical sense, denying thus the protagonist’s claims to having the truth.³⁴

³⁴This may be the reason why, perhaps, the following attempts are made in the course of the novel: to falsify the text of the first volume of the cycle and to indicate its author, who is thought to be one of the Bishops of Santa Maria. The theme of authorship, and thus negation of the authenticity of the subsequent volumes of the novel, will be systematically developed in these volumes; following this theme and the consequences of this gesture would be the perfect way to reconstruct the coming to be of the palimpsest in Parnicki’s world and to gain an insight into the view of the author of *Identity* on historiography.

4 The *Labyrinth* and “The true world unattainable, undemonstrable, and unable to be promised; but even as conceived, a comfort, an obligation, and an imperative. (The old sun still, but shining only through mist and scepticism; the idea become sublime, pale, northerly, Koenigsbergian.)” [FN: 17]

What is obvious in this chapter (using Heidegger’s nomenclature) is Nietzsche’s allusion to Kant. The author of *Being and Time* views this metaphor as a reference to Kant’s Platonism³⁵ and the resulting from it metaphysics, characteristic of the Greek philosopher. As I have mentioned above, Parnicki avoids metaphysics, moving it into the sphere of metaphors. It is in this context that Plato makes an appearance in the text. Since the author of *The word and the flesh* rather holds a discourse—if at all—on metaphysics than engages in it, what should be perceived in the context discussed here is first and foremost the subsequent stage of the loss of access to the truth in differently perceived history.

The new element introduced in the novel is the dissociation of the main character. So far some characters used to appear—due to various changes and situations—in the minds of others, the former usually being one of the protagonists of the *Workers called at eleven*. This time, the cross-breed character, son of a conquistador and a native woman, Krzysztof [i.e. Christopher—AP] Villafana splits into Krzysztof, his European component, and Kszytl, an Indian. At some point he even begins to speak in first person plural, recognising his duality³⁶. This new way of duplication is yet another variant of the adduced theme.

There is also a provision, which makes a distinct step towards dispelling the illusion of veracity:

The writer of this story is, of course, unable to vouch for the absolute accordance with reality of the prison conversations, recreated in this very chapter of the story, that de Puertocarrero held with himself, and which conversations can be divided into conscious (that is, those where even de Puertocarrero himself did not doubt that they were just and only monologues) and more or less unconscious monologues, or would-be dialogues—in most cases with five hundred years long dead Bishop Łukasz Żydzięta. [NBIII: 92–93]

³⁵ M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, pp. 205–206.

³⁶ Perhaps it should be considered if the plural is not, in some sense, a third persona within the dissociating character, which remains unnoticed to him.

It turns up that what has been said cannot be reconstructed with absolute certainty that it is the truth. Such provisions were not made in the previous volumes, the veracity of at least one's own text was always tacitly assumed. This time the writer himself has no such certainty. Needless to say, it also pertains to speech: "everything at all, anything anyone tells anyone else anywhere—may also be no more than fiction!" [NBIII: 94]. In such case it is not possible to attain the truth anymore but seeking the truth is still an important task for the characters. And it is in this sense as well that the title of this part, the *Labyrinth*, can be understood. An obvious question arises, does this labyrinth have an exit at all?³⁷

What is also interesting in the passage about de Puertocarrero's dialogues is that it is clearly stated that the character's conversation with Łukasz Żydzięta was his imagination. In this way the split into Krzysztof/Kszytl not only becomes an alternative to, but outright replaces the passage from previous volumes (a peculiar form of incarnation).³⁸

The very subtitle of the third volume, *Labyrinth*, introduces a new perspective also to the process, interesting to me, of the loss of the truth. Although it is difficult to find traces, in the text of the novel, which would show that—as Giorgio Colli³⁹ has it—the labyrinth is considered as a metaphor of the beginning of philosophical thinking, its relation to the cognitive process is beyond doubt. And the latter is in some places understood in a quite perverse way:

'And can half-men, half-bulls—the very Minotaurs—exist? You say they do in a tale. So a tale can furnish a crane with not only iron claws, but also golden and even thunder ones—'

'And a man with unusual attributes—'

'The page is growing, at last! He's already turned into a squire!' [NBIII: 206]

In this case the characters use the term "tale" as synonymous to "myth." Assuming that the plot of the novel takes place in the 16th century, we may assume that such nomenclature is justified. Of course, it has to be assumed at a different plane that the character consciously uses the term from the title because he cares for the impression he is making on his interlocutor. Here the understanding that a tale is in opposition to reality turns out to

³⁷ Elżbieta Rybicka (cf. E. Rybicka, *op. cit.*) seems not to doubt it. In the context discussed here, however, it is not so obvious anymore.

³⁸ Anyway, it is a step of yet another process, the reconstruction of which—albeit fascinating—lies beyond the scope of this essay.

³⁹ G. Colli, *Narodziny filozofii* [The birth of philosophy], tr. into Polish by S. Kasprzysiak, Kraków 1997.

be a step in the character’s development. What is possible in the world of a tale cannot happen in reality. In that case, however, since everything is a tale, for the image of the world can only be conveyed this way, as the previous volume rightly emphasized, how to attain the truth? Not only the truth about history but the individual truth as well, since Krzysztof/Kszytl, convinced that he was pulled into the labyrinth by Father Diaz (from beyond the grave, for that matter), wonders if “it was the real Father Diaz or only one we imagined, and if only imagined by us, and not the true one, it would have to be said, ‘imagined in our own form and likeness?’” [NBIII: 291]. And, to tell the truth, there is no straightforward answer to this question.

The imperative to seek the truth appeared several times in this part of Parnicki’s novel. In my mind, this is very close to the stage described by Nietzsche as the third item. In this context, the labyrinth gains a new meaning; seeking the exit or the centre of the labyrinth (or, perhaps, both of those things?) becomes an imperative, even a necessity, though apart from the promise of the exit there are no premises that there is such an exit.

5 *Earthen bottles* and “The true world—unattainable? At any rate unattained. And being unattained also unknown. Consequently also neither comforting, saving, nor obligatory: what obligation could anything unknown lay upon us? (Grey morning. First yawning of reason. Cock-crowing of Positivism.)” [FN: 17]

It is interesting that Heidegger, while analysing the adduced passage of *The Will to Power*, is still focused on the previous one, most of all on overcoming the ideas of the Koenigsbergian philosopher:

With the help of its own chief principle, the theoretical unknowability of the supersensuous, the Kantian system is unmasked and exploded. If the supersensuous world is altogether unattainable for cognition, then nothing can be known about it⁴⁰

Parnicki sees this step in a completely different way. The protagonists of the novel are, for various reasons, put in a Swedish prison, and from this angle they hold discussions, some of which concern the veracity of the previous volumes of *A new tale*. The physical incarceration (forced or voluntary—it is not obvious in the plot of the *Earthen bottles*) does not, of course, deprive

⁴⁰M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

one of the freedom of thought; to the contrary, it gives one more freedom for considerations.⁴¹ The task they set themselves was expounded so by Atanazy:

‘You may ask if it is but a conjecture, of mine, Jan Diaz, or even yet another seeker (of whom there were many) of the boundary between the tale (that is, either lie or illusion) and the truth in the collection B of writings of Bishop Alonso (Pol. *Alfons*) de Santa Maria; which collection, besides, has indeed received a supplement, too, in the form of Krzysztof Villafana’s story about the wandering of supposedly Father Diaz, but in fact of the author himself, through the mysteries of the labyrinth, in which the supposedly mournful, and also supposedly vengeful thought of Łukasz Żydzięta had reigned for six hundred years?!’ [NBIV: 36]

Seeking the truth is therefore still an imperative for the characters in the novel. What is more, the metaphor of the labyrinth, introduced in the previous volume, remains apt. It is worth to pay attention here to the accretion of texts, in case of which there is not even a certainty who their authors were. Each of them is only a commentary to the previous ones, and the veracity of the fundamental text itself is being questioned, since they belong to “the collection B of writings of Bishop Alonso de Santa Maria.” This designation assumes ambiguity, as the said Bishop may have only collected the texts (they belonged to him), but he may have been their author just as well.

The initial situation is consistent with Nietzsche’s remarks. Looking at the fourth volume of *A new tale* from this angle, one can see that Parnicki engages in a polemic with the text of *The Will to Power* again, at the same time departing from metaphysical (or anti-metaphysical) interpretation of the latter text.

There is no truth the possession of which would lead to some kind of a final solution. And if so, everything becomes a tale, and perhaps something more:

‘...and when Atanazy acquainted me with a new tale. That is, with the texts of which the new tale is composed.’

‘With texts? He acquainted you with himself. After all, Atanazy himself is a new tale. Just like the lot before him, beginning with Łukasz Żydzięta and Aron. Like his contemporaries, the Boniecki siblings. Just like you after him (after him—less in terms of time than of succession).’

‘So each reader and each listener of a new tale is a new tale himself?’

⁴¹ Actually, the characters are being temporarily imprisoned in each volume. It is the first time, however, that virtually the whole “real” scenery of the book is limited to a prison cell.

‘He cannot fail to be. You suspect fabulousness in the writings of Łukasz Żydzięta, or the two Bishops—father and son—de Santa Maria, or Krzysztof Villafana. But, since they are not only the authors, but also the protagonists of these works, you also suspect fabulousness in themselves. The same will happen to both your works and you.’

‘But I don’t want to be a tale at all.’ [NBIV: 424]

Should one follow the train of thought of the interlocutors, everyone who enters the world of *A new tale* becomes not only its participant, but also a part of it, the tale itself. The relationship between the story and the storyteller becomes blurred. If one follows consistently the findings so far, it will appear that attaining the truth is impossible because a man is never the vector of only the truth [NBIV: 161]. But if so, is there still a point in seeking it? Seeking the truth becomes then, perhaps, a convenient dover for playing entirely different games. That which could only be suspected so far becomes, also from the perspective observed here, more and more visible. Even the characters of the *Labyrinth* believed that finding the Minotaur would give them a chance to be certain about the truth. It seems that the characters of the *Earthen bottles* lose this kind of illusions. The boundary between the truth and the tale, so interesting to them, appears to lie not in the world anymore but, in a sense, individually in each of the characters.

From this viewpoint, the following fragment of a dialogue sounds like a desperate attempt at escape from the “new-tale” trap:

‘So it’s possible to annihilate a tale, isn’t it?’

‘So far as it’s possible to annihilate the desire and courage to discern, feel, and imagine such things in heaven and earth that aren’t dreamt of in philosophy.’ [NBIV: 430]

Then the question recurs of what is beyond that which is accessible to experience. The tale reaches beyond the accessible world. America, or Anti-Earth, was discovered already between the second and third volumes of the cycle, falsifying the dreams expressed by Bacon, and earlier yet by the failed civilising missions of Aron and Eryk (albeit the degrees and causes of the failure are not the same). The tale goes on, however, for it strives to relay the story of attempts, undertaken again and again, to attain the truth, which each time lies farther from those seeking it. It withdraws more and more but—and it is here that I must disagree with Czermińska’s conclusion presented in the beginning—still seeks a connection with reality. The accumulation of texts, as well as the accumulation of historical relations, makes it more and more difficult.

This is how I would interpret the textual relationship between Parnicki and Nietzsche. *A new tale* emerges, somewhat paradoxically, as a reflection of reality; whereas the reality becomes another (different) world, which originally was a difficult to access carrier of the truth, but the slowly progressing loss of contact with the former makes the latter unattainable at all.

6 *Breeding grounds of wonders* and “The ‘true world’—an idea neither good for anything, nor even obligatory any longer,—an idea become useless and superfluous; consequently a refuted idea: let us do away with it! (Full day; breakfast; return of *bon sens* and cheerfulness; Plato blushing for shame; infernal noise of all free intellects.)” [FN: 17]

Heidegger remarks that the “true world” in Nietzsche’s text is set in quotation marks, and therefore concludes that it is related to it being abolished due to its uselessness.⁴² Parnicki responds to the challenge of the author of the *Dawn* with a much more interesting gesture. He introduces the *New book of the bowl of lentil stew, or ‘The tale of tales.’* He therefore sets in quotation marks the title of the cycle, about which I said that it was the substitute of the real world, and even doubles these quotation marks in an analogous way. The text of this additional tale is an anti-utopia, set in the future, several of which were written in the 17th century, when the action of the second part of the fifth volume of the cycle takes place.

The characters do not doubt that it is fictional. The problem they set for themselves is the authorship of this text, yet this time there are at least several candidates for this position. It is not the content that occupies them, therefore, but the consequences of attributing the authorship to one person or another.

In general, in this part there is much less talk about the truth, as there is no point in talking about something which is no longer important. More and more often instead, there appear elements which are usually called metatextual but which are difficult to qualify as such in the space of *A new tale*. One of the characters pretending to be the author of *The tale of tales* addresses his queen in the following words:

Does your twice royal grace and exaltedness know what a new tale is? She does not, is what your eyes tell me. So let me tell you. There would be no tale of tales, or the new book of the bowl of lentil stew at all, had not a

⁴²M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

new tale been created, and much earlier at that. I would even call the tale of tales not an independent piece but only a chapter—the penultimate one, perhaps—of a new tale itself. [NBV: 192]

At least two questions which appear in this passage are interesting for the considerations here. First, it is perhaps the only place—before the final volume—where an allusion to the length of the cycle appears overtly in the content of the work. In an intriguing form, a character predicts how much longer the action of the novel, in which she herself participates, will take. It is therefore a surrender of the literary illusion of the truth, which is then openly abandoned in volume six. Second, *The tale of tales* is included in the course of the novel not by the narrator (who, according to a commonly accepted definition, is wholly absent in the second part of the fifth volume of the cycle) but by a gesture of a character⁴³.

The world of *A new tale* presents itself as increasingly multi-levelled, and so the question about the truth loses its topicality within it. Just as the search for the “true world” has lost its meaning, since it was proven to be a fictitious tale in this volume.

7 The Finger of menace and “We have done away with the true world: what world is left? Perhaps the seeming?... But no! in doing away with the true, we have also done away with the seeming world! (Noon; the moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; climax of mankind; INCIPIT ZARATHUSHTRA.)” [FN: 17]

The sixth volume of *A new tale* gathers together again all the characters of previous volumes, and introduces into it characters from both Parnicki’s other novels and works by other writers. They all assemble in order to pass a judgement on their author. Similarly to the two previous volumes and the third volume of the *Faces of the moon*, written almost at the same time, the characters wear masks, albeit much more easier to describe than they are in the trilogy. Most interestingly, masks are also—according to Deleuze—important to Nietzsche:

With Nietzsche, everything is a mask. His health was a first mask for his genius; his suffering, a second mask, both for his genius and for his health. Nietzsche did not believe in the unity of a self and didn’t experience it. Subtle relations of power and of evaluation between different “selves”

⁴³The question of the role of *The tale of tales* in the whole cycle is beyond doubt one more theme, not picked up yet, which awaits study.

that conceal but also express other kinds of forces—forces of life, forces of thought—such is Nietzsche’s conception, his way of living.⁴⁴

In the light of this passage, *The Finger of menace* seems to be quite an excellent commentary.

The final period in the history of “an error,” according to the Heideggerian explanation of Nietzsche’s ideas, is above all else the overcoming of the Platonic belief in the existence of the ideal world in favour of the sensual world. According to the author of *Being and time*, it is closely related to the whole anti-Platonic philosophy of that thinker. And even though that part of the exegesis is, in the opinion of other researchers, highly controversial, what proves to be of interest is a remark associated with the parenthetical note, where the author of the *Dawn* announces the coming of Zarathustra⁴⁵. Could the latter turn out to be, in Parnicki’s version, the creation of the author of the whole cycle, introduced into the last volume, which has some clearly autobiographical elements? Such an interpretation cannot be rejected, taking into account, for instance, Rorty’s reflexion remarked upon by Markowski:

In the chapter “Self-creation and affiliation: Proust, Nietzsche, and Heidegger,” Rorty says: Nietzsche was headed in the same direction as Proust, since they both discovered that all that counts is the way in which we present us to ourselves and are able to describe it, not worrying about the objective validation of this description. Instead of the final version of hetero-description (“this is what the world is like”) they both proposed the act of self-creation, which was the answer to the set of “small accidents animating each other,” the set we often call life.⁴⁶

The sixth part of *A new tale* combines the weight of masks and the importance of autobiographical creation; at which point it is worth to remember that the latter will become a downright constitutive plot element of the novels written by the author of the *Identity* after the completion of the discussed cycle.

What is important, like in the case of the previous volumes, is the formulation of the question of the truth, whose formulations rise to become an independent narrative thread. It is not an accident that almost the same assumption as was expressed by Łukasz in the *Workers called at eleven* recurs here:

What makes something—anything—the truth? A perfect defence—that is, one which cannot be refuted by anyone or anything—of a thesis that

⁴⁴ G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, p. 16; [English quotation from: *idem*, “Nietzsche,” in: *idem*, *Pure immanence: Essays on a life*, New York 2001, p. 59].

⁴⁵ M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, pp. 208 f.

⁴⁶ M.P. Markowski, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

something is the truth. You may say, one attains the truth by experience?
But isn't all experience but an argument for the thesis that something either
is, or is not, the truth? [NBVI: 269]

Besides, even this opinion is expressed by a mask, one we may identify with the Khazar. It is not without meaning that this time, on one hand the thesis is being advanced in the form of questions and, on the other, the voice of Aron, who would oppose this thesis, is missing. The most important change, however, occurs in the status of the character in the novel. Łukasz Żydzięta, the 11th century Bishop of Kyiv, arrives at the 19th century Sandomierz, from which town he set off on the same night before Saint James Day, almost 750 years before. He is not himself anymore, but a mask. What is his status then? This is a question which can be asked of virtually every character appearing in the novel. In the text itself, this question is raised, among others, regarding Hibl:

Do you believe in Your reality, Hibl?

...One reality of yours is your aptitude in the service of the Habsburgs as a policeman. Another reality, it is the general meaning of your service to the Habsburgs. The third, the general meaning of existence and, further yet, of the Habsburg monarchy as the illuminist or enlightener, according to the standards from before but the French and the American Revolutions. Also, it was only the fourth reality in a row that I asked you about, the reality of your existence, first outside of the *Ashes* (Pol. *Popioły*) novel, and then outside of *A new tale* as well. [NBVI: 184]

Hibl, according to the content of the novel by Żeromski, lives in the times when the action of the volume takes place, yet the question which precedes the reasoning presented above is a metaphysical one, since it refers to the character's belief in his own existence. Except that the last of the questions given above actually deprives the previous three of meaning in the ontological sense, since it relates to the very possibility of the character's existence beyond the worlds of the novels. A negative answer to this problem makes the previous ones groundless.

It also enables to touch the relationship, fundamental for Parnicki (and Nietzsche), between the truth (reality) and its depiction (interpretation). This question, in the case of the author of *The Will to Power* was raised by Markowski: “Finally, Nietzsche will say that the world and the interpretation are one, replacing the category related to the depictions...by a category which refers to interpretations.”⁴⁷ In the *Finger of menace*, this issue recurs several times, mostly in relation to the genealogy of the novel, but not only to it:

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

...tales aside, but the requirements of historical truth, and at the very least of historical probability, have to be fulfilled, however, one way or another. [NBVI: 36]

...new tale is forbidden to fall into a state of conscious contradiction with historical truth (although falling involuntarily into this very state of contradiction would be acceptable, while less than praised). [NBVI: 46]

...does not the title itself, *A new tale*, contain within a warning signal for all those who would tend to recognise historicity—or, to the contrary, the indolence of historicity—as the main criterion of either the value or the usefulness of this novel cycle? [NBVI: 119]

Of the incognisability of historical truth as the truth of both the collective and the individuals. He also wants to derive from such a thesis (logically, in any case; this must be given to him) another one, about the equal validity of the fantasy and the evidence of the documents in novels, which are commonly called historical. He calls historiography fabulography, and by doing that raises the latter to the rank of the former. He assigns them both equal culture-creating value, which may allow to draw two conclusions: either they both have the same didactic value, or culture-creating activity neither imposes any didactic obligations on itself, nor allows anyone or anything to impose them on itself. [NBVI: 299-300]

The chronology in which the suggestions appear is not random. From the beginning of the novel, there is a dispute about the meaning of the title of the cycle.⁴⁸ The first two statements seem to confirm that the writer still adheres to the concept of putting the question of the historical truth right in the centre. In the course of action, however, that is as the trial of the person of the author of the cycle proceeds, the historicity as a criterion of value becomes a suspect in its capacity as a criterion of the value of literary work (the third passage). It is so because, from the second volume of the novel on (although some initial signals of this strategy can be found in the *Workers called at eleven* as well) the truth gives way to the interpretations, which increase dramatically and create a palimpsest, in which the original text has been blurred so thoroughly that it becomes unattainable. And this is what the last of the adduced quotations is about. This approach to the

⁴⁸ Provoked, more likely or not, by the opinions of the critics, to which the writer was very sensitive; he would even adopt—whether consciously or ironically is another question—some of the phrases which appeared in the reviews of his novels, and which are later repeated in the interviews he gave, among others. In the case of *A new tale*, there was a situation of this kind as well, which can be addressed in the context interesting to us. In the review of the second volume of *A new tale*, Witold Billip stated that Parnicki put an equal sign between historiography and fable-making (cf. W. Billip, “Opowieść o heroizmie myślenia” [A tale of the heroism of thinking], *Nowe książki* [New books], 1964, No. 3). In turn, Parnicki spoke in one of the interviews about “wandering between fable-making and historiography” (see: *Zwierzenia..., op. cit.*).

account calls to mind again Heidegger’s exegesis of the philosophy of the author of *The untimely meditations*:

The result is the following proposition, which would apply to Plato, although couched in Nietzsche’s manner of speech: truth is worth more than art. Nietzsche says, on the contrary: art is worth more than truth.⁴⁹

Parnicki engages in a polemic with such an interpretation, for he points out the purpose of employing both history and fantasy, relating it to culture. But most of all he does not show them as radically opposite but rather as complementary to each other.

The *Finger of menace* visibly indicates, however, its relationships with *The history of an error* also because the illusion of realism is being abandoned in the course of the novel (regardless whether in a metaphysical or anti-metaphysical way). Indeed, not only the *metales casados*, that is, personifications of the types of prose which compose the work, begin to take the floor, but also the representatives of punctuation marks. The subtitle of the volume, as well as the significant theme of the novel itself, both refer to the possibility of concluding the content of the volume at any time.

8 Conclusions

As Markowski notices:

Interpretations are all there is. Let us not forget, however, that not all interpretations are equal. If we consider these two statements not as a contradiction but as a paradox, it is that paradox on which the Nietzschean philosophy of interpretation is built.⁵⁰

This same thought could also be used to sum up the efforts of Parnicki’s characters. It should be assumed then that *A new tale* is founded on an analogous paradox, from which it seeks an exit. With each subsequent volume, it is attained with increasing difficulty, and in the final, sixth one, the boundaries of the very interpretation are reached and a “new” chaos is attained, which can be controlled only by someone from beyond this world—a peculiarly understood super-human, the creator of the whole cycle, who makes an appearance in the *Finger of menace* in a way which is analogous to the coming of Zarathustra, announced in *The history of an error*.

Seeking the meaning of *A new tale* is a process which is far from conclusion. The Nietzschean theme brings a different way of ordering a certain level of

⁴⁹ M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

⁵⁰ M.P. Markowski, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

the discourse, which is still awaiting attention suitable to its importance. So far, it was either the relations with history or the efforts to solve the puzzles of the plots by themselves which predominated the reading of the works by the author of *Identity*. Without diminishing the role of that research, I believe that at least some attempts at broader, synthesising conceptualisations of this unusual writing should be made. Within the scope of a small essay, it was only possible to show the beginning and the end of a remarkable process, which—it is worth to stress—does not recreate the observations of the author of the *Dawn* but is, in Parnicki's view, only a framework, to which the writer sometimes refers in a polemic way. One may have an impression that the author is testing the theories of the German philosopher. The title of the cycle is equivocal, which was clear to the critics as soon as it began to be published. The relationships with the process described by Nietzsche form one of the levels of the palimpsest created by the Polish writer, important because it allows to recognise the philosophical foundations of one of the constitutive features of this prose.⁵¹

Miroslaw Gołuński

Teodor Parnicki and Friedrich Nietzsche—How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable in A New Tale Cycle

In the article the author compares the Polish writer's cycle *A New tale* with the passage from the *Twilight of the Idols* by the German philosopher. He advances a hypothesis that Parnicki incorporates the Nietzschean thought into his novel cycle, with a special reference to moving away from the truth. This scheme from Nietzsche remains unexpressed but is included in the plot of the work. What is essential is that both state the historicity of this process.

Keywords: Teodor Parnicki, Friedrich Nietzsche, truth, historicity.

⁵¹ Nietzsche points out the points in history when the subsequent steps in the process of losing the truth were passed, while Parnicki sets the action of the volumes of his novels in different times than the Nietzschean assumptions would dictate. What has to be remarked upon, however, are the more or less subtle excursions beyond the historical time in *A new tale*. And it is not just the planned fantasticality of the final volume, but also similar devices, which I have pointed out while analyzing the *Time of sowing and time of reaping*.