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NORWID – BRANICKI – MATEJKO – BEREZOWSKI  
HISTORY OF AN AUTOGRAPH

A town Montrésor located in the French Touraine is an important place for Polish culture abroad. A castle lying there was owned by the Branicki family since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. At present, it is stewarded by the Rey family.<sup>1</sup> It houses a huge collection of works of art collected mainly by its first resident: Count Ksawery Branicki, who held the property as a gift from his mother, Róża Branicka of the Potocki in 1849. Even though the collection includes important works of foreign authors in a small number, like *Harlot* by Paolo Veronese to the fore, yet, its value is determined mainly by a rich collection of Polish materials.<sup>2</sup> There you can find, inter alia, works of Leon Kaplinski, Henryk Rodakowski, Artur Grottger, Ary' Scheffer, Marcei Guyski, Wojciech Kossak, Nicolas Robert-Fleury and Tony Robert-Fleury<sup>3</sup>. The thing which modelled Montrésor collection was not so much aesthetic taste of its creator, Ksawery Branicki, as, simply put, his patriotic commitment reflected both on the political and cultural level. Hence the characteristic for these collections of great compositions drawing their theme from the history of Poland, but also an abundance of works that have arisen as a result of generously paid orders of its patron financially supporting Polish artists in France.

There is also a Norwidianum (piece of art by Norwid) in the castle archives. It is an autograph of the poem *Improwizacja – wracając z Ekspozycji 1867 –*

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Countess Maria Rey for allowing me to perform a preliminary research in the castle archives as well as for the warm welcome which I met.

<sup>2</sup> The catalogue of Polish materials located in Montresor and a synthetic outline of the history of the collection include the following works of Andrzej Ryszkiewicz: *Polonica na zamku w Montrésor*, Poznań 1975 and *Ksawery Branicki i polonica na zamku w Montrésor*, [in:] *IBID., Kolekcjonerzy i miłośnicy*, Warszawa 1981, pp. 102-196.

<sup>3</sup> The Polish materials were also painted by two French painters on Branicki's request. They are, incidentally, amongst the most important works in Montresor collections. *Warszawa 8 kwietnia 1861* by Tony Robert-Fleury and *Uduszenie Pawła I* by Nicolas Robert-Fleury.

w *Paryżu* written by Norwid in 1867 and sent to Kazimierz Błociszewski, the secretary of Branicki<sup>4</sup>. This tiny, barely four-line poem, of course, does not belong to the most important Norwid's lyrics, the more that it is, though, confusing and worthy of further research, a variant of the text better known under the title *Improwizacja na ekspozycji*, published in *Pisma wszystkie*<sup>5</sup> (No 284 PWSz II, 178). However, the very fact that you have to do with one of the very few Norwid's autographs written abroad and, consequently, its availability is limited. This makes it worth devoting some text. The more that an occasional minor ironic trifle like this sheds some light on the relations that will be marked, generally, by four family names: Norwid – Branicki – Matejko – Berezowski.

The text of the poem was written by Norwid on a rectangular sheet of paper of the format: 14/18,5 cm (5.5/7.3 inch). The card was deposited in a small envelope; the letter did not contain any text but the poem. On *verso* page, there is a recipient's name and address: „Monsieur Mr Casimir Błociszewski, Paris, Rue de Berri N°... [house number was not written by Norwid], dans la résidence du Comte Xawier Branicki<sup>6</sup>. The address was highlighted with blue crayon. On postmarks: dispatch (Paris, R. St. Lazare) and delivery (Paris, R. Montaigne) the same date: 29<sup>th</sup> October 1867. On *recto* page, there is poem text written by Norwid's hand, signed 'Cyprian Norwid'. Both the address and the poem were written in black ink. The autograph is slightly damaged: a small tearing probably caused during opening the envelope as a result of breaking the postmark. I quote the text of the autograph preserving the original spelling and punctuation<sup>7</sup>:

<sup>4</sup> The following canvas are worth mentioning: *Hrabia Wilczek błagający Jana III o pomoc dla Wiednia* by Henryk Rodakowski and *Warszawa 8 kwietnia 1861* by Tony Robert-Fleury, mentioned in the last footnote.

<sup>5</sup> Archive in Montrésor, shelf mark III.15.

<sup>6</sup> C. NORWID, *Pisma wszystkie*, v. I-XI, collected, selected, introduced and with critical remarks added by J.W. Gomulicki, Warszawa 1971-76 (next quot. PWSz, the Roman numeral means volume (v.), Arabian numeral: page).

<sup>7</sup> I cite the address from the autograph. A slightly different record of the address (a small letter in 'rue' and 'comte,' and the spelling of the name 'Xawier') published by *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*: „Monsieur Mr Casimir Błociszewski, Paris, rue de Berri N° [?], dans la résidence du comte Xawier Branicki”, cf. Z. TROJANOWICZOWA, E. LIJEWSKA with the cooperation of M. PLUTA, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, v. II: 1861-1883, Poznań 2007, p. 319 (further quot.: *Kalendarz II*).

*Improwizacja – wracając z Ekspozycji 1867 – w Paryżu*

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Gdyby, pole-sztuki i polityczna-warstwa  
Przez jaki dziwny czar, zmieniały się kolejką;  
Berezowski, byłby politycznym-Matejko,  
A Matejko, byłby Berezowskim-malarstwa!

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Cyprian Norwid

The facsimile of the autograph and the text were published twice so far, both of them in ‘non-Norwidian’ literature. For the first time: in Łukasz Krzywka’s article *Berezowski, Norwid, Matejko* („Odra” 1991, No 6, p. 58), for the second time: in *Ksawery Branicki (1816-1879)*, monography by Julia A. Słupska dedicated to Branicki. *Emigracja: polityka i finanse*, Warszawa 2008, p. 196). The edition of Norwid’s work had been used in Montresor version. It was invoked as a variant of above mentioned poem *Improwizacja na ekspozycji*. Let us also quote the message of the text recognized as base edition by Gomulicki:

*Improwizacja na ekspozycji*

Gdyby ducha-prąd, lub czar kuglarstwa,  
Pęzel obracał w grot, sztukę – w czyn zmieniał kolejką;  
Berezowski – byłby politycznym-Matejką,  
A Matejko – byłby Berezowskim-malarstwa!...

Pisałem 1867<sup>8</sup>

(PWsz II, 178)

Norwid sent that version of the poem to Bronisław Zaleski on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1867 in letter with the refusal to the suggestion to print his comedy<sup>9</sup>, *Aktor* without fee within the series published by Władysław Mickiewicz, *Biblioteka Ludowa*. The whole text was written on the free page of the letter received from Zaleski. Explaining, not for the first time, the reasons why he did not want to publish for free, Norwid placed the epigram at the end of the letter adding a postscript: ‘NB.

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<sup>8</sup> I only modernized the spelling of the words: „Improwizacja” instead of „Improwizacia” (atg); „Ekspozycji” instead of „Expozycyi” (atg).

<sup>9</sup> Autograph: The Czartoryski Library, manuscript 6919, p. 58; first edition: C. NORWID, *Reszta wierszy odszukanych po dziś a dotąd niedrukowanych*, collected and published Z. Przesmycki (Miriam), Warszawa 1933, p. 116.

jest to jedyny mój rękopism, który mogę ofiarować bezpłatnie do popularnego druku, i ofiaruję takowy' (PWsz IX, 311).

If you take into account the date of creation of the two texts, the matter which of them should be the basis for publication and which a variant becomes problematic. Everything seems to indicate that Montresor version is a later version, which makes it, according to the editing norms, a basic variant. They were different in *Zasady wydania (Rules for edition)* placed in *Dzieła zebrane* volume I compiled by Gomulicki, the editor explained: 'If the existing sources were created at the same time, or one shortly after another, the text after conducting philological analysis appeared to be latest or the most correct revealing traces of the author's correction was considered to be the canonical text'<sup>10</sup>. Gomulicki mentioned also the text of *Improwizacja na ekspozycji* as such a case. Since it does not seem to be possible to prove which variant is the earlier text with the way of philological analysis, in my opinion, Gomulicki must have ignored a more provable question of dating those two poems. He accepted according to his taste the one which seemed to be more poetically polished as a canonical variant. The editor did the same in the case of printing the poem in *Pisma wszystkie*.

Thus, everything written in norwidology on Montresor poem *Improwizacja – wracając z Ekspozycji 1867 – w Paryżu*, is included only in a few scanty editorial remarks treating the text as a mere version of the text *Improwizacja na ekspozycji*. Even those scanty remarks need some correction. In *Metryki i objaśnienia* included in *Pisma wszystkie*, you can read: 'Another autograph, [*Improwizacja na ekspozycji*], sent on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1867 to Kazimierz Błociszewski: collections of Stefan Rey in Montrésor (Touraine)' (PWsz II, 397). The editor, here, mistakenly gave the name of the then-owner of the collection, Stanislaw Rey. The mistake is repeated by the author of *Kalendarz* (II, 318).

Gomulicki's information concerning the form of the Montresor text is also misleading. In the commentary to *Improwizacja na ekspozycji*, the editor states that the differences between the both versions concern only the first two lines, and only those are referred to in the commentary (Dz.zebr. II, 216 and PWsz II, 397). The changes in the part of the text are, of course, the most significant, but the two following verses of two versions are also not identical. Although they are semantically equivalent to each other, the editorial commentary should spot and highlight also those small differences occurring between them.

One more detail from the commentary to *Improwizacja... i Dzieła zebrane*: 'Norwid sent his epigram in numerous copies to his friends, among others,

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. PWsz IX, 310 and *Kalendarz* II, 318.

Bronisław Zaleski, ironically offering it to his commemorative book to honour Seweryn Goszczyński' (Dz.zebr. II, 877). There is something you would like to ask the editor about the source of his knowledge. It is hard to figure out from where Gomulicki draws information about a number of copies of the epigram, which is known in two versions (it, of course, does not mean that there were no others). It is also not clear what commemorative book the editor writes about and on which Norwid's letter to Zaleski his information is based. Certainly, it is not a quoted letter, but a letter including the text of *Improwizacja...*, from 20<sup>th</sup> October 1867. There is nothing about commemorative book in honour of Goszczyński...

A particularly interesting question and demanding the explanation is, above all, the problem of the recipient of the message which is in the collection at the castle in Montrésor. Unfortunately, this issue was passed over with silence by Gomulicki and the authors of the *Kalendarz*. And yet, the content of the poem did not bind the addressee in any specific way in the version sent to Zaleski, whereas there is such a relation in Montresor version, and it is very strong. So, appearing on *verso* page of the autograph Kazimierz Błociszewski (whose name, let us remind you, is not mentioned even once in well known printed letters of Norwid) is not, as you could think, a real addressee of the text. It is, however, the person to whom Błociszewski was a secretary, Count Ksawery Branicki, whom Norwid had known since his residence in Warsaw, and with whom he must have kept some contacts. Unfortunately, there are no preserved letters from Norwid to Branicki, though, the poet's correspondence contains references to at least three letters sent to Branicki<sup>11</sup>. Branicki is associated with both characters of Norwid's epigram: Matejko and Berezowski as well as International Exposition of 1867, where the painting of *Rejtan* by Matejko was exposed in an atmosphere of a scandal. Because of the exhibition, Alexander II came to Paris, which was used by young Polish emigrant, Antoni Berezowski who made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Tzar in Bois de Boulogne on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1867 .

Let us start from Matejko. It may not be the right time or place to present the whole turbulent history of the genesis and reception of the picture: *Rejtan – Upadek Polski*<sup>12</sup>. (*Rejtan, or the Fall of Poland*) It is enough to write that the canvas exhibited in the International Exposition in Austrian painting department aroused the great interest and controversy from the very beginning. Matejko's work depicting the scene of the Partition Sejm of 1773 contained numerous historical inaccuracies, for example, showed people who had not been present in the

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<sup>11</sup> C. NORWID, *Dziela zebrane*, ed. J.W. Gomulicki, v. I: *Wiersze*, Warszawa 1966, pp. 894-895 (further: Dz.zebr.).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. PWSz IX, 194 (Gomulicki's commentary pp. 571), 246, 465.

Parliament, e.g. Szczęsny Potocki, or much more interesting to us: Hetman Franciszek Ksawery Branicki, Ksawery Branicki's grandfather. Lucian Siemieński, criticizing Maciejko's failure, also reveals the real reasons for such, and no other, a 'configuration' of the scene.

The Fall of Poland was a historical action extending for almost 100 years [...] it is almost impossible to find one moment when the action was concentrated like in the last scene of the tragedy. The artist wanted to find it in a well-known Tadeusz Rejtan's protest during the Sejm of Poniński's Confederation, but because it was not enough, he added Targowica Confederation 20 years later. In this way, he made an image much more allegorical than strictly historical. [...] Admixture of allegory to history insults the majesty of the latter. Either there is a historical accuracy or there is not [...].

To those who know the history of the Fall of Polish Republic, the painting of Jan Matejko not only does not say everything, it also offends with the confusion of dates, and to people ignorant in history says more than the most eminent journalist dares to say: it accuses the whole one layer of the nation of corruption: selling off the independence of the Homeland! It is just one that speaks up loudest in the picture; even the main character moves into the background and is less interesting than a pouch from which poured gold... It is selling off Poland and not its fall<sup>13</sup>.

Siemieński criticizing Matejko, accurately reads his intentions. The artist did not mean fidelity to the historical reality. He always preceded his historical works with very diligent studies. It was something that could be called the anatomy of Polish betrayal, the blade of which struck the nobility, not otherwise. Not too surprisingly, the picture aroused very violent reactions mainly, but not only, in conservative circles. There were even voices that it should be destroyed, or, at least, not admitted to the exhibition. As significant, against this background, that we should know was Ksawery Branicki's reaction to the work. Jozef Bohdan Zaleski mentioned about his deep interest in the painting: 'The crowd is surrounding the painting by Matejko, as if on the order of historical Nemesis. Mr Ksawery Branicki contemplates the image of his grandfather, hetman: similar to him, for hours'<sup>14</sup>.

Branicki most fully expressed his attitude towards the work of Matejko and the painter himself in the introduction to *Brama pokuty*, dedicated to Stanisław Tar-nowski, his own translation of Lamentations by Rabbi Gabriel Herschel Schoss-

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<sup>13</sup> MAREK ZGÓRNIAK writes more on this subject in the book *Matejko w Paryżu. Opinie krytyków francuskich z lat 1865-1870* (Kraków 1998, pp. 153-182).

<sup>14</sup> Quotation after *Jan Matejko. Wypisy biograficzne*, ed. J. Gintel, Warszawa 1955, pp. 163-164.

burg<sup>15</sup>. It is worth quoting a longer passage because it illustrates both hysterical reception of Matejko's work in the environment of Polish aristocracy and Branicki's attitude contrasting with it:

Many years ago, I do not remember the year, Miss Konstancya Wyleżyńska, Mrs. Loewenthal's sister, wrote me a letter. I do not remember the words, but the content was as follows: Jan Matejko painted a picture showing the Grodno Sejm, where your grandfather, Great Crown Hetman Jan Franciszek Xawery Branicki, appeared as well as the grandfather of his mother: Szcześny Potocki; there is also Fr. Marshal Czartoryski with his wife. The author of the painting is going to send it to the Universal Exhibition in Paris. I advise you having acquired this picture to destroy it or hide it.

I wrote back, to good-natured Miss Konstancya, that I did not want to buy the picture, because I did not think that it should decorate Montrésor; I considered that burning a piece of art was vandalism. History is history; everyone writes and paints as he pleases. It seemed to me, however, I was not sure whether my grandfather had participated in the Grodno Sejm. Because not everyone shared my point of view, I warned about all of this (through my brother's wife Countess Jadwiga Branicka, from the Czartoryski) Enlightened Countess Iza Działyńska.

A few days later, General Władysław Zamoyski came to me, and told me to go to the Emperor Napoleon III and beg the monarch not to allow this painting to the exhibition... He was developing the reasons for such a step with great eloquence and earnestness. I simply laughed and refused because I was not sharing his opinion. Then he said in response that the exhibition would be an insult to the royal character of the Hotel Lambert. At this, I squeezed his arms and said, if I remember, literally: "Dear General, I highly esteem Your character, and perseverance, but as to the apparent royalty, although the emigration party is indifferent to me, the idea, in my opinion, has always been just as harmful as unfounded; and it ridicules the serious Fr Adam. It created, as a result, the Democratic Centralization." The General told me that I, not being a monarchist, was not able to judge the whole significance of this idea<sup>16</sup>.

At the very beginning of the introduction to *Bramy pokuty*, Branicki stated that he liked Matejko's canvas very much: "I must confess that the picture greatly fell to my taste, despite some mistakes, namely the lack of main action"<sup>17</sup>. Those words, written many years after the exposition of *Rejtan*, might be taken as a gesture *ex post* of self-creation of the aristocrat famous from his eccentricity and

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<sup>15</sup> J.B. ZALESKI, *Korespondencja*, v. IV, Lwów 1904, p. 15 (letter to Felicja Iwanowska).

<sup>16</sup> A. Ryszkiewicz describes relations between Branicki and Matejko. Cf. Idem, *Branicki i Matejko*, „Tygodnik Powszechny” 1973, No 39, pp. 4-5 and Idem, *Kolekcjonerzy i miłośnicy*, pp. 144-148.

<sup>17</sup> G. HERSCHEL SCHOSSBURG, *Brama pokuty. Elegia historyczna*, Polish translation with the assistance of X. Korczak Branicki, Paryż 1879, pp. X-XI.

independent opinions. You might, if the words were not followed by action. Soon after the exposition of *Rejtan* on the exhibition, Branicki asked Matejko to paint the scene of suffocation of Tzar Paul I. Knowing the generosity of Branicki, the painter agreed for the proposal, but he put one condition: Branicki was to buy *Rejtan* too. Branicki refused to tied transaction and dictated his secretary, Kazimierz Błociszewski (above mentioned), the following answer:

Gracious Lord! The Right Honourable Mr. Ksawery Branicki had requested Mr. Leon Kapliński, whose friendship is an honour, to order a picture from you, the content of which is to be the tragic death of the Emperor Paul. You, seeing in this order also an intention to buy the painting of yours currently exposed at the universal exhibition in Paris, place the condition that you will paint the ordered painting for the purchase of the picture of *Rejtan*. Although, the Honourable Branicki appreciates all the great qualities of this painting, He told me to notify you that he had never wished to have it in his possession. He also felt to be forced to withdraw from the intention to buy the ordered painting, the execution of which you depend on the acquisition of another picture<sup>18</sup>.

The painting which Branicki wanted to be painted by Matejko, finally, was painted by Nicolas Robert-Fleury. The work was entitled *Suffocation of Paul I*, it is in the collections of Montrésor, however, it has never been publicly exposed. Relationship between Branicki and Matejko came to an end<sup>19</sup>.

But what was Branicki's reaction for Berezowski's attempt? You could say that it reflects the dual behaviour of Polish emigration environment, Branicki was one of those who, with Władysław Zamojski, Karol Ruprechta, Seweryn Gałęzowski, Agaton Giller, and about 300 other emigrants, signed petition to Napoleon III condemning the attempt on Tzar Aleksander II<sup>20</sup>. However, emigrant circles treated

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<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. XI.

<sup>19</sup> Both Matejko's letter to Branicki from 26<sup>th</sup> June 1867 and the draft with Błociszewski's answers can be found in the archives in Montrésor, catalogue number III.2 V. 5.

<sup>20</sup> At this point, a curious detail: in the above mentioned Introduction to *Brama pokuty*, Branicki reports to Tarnowski about his ultimately unsuccessful negotiations with Matejko. But what is very significant, he presents the whole situation differently than it appears from the preserved sources (letters). He asserts that the only reason for which the transaction did not take the place was financial considerations: 'It will not greatly matter whether after finished or during the exhibition, I wrote through the mediation of Miss Konstancja Wyleżyńska or directly to Matejko that I found his picture (with *Rejtan*) outstanding, I wished to have another of this kind, presenting the death of Paul, the Emperor of Russia. I asked about the price on that occasion. I received the answer, in the same way, that it would be unpleasant to Matejko to paint a similar picture, and that he was ready to do this for the price of 60,000 zł. No matter how much I appreciate the big talent of the artist, the price was too high to me, and there our relation broke'. (*Brama pokuty*, pp. XI-XII). Can we assume that the time between the matter with Matejko and the publication of *Bramy pokuty* weak-



the matter of Berezowski as an opportunity to publicize the Polish question on the international scene and quietly supported his defence. The trial appeared to finish with, at least, partial success; Berezowski avoided the death penalty sought by the prosecutor. As you can read in *Kalendarz*: „The accused was defended by Emanuel Argo [nota bene one of the most successful French defenders; comment added by: Ł.N.], who in his defence speech denounced Russia’s attitude to Poland; the judges decided that, in this case, there were attenuating circumstances’ (*Kalendarz* II, p. 304). About the involvement in the case, inter alia, of Branicki informs a report written by tsarist spy, Juliana Aleksander Bałaszewicz on 12th August 1867:

Defence of Berezovsky was prepared at the Hotel Lambert, and assigned to Aragon. Branicki sent 500 fr., Czartoryski and Zamoyski 200 fr., as a gift for him. Despite the efforts just 70 francs were collected today. Under the pretext of collecting money for a gift for Aragon, members of the Central Committee plan to steal half of the collected money, and it will be squandered on dissolute pleasures in pubs of Paris <sup>21</sup>.

What links Branicki to Matejko and Berezowski? I think that this is a peculiar attitude of ambivalence: in case of Matejko and his *Rejtan*, however, reluctance to the main theme and idea of the painting<sup>22</sup>, and at the same time, appreciation for talent and expressiveness of his painting. In case of Berezowski: public condemnation of his act, and, at the same time, understanding his determinants, and specific financial assistance for the defence of the assassin. What is in common in both cases is the base of the ambivalence: Branicki’s genuine independence of judgement and appraisal, who always said and did, what he thought was right regardless of the consequences. It can be assumed that the latter trait was the main reason for the recognition Branicki attained from Norwid, what will be mentioned further.

Therefore, Norwid sent the epigram, on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1867, to Błociszewski, so, indirectly to Ksawery Branicki, where he ironically characterized Matejko and Berezowski. Both heroes of the line were the perpetrators of the then scandals: the first: cultural and social, the latter political one. Close to the ‘orbit’ of the scandals appears the recipient of the epigram. It can be assumed that it would be difficult to find more appropriate recipient of the poem than the Count Ksawery Branicki...

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ened Branicki’s memory so much that he forgot about the offer to purchase *Rejtan*? Or, rather the count preferred to skip the details to avoid explaining why he did not use the occasion to purchase the painting recognized by him as ‘outstanding’, explaining that might suggest that the question of the painting is a little painful to him.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Kalendarz* II, 304.

<sup>22</sup> A. POTOCKI (Julian Aleksander BAŁASZEWICZ), *Raporty szpiega*, v. II, selection, ed. and preliminary study R. Gerber, Warszawa 1973, p. 127.

Norwid's attitude to the painting of Matejko most fully expresses a letter to Stanislaw Potocki from 1867 (PWsz IX, 349-350)<sup>23</sup>. The author of *Quidam* uses, characteristic for him, semantic procedure: takes two synonymous terms: 'Painter' and 'artist' and deepens the differences between them referring to two different states of affairs. Proficiency of a painter (*pictor*) associates with the issues strictly connected with workshop (picture, technique, use of colour, and so on), proficiency of an artist (*artifex*) results from ability to incarnate perfection in work. Norwid calls grandmasters those artists, in whose works both the aspects harmonize, as examples he mentions Raphael and Michelangelo. However, it is also possible the situation in which the skills of the painter: his technical mastery threatens his artistry hindering the evocation of 'ideal'. And according to Norwid, it is the case of Matejko:

Pan Matejko jest jednym z najbieglejszych malarzy dziś w Europie, i jest jednym z najmniej wyobrażenia mających o artyzmie artystów, lubo dziś na świecie mnogich.

Wszystko tam [na płótnie *Rejtana*] wyzute z ideału! To parlament? – a to wielka karcza flamandzka, gdzie hałabardują z kijami i pięściami – żadnego a żadnego senatorskiego gestu – żadnego męża togi – żadnej parlamentarnej fałdy na ramieniu – Rejtan nie gladiator konający, ani męczennik ufny w zapieczątowanie sprawy i czujący pod palcami ręki swojej sakramenta dziejów – nie. Rejtan tam jest w sąsiedztwie demoniak, który zawiesiście dokazał swojego i koniec [...].

Rysunek jest tak samo zupełnie teź samej i zarazem wielkiej biegłości i żadnej idealności [...].

Strona moralna nie zwrócona do masy narodu i do sumienia Rzeczypospolitej, ale do kilku osób, sportretowanych z przeraźliwą dzielnością pęzla i z naciskiem koloryzacji ich ciała śmiertelnego. Wszystko razem genialne w pęzlu i dające Polsce jednego z najznakomitszych dziś malarzy (*pictores*) na świecie.

(PWsz IX, 349-350)

Matejko's technical mastery (exaggeratedly evaluated by Norwid) annihilates ideal; expressive concreteness of the scene and brazen allegorism trivializes its message. After all, according to Norwid, moral significance of the work instead of moving the conscience of the nation, it attacks mainly presented magnates (in the canvas) and their descendants, like the recipient of the letter, Stanislaw Potocki or such as the addressee of the Montrésor epigram, Ksawery Branicki. In this case *Rejtan – Upadek Polski* is not the work that illustrates the titular 'Fall' and diagnoses precisely its causes. It is, instead, an act of vengeance, a revenge of artist who usurps being the voice of people.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. footnotes. 19.

The thread of revenge appears in Norwid's statement about Berezowski<sup>24</sup>. In this case, as usually, Norwid took the very different stand than emigration circles, both democratic and conservative, who officially and almost unanimously condemned the attempt. Norwid believed, however, that submitted protest petition to Napoleon III was foolish and erroneous from political and diplomatic point of view, because it unnecessary publicized the attack as an act of a Pole and, inevitably, in spite of good intentions, pull odium on Polish emigration. Norwid, for his part, recommended a complete cut-off from the supposition of responsibility of Poles for the attack, and sending messages in public space, in which he accented that Berezowski is the citizen of Russia:

Język publiczny mówi: „Pan Berezowski jest obrażającym Gościa Francji i w osobie jego gościnność Naczelnika Państwa, naród, obywateli. Obrażający kto jest? – jest obywatelem prowincji okcydentalnej państwa obrażonego i członkiem Kościoła, którego obrażony jest Najwyższym Kapłanem.

[...]

Publicznie: P. Berezowski jest taki sam Rosjanin jak ten, co strzelił do Aleksandra II-o w Petersburgu, i ten, co sztyletował ambasadę ruską w Paryżu. I jest przestępcą-stanu we Francji, albowiem kula jego świsnęła około piersi Naczelnika Państwa i skaleczyła wolne oblicze obywatelki.

(*[W sprawie zamachu Berezowskiego] Nota*, PWSz VII, 163-164)

Norwid used the same argumentation in his letter to one of the main signatories of the protest petition, Władysław Zamojski:

P. Berezowski jest tak samo rosyjski dla Jego Wysokości Ces[arza] Rosji jak ten, co strzelał do Niej w Petersburgu i jak ten, co godził sztyletem w członka Ambasady Rosyjskiej w Paryżu. Nie mogę zrozumieć racji, dla których Emigracja Polska zbiera wyłącznie wstyd i hańbę: co do kęśliwości, jakimi obdarzają nas prasa i potoczna opinia, zechce mi pan wybaczyć, Generale, jeśli powiem, iż przyczyna tych niesnasek nie leży w bezsensownym czynie osobnika utrzymującego, że jest Polakiem.

(PWSz IX, 294-295)<sup>25</sup>

But who is actually Berezowski? You can also, and you should speak, but with the language of private, not in public space:

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<sup>24</sup> Dating from: *Kalendarz* II, 291; in: PWSz IX, 349, date: 1868.

<sup>25</sup> An extensive description of Norwid's attitude towards Berezowski's matter, cf. P. CHLEBOWSKI, *To jest najgłupsza, najhaniebniejsza historia pod słońcem!*, „*Studia Norwidiana*” 33 (2015), pp. 219-268.

Język prywatny mówi: ‘Pan Berezowski jest Polak’ – bardzo ładnie! – ja się p r y - w a t n i e nie wyrzekam, że pan Berezowski jest Polak i wiem, kto jest: jest mściciel-egoista – patriota polski, który mówi: „*Périsse le monde, viva la Pologne!*” – takich znam milion, i że milion, więc wiem, że byłbym d u r n i e m (przepraszam za nieparlamentarny wyraz), gdybym własnym gardłem chciał milion takich pocziwych awanturników nawracać.

(*[W sprawie zamachu Berezowskiego] Nota*, PWSz VII, 163-164)

Very sharp, even harmful Norwid’s words, however throw light on the meaning of the epigram *Improwizacja – wracając z Ekspozycji 1867 – w Paryżu*. According to Norwid, the sense of comparison of Matejko and Berezowski should be seen in an immature patriotism (‘Polish patriot’) expressing itself by the acts of revenge (avenger), ultimately harmful, and showing no considerations for broader consequences (‘egoist’).

\*

The mention of Ksawery Branicki appeared several times in Norwid’s correspondence. They have a positive character almost without exceptions, which may be surprising, taking into account the leftist views and political orientation of the aristocrat. This point of Branicki’s activity is not, however, raised at all in Norwid’s statements, though, he certainly did not approve of many initiatives and political gestures of Branicki. It would be hard to assume that the poet could like, for instance, Branicki’s support for Mickiewicz’s *Trybuna*... Only once did Branicki speak, and it was positively, though with some reservation, appreciating his generosity on the provision of property to Andrzej Zamoyski’s sons and financing French newspapers so as they wrote positively about the Polish issues<sup>26</sup>.

The name of Branicki, however, usually appears in the letters on the occasion of artistic work of the author of *Solo*. Branicki was the purchaser of his works a few times, and he sometimes financially supported the work on them<sup>27</sup>. Doubtlessly, the most important from among the letters sent to Branicki about which

<sup>26</sup> Text of the letter in French language, translation taken from: *Kalendarz* II, 305.

<sup>27</sup> The words were highly criticized, for example, by Jacek Trznadel in a chapter of *Polski Hamlet*. „It was hard to read, and I doubt whether Mickiewicz could have written something like that if he had lived those years [...] But how deep is this reluctance! It pushes Norwid to make judgments bringing shame on himself (Even from the standpoint of people from that epoch) and this betrayal is clearly of ideological nature. In this way I understand, the official titles which he gives to the Tsar and qualifies Berezovsky in ‘public’ (!) as a Russian citizen. (cf. J. TRZNADEL, *Polski Hamlet czyli kłopoty z działaniem*, second edition, reviewed and extended, Warszawa 1989, pp. 162-163).

Norwid mentions in his correspondence, is the one mentioned in the letter to Władysław Czartoryski from 20<sup>th</sup> September 1870 (PWsz IX, 463-466). In it, Norwid had asked Branicki, as reported to Czartoryski, for a few months of shelter in Montresor during the ongoing Franco-Prussian War. However, the author of *Vade-mecum* did not receive any answer. Branicki was at that time very ill and was in England. It is also possible that the letter to Branicki shared the fate of that letter to Czartoryski, and due to warfare, it did not get to the addressee.

The most extensive and far the most interesting statement about Branicki, however, brings the letter from 8<sup>th</sup> December 1879, addressed to Konstancja Górska. It was written after the count's death, just after the funeral in which Norwid had participated:

Nabożeństwo za spokój duszy ś.p. Ksawerego Branickiego odbyło się dziś rano. Przeziębły i z nogą chorą wracam z tego smętnego obrzędu i koła. Był książę Napoleon ustronnie i prywatnie, jak emigrant wśród emigrantów, a we własnej niedawno stolicy. Zresztą koło zwykle, więcej zwichnięte i wykolejone, przy drodze bez osi leżące; może i bocianiego gniazda z koła tego na ruinie wieży nie zrobi się!

Co Polska traci w zgonie Branickiego, zapewne nie wie. Naród za długo żyje bez politycznego bytu i jest nieświadomy, niewinny; ledwo, ledwo, ledwo ocenić zdolny ludzi zupełnie urobionych, ale odgadywać ich, spóksztalić się z nimi – to jest dla ludów nieżywych zadaniem niezrozumiałym! [...]

Inaczej jest u ludów nawykłych do publicznego życia; one odgadują człowieka i z nim wspólnie kształcą się i podnoszą.

Ś.p. Branicki jak dopełniał obowiązków wszystkich możliwych obywatela, nie chcę i nie mogę tu spowiadać. Niektóre z tych obowiązków znam z teorii – mógłbym nietrafnie sądzić, ale dopełnił on jednego obowiązku znakomicie, to jest: o n s i ę n i g d y i n i c z e m u n i e p ł a s z c z y ł.

Powiedzą, że to łatwo z jego środkami. Nieprawda! To zawsze jest bardzo trudne w Europie i w XIX wieku. To bardzo jest niełatwe i może dlatego, że niełatwe, to i acy-rzadkie!

Znałem osobę bardzo dawno, jeszcze w Warszawie. Nie zbliżałem się bardzo w emigracji, bo unikam bogatych i możnych. Hojności Ksawerego Branickiego użyłem parę razy i dla innych – niedawno dla jednej wdowy z sierotami. Nigdy mi nie odmówił.

(PWsz X, 137)

As it may be assumed that, taking into account all the differences, Norwid valued those qualities of Branicki, which he prided himself on, and considered characteristic of him: pride, independence and honesty to his own beliefs. Hence the idea to send a message (by Błociszewski, in 1867) to Branicki: the description of his point of view of matters related with Matejko and Berezowski, which as he presumed, might interest the count. Norwid expressed his opinion in the most appropriate way to him as a poet, to put it briefly: in the form of four verses of

epigram, instantaneous nature of the associations forming the axis of the work, he emphasized with the title: *Improwizacja – wracając z Ekspozycji 1867 – w Paryżu*.

Translated by Bogdan Malec

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NORWID – BRANICKI – MATEJKO – BEREZOWSKI  
HISTORY OF AN AUTOGRAPH

S u m m a r y

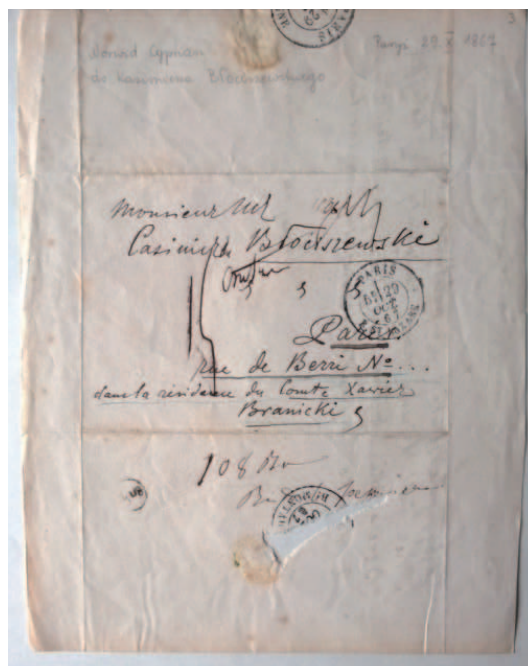
This article discusses the history of one of rare Norwid's autograph that are stored abroad. This is an epigram entitled *Improwizacja – wracając z Ekspozycji 1867 – w Paryżu* [Improvisation – coming home from the 1867 Paris Exposition]. This work is stored as part of a vast collection of Polonica at the Montrésor castle (Touraine, France). The castle was bought by the Branicki Family in the mid-19th century, and today it is managed by the Rey Family. The author describes the autograph and juxtaposes it against a better-known edition of the epigram, entitled *Improwizacja na ekspozycji* [Improvising at the Exposition] to finally claim that – in accord with the canonical principles of editorial art – it is the Montrésor variant of the text – as a later work – that should be considered canonical for the purposes of publishing and researching Norwid's legacy. Moreover, the author analyses the context of historical and cultural events that made Norwid send the epigram to Count Ksawery Branicki in 1867, in which he ironically set two vital figures against one another: the painter Jan Matejko and Antoni Berezowski – author of a failed assassination attempt on Tsar Alexander II.

**Key words:** Cyprian Norwid; Ksawery Branicki; Antoni Berezowski; Jan Matejko; autograf; *Improwizacja – wracając z Ekspozycji 1867 – w Paryżu*, *Improwizacja na ekspozycji*; Montrésor; *Rejtan*; assassination attempt on Tsar Alexander II.

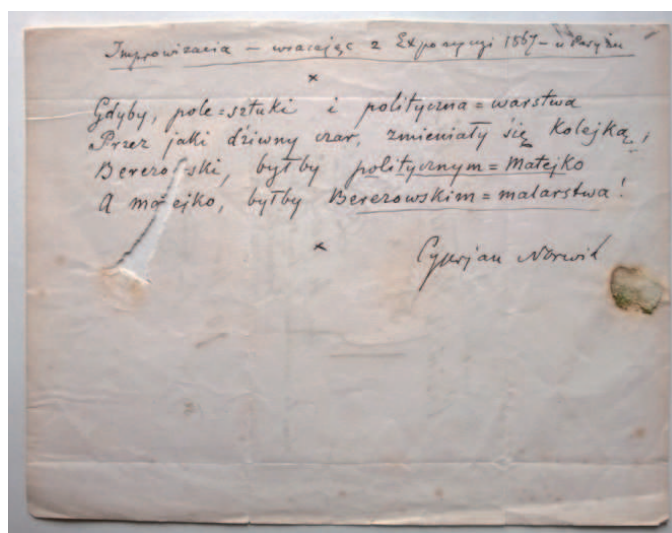
**Słowa kluczowe:** Cyprian Norwid; Ksawery Branicki; Antoni Berezowski; Jan Matejko; autograf; *Improwizacja – wracając z Ekspozycji 1867 – w Paryżu*; *Improwizacja na ekspozycji*; Montrésor; *Rejtan*; zamach na Aleksandra II

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Autograph of the poem *Improwizacja – wracając z Expozycji 1867 – w Paryżu*, side verso.  
Castle archive in Montresor, photography Łukasz Niewczas



Autograph of the poem *Improwizacja – wracając z Expozycji 1867 – w Paryżu*, side recto.  
Castle archive in Montresor, photography Łukasz Niewczas