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“I OCCASIONALLY MADE AQUA FORTI...” ON THE ALLEGED UNIQUE PRINTS BY NORWID

The Department of Iconographic Collections at the National Library (ZZI BN) has an etching depicting Eve handing a fig to Adam. Until recently, this etching was erroneously attributed to Norwid (fig. 1).¹ The print is a reproduction of Raphael Santi’s composition from the fresco *Original Sin* – the second of the four paintings illustrating the story of Adam and Eve that adorn the vaults of the second arcade of the Vatican Loggias.² The print is trimmed close to the frames around the depiction of the biblical scene. The imprint of the plate is indiscernible and from among the original inscriptions, only the signatures have survived. On the left-hand side, below the frame, it is possible to make out the mark of the author of the original: *Raff. Urb. inv.*, and on the right-hand side the mark of the etcher: *N.C.inc*. The print comes from the Archive of Zenon Przesmycki, which found its way to the National Library collection soon after the end of the Second World War. This fact was probably the reason for the serious error in establishing the attribution of the print in 1986 by dr Hanna Widacka.³ Influenced by the provenience of the print and the

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- 1 ZZI BN inv. no. G.22189. Trimmed print, the size of the composition within frames: 12.1 x 13.9 cm, with inscriptions: 12.4 x 13.9 cm – <http://polona.pl/item/391401/0/> [accessed 12.11.2015].
 - 2 Note that the latest findings concerning the complicated matter of authorship of the decoration of the Vatican Loggias considerably differ from the state of knowledge available to Norwid and his contemporaries. Nicole Dacos has established that the fresco *Original Sin* was painted, according to Raphael’s original idea, by his pupils, Pellegrino da Modena and Tommaso Vincidor. Cf. N. Dacos, *Rafaël w Watykanie*, Kraków 2009, pp. 10, 143, plate 104.
 - 3 H. Widacka, “Grafika Cypriana Norwida”, *Studia Norwidiana* 1985–1986, vol. 3–4, p. 157 (the same text appeared in a slightly altered form in: H. Widacka, *Niezmany Norwid: grafika*, Warszawa 1996).

monogram of the etcher, the researcher saw the etching as a graphic work by Norwid himself, and regarded the print as a unique copy of his work.

Meanwhile even a cursory stylistic analysis of the print raises many doubts as to its attribution, as suggested by Hanna Widacka. In fact, the researcher herself mentioned a “purely reproductive, contour” character of this work, though she failed to draw any further conclusions from this fact. Indeed, the composition represents all the features typical of nineteenth century graphic reproductions. However, by the same token, it is so distant, so different from the individual style of the remaining etchings by the author of *Promethidion*, that its otherness should be a cause to wonder. The style of Norwid’s graphic work corresponds ideally with the style of his drawings, both as regards the modelling of the figures, characteristic gestures, the type of physiognomy, and the complex ideological programme, which has an elaborate and ambiguous symbolism. With one exception (of which later on), Norwid’s etchings are original works and never straightforward imitations of foreign compositional patterns. This becomes obvious when we look at such prints as *There was no room for them in the inn*, *Dialogue of the dead*, *A child’s prayer*, *Echo of a ruins*, *Scherzo* or *Solo*.⁴



FIG. 1. Etching from the collections of Zenon Przesmycki, ZZI BN inv. no. G.22189 – <http://polona.pl/item/391401/0/Photo: J. Tomaszewski>.

4 Prints from the ZZI BN collection, available in digital form on the CBN Polona page: *Il n’y avait point de logement pour eux dans l’hôtellerie* [i.e. hôtellerie], inv. no. G.4412 – <http://polo->

An interesting fact is that Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki, familiar with both the contents of the Przesmycki archive and the Norwid collection of the National Library, did not include our print in the graphic oeuvre of the artist,⁵ which is another reason why Norwid's authorship should be thoroughly analysed. The etching was not mentioned or reproduced in anthologies of Norwid's plastic works – neither those compiled by Przesmycki, nor those published after the war by Janina Ruszczycówna.⁶ Neither was it shown in the first monographic exhibition of the artist's oeuvre in 1946.⁷

The main element that puts into question the correctness of Hanna Widacka's proposition that we are dealing with a work by Norwid is the etcher's signature: "N.C.inc.", which features in the print. Cyprian Norwid used to sign his works with his initials fairly frequently, though he always put them in the generally accepted order as "C.N.", never as "N.C.". Therefore, the signature under the etching suggested that we should look for its author among artists with surnames beginning with a C. Following this obvious trail, painstaking research was undertaken, and as a result it became possible to establish correctly the author of the etching, as well as to discover and acquire for the National Library collection its complete copy (fig. 2). Beyond any doubt, therefore, the author of the etching was the Italian painter Nicola Consòni (1814–1884).⁸ This, by now forgotten, artist did not leave behind many original works. Among his contemporaries, he was known above all as a "conservator" of works by great masters. He worked on inventorying and restoring by then seriously worn out

na.pl/item/391226/0/; *Dialogue des morts, Rembrandt Phidias*, inv. no. G.4412 – <http://polona.pl/item/391289/0/>; *On n'allume point une chandelle pour la mettre sous un boisseau*, inv. no. G.4408 – <http://polona.pl/item/391286/0/>; *L'Écho des Ruines*, inv. no. G.4418 – <http://polona.pl/item/391330/0/>; *Scherzo*, inv. no. G.4422 – <http://polona.pl/item/391358/0/>; *Solo*, inv. no. G.4421 – <http://polona.pl/item/391365/0/> [accessed 14.11.2015].

- 5 The etching *Original sin* was not mentioned by Juliusz W. Gomulicki, who listed in chronological order all known works by Norwid: C. Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, compiled, edited, introduced and provided with critical remarks by J. W. Gomulicki, vol. 11, Warszawa 1976 [hereinafter: PWsz.] and *Cyprian Norwid: przewodnik po życiu i twórczości*, Warszawa 1976.
- 6 *Cypryana Norwida antologia artystyczna* [compiled and with an introduction by Z. Przesmycki], Warszawa 1933; *Rysunki i grafika C. K. Norwida*, Kraków 1946; *Rysunki i grafika K.C. [!] Norwida*, Warszawa 1946; *Rysunki i grafika Norwida* [introductory remarks and captions by Janina Ruszczycówna], Kraków 1947.
- 7 *Cyprian Norwid. Wystawa w 125. rocznicę urodzin. Katalog*, Warszawa 1946.
- 8 L. Barroero, *Consòni, Nicola, Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 28 (1983) – www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nicola-consoni_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ [Accessed 16.07.2015]. Consòni, born 1814 at Ceprano Romano, died in 1884 in Rome. He studied at the academy of fine arts in Perugia and in Rome. He worked on the decoration of many Roman churches and other buildings. The mosaics adorning the façade of St. Paul's Basilica Outside the Walls were produced according to his design. He was also the author of two paintings in this church. Among other projects, he took part in the decoration of the Palazzo Torlonia in Piazza Venezia.

frescos by Raphael and Perugino in the Capella di San Severo. In the years 1866–1867, he was asked to produce decorations in Pius IX's loggia in the Vatican. However, this most ambitious work in his entire career was to be in fact a continuation of the paintings produced by Raphael and his pupils. It was then that, following in the great master's footsteps, he opened his own *bottega* or studio. He himself painted 24 scenes illustrating the Passion of Jesus, while the rest were done by his collaborators: Alessandro Mantovani, who painted grotesques, and Pietro Galli, who was responsible for stucco ornaments. The etching representing the scene of picking the forbidden fruit was produced in connection with Consòni's interest in Raphael's work. It comes from a large cycle of fifty etchings reproducing the works of the Master of Urbino, which were published in 1841 in the form of an album entitled *Raccolta delle opere di Raffaello*.⁹ The size of the composition *Original sin* included in this publication is the same as the dimensions of the print from Przesmycki's collection. In addition, the signatures are located in exactly the same place in both. The print in the album bears an extra title: *Il peccato originale*, as well as a top heading: *Loggie Vaticane* and the number of the plate: *T.XVIII*. Any

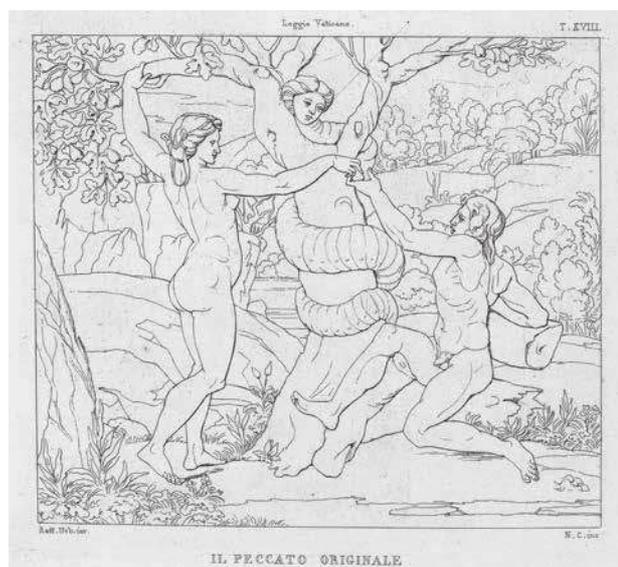


FIG. 2. N. Consòni after Raphael, *Il peccato originale*, 1841, etching, plate XVIII in the album *Raccolta delle opere di Raffaello*, ZZI BN, inv. no. A.7081 – <http://polona.pl/item/41985191/34/>

⁹ *Raccolta delle opere di Raffaello* disegnate e incise da Niccolò Consòni, Roma 1841. ZZI BN inv. no. A.7081.

comparison of all the details of the two prints makes things certain: these are two copies of the same graphic composition.

Some words are due to another of Norwid’s works associated with the above mentioned etching by Consòni. The work in question is a small drawing showing Eve in a pose known from Raphael’s composition (fig. 3). In her article,¹⁰ Widacka regarded it as a preparatory sketch for our etching. Since we have now attributed the etching correctly, it is only right to say that the drawing is indeed a sketch inspired by the etching *Il peccato originale*, a print of which was in Norwid’s possession and formed part of his artistic collection. We know many drawings (and graphic prints) by Norwid that feature motifs taken from paintings by Raphael and Michelangelo, as well as by Ribera, Rembrandt and Le Sueur. The graphic print of Consòni’s etching, which the Artificer¹¹ had in his archive, was certainly useful for studies of the model of universal beauty, a kind of canon with its roots in antiquity, the traces of which Norwid tried to discover at all stages of civilizational development. In particular, the art of Raphael and other renaissance masters constituted – according to the author of *Quid-*



FIG. 3. C. Norwid, *Study of the figure of Eve from Raphael’s fresco ‘Original sin’*, ca. 1860 ink and pencil, 2.1 × 8.8 cm; ZZI BN, inv. no. R.768 – <http://polona.pl/item/396396/0/>

- 10 H. Widacka, “Grafika Cypriana Norwida”, *Studia Norwidiana* 1985–1986, vol. 3–4, p. 157, ill. 3.
- 11 In Polish *sztukmistrz* (Lat. *artifex*), used by Norwid in the sense of a total artist, master of form and technique (editor’s note).

am – a combination of the ideal of classical beauty and the idea of Christianity.¹² It is a known fact that Norwid loved collecting newspaper cuttings and etchings, and using them in his albums. The prime examples of this specific system of work are three volumes of his *Album Orbis*, described in detail by Piotr Chlebowski and Anna Borowiec.¹³ These volumes contain not only original drawings by Norwid, but also press cuttings, reproductions, graphic prints and photographs, often covered with his annotations and tinged with colour by the artist. In a letter to Bogdan Zaleski, Norwid described his “artistic portfolio” as “a collection of motifs comprising the whole course of world civilization from its very beginning – not all of them by my own hand, because this would have been impossible!”¹⁴ In the part of Przesmycki’s Norwid Archive to be seen in the Department of Iconographic Collections, there are, next to the print of Consòni’s etching, several dozen other prints coming from various other album publications and newspapers, which served the Artificer as technical models, a store of motifs explored and transformed in accordance with his own ideas. A perfect example is the anatomical sketch (fig. 5) made by Norwid on the basis of a lithograph (fig. 4) he possessed in his collection.

This drawing is not a reproduction, nor a faithful rendition of shapes. Norwid never copied other artists’ works, but interpreted them in his own creative way. The figure touched with watercolours came into being following a detailed analysis of the build of the human body and its muscular system, carried out on the basis of the lithograph that recorded the then state of anatomical knowledge. The observations made during such analyses served Norwid to give them permanent form in his plastic notes,¹⁵ which he referred to as “scraps, bits and pieces” and

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- 12 “With the Greek artificers, formal contemplation undeniably reached the highest degree – nevertheless Raphael and other leading Christian artists not only equalled these formal ideals, but even most obviously exceeded them. Ancient art never rose to the ideal of the Holy-Family, where the Child-God, the Virgin-Mother, the Old Man-Angel are shown in the most abject circumstances. However, it does not do to deprecate or to lose that which the ancient workers attained in the formal field, and it is pleasant indeed to note that the tomb of Beato-Angelico da Fiesole, that most Christian of painters that we know, rightly bears the following inscription: ‘Non mihi sit laudi, quod eram velut alter Apelles, sed quod lucra tuis omnia, Christe, dabam’ etc.”, Norwid explained in a footnote to his poem *Quidam*, PWSz., vol. 3, p. 185. About the constant presence of ancient motifs and symbols in Christian art, Norwid wrote also in *Una piccolissima osservazione al Illustre Autore del “Magnificat delle arti*, PWSz., vol. 6, pp. 395–397.
- 13 P. Chlebowski, *Romantyczna silva rerum. O Norwidowym “Albumie Orbis”*, Lublin 2009; A. Borowiec, *“Album Orbis” Cypriana Norwida jako księga sztukmistrza*, Gdańsk 2016.
- 14 Letter to J. B. Zaleski of July 1872, PWSz., vol. 9, p. 513.
- 15 Some of them feature the annotation “remember”, see two drawn sketches *Studies of hands* (ZZI BN inv. no. R.660 – <http://polona.pl/item/391998/0/> and ZZI BN inv. no. R.661 – <http://polona.pl/item/392000/0/> [accessed 14.11.2015].

from Raphael’s fresco “Original sin”, is also a good illustration of such investigations, while at the same time being an attempt to fathom the technical secrets of the old masterpiece. Norwid built his own works from such “scraps”, putting together various visual borrowings to form a new whole, though he always made this “pictorial alphabet” absolutely clear to the viewer.¹⁷

At this point, it seems proper to signal another research problem. As mentioned above, apart from *Original Sin*, we know about only one etching ascribed to Norwid that is obviously a reproduction. This shows Mary Magdalene kneeling at the feet of lifeless Christ. In fact it is a detail from a graphic reproduction of the painted *Pietà* by Andrèa del Sarto (1486–1530) from the Galleria Palatina in Florence. The print can be seen in the *Album Berliński*, now in the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw (cf. fig. 7).¹⁸ Next to the etching there is a note, written by an unknown hand (not Norwid’s): “Magdalene cut out from Norwid’s etching.” This note persuaded



FIG. 6. C. Norwid, *Study of a male nude seen from the back*, ca. 1860, pen and ink, crayon, 8.5 × 6.2 cm; ZZI BN, inv. no. R.647 – <http://polona.pl/item/391943/0/>

17 The phrase “pictorial alphabet” comes from Jerzy Wolff’s article “Dwie wystawy”, *Głos Plastyków* 1947, no. 12, p. 82. Remarks on the sources of inspiration and artistic motifs used by Norwid in his art were presented in an article by Anna Borowiec, “Grafik-montażysta. O pracach graficznych Cypriana Norwida”, *Studia Norwidiana* 2009–2010, vol. 27–28, pp. 193–222.

18 MNW inv. no. Rys.Pol. 1843/69.

J. W. Gomulicki to ascribe the work to Norwid.¹⁹ Our experience with the erroneous attribution of Consòni's etching to Norwid makes us cautious in this case too. *Saint Mary Magdalene* is stylistically just as distant from Norwid's remaining graphic oeuvre as is *Original Sin*. In addition, the annotation on the album page does not necessarily refer to the authorship of the etching. It may just as well mean that the graphic that served as the basis of the etching of the saintly woman belonged to the Artificer's artistic archives or his collection.²⁰ As is known, apart from his own work, Norwid included in the *Album Berliński* also two drawings by other authors.²¹ So the album is not a homogeneous work. Gomulicki looked for evidence relating to this work in the preserved correspondence of Norwid. He suspected that



FIG. 7. *Saint Mary Magdalene* (etching from *Album Berliński* by C. Norwid), photography from the collections of Zenon Przesmycki, ZZI BN, inv. no. F.336 – <http://polona.pl/item/5843680/0/>

19 PWSz., vol. 11, pp. 228, 360, ill. 207.

20 Norwid owned valuable drawings in his collection – by Raphael, Federico Barocci, Eustache Le Sueur, even Leonardo da Vinci. Whenever he was short of money, he tried to sell them, or else use them to meet his financial commitments (Z. Trojanowiczowa, Z. Dambek, I. Grzeszczak, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, Poznań 2007, vol. 1, pp. 430–431, vol. 2, pp. 44, 582, 589, 592–593). The authorship of one of Raphael's drawings was, according to Michalina Zaleska née Dziekońska, confirmed by experts from the Louvre, who wanted to buy it for the their museum (A. Krechowicki, *O Cypryanie Norwidzie. Próba charakterystyki. Przyczyunki do obrazu życia i prac poety, na podstawie źródeł rękopiśmiennych*, Lwów 1909, p. 217. The authenticity of Leonardo's drawing raised so many serious doubts that, by 1877, Norwid had failed to sell it (PWSz., vol. 10, pp. 99–100, 224).

21 E. Chlebowska, *Cyprian Norwid. Katalog prac plastycznych*, vol. 1, *Prace w albumach 1*, Lublin 2014, p. 54.

it was perhaps about this etching that Norwid wrote to Vincenzo della Bruna (1804–1870), who taught the Polish artist graphic techniques, but in fact Norwid probably referred to one of his original works in the letter. The artist assures his teacher that he had not given up the idea of etching his own composition – “mia invenzione” – but had introduced some changes in order to make it more lucid. It seems worthwhile to quote this letter *in extenso*:

Carissimo Signor Della Bruna!²²

Voglio assicurarlo che non ho cambiato il mio progetto di incidere la mia invenzione. Io ho principiato di nuovo a dissegniarla e cambiato anche qualche cosa per via che sia fatta con tanta pulitezza è possibile.

Suo affettato

Norwid²³

The provenience and above all the authorship of the fragment of the etching are intriguing, especially so because St. Mary Magdalene is a rather significant figure in Norwid’s oeuvre. Motifs associated with the story of Mary Magdalene – not only in the Bible, but also in the apocrypha – in Norwid’s writings have been analysed by Dariusz Pniewski²⁴ and Magdalena Kowalska.²⁵

The ultimate confirmation of the thesis that Norwid is not the author of the etching with Mary Magdalene would obviously be the discovery of a print based on del Sarto’s painting that is identical to the one from which the cutting comes. Unfortunately, so far we have failed in our searches. By comparing the arrangement of lines in the accessible graphic reproductions of the *Pietà di Luco*, we have only succeeded in ruling out certain trails. We can only say with certainty that this is not a fragment of etchings by Carlo Lasinio (1791–1794),²⁶ Carl Ernst Hess (1804–1815),²⁷

22 Letter to Vincenzo della Bruna, before September 1844, PWsz., vol. 11, p. 441.

23 “Dear Signor Della Bruna! I would like to assure you that I have not given up my intention to etch my own idea. I have begun drawing it anew and have also changed some things in a way that have made it as lucid as possible. Yours truly, Norwid.”

24 D. Pniewski, “Religijne poszukiwania Norwida. Postać Marii Magdaleny jako złożone zjawisko kulturowe wpisane w poemat ‘Quidam’”, in: *Spotkania w przestrzeni idei – słów – obrazów. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana prof. dr hab. Zofii Mocarskiej-Tycowej*, ed. J. Bielska-Krawczyk, K. Wikliński, S. Kołos, Toruń 2012, pp. 27–34.

25 M. Kowalska, “Norwid wobec Prowansji czasów rzymskich”, *Studia Norwidiana* 2013, vol. 31, pp. 41–70.

26 C. Lasinio, *Cristo morto colla Vergine, ed altri Santi, 1791–1794*, etching with burin, 36.5 x 28 cm – www.artivisive.sns.it/stampeditraduzione/schedaStampa.php?id=41# [accessed 14.11.2015].

27 C.E. Hess, *Déposition de croix 1804–1815*, etching with burin, 25.3 x 16.5 cm – <http://collection.britishmuseum.org/id/object/PPA249904> [accessed 14.11.2015].

Pietro Bettelini (ca. 1811),²⁸ Jean Louis Charles Pauquet (1819),²⁹ Giuseppe Mari (1837–1842),³⁰ nor prints published by the Fratelli Giachettis (1826–1829).³¹ To establish the origin of the cutting we need more searches, but the solution is probably only a matter of time.

As with the two previous cases, there are serious doubts regarding the attribution of the fragment of a lithographic print showing a bird with a broken wing (fig. 8), which can be seen in the Department of Iconographic Collections. In the above quoted article by Hanna Widacka from 1986, this cutting was given the title *An eagle on the rock* and was included



FIG. 8. *An eagle on the rock*, lithograph coloured with watercolours, ca. 1850, ZZI BN, inv. no. G. 14449 – <http://polona.pl/item/391376/0/>



FIG. 9. *White eagle on the rock*, pen and ink, pencil, ca. 1860–1869, ZZI BN, inv. no. R.84 – <http://polona.pl/item/396946/0/>

- 28 P. Bettelini after P. Ermini, *Compianto sul Cristo morto*, after 1811, etching with burin, 42.4 x 62.4 cm – www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/stampe/schede/H0080-03597/ [accessed 14.11.2015].
- 29 J.L.C. Pauquet, *Le Christ au tombeau*, 1819, etching, 47 x 29.5 cm – www.artivisive.sns.it/stampeditraduzione/schedaStampa.php?id=1934# [accessed 14.11.2015].
- 30 G. Mari, *Il deposito di Croce*, 1837–1842, etching with burin, 35.5 x 27.7 – <http://collection.britishmuseum.org/id/object/PPA249905> [accessed 14.11.2015].
- 31 Fratelli Giachetti, *Opere dei Maestri predecessori, contemporanei, e successori di Raffaello XV^o e XVI^o Secolo*, 1826–1829, etching, 35.3 x 23,2cm – www.artivisive.sns.it/stampeditraduzione/schedaStampa.php?id=484# [accessed 14.11.2015].

among Norwid’s works.³² The fragment of an unrecognised print, tinted with watercolours, also comes from the Norwid archives, acquired together with the collection of Zenon Przesmycki. The lithograph is not signed by its author. It bears no features of a reproductive graphic work, therefore it could be an original composition. However its style does not recall that which is typical of Norwid’s own graphic works. It is more likely that the cutting was one of the motifs that the Artificer collected, than another unique graphic work by him. It is hard to say whether the cutting really inspired the drawing *White eagle on the rock* (fig. 9)³³ which Hanna Widacka seemed to believe when she set the two pieces together.³⁴

Establishing the correct attribution of *Original Sin*, together perhaps with the confirmation of foreign authorship of the etching *Saint Mary Magdalene*, seems all the more important in that it shifts Norwid’s earliest preserved graphic works along the time axis from the 1840s closer to the middle of that century. This means that nothing is known about the first graphic attempts by the Artificer, of which he wrote in a letter to Antoni Zaleski in 1845, “In Florence, where I encountered various obstacles, I occasionally made *aqua forti*...”³⁵ There are still many unknowns in Cyprian Norwid’s artistic oeuvre, which requires thorough studies – also of only apparently minor, trifling works.

translated by Bogna Piotrowska

SUMMARY

The article discusses the wrong attribution of three engravings to Cyprian Kamil Norwid. The author has determined the actual authorship and origin of *Original Sin*, an etching previously believed to be a unique copy of an early engraving by Norwid. The engraving *Il peccato originale* was made by the Italian artist Nicola Consòni and published in 1841 in an album entitled *Raccolta delle opere di Raffaello*. The author also discusses doubts as to the attribution of the etching *St. Mary Magdalene* glued into the so-called *Berlin Album* as well as of *Eagle on a Rock*, a lithograph. Additionally, the paper reflects on how Norwid used themes from works by old masters as well as from contemporary graphic patterns.

32 *Op.cit.*, p. 166, ill. 14.

33 *White eagle on the rock*, ZZI BN inv. no. R.841 – <http://polona.pl/item/396946/0/> [accessed 14.11.2015].

34 For the sake of accuracy it should be added that the lithograph depicts a falcon rather than an eagle, as indicated by the characteristic shape of its short beak and light-coloured spotted colouration of the body, contrasting with the dark feathers of the wings.

35 Letter to Antoni Zaleski, 24–25 February 1845, PWSz., vol. 8, p. 16.