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CYPRIAN NORWID AND ITALIAN ART – A DIFFERENT APPROACH

1. A DOUBTING CICERONE

Norwid had definite philosophical and aesthetic views¹, as well as a fixed opinion on the taste of Poles², and he believed that his compatriots had to be prepared to be able to properly receive European artistic works, as they lacked not only a sense of aesthetics, but also knowledge which would allow them to reflect on the art presented and to take inspiration therefrom:

Niejeden szlachcic widział *Apollina*
I Skopasową milejską *Wenere*,
A wyprowadzić nie umie komina,
W ogrodzie krzywo zakreśla kwatere;

¹ Cf. S. MORAWSKI, *Poglądy estetyczne Cypriana Kamila Norwida*, “Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 2(1958), No. 4, p. 148. The issue of Norwid’s aesthetic thought has for many years been the subject of extensive analyses as a separate research problem. See e.g.: K. WYKA, *Norwid nieobecny* (1945), [in:] IDEM, *Cyprian Norwid. Studia, artykuły, recenzje*, Kraków 1989, pp. 233-242; D. PNIEWSKI, *Między obrazem i słowem: studia o poglądach estetycznych i twórczości literackiej Norwida*, Lublin 2005, pp. 5-119; I. WORONOW, *Synteza sztuk w pismach Norwida*, [in:] EADEM, *Romantyczna idea korespondencji sztuk. Stendhal, Hoffmann, Baudelaire, Norwid*, Kraków 2008, pp. 185-210; E. NOWICKA, K. KUCZYŃSKA, *Dwa głosy o sztuce: Klaczko i Norwid*, Poznań 2009; E. CHLEBOWSKA, *Norwid sztukmistrz nieznanym*, Lublin 2013.

² “Pisać o sztuce dla narodu, który ani muzeów, ani pomników, właściwie mówiąc, nie ma; pisać dla publiczności, która zaledwie biernie albo wypadkowo obznajomiona jest z tym przedmiotem – jest to nie pisać o sztuce, ale objawić ją” [Writing of art for a nation which, as a matter of fact, has neither museums nor monuments; writing for a public which is acquainted with the object merely in a passive way or accidentally – that is not writing of art, that is revealing it], he ironically declared in the brochure *O sztuce (dla Polaków)* of 1858 (PWsz VI, 337).

Budując śpichlerz często zapomina,
Że użyteczne nigdy nie jest samo,
Że piękne – wchodzi nie pytając bramą!
(*Promethidion*, DW IV, 110)

A similar view was later presented by Józef Kremer³, who – on declaring Italy to be a natural handbook of art history – wished to promote the knowledge on the country among Polish readers with the help of a detailed, six-volume-worth journey through Italy⁴. Much like Kremer, Norwid was interested in Italian art both in a strict sense and in a general one, extending over the artistic and cultural heritage of many centuries of the whole Italian territory, including the works of medieval and Renaissance artists, as well as the art of the Etruscans and ancient Rome. As a student of art at the Academy in Florence and in Luigi Pampaloni's atelier⁵ he also had an ambition to be a *cicerone* guiding Poles through the artistic attractions of Italy. As one can conclude from the writer's correspondence with Michalina Dziekońska and the information she gave to Zenon Przesmycki, around 1850 Norwid nursed the idea of writing a *Przewodnik po zabytkach starożytnego Rzymu* [*Guidebook to the Monuments of Ancient Rome*], which would consider in particular "old-Christian" traces⁶. Thus even he felt the need to spread knowledge on ancient art. Exercising his privileges of being a representative of international bohemia in Rome, he willingly served as a guide for visitors from Poland. Aniela Walewska nee Kuszel, who wrote under the name of Wanda Odrowąż⁷, recalled

³ Dariusz Pniewski commented on the non-accidental correspondence of Kremer's and Norwid's concepts (D. PNIEWSKI, *Józef Kremer a Cyprjan Norwid. Zarys problemu*, [in:] *Józef Kremer (1806-1875)*, J. Maj (ed.), Kraków 2007, pp. 265-282).

⁴ See J. KREMER, *Podróż do Włoch*, vol. I-VI, Warszawa 1878-1880. About that book, see J. UGNIĘWSKA, "Podróż do Włoch" J. Kremera, [in:] *Józef Kremer (1806-1875)*, pp. 181-220; J. ZIELIŃSKI, *J. Kremer w Trieście*, *ibid.*; L. BERNARDINI, *J. Kremer we Florencji*, *ibid.*; K. ŻABOKLICKI, *J. Kremer w Neapolu*, *ibid.*; O. PŁASZCZEWSKA, *Literatura i legenda w "Podróży do Włoch" J. Kremera*, [in:] EADEM, *Przestrzenie komparatystyki – italianizm*, Kraków 2010, pp. 504-527.

⁵ Cf. S. MORAWSKI, *Poglądy estetyczne*, p. 146.

⁶ Norwid's extensive notes and letters adding to their content, left in Paris in a deposit for the duration of Dziekońska's journey home in 1868 or 1869, were reportedly destroyed. Cf. Z. TROJANOWICZOWA, Z. DAMBEK, J. CZARNOMORSKA, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cyprjana Norwida*, vol. I: *1821-1860*, Poznań 2007, pp. 475-476.

⁷ The substantive value of her memoirs, as concerns Italian issues, is assessed by Luca Bernardini (L. BERNARDINI, *Polska podróżniczka w Lukce w czasach ekscentrycznego księcia Karola Ludwika Burbona / Una viaggiatrice polacca nella Lucca dello „sconcertante” duca Carlo Ludovico di Borbone*, transl. by Z. Koprowska, [in:] *Iter italicum. Sztuka i historia / Arte e storia*, M. Wrześniak (ed.), Warszawa 2011, pp. 395-413, 415-433).

not only the conversations “with poor N.”⁸ on literature, but also the exhausting trip she took with him to see the most interesting recesses of Rome⁹, during which that “immensely learned and artistic” man discoursed learnedly

on Michelangelo, on his Moses, at the same time explaining the whole value and sense of the word *B e a u t y*, where the totality thus merges details in itself that at first you do not notice them, but later you admire them the more for constituting such a great whole¹⁰.

Thus in accordance with the convention of the then salon¹¹ and expectations of polite company, he acted as a *cicerone*, to which function he seemed to have every authorisation due to the craft he performed. He took on a similar role earlier with Klementyna Hoffmanowa nee Tańska and the readers of “Biblioteka Warszawska”, when he wrote in 1845 *O rzeźbiarzach florenckich (dziś żyjących)*. Although he proposed to look at Italian art through the prism of its modern condition, this led to a reflection idealising the past. As much as Norwid considered the work of such artists as Giotto, Andrea Pisano, Ghiberti, Donatello, Cellini and Michelangelo the embodiment of the highest artistry, as Stefan Morawski notes, “he viewed all later artists as epigones and distinguished two trends in the Italy of his time – winckelmannists, with references to Canova, and purists, who returned to the motifs and manner of the old-Tuscan school”¹².

2. THE NEGATIVE MYTH OF ITALIAN ART

There has been an extensive discussion on the phenomenon of the “positive” reception of Italian art, as shown in Norwid’s poetry, artistic prose, articles

⁸ Cf. W. ODROWĄŻ [A. Walewska z Kuszłów], *Kilka chwil we Włoszech w latach 1847 i 1848*, Poznań 1850, p. 48.

⁹ “It is simply not possible to describe everything I have seen today. Five or six churches, several painting galleries; I was most interested by St. Onuphrius church; Torquato Tasso died there, and his tombstone, so simple and modest, is to be found there. But the mortification, the humiliation, which often is suffered by women in Rome, afflicted us there, too: they did not let us in the cabinet he died in, or to the garden, under the tree he used to sit under. Mr N. [Norwid] made a paperknife from part of its trunk; I envy him that souvenir, but I envy the more all those privileges which allow that lucky half to be everywhere, see everything”. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 50.

¹¹ On the issue of the salon and Norwid’s participation therein, see e.g., S. BOBRAN, *Gdzie bywał Norwid? Salonowe doświadczenia poety paryżanina*, [in:] *Środowiska kulturotwórcze czasów oświecenia i romantyzmu*, B. Dopart (ed.), Kraków 2013, pp. 157-169.

¹² S. MORAWSKI, *Poglądy estetyczne...*, p. 147.

and correspondence¹³. In that context, it seems justified to indicate not only the writer's "direct" reception of Italy's artistic heritage (including the evaluation of particular works and authors), but also those elements of his works where the subject of reflection is the issue of how Polish and international public received that heritage. The fact that Norwid's opinion on Italian art, valued and missed by the writer¹⁴, and on art created by artists who sought inspiration in Italy is not only of an idealising nature¹⁵, is proven among others by the ambiguous presentation of the cosmopolitan artistic colony in Rome given in the story "*Ad leones!*"¹⁶. Thus raising the issue of Norwid's reaction to the manner of receiving Italian art as considered binding by his contemporaries, one must consider the fact that the author of *Vade-mecum*, being so sensitive to any indications of falsehood in social and salon life, viewed the nearly mass-fascination of Poles with Italian art mainly as fashion, and not a result of intellectual needs. Therefore, it may be interesting to examine Norwid's works not so much for the thoughts approving such or other solutions of the "Italian school" at various stages of its development, but his own resistance against Italian artistic heritage whose general view was distorted – as he supposed – due to ignorance or lack of taste with the receivers. That is one reason why it is worthwhile to consider the negative view¹⁷ on that heritage, to consider Italian art viewed by Norwid in the mirror of irony, pragmatism, or simply with

¹³ See e.g. Z. SZMYDTOWA, *Norwid wobec włoskiego odrodzenia*, [in:] EADEM, *Studia i portrety*, Warszawa 1969; B. BILIŃSKI, *Cipriano Norwid. Poeta romantico polacco al Caffè Greco e la sua novella «Ad leones»*, "Strenna dei romanisti" 1971, vol. 32; A. MELBECHOWSKA-LUTY, *Sztukmistrz. Twórczość artystyczna i myśl o sztuce Cypriana Norwida*, Warszawa 2001; O. PŁASZCZEWSKA, *Wizja Włoch w polskiej i francuskiej literaturze okresu romantyzmu (1800-1850)*, Kraków 2003; D. PNIEWSKI, *Między obrazem i słowem*.

¹⁴ That frequently professed yearning is expressed e.g. in the note to the essay [*Dwie powieści*] (1866), stylised to resemble a letter to Lenartowicz: "Pozdrów w imię moje, kochany Teofilu, „Dzwonnicę” Giotto i nagiego „Dawida” przed Starym Zamkiem: pozdrowisz wszystko, co oryginalne w Erze – a co oryginalne? to jedynie pracowite i czujne" (DW VII, 131) [Greet on my behalf, dear Teofil, Giotto's "Campanile" and the naked "David" in front of Palazzo Vecchio: greet everything that is original in the Era – and what is original? only that is laborious and alert].

¹⁵ The writer's tendency to glorify everything Italian is visible in particular in statements containing Italian themes and formulated from the perspective of an outside observer, written mostly during Norwid's stays out of Italy.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. O. PŁASZCZEWSKA, *Rzym, rzeźba i Ameryka, czyli wspólne szlaki Norwida i Hawthorne'a*, [in:] EADEM, *Przestrzenie komparatystyki – italianizm*, pp. 406-416.

¹⁷ Dariusz Pniewski indicated the ambiguity of Norwid's views on Italian art in his analysis of the writer's reception of Venetian painting, D. PNIEWSKI, *Między obrazem i słowem...*, pp. 284-294, 332.

a distance, reflected merely in a small fraction in the above quoted fragment of *Promethidion*.

2. 1. A MYSTERIOUS TINCI

A non-literary (and relatively early) harbinger of Norwid's distance towards Italian art can be seen in a fragment of the writer's correspondence with Antoni Zaleski from the time of Norwid's artistic studies in Florence. His letter of 2nd November 1844 is heavy with critical comments on the art pursued by the artists related to that academy. The paintings by Luigi Mussini "smell of palette"¹⁸, and sculptors (except Pio Fedi, whom Norwid valued, for he "has a high and learned sense of arts and art in general") imitated the "artificially scented sentiments" of Giovanni Dupr ¹⁹. What intrigues is the mention of a figure well known to both the sender and the addressee, and named "Tinci" in the letter. Researchers have not been able to link that name to any specific person from the Florentine community of visual artists²⁰. Norwid thus writes of that artist (engaged, as may be guessed, in various branches of art): "*Tinci, który fra le altre virt  [ha] imparato anche la pitttttuura, skończył capo d'opera!*" (DW X, 41) [*Tinci, who among other virtues has also mastered paaaaainnnnting, has finished [his] masterpiece.*] The translation of that phrase as provided in *Kalendarz  cicia i tw rczości Norwida* and in the note in volume X of his *Dziela wszystkie*²¹, loses the irony which forms the basic ingredient in the description of the unidentified artist, who nevertheless was probably not liked much

¹⁸ Cf. C. NORWID, Letter 11: Do Antoniego Zaleskiego – 2 XI 1844, [in:] IDEM, *Listy*, vol. I: 1839-1854, prep. by J. Rudnicka, Lublin 2008, p. 41 (DW X). Norwid's view quite coincides with the opinions on the artist as expressed by today's historians of art. Cf. F. MAZZOCCA, *1800-1860. Da Napoleone all'Unit *, [in:] *Ottocento. Da Canova al Quarto Stato*, M.V. Marini Clarelli, F. Mazzocca, C. Sisi (eds.), Skira, Milano 2008, p. 43; and C. SISI, *1861-1899: gli anni delle Esposizioni*, ibid., pp. 52-54.

¹⁹ Cf. C. NORWID, Letter 11: Do Antoniego Zaleskiego – 2 XI 1844, p. 41. From among representatives of the trend of enchantment with antique models, developing in Florence, who were considered epigones by their contemporaries – followers of Milan Romanticism (see L. LOMBARDI, Pietro Magni. Milano 1816-1877, [in:] *Ottocento. Da Canova al Quarto Stato*, p. 274) – Norwid chose the one whose aesthetic views were similar to his own (A. MELBECHOWSKA-LUTY, *Sztukmistrz...*, pp. 48-49).

²⁰ Cf. J. RUDNICKA, [*Komentarz do w. 59-60*], [in:] C. NORWID, *Listy*, vol. I: 1839-1854, p. 43; also [note 10] [in:] Z. TROJANOWICZOWA, Z. DAMBEK, J. CZARNOMORSKA, *Kalendarz...*, p. 162.

²¹ "Tinci, który mi dzy innymi cnotami opanował malarstwo, skończył arcydzieło," transl. by J. Rudnicka, [*Komentarz do w. 59-60*], [in:] C. NORWID, T. X. *Listy*, vol. I: 1839-1854, p. 43.

by either the poet or Zaleski. Tinci was not a surname²², but a nickname providing a clue as to the origin and profession of the person described. Its meaning can be traced back to the Sicilian dialect, where *tinci* is the 3rd person singular of the verb *dipingere* (*dipinge*, ‘to paint’) or *tingere* (*tinge*, ‘to colour’)²³. The name *Tinci* can either be strictly descriptive and simply denote a painter (‘one who paints – *tinci*’), or it can be mocking, if interpreted (according to its dialect markedness) as a synonym of a ‘mediocre dauber’. Since the term *imbrattatele* (‘dauber’) did not exist at the time of Norwid’s stay in Italy (its usage was first recorded in 1868²⁴), it would seem natural to use dialect as a means of mocking a less talented colleague. Such meaning would likely be indicated by the context in which the term appears with Norwid. The irony is augmented by the hyperbolisation placed directly after the name and concerning Tinci’s abilities as a holder of “*cnót wszelakich*” [of any and all virtue] (within artistic techniques and skills, as I understand), who has just completed a ‘masterpiece’ (*capo d’opera*). In the quoted fragment, Norwid used free indirect speech, hence it is easy to discern that the rank of the artistic production was given by the artist himself. The multiplication of the letters *t* and *u* in the word *pittura* may both imitate the pronunciation typical of the Sicilian dialect (as heard by a foreigner), standing out against the Tuscan Italian that Norwid usually heard, and signal the painter’s individual features – perhaps a stutter or inclination towards emotion-loaded emphasis. It is thus nonsignificant which of the Sicilian-born artists studying in Florence in the 1840s is meant in the letter. What is important is what features were not tolerated by Norwid in modern artists, namely: overconfidence and self-praise combined with lack of talent and skill.

2. 2. STEREOTYPES AND “SERIOUS CARICATURE”

Norwid was also critical towards a whole set of features traditionally defined as *italianism*²⁵ or *italianità*, understood not only as a *model of Italian impact* on

²² It is not recorded in the popular dictionary of Italian names by Emidio De Felice, either (E. DE FELICE, *Dizionario dei cognomi italiani*, A. Mondadori (ed.), Milano 1978).

²³ It can be found, for instance, in the saying *nivuru cu nivuru nun tinci* (black on black leaves no stains/tint). I would like to thank Mr B. Talamonti, a retired RAI Milano journalist, for that clue.

²⁴ Cf. *Imbrattatele*, [in:] N. ZINGARELLI, *Lo Zingarelli 2014. Vocabolario della lingua italiana*, Zanichelli Bologna 2014 (Versione 3.1, iPad).

²⁵ Cf. O. PŁASZCZEWSKA, *Italianizm*, [in:] EADEM, *Przestrzenie komparatystyki – italianizm*, pp. 257-297.

other nations²⁶, but mainly as the specific nature of Italian culture, expressed in art and in customs. That set of features includes casual display of traces of great past, which could be relatively easily available (for an average observer) works of art or architectural monuments picturesquely sliding into a state of neglect and ruin. That motif returns often in Romantic literature in the shape of variously interpreted vision of Italy as the “land of the dead”. Lamartine is commonly assigned the title of the first who presented such a vision of Italy, but that image was largely promoted by the works of Byron²⁷. Norwid, who was averse to following fashions (or did not wish to admit their potential impact on his work), took at least a few occasions to express his distance towards what many people idealised and saw as beautiful. (However, it ought to be stressed that not everybody followed that fashion, to mention just *Voyage d'Italie (1826-1827)* by Anna Potocka-Wąsowiczowa, who emphatically declared and proved, if not always effectively, the independence of her opinions.²⁸) One may wonder if perhaps Norwid's scepticism towards Italian “innate” sense of art did not result from his own theory of “hard-earned” beauty that was attained by way of diligent, painstaking work.²⁹

One of Norwid's works which contains criticism towards the “italomania of the comers from the North”, as well as (indirectly) towards the manner of perceiving *italianità* which they imposed on others, is the drama *Noc tysiączna druga*, a tragicomedy raising the issue of illusory love³⁰. It holds a fragment in which imagological reflection contains a particular element of observation on art. It is a description of a room in an inn near Verona, put in the mouth of Roger from Czarnolesie (thus a Polish traveller). The image of the space in that “rysunek poetycki”³¹ [poetic drawing] is constructed of fragmentary mentions of items chaotically collected, mismatching in style, utility and historical affiliation³². For the

²⁶ Cf. W. TYGIELSKI, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII wieku. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 583-597.

²⁷ Cf. M. BRAHMER, *Włochy w literaturze francuskiej okresu romantycznego (1930)*, O. Płaszczewska (ed.), Kraków 2015, pp. 25-69.

²⁸ With e.g. the claim that although everyone considered Villa Borghese to be the most beautiful of Roman villas, actual precedence ought to be given to Villa Pamphilia. Cf. A. POTOCKA, *Voyage d'Italie (1826-1827)*, publié par Casimir Stryenski, Paris: Plon 1899, p. 66.

²⁹ Cf. S. MORAWSKI, *Poglądy estetyczne...*; K. WYKA, *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz (1948)*, [in:] IDEM, *Cyprian Norwid. Studia, artykuły, recenzje*, Kraków 1989, pp. 5-169; D. PNIEWSKI, *Między obrazem i słowem...*, pp. 7-16, 199-201.

³⁰ On the Italian character of that work cf. O. PŁASZCZEWSKA, *Wizja Włoch...*, pp. 248-252.

³¹ A term coined by Kazimierz Wyka (K. WYKA, *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz*, p. 97).

³² Cf. O. PŁASZCZEWSKA, *Wizja Włoch...*, p. 249.

protagonist, the sight of the room constitutes a projection of Italian mentality (which in Norwid's philosophy is both attractive and disturbing, as it indicates the spiritual and physical "languor" of a once artistic people) and the aesthetic sense of that nation. The items listed by Roger are a collection of artefacts associated with the stereotype of Italian art in its functional version:

Szczególniejszy naród!...choćbym sobie nie dał był słowa zerwać już ze światem idealnym i w praktyczne wejść życie – wystarczyłoby zastanowić się nad postacią moralną tego ludu arcyklasycznego... mozaikowa posadzka... lampa, dotąd etruski kształt mająca... pajęczyny chwijące się po kątach, które jeszcze Longobardów pamiętają... ta zapona na łóżko z adamaszku purpurowego, co zakupił ją może właściciel austerii po werońskim szlachcicu jakim na sprzedaży publicznej... po jakim Skaligerim... a nieporządek... a lenistwo!... (DW V, 106)

[A particular nation that is!... even had I disallowed myself to break faith to the ideal world and enter practical life – it would suffice to reflect on the moral form of the arch-classical nation... mosaic floor... lamp, still Etruscan in shape... cobwebs swaying in the corners, dating back to the Longobards... that bed canopy of crimson damask, purchased perhaps by the inn's owner from some Verona nobleman's goods at a public sale... after some Scaligeri perhaps... and the disorder... the laziness!...]

Frequently quoted by commentators, that fragment by Norwid – who played about both with the conventional image of Italian art and with its conventional reception (the critical statement is given in the form of a theatrical drama) – does not, therefore, have to be viewed as the author's position (although Roger may be treated as the writer's *porte-parole*). It may also be treated as a kind of a cultural quotation, as it very clearly follows the critical reflection over Italian art and mentality (as well as morality³³), which trend is visible in the whole European literature of the 19th century.

Another stand similar to Norwid's, torn between evident awe and reasonable distance towards the artistic heritage of Italy, can for instance be found in the above-mentioned recollections by Anna Potocka-Wąsowiczowa, concerning a period not much earlier than the drama discussed here³⁴. Potocka, whose opinions were frequently ahead of her time³⁵, was sensitive to bad taste and triumph of

³³ "The history of the Italian people becomes visible through the details of that chamber, just like the moral history of each human individual can be read from the furniture and fittings they surrounded themselves with." K. WYKA, *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz*, p. 98.

³⁴ Quite obviously, Norwid could not know that circa 1850 journey's history since it was only published in 1899.

³⁵ Cf. C. STRYJENSKI, *Introduction*, [in:] A. POTOCKA, *Voyage d'Italie...*, p. VII.

form over substance in social relations, just like Norwid, and in her evaluation of works of art she also referred to ethical criteria. The references to Italian art in its generalising anonymity allowed Wałowiczowa to form certain conclusions on the mentality differences between the inhabitants of Rome and of Naples³⁶. Attachment to national tradition was attributed to Romans, who appreciated “real” values, while Neapolitan were presented as being insufficiently mature to see something valuable in Italian art.

A scenery as if copied from Norwid and in a sense copying the imagological pattern used by Potocka returns also in the metaphor of Rome which is picturesque but falls into ruin (with its material and spiritual culture) as the atelier of an old, starving artist, which was used in 1866 by Hippolyte Taine³⁷:

Je compare Rome encore une fois à l'atelier d'un artiste, non pas d'un artiste élégant, qui, comme les nôtres, songe au succès et fait montre de son état, mais d'un vieil artiste mal peigné, qui en son temps avait du génie, et qui aujourd'hui se dispute avec ses fournisseurs. Il a fait faillite, et les créanciers ont plus d'une fois démeublé son logis; mais ils n'ont pu emporter les murailles, et ils ont oublié beaucoup de beaux objets. En ce moment, il vit de ses débris, sert de cicérone, empoche le pourboire, et méprise un peu les richards dont il reçoit les écus. Il dîne mal, mais il se console en pensant aux glorieuses expositions où il a figuré, et se promet tout bas, parfois même tout haut, que l'an prochain il prendra sa revanche. Il faut avouer que son atelier sent mauvais, les planchers n'ont pas été balayés depuis six mois, le sofa a été brûlé par les cendres de la pipe, des savates éculées traînent dans un coin, on aperçoit sur un buffet des pelures de saucisson et un morceau de fromage; mais ce buffet est de la renaissance, cette tapisserie râpée, qui cache un mauvais matelas, vient du grand siècle, le long du mur où monte l'ignoble tuyau de poêle pendent des armures, de précieuses arquebuses damasquinées. Il faut y venir et n'y pas rester³⁸.

³⁶ “L'essentiel ici, c'est l'apparat. À Rome, on a de vieux carrosses, des livrées défraîchies, des vêtements démodés; mais on possède de magnifiques tableaux, et plutôt que de s'en débarrasser on dîne avec de la salade. À Naples, au contraire, tout est luxe, splendeur, élégance; les couturières françaises et les bons cuisiniers, inconnus à Rome, viennent ici faire fortune”. – A. POTOCKA, *Voyage d'Italie...*, p. 121 [The essential thing here is pomp and ceremony. In Rome, you have old carriages, faded liveries, unfashionable clothes; but you possess magnificent paintings, and you had rather dine on salad than get rid of them. In Naples, on the contrary, everything is luxury, splendour, elegance; French seamstresses and good chefs, unknown in Rome, can make a fortune here.]

³⁷ In the context of a discussion on the images of an artist's atelier in 19th-century literature, I commented on that metaphor in my article *Fikcja i rzeczywistość atelier. Pracownia artystyczna w oczach XIX-wiecznych literatów*, “Ruch Literacki” 45(2014), vol. 4-5, pp. 427-447.

³⁸ H. TAINE, *Voyage en Italie* (1866), vol. I: *Naples et Rome*, Paris: Hachette 1895, p. 161 [I shall compare Rome once more to the atelier of an artist, not an elegant artist who, like ours, dreams of successes and parades his status, but an old, unkempt artist who had talent in his time, but who argues today with his contractors. He has gone bankrupt, and the creditors have more than once taken his furniture; but they could not take away the walls, and they forgot many beautiful

Similarly to Norwid, Taine used the stereotypical image of an Italian as a man without any practiciness, but equipped with an artistic sense, in order to characterise the paradox of Italy as source of the European civilisation which on losing its creative power did not lose its impact (according to the conviction that the value of Italian artworks did not depend on the situation of the state, although a return to the “golden age” of art was not possible anymore).

What is characteristic in the three works quoted above is mainly the reference to the common image of Italian art, within both high and functional culture. According to that common image, the fact that a work was made by an Italian, that it came from the workshop of an Italian artisan, equalled a guarantee of its quality³⁹. Moreover, that stereotype included the aesthetic value of an item (regardless of its prosaic function, like the “zapona na łóżko” [bed canopy] in Norwid’s drama or the kilim in Taine’s *Voyage*), its formal uniqueness (noticeable in particular against a common background, like Norwid’s “mozajkowa posadzka” [mosaic floor] or Potocka’s reference to great paintings), antiquity and innate “classicism” (real, or a natural imitation of an antique pattern: Norwid’s “lampa, dotąd etruski kształt mająca” [lamp, still Etruscan in shape] and Taine’s Renaissance sideboard), as well as any connection with history. In Norwid’s interpretation, the stereotype is not simply undermined, as one may expect, but gains a partially caricatured⁴⁰ dimension. The historical nature of Italian functional art turns out to be quite ambivalent: next to a damask canopy “po jakim Skaligerim” [after some Scaligeri] appear spiderwebs “które jeszcze Longobardów pamiętają” [dating back to the Longobards] (it is difficult to deduce from Roger’s fragmented monologue whether the back-dating concerns architecture or dirt). And the *loci communes* not directly related to art include laziness, connected with a tendency for mess, seen (not only by Norwid) as a natural, national feature of Italians. Putting a nearly

items. At this moment, he lives on his debris, serves as a cicerone, pockets the tips, and scorns a bit the wealthy who give him the money. He eats poorly, but he consoles himself with the thought of glorious exhibits he made an appearance at, and he promises to himself quietly, sometimes even out loud, that the following year he shall have his revenge. It must be said that his atelier smells bad, the floor has not been swept for six months, the sofa is scorched with the ashes from his pipe, the worn slippers lie about some nooks and corners, on the sideboard you can see some sausage skins and a piece of cheese; but that sideboard is from the Renaissance, that worn fabric, which covers a poor mattress, comes from the *grand siècle*, along the walls where a shabby stovepipe is mounted, there hang armours, precious damascened muskets. You should enter, but not stay.]

³⁹ That element of the stereotype survives until this day – the 20th and 21st centuries – in the form of the binding myth of “Italian design” as a guarantee of utility and beautiful form of everyday items.

⁴⁰ On Norwid’s understanding of caricature see D. PNIEWSKI, *Między obrazem i słowem...*, pp. 298-301.

clichéd statement on Italian art and the innate tendencies of the inhabitants of Italy in the mouth of the drama's protagonist, stylised for a typical "child of the time" – a writer and traveller⁴¹, signals a game that Norwid consciously plays with the social and literary convention, which assumed a generalising – seemingly critical, but nonetheless positive – image of the artistic heritage of Italy and descendants of its creators. The fact that the statement is shaped in such a manner that it nearly borders on pastiche, is also a sign of the writer's distance towards the tendencies of contemporary literature to idealise Italian culture. Taine's reflection, younger than Norwid's statement, accentuates to a higher degree the awareness of the dangers of a fascination with the inseparable combination of artistry and abnegation, which for 19th-century recipients constituted the two basic features of the "Italian spirit": "Il faut y venir et n'y pas rester" – "You should enter, but not stay"⁴².

2. 3. "Z MARMURU NAGROBEK DLA KOCHANEJ ŻONY" [A MARBLE TOMBSTONE FOR HIS BELOVED WIFE]

Yet the most characteristic displays of Norwid's distance towards the Italian art, received *alla polacca*, included humoristic genre scenes, which could be found in the writer's artistic prose and in his letters all his life. During his trip and wanderings across Europe, Norwid had abundant occasions for the observation of social customs, which later bore fruit in the form of increasingly singular portraits of other Poles. Norwid's gallery of gentry portraits holds an outstanding example of a masterly pastiche of travelling journal fragments: a sample statement by Kalasanty Gozdawa, a provincial nobleman forced by his daughter to travel across Italy, placed in a late essay *Estetyczne poglądy* (1881). But that example is not so much about art, as it is about a generally understood fashion for "italianism"⁴³. On the other hand, the issue of "Italian art" appears in a similar context (with elements of *gawęda*⁴⁴ stylisation in reported speech) in both versions of a prose

⁴¹ The understanding of the main protagonist of *Noc tysięczna druga* as a "type" rather than the author's voice seems to be supported by the fact that the list of *dramatis personae* has the note: "Można zamienić imię Roger na inne stosownie brzmiące" (DW V, 104) [The name Roger can be changed to another fitting one].

⁴² H. TAINE, *Voyage en Italie*, vol. I, p. 161.

⁴³ More on that topic in: O. PŁASZCZEWSKA, *Wizja Włoch...*, pp. 134-135.

⁴⁴ *Gawęda* is a Polish literary genre stylized as an oral tale, characterized by freedom of composition, rich in digressions, and written in colloquial language. With realism of detail, vivid local colour and humour, the genre enjoyed great popularity in Polish fiction, especially during Romanticism [translator's note].

miniature titled *Archeologia* (1866), written for Konstancja Górska and Joanna Kuczyńska much earlier than *Estetyczne poglądy*. In both texts, the object of ironic reflection is the procedure of making a “dobre i przyzwoite małżeństwo” (DW VII, 135) [good and decent marriage] and its typical course (until the death of the main victim)⁴⁵. The plot “develops,” as Wincenty Grajewski notes, “in a split into what is stated and into “implicates” (that is, intentions expressed not in what is said, but in the fact that it is said)”⁴⁶. The action takes place – obviously – among Polish gentry, in Poland, and the “art” is represented by a tombstone statue carved by an Italian sculptor commissioned by the lady’s husband. In both cases one can see a parody of old-Polish patronage of art, which in the golden times of the Polish kingdom caused an inflow of craftspeople of diverse professions, including architects, plasterers and sculptors, working at the royal court, aristocratic manors, and performing work commissioned by the Church⁴⁷. In the reality of *Archeologia*, the statue fits neither its surroundings nor the emotions evoked by the wife’s demise. An anonymous Italian mason substitutes for the Guccis, Padovanos and Berreccis of old (as well as Norwid’s contemporaries, it must be said, for instance his maestro Lorenzo Bartolini, author of the tombstone of Zofia Zamoyska-Czartoryska in the Florence church of Santa Croce, and other artists who performed works commissioned by Polish aristocrats still in middle of the century, like the sculptors from the Antonio Canova circle, e.g. Antonio D’Este (1754-1837), Francesco Massimiliano Laboureur (1767-1831) or Filippo Albacini (1777-1858), the author of the Krasieńskis’ epitaphs in Dunajowice, Podole⁴⁸), in

⁴⁵ Connotations with Mickiewicz’s paradigm from part IV of *Dziady* are nearly automatic, which proves the specific character of the time: “Gdy na dziewczynę zawołają: żono! Już ją żywcem pogrzebiono!” [When a girl is called a wife, she is as good as buried alive], see A. MICKIEWICZ, *Dziady. Część IV*, [in:] IDEM, *Dziela. Wydanie narodowe*, prep. by S. Pigoń, vol. III: *Utwory dramatyczne*, Warszawa 1958, p. 57. On the reality of 19th-century marriages see I. WĘGRZYN, *Jak zdobyć męża? Herkulesowe prace romantycznych panien na wydaniu*, [in:] *Prace Herkulesa – człowiek wobec wyzwania, prób i przeciwności*, M. Cieśla-Korytowska, O. Płaszczewska (eds.), Kraków 2012, pp. 489-505.

⁴⁶ W. GRAJEWSKI, *Archeologia*, [in:] *Cyprian Norwid. Interpretacje*, S. Makowski (ed.), Warszawa 1986, p. 208.

⁴⁷ The issue of Italian immigration to Poland – including also artists and the way they functioned in the Polish society – is discussed by Wojciech Tygielski from the perspective of social history (see W. TYGIELSKI, *Włosi o Polsce...*). On Italian artists in Poland and their impact: *ibid.*, pp. 222-264, 447-461. For more on their presence and activity in Poland see *Artyści włoscy w Polsce XV-XVIII wiek*, J.A. Chróścicki et al. (eds.), Warszawa 2004.

⁴⁸ Cf. K. MIKOCKA-RACHUBOWA, *Mauzoleum w Dunajowicach – nieznaną pracą Filippa Albacini*, [in:] *Artyści włoscy w Polsce XV-XVIII wiek*, pp. 707-718.

order to satisfy the requirements set by conventions (a proper burial of the one after whom the commissioner inherits⁴⁹) and fashion, which said that a “nice” tombstone had to be carved by an artist from Italy (the fact ennobling mainly the commissioner in the eyes of the local community). In the pauperised reality presented by Norwid (whose works often voice a deep awareness of the mechanisms ruling the society at a time of progressive industrialisation⁵⁰), where marriage is synonymous to a financial union instead of an emotional relationship, employing an “Italian” is a way to financially silence any potential pricks of conscience of the widower⁵¹ when his own attitude is inevitably confronted with the underestimated merits of the deceased:

Są takie – ironizuje Norwid – co wcześniej – są, co później odchodzą z tego świata; wtedy – stroskani i stroskane pocieszają stroskanego, który każe Włochowi: aby, Mości Dobrodziej, wyrznął z kamienia figurę płaczącą na grobie – – i powiada, że to był anioł i basta!!... (DW VII, 137)⁵²

[There are such, states Norwid with irony, who earlier – or who later leave the world; then – webegone males and females conform the webegone one, who orders the Italian: to cut in stone, my Dear Man, a figure crying over the grave – – and says, she was an angel and that's it!!...]

The noble patron in that portrait by Norwid has neither any aesthetic needs or any kind of notion about what such a statue should look like. His only requirement is for the statue to fit the general graveyard iconographic convention. Such a description reflects Norwid's views on Polish people's immaturity not just in the creation, but also in the reception of art, which is precluded by the national artistic ‘sight impairment’⁵³. The other version of the miniature misses the motif of

⁴⁹ The same motif, but without the Italian staffage, appears in *Lapidaria* (PWsz II, 223-224).

⁵⁰ Zofia Stefanowska analyses the issue in the essay *Pisarz wieku kupieckiego i przemysłowego*, [in:] EADEM, *Strona romantyków. Studia o Norwidzie*, Lublin 1993, pp. 5-53.

⁵¹ Cf. W. GRAJEWSKI, *Archeologia*, pp. 209-212.

⁵² In 1877, Norwid also drew a caricature of a lover of the art of sculpture, who told “Włochowi wyrznąć z marmuru nagrobek dla Kochanej żony” [an Italian to cut a tombstone for his Beloved wife in marble], see A. MELBECHOWSKA-LUTY, *Sztukmistrz...*, pp. 207, 479 (table 228, C. NORWID, *Szlachcic przed nagrobkiem żony*). On the techniques of caricatured exaggeration of figures that Norwid used cf. D. PŁUCIŃSKA, *Norwida gra z odbiorcą – “Klary Nagnioszewskej samobójstwo”*, [in:] *Poeta i sztukmistrz. O twórczości poetyckiej i artystycznej Norwida*, P. Chlebowski (ed.), Lublin 2007, p. 167.

⁵³ Kazimierz Wyka calls it “civilisational noneducation [lit. incomplete education] of Poles”, see K. WYKA, *Norwid nieobecny*, s. 239.

sincere or fake sorrow after losing the spouse, while it exposes the commemorative function of the statue:

Są, które wcześniej, są, co później ze świata schodzą, wedle widoków Opatrzności, a wtedy stroskani każą robić Włochowi marmurową figurę płaczącą przeraźliwie, żeby stała sobie płacząc raz na zawsze. Zaś Włoch ryje napis i nieortograficznie pisze nazwisko z dużym herbem. (DW VII, 143)

[There are such who earlier, are such who later leave this world, according to the rulings of Providence, and then the woebegones order the Italian to make a marble statue crying in shrill distress, to stay there crying once and for all. And the Italian carves the inscription and misspells the name next to the huge coat of arms.]

The sarcastic exaggeration of the gesture of grief (by adding a description to crying using a colloquial and mainly auditive adverb “przeraźliwie” [lit. shrilly], creating in effect a comic synaesthesia) signal yet another role of the tomb statue, which is to “stać sobie płacząc raz na zawsze” [stay there crying once and for all]. The statue is supposed to symbolically end the unpleasant history of the unhappy (for wrongly started, as Norwid suggests) relationship which dragged in time, and, last but not least, satisfy the “Master’s” *amour propre*: a misspelling in the name confirms the artist’s foreign origin (which equals costliness), and the “huge” coat of arms enhances the founder’s sense of self-worth.

The “Italian character” of a work of art is mocked by Norwid as an element of an item’s functionality; the national aspect is of no significance here. In Norwid’s work, the Italian statue turns out to be an allegory of falsehood, a consummation of the lies which form the basis for the human relations described⁵⁴, and which – according to Norwid’s principle of sincerity – is mercilessly defined in the essay for Konstancja Górska⁵⁵ and provided with an extended psychological explanation in the text written for Kuczyńska⁵⁶. The “Italian character” of the tombstone is

⁵⁴ According to *Pięć zarysów*, Christian tombstones are objectionable. For Norwid’s narrator it is “[...] wszystko wyraźnie nieszczerem:/ – Nałóg tylko i nałóg – i lekceważenie / Życia lub śmierci – ” (*Pięć zarysów. III. Ruiny*, DW IV, 160) [all clearly insincere:/ - just compulsion and compulsion – and disregard / Of life or death –].

⁵⁵ “[...] starając się o siebie, kłamali sobie najusilniej zbyt wiele czasu” (*Archeologia I*), DW VII, 136) [wooing each other, they lied most earnestly to the other for too long a time].

⁵⁶ “Narzeczoney będzie ze swzech miar uprzedzający i czujny w staraniu o rękę młodej osoby, która nie mniej w całym obyczajaju swoim doskonale mu będzie miłą. Nastąpią zaręczyny, a potem bolesne przygotowania przenosin, a nareszcie szlub i wesele [...]. Staną przeto nagle względem siebie dwoje nieznanych sobie osób i będą się dziwić, że rzeczywistość jest zimna, lubo ta rzeczywistość bynajmniej nie jest temu winną i takąż samą była pierwej – w tak zawodnym powietrzu najdrobniejsza sprzeczność, która w powietrzu innym byłaby przyczyną urozmaicenia wrażeń,

ridiculous, as it is unnecessary both in the reality presented, and in the world so well-known to the writer.

3. "ZAPEWNE DO WŁOCH ODDAŁĘ SIĘ..."
[I SHALL LIKELY DEPART TO ITALY]

Norwid's distance towards Italian art was usually visible when he referred to its common understanding, with its generalisation and simplification – common for the conventionalised view of the world which the author of "*Ad leones!*" attributed to an immature, unprepared observer following fashion. The quoted examples show that the critical approach – firstly to the "italomania" telling Poles to admire Italy regardless of whether the picturesque disorder be a consequence of the inhabitants artistic tendencies or plain mess resulting from their laziness, secondly to the displays of *italianità* suitably commercialised for 'tourists' – increases in Norwid's works with time⁵⁷. The initial popularising inclinations (with such examples as the article *O rzeźbiarzach florenckich dziś żyjących* concerning specific sculptors and works and idealising the past of Italian art – but those examples would require a separate discussion) and precisely directed criticism (like in the above-quoted Norwid's letter to Zaleski) gave way to ironic observations of raptures over some anonymous relics of great artistic heritage, to finally transform into a strict moral judgement, though masked with humour, of a world where human relationships were marked with falsehood, and ignorance disallowed a different perception of art than dictated by fashion. Considering the strongly autobiographical character of Norwid's writings, his critical reflections on Italian art in the generalising view, including also the sphere of everyday aesthetics, could be

okaże się być zaraz ogromnym zawodem!" (*Archeologia II*], DW VII, 141-142) [The fiancé will be by all means obliging and sensitive in courting the young lady, who shall nevertheless be perfectly amiable to him in her whole demeanour. There comes the betrothal, then the painful preparation for the move, and finally the vows and the wedding [...]. Thus they will stand before the other, two people foreign to each other, and they will wonder at the reality being so cold, although that reality is not in the least guilty of that, and it is no different from what it was before – in such a deceptive air the slightest controversy, which in a different air would have been but a cause for more variety of impressions, will soon appear a huge disappointment!].

⁵⁷ Perhaps that criticism should be related to the process of the writer moving away from the life of *société*, his gradual eccentricism, despite the attempts to follow the social imperatives of the Gospel, which require contact with your next. The more averse Norwid becomes towards "worldliness", and the deeper his awareness of the connection of aesthetic and ethic issues – the more irony is in his eye.

treated as an element of self-creation. Ever since 1850s, one can note the tendency in the writer's work to show Italy as a private ideal space, a potential asylum⁵⁸ for a man tired with the Parisian life, and with the wandering across America – in a word, an irrevocably lost (which Norwid did not fully wish to admit⁵⁹) Arcadia. Paradoxically, the distance that characterises the writer's attitude towards Italian art as shown in the quoted fragments seems an element of that same myth of Italy, so carefully built, as his “intellectual property”.

Przecież i ja – ziemi tyle mam,
Ile jej stopa ma pokrywa,
Dopokąd idę!...

(*Pielgrzym*, PWSz II, 28)

[But so do I – have as much land
As much foot covers on the ground,
Wherever I go!...]

is the ideological *credo* of Norwid's poem, which may be treated as a guideline for interpretation when reflecting on the specific character of Norwid's mental appropriation of Italy. It results in the writer's criticism especially towards foreign reception of what is Italian, towards the foreign fascination with *italianità*. Irony and distance indicate here a higher level of initiation: not just knowledge of Italy's artistic and cultural heritage, gained through study and laborious work, but also exclusive rights to its interpretation. In his criticism, the author of *Quidam* does, however, take some paths chosen also by his contemporaries. A similar view on Italian picturesqueness in the reflections of Potocka-Wąsowiczowa (in Poland) and Taine (in Europe) suggests that Norwid was not such a highly individual artist as he claimed to be and as he is traditionally seen.

Translated by Anna Maria Gernand

⁵⁸ E.g. “Zapewne do Włoch *oddalę się*, więc załatwiam pierw wszystko”. (Letter 114: Do Adama Potockiego – 29 I 1851, DW X, p. 315) [I shall likely depart to Italy, so I arrange everything first].

⁵⁹ For instance when he applies to Władysław Czartoryski for a loan for a journey to Italy, before he ends up at the St. Casimir nursing home, he dreams of a “mythical journey”, the destination being Italy as the “birthplace of European culture, the source of Christianity”, a place of youth and hope for the future. Cf. A. WITKOWSKA, *Cześć i skandale. O emigracyjnym doświadczeniu Polaków*, Gdańsk 1997, pp. 86-87.

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NORWID WOBEC SZTUKI WŁOSKIEJ INACZEJ

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Artykuł porusza kilka wątków Norwidowskiego stosunku do włoskiej sztuki. Zwraca uwagę na Norwidowskie przekonanie o roli, jaką poznawanie dziedzictwa artystycznego Italii może mieć dla edukacji estetycznej Polaków. Dotyczy także krytycznej reakcji Norwida wobec dominującej wśród współczesnych manieri odbioru sztuki włoskiej, przy jedno-czesnym przyswojeniu ogólnoeuropejskich wzorców narracyjnych, co stawia pod znakiem zapytania wystudiowaną „osobność” poety i ukazuje go jako świadomego, lecz niewolnego od powszechnej w XIX wieku italoofilii twórcę.

Słowa kluczowe: Cyprian Norwid; Hippolyte Taine; Józef Kremer; sztuka włoska; ironia; XIX-wieczna italofilia; XIX-wieczna italomania; sztuka włoska w Polsce; negatywny mit Italii.

CYPRIAN NORWID AND ITALIAN ART – A DIFFERENT APPROACH

S u m m a r y

The main purpose of the essay is to show the central aspects of Norwid's approach to Italian art. Firstly, the poet's opinions on the educational role of Italian art and its influence on the aesthetic sensibility of Poles are discussed. Secondly, the attention is paid to Norwid's texts in

which Italian myth receives a negative meaning and the *Italianate fashion* is presented from an ironic point of view, becoming also a source of linguistic humour. Moreover, the poet's derision of *italianity* (considered a necessary feature of an artefact) is analysed. Last but not least, Norwid's representations of typically Italian *milieux* are discussed in the context of contemporary travelogues and diaries in order to show how stereotypical may be observations made by the poet who is often considered the most original among the Polish 19th-century authors. In conclusion, Norwid's interest in Italian art seems a consequence of an international trend.

Summary translated by Rafał Augustyn

Key words: Cyprian Norwid; Hippolyte Taine; Józef Kremer; Italian art; irony; 19th-century italophilia; 19th-century italomania; Italian art in Poland; negative Italian myth.

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