

EDYTA CHLEBOWSKA

THE EMERALD OF EMPEROR TIBERIUS
– THE “TRUE” IMAGES OF CHRIST
IN NORWID’S WORKS

“CI GÎT L’ARTISTE RELIGIEUX”¹

In 1871, Antoni Zaleski and Władysław Bartynowski came up with the idea of compiling a dictionary of Polish artists from the oldest times to the contemporary, expanding upon the formula of the lexicon Edward Rastawiecki published in the second half of the 1850s,² that would include not only painters, but also sculptors, medallists, engravers, and lithographers. The project was never realized, although many preparations had been made, including a survey listing the information the compendium was to contain, which was sent out to living Polish artists. Thanks to Zaleski, Norwid’s dear friend from his Florence days, one of these surveys also found its way into the hands of the author of *Vade-mecum*.³ In accordance with their creators’ guidelines, a significant portion of the autobiographical note Norwid prepared, known to Norwidologists as *Autobiografia artystyczna* [*An Artistic Autobiography*], was comprised of a register of works, which “wylegitymować mogą interes biografijny” [“could properly represent him within the biographical context”] (PWsz VI, 556-560). A careful reading of the note reveals, that with the exception of a few portraits (the medallion of Zygmunt Krasiński, the oil painting of Prince Marcel Lubomirski) and a handful of

¹ C. NORWID, *Épitaphe*, PWsz II, 177.

² *Słownik malarzy polskich tudzież obcych w Polsce osiadłych tudzież czasowo w niej przebywających*, vol. I-III, Warsaw 1850-1857. In 1886, after Rastawiecki had already died, his *Słownik rytowników polskich tudzież obcych w Polsce osiadłych lub czasowo w niej pracujących* appeared in Poznań.

³ The contents of the survey were published by J.W. Gomulicki (PWsz VII, 612-613).

graphic compositions on diverse themes, it exclusively mentions religious works, including: scenes from the New Testament (*Herod naradzając się ze skrybami o gwieździe* [*Herod Conferring with Scribes About the Star (of Bethlehem)*], *Łódź apostołska na jeziorze Genezareth* [*Apostles' Boat on Lake Genezareth*]), illustrations of evangelical parables (*Parabola o perłach przed trzodą wieprzów* [*Parable about Casting Pearls before Swine*] as well as the cycle *Parabola o wielbłądzie w uchu igielnym* [*Parable about the Camel and the Eye of the Needle*], images of Christ, the Mother of God, Saints (*Święty Bazyli Wielki I święta Makrena* [*Saint Basil the Great and Saint Macrena*]), and even a series of illustrations for the story *Bogurodzica* [*Mother of God*] and sepulchral bas-relief designs for Polish graves in Parisian cemeteries. In the light of *Autobiografia artystyczna* Norwid unequivocally appears as a religious artist; given the notably auto-creative character of the text and its purpose, there can be no doubt that it was important to the artist that this exact depiction of his creative profile be preserved and passed down to future generations. The question remains, to what extent this image is consistent with the facts, and whether the author's selection of works is truly representative of his artistic legacy.

A review of Norwid's imaginarium allows us to discern that Christian iconography constitutes, alongside ancient themes, a generic and anecdotal-symbolic current, the most important thematic sphere of this artist's hand-drawn, painted and graphic compositions. Moreover, in Norwid's work, which is dominated by low-key scenes, realistic and imaginative effigies, delicate forms and inconspicuous sketches, it is precisely the religious depictions which stand out as perhaps the most numerous in terms of his most impressive, often multi-figure compositions. Notably, at the time Norwid was putting together his lexical autobiography, he was also working on the only altar painting of his artistic career, designed for the chapel in the Saint Stanislaus Poorhouse (a branch of the Saint Casimir Poorhouse) in Juvisy, outside Paris, led by the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. It was the canvas painting *Widzenie św. Stanisława Kostki* [*The Vision of Saint Stanislaus Kostka*], commissioned by the Mother Superior Teofila Mikułowska in 1866, but not completed by the author of *Echo Ruin* [*Echo of the Ruins*] and installed in its intended place until eight years later. Towards the end of the 1860s Norwid also came up with the initiative of publishing an edition of the Bible illustrated by Polish artists, claiming that such an edition "ten jeden katolicki naród do dziś nie ma wcale" ["has never appeared in this very Catholic nation"].⁴ In 1879 the biblical initiative gained greater visibility, in the form of a postulate that a Biblico-artistic Society be established "KTÓRE SIĘ NIE ROZWIĄŻE, AŻ WYDA

⁴ Letter from C. Norwid to Bronisław Zaleski from 11 January 1872, PWsz IX, 503.

BIBLIĘ CAŁĄ” [“that will not disband, until it produces a whole Bible”].⁵ The poet suggested, that the pages of the proposed publication contain “wszystkie próby ducha artystycznego polskiego mniej i więcej dołączne” [“all the more or less successful samples of the Polish artistic spirit”] and asserted emphatically, that such a Bible “niepowinna się wzorować na żadnej ilustracji obcej, lecz swoje pojęcie postawić” [“should not take example from any foreign illustration, but establish its own interpretation”].⁶ On more than one occasion he undertook the representation of the biblical scenes himself, focusing primarily on illustrating events from the life of the Saviour, starting with the illustration *Nie było dla nich miejsca w gospodzie* [*There Was No Room For Them in the Inn*], through the representation of the Holy Family, and many scenes depicting Christ’s public activities, ending with the events of the Passion. Among the many evangelical motives depicted by the author of *Promethidion*, these are decidedly in the foreground.⁷

There is also no doubt that the mystery of Incarnation was situated at the centre of Norwid’s thought and creativity, constituting the heart of his historiosophic reflection. Alina Merdas previously wrote that:

Norwid based his worldview and value system on truths extracted from the Gospel. This is evidenced by the issues addressed in the works, which we can discern through an analysis of the style. It turns out, that each issue – from the greatest and most general to the simple and personal can be expressed in a “biblical style” – through poetic imagery or more sophisticated means of poetic expression, through symbols and allegory, built on biblical motifs. [...] an analysis of the evangelical motifs related to the figure and teachings of Christ reveals how deeply Norwid’s poetry is rooted in the Gospel, how the solution, explanation, and realization of everything can be found in Christ, how He is man’s given way through God.⁸

The author’s opinion also sheds additional light on Norwid’s works of fine art, prompting a more careful look not only at the selection of evangelical themes and motifs, but also the artist’s methods of representing the Saviour’s figure. In 1845 Norwid produced a drawing illustrating Christ’s visit to the house of Lazarus, during which the host’s sister Maria anointed the Saviour’s feet with a fragrant oil and wrapped them in her hair (J 12, 1-8). The scene, which makes stylistic reference to the achievements of the Nazarenes, captures our attention through one detail: the figure of Christ, the only one left unfinished by the artist, the face

⁵ C. NORWID, *Interesa sztuki*, PWSz VI, 576.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 577.

⁷ Zob. E. CHLEBOWSKA, „Co byłeś smutny aż do śmierci a miłujący zawsze” – motywy pasyjne w plastyce Norwida, [in:] *Kulturowy wymiar twórczości Norwida*, ed. J. C. Moryc OFM, R. Zajączkowski, Lublin 2016, p. 133-144.

⁸ A. MERDAS, *Łuk przymierza. Biblia w twórczości Norwida*, Lublin 1983, p. 61.

of the Saviour was left completely blank by Norwid, or else erased after multiple drawing attempts. This incompleteness, paradoxically, evidences the artist's concern for a dignified representation of Jesus, his commitment to render, through artistic means, the richness and depths of Christ's message manifesting itself in the Holy Face. Rather, the artist preferred to leave the work in unfinished form than offend the dignity of the Son of God; moreover, he chose not to finish the drawing even when he decided to gift the cartoon as a nameday present to his close friend Michalina Zaleska (née Dziekońska).⁹ The evangelical scene can be considered as a kind of *exemplum*, revealing through its imperfect, broken form the complexity of Norwid's attitude towards creativity, in which strictly artistic considerations coexist with the ethical dimension of the work or, more broadly, its creativity. Thus, in his literary as well as artistic endeavours, the author of *Vade-mecum* constantly aspired to "odpowiednie dać rzeczy słowo" ["give each thing its rightful name"] (or, to misquote the author: "give each thing its rightful image"), aiming "ku prawdzie pierwowzoru" ["for the truth of the original"]. Norwid's attitude towards the image of the Saviour, as revealed in his artistic practice, not only appears to confirm this inclination, but also constitutes an expression of concern for the preservation of the "sumienności w obliczu źródeł" ["conscientiousness towards the sources"], postulated on the pages of lesson III from the lectures *O Juliuszu Słowackim* [*On Juliusz Słowacki*], which attests to the originality of the work, according to the poet.¹⁰ Turning to the sources, which – as Michał Kuźniak rightfully suggested – should be sought in both the sphere of tradition and transcendentalism,¹¹ is, therefore, far from imitation, it is the measure of "true creativity." (PWsz VI, 426).

NORWID'S IMAGES OF THE SAVIOUR

On the pages of Aleksandra Melbechowska-Luty's monograph devoted to the poet's artistic output we can read: "Norwid struggled with great difficulty to re-create Christ's face in numerous sketches, as if he was afraid, that he would offend its sanctity by an insufficiently ideal depiction. He often sketched it schematically,

⁹ Norwid included a characteristic dedication with the gift, written in the corner of the composition: „proszę przyjąć tak jak jest: bo nic mniej złego na dzień Ś-o Michała Arch. nie mam – rysowałem to 1845 we Florencji. C. N.” [“please accept it as it is: because I have nothing less bad to give for Saint Michael the Archangel's Day – I drew it in Florence in 1845. C. N.”].

¹⁰ M. KUZIĄK, *Norwid – zmagania z podmiotowością. Epifanie poetyckie autora „Vade-mecum,”* „Pamiętnik Literacki” 2015, nb. 4, p. 9-13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12; see also B. SAWICKA-LEWCZUK, „Kto ze źródła pije...”. *Wokół Norwidowskiej koncepcji poety*, [in:] *Czytając Norwida 2*, ed. S. Rzepczyński, Słupsk 2003, p. 89-102.

clumsily or copied it from the designs of others.”¹² The scholar’s opinion, thoroughly supported by the discussed drawing *Chrystus w domu Łazarza w Betanii* [*Christ in the House of Lazarus at Bethany*], loses some its significance, however, in the wider perspective of Norwid’s Christological iconography, which often reveals creative and exceptionally successful artistic pursuits in this domain, just to name such accomplishments as: *Scena z Męki Pańskiej* [*Scene from the Passion of Christ*] (1859, Ossolineum), *Zdjęcie z krzyża* [*The Descent from the Cross*] (1861, Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw), *Kobieta chananejska* [*The Canaanite Woman*] (1879, National Museum in Warsaw) or *Chrystus Pan z Barabaszem* [*Christ the Lord with Barabbas*] (1856, missing). Suffice it to say that Mariusz Bohusz-Szyszko considered the last of the above drawings, in which the figure of “Christ has sweetness and divinity in its expression, and in terms of form is perfectly and precisely complete in every detail,” to be “Norwid’s masterpiece.”¹³ In looking for the sources of Melbechowska-Luty’s critical judgment, we should, I believe, pay closer attention to the series of images of the Saviour that the author of *Vade-mecum* placed in the sheets of the second volume of *Album Orbis* (AO II). Let us also note, as a reminder, that the album is the author’s collage-compilation project, in the form of a three-volume work, comprised of – in the poet’s own words – “zbiór motywów, obejmujący od początku cały przebieg cywilizacji świata” [“a collection of motifs, encompassing the whole course of world civilization from its beginning”] (PWSz IX, 513). Its volumes are filled, then, with cutouts of illustrations as well as texts from various publications, photographs, moreover, Norwid’s notes and excerpts from his readings, as well as his drawings, which are almost undoubtedly copies and tracings of others’ works.¹⁴ The theme of the second volume of *Orbis* concentrates on the first centuries of Christianity, starting with evangelical times, through the period of martyrdom up to ancient Gaul and Scandinavia. The initial parts of the volume, after the series of scenes from the Holy Land, are filled with images of Christ, including illustrations from various sources and Norwid’s own sketches and watercolours. Their selection clearly reveals his intention to draw from the iconographic tradition of the first centuries of the Church, or, more precisely, his desire to depict “the true face” of Christ. For

¹² A. MELBECHOWSKA-LUTY, *Sztukmistrz. Twórczość artystyczna i myśl o sztuce Cypriana Norwida*, Warsaw 2001, p. 166.

¹³ M. BOHUSZ-SZYSZKO, *Norwid – plastyk*, [in:] *Norwid żywy*, ed. W. Günter, London 1962, p. 251, 249. The same considered Norwid „za jednego z najautentyczniejszych u nas rysowników tematów religijnych” [“one of our most authentic draughtsmen of religious themes”] (p. 250).

¹⁴ Detailed information on the originals of most of Norwid’s drawings in *Album Orbis* can be found in the catalogue of his fine art legacy (E. CHLEBOWSKA, *Cyprian Norwid. Katalog prac plastycznych*, vol. II. *Prace w albumach 2*, Lublin 2017; further quoted as: Katalog II).

this reason these works undoubtedly should not be the basis for making generalizations about Norwid's artistic accomplishments, just as they should not be evaluated against the backdrop of the autonomous realizations of his works of fine art. They nevertheless constitute – similarly to other items in *Album Orbis* – a documentation of the endeavours related to different spheres of the poet's creative activities.

Jerzy Sienkiewicz pointed out years ago the problem of fairly evaluating Norwid's artistic output, in view of the fact that so many of his sketches are copies of others' works. This eminent expert on the history of Polish drawing rightfully noted that the sketches of the creator of *Solo*, especially those in his notebooks and albums:

can easily obscure the real picture, when one takes the wrong approach towards their interpretation and forgets, that they were left behind by a man of extremely diverse interests – Norwid the artist, poet, erudite, thinker and researcher [...], who in trying to learn about past epochs or the individuality of a past artist tries to enter them, so to speak, copies, follows the footsteps of others towards their truths and repeats this truth, preserving, for accuracy's sake, the other's language [...] More than one of Norwid's drawings – let us, again, repeat – is only a copy or excerpt from someone else's document, and not his own interpretation or reaction of artistic sensitivity.¹⁵

Keeping in mind the documentary character of the images of the Saviour from *Album Orbis* and considering the horizon of artistic means, favouring Early Christian tradition, it seems that the key to understanding the creative quest Norwid focused on in this collection of drawings is the matter of Christ's so-called true image, the primary subject of this article.¹⁶ The poet's interest was not limited in this respect to exclusively iconographic sources. In his *Notatki z historii* [*Notes on History*] Norwid included a cutout from an unknown French publication of an apocryphal letter by Proconsul Publius Lentulus, containing a description of Christ's appearance. The text, which inspired artists attempting to re-create the countenance of Christ for many centuries, also enjoyed unflinching popularity during Romanticism.¹⁷ In the corresponding collection *Notatki z mitologii* [*Notes on Mythology*] the poet included, in turn, the correspondence between Abgar V, the

¹⁵ J. SIENKIEWICZ, *Norwid malarz*, [in:] *Pamięci Cypriana Norwida*, a collection, Warsaw 1946, p. 74.

¹⁶ J. Zieliński pointed out – referencing the popularity of Lentulus' description during the Romantic period – Norwid's interest in this matter (*Obraz pogodnej śmierci. Norwid – Rafael – Maratti „Śmierć świętego Józefa”*, Lublin 2010, p. 23-24).

¹⁷ Por. M. SMEYERS, *An Eyckian Vera Icon in a Bruges Book of Hours, ca. 1450* (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS. 421), [in:] *Serta Devota in Memoriam Guillelmi Lourdaux. Pars Posterior: Cultura Mediaevalis*, ed. W. Verbeke et al., Leuven 1995, p. 206-207.

ruler of the Osroene Kingdom with the capital in Edessa, and Christ, taken from the same source; he even made his own translation of these letters.¹⁸ Although this correspondence was deemed apocryphal in the so-called Gelasian Decree as early as in the 6th century, its scope of influence continued to widen. It is associated, above all, with the multithreaded legend about the beautiful image of Christ given to the King by the messenger, which was called the Mandyllion of Edessa, and created supernaturally, through an impression of the face's outline on canvas. This image, brought to Constantinople in the 10th century, enjoyed a great cult following, but disappeared after the pillaging of the Byzantine capital in 1204. At the same time, another image – also an *acheiropoietos* – was gaining popularity in the West: the so-called *Veronica*, kept in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, whose cult was, in a way, the continuation of the practices rooted in the Byzantine Middle Ages surrounding the Edessian painting.¹⁹ I allowed myself this somewhat complex digression, because among the likenesses of Christ on the pages of *Album Orbis* (AO II, sh. 16 *recto*) there is an 18th-century lithograph with the image of the Roman Veil of Veronica by Antoni Puccinelli (1822-1897) (ill. 1).²⁰

Countless copies of the image, printed on linen or silk canvas, were distributed among pilgrims after the famous miracle which took place in Saint Peter's Basilica on January 6th, 1849, when towards the end of the three-day display of Veronica's Veil, despite the relic having been covered with silk fabric, a clear image of Christ's face appeared upon it, as if illuminated by a gentle light from below.²¹ This engraving in the album is the only trace of Norwid's interest in the

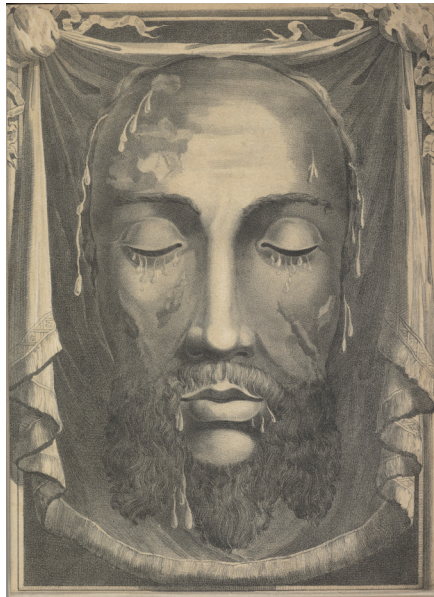
¹⁸ *Wymiana listów między królem Abagarem a Jezusem Chrystusem*, [in:] C. NORWID, *Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. VII: *Proza I*, ed. R. Skręt, Lublin 2007, p. 119-122.

¹⁹ The fundamental source of knowledge on both images of Christ is the monograph by E. von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder. Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende* (Leipzig 1899, p. 102-262), which contains a wealth of source texts (p. 158* - 335*). From newer publications see: H. BELTING, *Obraz i kult. Historia obrazu przed epoką sztuki*, transl. T. Zatorski, Gdańsk 2010, p. 235-258; I. WILSON, *Cahun Turyński*, vol. I, transl. A. Polkowski, Bristol–New York 1978, p. 124-131; D. FREEDBERG, *Potęga wizerunków. Studia z historii i teorii oddziaływania*, transl. E. Klekot, Kraków 2005, p. 208-215. The most recent literature pertaining to the Edessian relic is discussed by M. Tycner-Wolicka (*Opowieść o wizerunku z Edessy. Cesarz Konstantyn Porfirogeneta i nieuczyniony ręką wizerunek Chrystusa*, Kraków 2009, p. 46-48).

²⁰ The reproduction Norwid inserted is cropped, and for this reason the text, which should be found beneath the composition, is missing: *Vera effigies Sacri Vultus Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, que Rome in Sacrosancta Basilica S. Petri in Vaticano religiosissime afservatur, et colitur*.

²¹ Veils similar to Saint Veronica's, which were intended for pilgrims, and which were popular between 1849 and the beginning of the 20th century, came with wax seals and a certificate confirming they had touched holy relics: the Veil of Veronica, pieces of the Cross or the spear, which had pierced Christ. See the extensive gallery of photographs of these images, published on the internet

relic. Although Norwid lived in the Eternal City when those events took place, and even joined in the activities of the Poles, initiated by Resurrectionists and expressing support for Pope Pius IX (on January 9th he signed *The Proclamation of the Poles to Pope Pius IX*)²² the poet's biography does not contain any accounts of his participation in the religious services celebrated by the Order of the Pope who was in Gaeta then, nor any mention that a miracle occurred during one of those services.



II. 1. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis* II, sh. 16 *recto*

Going back to *Album Orbis*, it should be noted, that the Veil of Veronica is one of the very few representations of Christ's face from an *en face* perspective in the collection, as Norwid much more preferred profile images. The series of the Saviour's portraits begins with the traced copy of a medal showing a head from the left profile and a Hebrew inscription (AO II, k. 15 *verso*).²³ On each side of

at: <http://www.holyfacedevotion.com/images.htm> (accessed: 19.06.2018).

²² Z. TROJANOWICZOWA, Z. DAMBEK, with the cooperation of J. Czarnomorska, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, vol. I: 1821-1860, Poznań 2007, p. 335.

²³ Katalog II, items 317/VII.II and 318/VII.II.

Christ’s profile there is the inscription: וְשִׁי אֵ (Jesus);²⁴ on the reverse – a barely legible five-line inscription (in addition it is rotated 180 degrees) (ill. 2).²⁵



II. 2. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, sh. 15 verso

Medals of this type (because we are dealing with just one of many variants here (ill. 3)), were of substantial interest in Norwid’s time, and most generally considered the image on the obverse to have originated during the first years of the Church, pointing to its connections to both the description of Lentulus and the mandylion depicting the true face of the Saviour. It is quite possible that Norwid was aware of the above-mentioned trails of influence, given that he did place copy of Christ’s medallion in *Album Orbis* on the page preceding the reproduction of “The Veronica,” while the page that follows is devoted to yet another – also in the Roman *veraicon* visual tradition – image of Christ’s profile (ill. 4).

²⁴ As in: A.R.S. KENNEDY, *The Medals of Christ with hebrew inscriptions*, “The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society”, series V, no. 1/2(1921), p. 135.

²⁵ The contents of the inscription on the *recto* side of the medal became the topic of renewed scientific discussion in the first decades of the last century. Readers interested in the issue should refer to the work of Kennedy, who, indicating the mistake in the text, provides the following translation of the inscription: “A Jesus Christ, the King, came in peace and God became man Ω” (Ibid., p. 135-142). Cf. also: G.F. HILL, *The medallic portraits of Christ. The false shekels. The thirty pieces of silver*, Oxford 1920, p. 50.

Fac-Similies of Various MEDALS of
JESUS CHRIST
referred to in the annexed ESSAY.



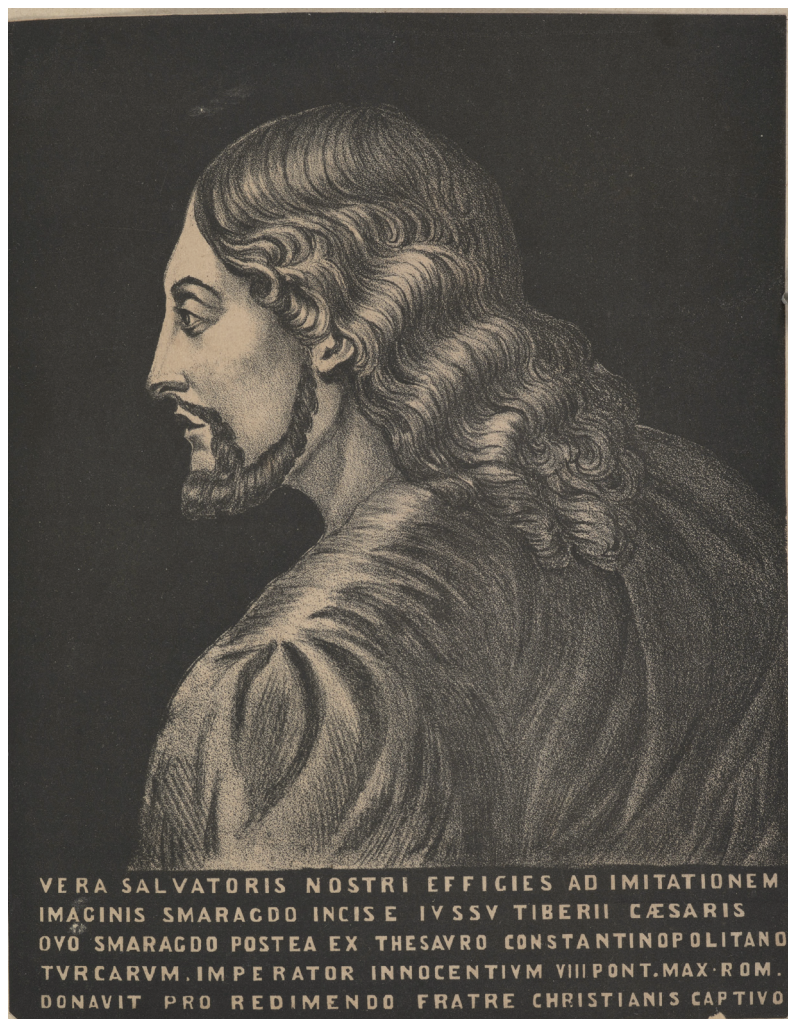
II. 3. The Medals bearing the image of Christ and Hebrew inscriptions.

The artist paid particular attention to the last of the mentioned works: the view of the head of the Saviour, captured from the left profile, furnished with an elaborate Latin inscription, which is evidenced by the fact that it appears twice within the collection (ill. 4 and 5).

A reader/viewer of *Album Orbis* first sees the lithographic reproduction of the object, which was taken from a thus far unidentified source (AO II, sh. 17 *recto*), and then Norwid’s copy of the lithograph, dated 1850, also encompassing the same full-length inscription (AO II, sh. 18 *recto*):

„VERA · SALVATORIS · NOSTRI · EFFIGIES · AD · IMITATIONEM/ IM-
 AGINIS · SMARAGDO · INCISAE · IUSSU · TIBERII · CAESARIS · / OVO ·
 SMARAGDO · POSTEA · EX · THESAURO · CONSTANTINOPOLITANO ·/

TURCARUM · IMPERATOR · INNOCENTUM · VIII · PONTIF · MAX · ROM
· / DONAVIT · PRO · REDIMENDO · FRATRE · CHRISTIANIS CAPTIVO · .²⁶



II. 4. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, sh. 17 recto

²⁶ Vera Salvatoris nostri effigies ad imitationem imaginis smaragdo incise iussu Tiberii Cæsaris ovo smaragdo postea ex thesauro Constantinopolitano Turcarum Imperator Innocetium VIII Pont. Max. rom donavit pro redimendo fratre Christianis captivo (Lat.) – The true image of our Saviour, modeled on the emerald image made on the order of Emperor Tiberius. This emerald was later offered to Pope Innocent VIII by the Turkish ruler from the treasury in Constantinople as ransom for his brother held in Christian captivity. See Katalog II, item 320/VII.II.



II. 5. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, sh. 19 verso

The existence of another copy of the lithograph, made by Norwid five years after the album version and kept in the collection of the Polish Library in Paris, is further evidence of the particular interest in this image. It is most likely that this was the drawing referenced in the same *Autobiografia artystyczna* mentioned at the beginning of this article, where among his artistic accomplishments the author of *Quidam* listed: „Profil Zbawiciela, na przezroczystym papierze do sztychu przygotowany, z łacińską legendą, tłumaczącą źródła, z których powzięty (niepublikowany), własność księżnej Marceliny Czartoryskiej” [“The profile of the Saviour, on translucent paper prepared for printmaking, with the Latin description explaining the sources of its origin (unpublished), the property of Princess Marcelina Czartoryska”] (PWsz VI, 558). The key to identifying this work is

of course the Latin text mentioned by Norwid, and although we cannot exclude the possibility that he is talking about another version of the drawing we are not familiar with, it nevertheless seems very likely that Princess Czartoryska donated her copy to the Polish Library. While the presence of the image of Christ in *Album Orbis* – encompassing, as the author specified, “a collection of motifs”, thus exhibiting the cognitive qualities of the collected material – is entirely justified, the reference to the second version of the same drawing in the register of works representative of the author of *Promethidion*, and a trademark of his artistic legacy, creates a certain cognitive dissonance. It also raises questions about the basis for such a high ranking of this sketch, which its creator supplied with an annotation revealing the “secondhand” nature of the work: “redrawn / C. Norwid 1855.” Without a doubt the key role should be assigned to the subject of the work in this case, which links the visual aspect to the image’s annotation, establishing a clear relation between the legendary history of the emerald intaglio with the portrait of Christ. This object, allegedly made on the order of Emperor Tiberius, was kept in the imperial treasury in Constantinople for a long time. It was looted by Turks in 1453, only to wind up at the Vatican a little less than four decades later thanks to the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II, who entrusted it, along with other precious gifts (among others a fragment of the spear of Saint Longinus) as well as an enormous sum of money, to Pope Innocent VIII, not for ransom, as the inscription would suggest, but rather in exchange for keeping his brother and rival Cem in Papal enslavement. In the 1860s, Charles W. King, a British collector of intaglios, considered to be one of the most eminent experts in this domain, searched for the emerald, or at least its traces, in the Vatican collections in vain; he later speculated that the object could have been lost during the Sack of Rome in 1527.²⁷ King also mentioned that copperplate engravings depicting the emerald of Emperor Tiberius as well as photographic copies thereof, furnished with the English translation of the legend, were very popular in London shops in the second half of the 19th century.²⁸ He pointed out, at the same time, that the image of Christ appearing on those reproductions does not bear the marks of ancient, or Byzantine, art, but is more stylistically related to the Renaissance. Moreover, he concluded that the direct model of the representation is the figure of Christ from the cartoon *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* by Raphael (a project from one

²⁷ CH. W. KING, *The emerald vernicle of the Vatican*, „The Archeological Journal” 1870 vol. 27, p. 188-189.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181; see also A. WAY, *Ancient Portraits of Our Lord. After the Type of the Emerald Vernicle given by Bajzet II to Pope Innocent VIII*, [in:] CH. W. KING, *Early Christian Numismatics and Other Antiquarian Tracks*, London 1873, p. 287-302.

of the arras illustrating the acts of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, dedicated to the Sistine Chapel) (ill. 6).²⁹



II. 6. RAFAEL, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*.

Contemporary research points to the opposite direction of this artistic “influenceology”, recognizing that the image of the Saviour from Raphael’s cartoon was created based on a medal dated circa 1500, whose prototype was supposed to be the Vatican intaglio.³⁰ Oil painting replicas dating back to the 18th century and containing translations of the original Latin inscription in their basic composition provide additional proof of the unusual popularity of the emerald image.³¹ The lithograph from *Album Orbis* undoubtedly fits within the multithreaded imitation

²⁹ CH. W. KING, *The emerald*, p. 181.

³⁰ J. K. G. SHEARMAN, *Raphael’s cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen and the tapestries for the Sistine Chapel*, London 1972, p. 50-51; F. GIMALDI, *The Image of Christ*, London: The National Gallery, 2000, p. 96.

³¹ Three versions of the image from private collections are presented at: <http://www.historicalportraits.com/Gallery.asp?Page=Advanced-Search> (accessed 15.09.2016).

trend, which began in the 15th century and continued to maintain its vitality until the times contemporary to Norwid.

“...GOD’S PROFILE”

It seems completely understandable, that Norwid considered the legend of the image of the Saviour engraved in the emerald: a precious stone, a symbol of the immortality of Christ as well as of the Saints, who enjoy the life of body and soul after resurrection, to be exceedingly interesting.³² It is most likely that the inscription accompanying the image, succinctly presenting the tangled history of “the true image of our Saviour” was also at the source of this fascination with the object. There is admittedly a lack of information which would allow us to reconstruct the actual historical knowledge the creator of *Echo ruin* possessed on this topic, but we can nevertheless presume, as I mentioned before, that the poet was aware of the relation between the emerald intaglio and “The Veronica.” After all, one of the versions of the multithreaded legend about the relic kept in the Vatican talks about the miraculous healing of Emperor Tiberius, which supposedly occurred thanks to the veil. At this point, we are just one step away from recognizing the direct relationship of the Saviour’s likeness carved in the emerald at the request of the Caesar with the Vatican *acheiropoietos*.³³ Following this lead we can in turn infer that it was not by accident that Norwid placed both images on neighbouring pages of his “collected motifs,” but rather on account of their related origins. However, the copy of the emerald of emperor Tiberius the author of *Solo* traced, presenting Christ’s face as it is also known from the work of Raphael, draws attention to the exceptionally complex yet simultaneously sublime relation between the model and its transformation, between reality and art as well as between the strength of tradition and the potential of artistic genius. In this work Norwid discovered a confluence of the values that he esteemed above all in art: the truth of the original, the classic ideal of beauty as well as the Christian soul, because – as we read on the pages of *Quidam* – “sprawa Pańska, wszystkie ideały najwyższe przenajwyższy, przez to samo niejako objęła je...” [“the Lord’s case, having far surpassed all the highest ideals, embraced them in a way...”]³⁴.

³² S. KOBIELUS, *Lapidarium christianum. Symbolika drogich kamieni. Wczesne chrześcijaństwo i średniowiecze*, Tyniec 2012, p. 79-80.

³³ Cf. W.H. INGERSOLL, *Portraits of our Saviour*, „Harpers New Monthly Magazine” vol. 72, May 1886, p. 933-948.

³⁴ PWSz III, 184.

In the search for the sources of Norwid's fascination with the emerald image of Christ, we may not ignore his previously mentioned predilection towards profiles in general. This partiality is revealed not only in the artistic, but also the literary output of the author of *Vade-mecum*, and the presence of profile renderings is closely related to the symbolic and metaphorical richness of medal-making, as Leon Krzemieniecki pointed out years ago.³⁵ It is characteristic, that for Norwid ancient Greece assumed the form of "Pani [...] z równym profilem Minerwy" ["A Lady [...] with the smooth profile of Minerva"] (*Marmur-biały* [*White-Marble*], PWSz I, 100).

He learned the art of the profile – as Elżbieta Dąbrowicz wrote – from the ancients, by looking at reliefs, taking medals and coins into his hand. According to Norwid the profile demonstrated the relation between the individual and the community. Because in the profile the whole community views itself with pleasure.³⁶

And so Norwid looked at the profiles of the protagonists of his works as well as the people surrounding him, gladly juxtaposing them with classic models: the main character of *Quidam* "profil z greckich miał medali" ["had the profile of a Greek medal"], and Minister Rossi – "medalowej czystości rysów profil" ["profile features of medallic purity"]. Quite often the poet "mierzył profil z znanymi biusty wielkich ludzi" ["measured a profile with well-known busts of great people"] (*Pompeja* [*Pompeii*]): Princess Ludovica Beauveau's profile resembled that of Faustina, the wife of Marcus Aurelius (PWSz VIII, 367), the face of a girl he met in a café at the Universal Exhibition seemed to him "niesłychanie do Kleopatry podobna" ["unbelievably similar to Kleopatra's"] (*Podróż po wystawie powszechnej* [*A Journey Through the Universal Exhibition*], PWSz VI, 208), and Napoleon "profil miał Aleksandrowy" ["had the profile of Alexander"] (*Do JK. Na pamiątkę Paryża* [*A Souvenir from Paris For JK.*], PWSz I, 210).

The poet was convinced, that the profile consisted of equal parts past and present, which is why in designing the medal of Zygmunt Krasiński he tried to achieve the effect of "wielu tej samej osoby momentów [...], momentów sumę!" ["many moments of the same person [...], the sum of those moments!"], consequently Roger Raczyński evaluated the portrait as "od fotografów podobniejszy" ["truer than a photograph"].³⁷ It is also worth noting, that most self-portraits, as well as

³⁵ See L. KRZEMIENIECKI, *Medal w poezji i prozie Norwida*, [in:] IDEM, *Romantycy o numizmatyce i medalierstwie*, Wrocław 1972, p. 55.

³⁶ E. DĄBROWICZ, *Profile Norwida*, [in:] *Poeta i sztukmistrz. O twórczości poetyckiej i artystycznej Norwida*, ed. P. Chlebowski, Lublin 2007, p. 175.

³⁷ Letter from C. Norwid to K. Krasiński from [August 1860], PWSz VIII, 429.

an outstanding portion of the real and imagined likenesses contained in the pages of his sketchbooks and albums, show us faces or silhouettes from the profile perspective. And although we should agree with Jerzy Sienkiewicz, who, in analyzing Norwid’s casual sketches and drawings discerned the stigma of “a manneristic and mnemotechnic tendency towards simpler drawing: in one direction – to the left”³⁸ there is no doubt, that the dominance of profile drawings in the work of the author of *Solo* has strong aesthetic-axiologic motivations. The most compelling evidence of this is the definition propounded on the pages of *Promethidion*, drawn from Adam-Promethion’s lips when he proclaimed, that beauty which, after all, is “kształtem jest miłości” [“the shape of love”], reveals “*profil Boży, / przez grzech stracony nawet w nas, profilu cieniach*” [“God’s profile, / lost through sin even in us, that profile’s shadows”] (DW IV, 107).

Of course, in the background of Norwid’s “profile studies” resound the echoes of Pliny’s tales of the mythical beginnings of painting and sculpture, at whose origin lays the outline of a human’s shadow, which was then filled in by forms appropriate to each of the named fields of art.³⁹ The fascination, which the author of *Quidam* displayed towards a clean profile line, also brings to mind associations with the activities of other profile apologists: Alexander Cozens and Johann Kaspar Lavater. In the 1870s, the former attempted to codify the elements comprising the profile of a human face, allowing him to “compose” the profile constituting the essence of “simple beauty.”⁴⁰ In the intellectual construct created by the English watercolour painter we can easily notice the “smooth profile of Minerva” admired by Norwid. Lavater, in turn, made the analysis of this profile the basis for physiognomy studies, whose aim was to find “medicine for the soul.” According to the author of the famous *Essays on Physiognomy*, the true structure of the soul manifests itself in the profile, and the nose constitutes one of the most important effects of the workings of internal powers, which is why it is called “the cantilever of the soul.”⁴¹ It is enough to look at the illustration juxtaposing six profiles of Christ from that publication, to ascertain the direction of the analyses conducted by the scholar (ill. 7).⁴²

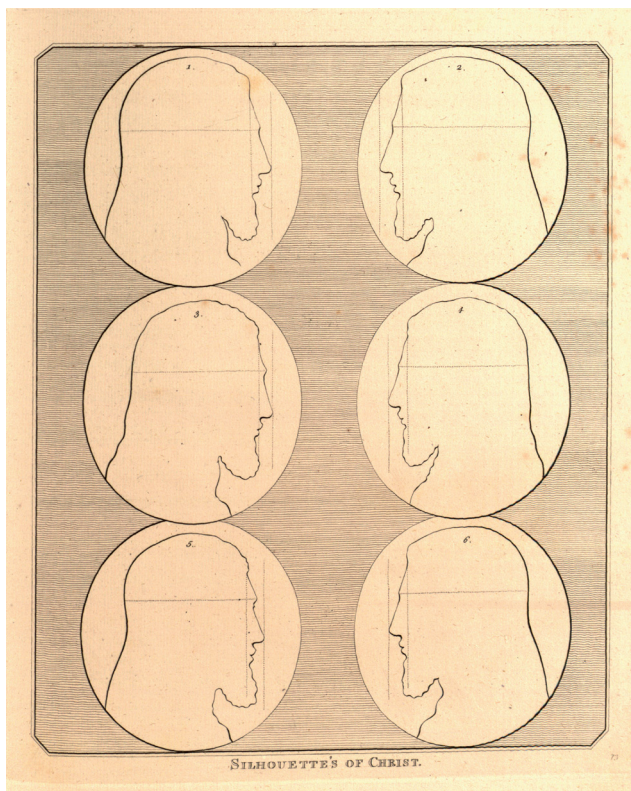
³⁸ J. SIENKIEWICZ, *Norwid malarz*, p. 68.

³⁹ PLINIUSZ STARSZY, *Historia naturalna*, transl. I. and T. Zawadzki, Wrocław 1961, p. 15, 43. Pliny’s theories are discussed by V.I. Stoichita (*Krótką historia cienia*, Kraków 2001, p. 11-20).

⁴⁰ A. COZENS, *Principles of Beauty. Relative to the Human Head*, London 1778, table 1.

⁴¹ V.I. STOICHITA, *Krótką historia*, p. 155.

⁴² As in: J.C. LAVATER, *Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, London 1792, p. 213. On p. 212 there is an explanation of the illustration, in which we can read, among other things, that „none of these heads can be considered the ideal representation of Jesus Christ”.



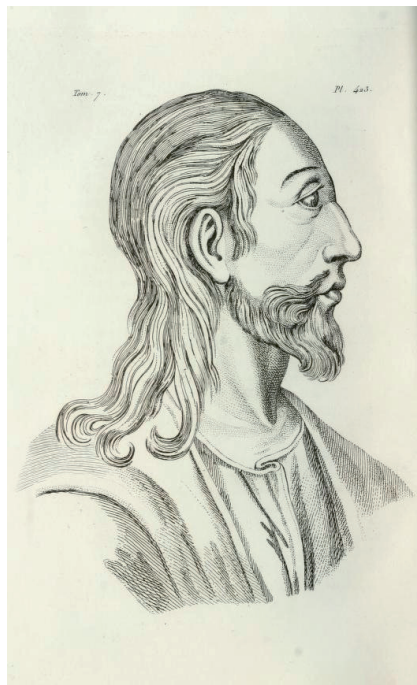
Il. 7. T. HOLLOWAY according to fig. J.H. FÜSSL, Silhouettes of Christ

Norwid was familiar with the “esteemed works of Lavater, ” but in writing about the relations between art and other fields of human activity, he reminded us that “zawyrokować nawet trudno, czyli [dzieła Lavatera] są dla artystów, czy dla lekarzy sporządzone” [“it is hard to tell whether [Lavater’s works] are intended for artists, or for physicians.”]⁴³ In the context of the issue of the “true” images of Christ, we should mention a quote from the ten-volume edition of the writings of the Swiss physiognomist that the poet copied into *Notatki etno-filologiczne* [*Ethno-philological Notes*], which he was compiling at the same time as his work on *Album Orbis*.⁴⁴ The quote is the introductory fragment of the description of the “ancient” portrait of Christ published by Lavater in the collection of so-called

⁴³ *O sztuce (dla Polaków)*, PWSz VI, 338.

⁴⁴ PWSz VII, 412 – as in: J.C. LAVATER, *L’art de connaître les hommes par la physionomie*, vol. VII, 1835, p. 191.

“ideal physiognomies” (ill. 8), in which – pointing out, that the work is considered to be an authentic image of Christ according to the legend– the scholar emphasizes its great influence.



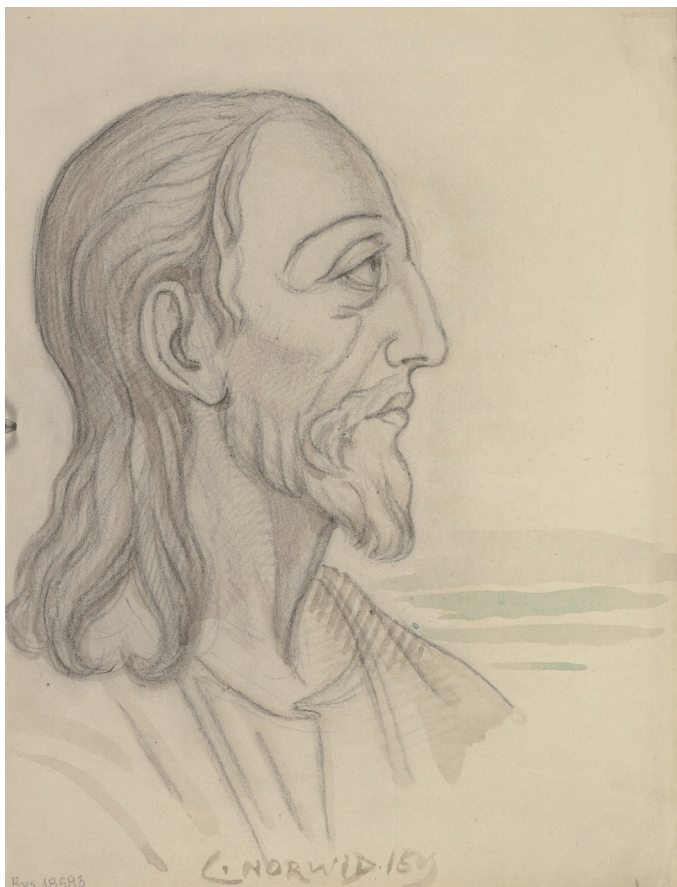
II. 8. J.C. LAVATER, *L'art de connaître les hommes par la physionomie*

Norwid’s mention of Lavater’s description is important, in that the drawing, which was decidedly copied directly from the Swissman’s publication, was included among the discussed images of the Saviour in the creator of *Solo*’s album (AO II, sh. 17 *verso*) (ill. 9).⁴⁵

Unfortunately, in his writings Lavater does not explain which object served as the source of his illustration. We cannot rule out the possibility, although I am far from any definitive statements on the issue, that the model could have been a fragment of the fresco imitating the mosaic found in the Roman catacombs of Saint Callixtus, whose reproduction, along with the corresponding explanation, made

⁴⁵ The 18th and 19th centuries saw an immeasurable wealth of illustrated publications, which multiplied iconographical models, often nearly identical, with only insignificant modifications, on account of which it is often impossible to establish the actual source of an iconographic extract.

it into Louis Perret's impressive publication *Catacombes des Rome*.⁴⁶ In the same work, there is – *notabene* – one more object, a copy of which Norwid included in his collection of the “true images” of Christ with the annotation “Christ from the CATACOMBS,” namely a relief bust found in the catacombs of Saint Agnes. (AO II, sh. 20 *recto*) (ill. 10).



II. 9. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, sh. 17 verso

⁴⁶ L. PERRET, *Catacombes de Rome: architecture, peintures murales, lampes, vases...*, vol. I, Paris 1851, table 28. (description thereof *ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 31-32). Currently, the painting imitating the mosaic, found in the Vatican Museum collections (inventory no. 64316), is attributed to the 18th century. See C. LEGA, *La nascita dei Musei Vaticani: Le antichità cristiane e il museo do Benedetto XIV*, „Bolletino dei Monumenti Musei e Gallerie Pontificie” 28(2010), p. 117.



II. 10. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, k. 20 recto

It should also be mentioned that Perret had his doubts about the early Christian origins of both works, pointing to the stylistic traits of the Renaissance epoch.⁴⁷ Even assuming that the creator of *Echo ruin* used Perret's edition, it is entirely possible that he was not familiar with the annotations to the illustrations in question, published in the last volume of the Frenchman's works. That particular volume was printed several years after the ones containing the tables with illustrations, and so Norwid may have been unaware of Perret's doubts concerning their attribution.

Norwid's quest for the "true" image of Christ, which was preserved on the pages of the second volume of *Album Orbis* in the form of a humble gallery of

⁴⁷ L. PERRET, *Catacombes de Rome*, vol. VI, Paris 1855, p. 31-32, 62.

Christ's portraits, primarily concentrated on – as we have established above – profile depictions. The mere inclusion among the collected images of the reproduction of the Roman Veil of Veronica, surrounded by a centuries-old cult, and created, as it is surmised, by physical contact with Christ's face, which represents a hieratic, frontal view of the Holy Face, does not negate this tendency. It seems that the poet – in accordance with tradition – saw the archetype of all the images of the Saviour in this painting, but at the same time treated it as a constant and necessity, a model remaining somewhat in the shadow, or maybe rather as a point of reference, for the “truer” portraits showing the outline of the profile. This fascination with the profile, rooted in constant interaction with the ancient art of medal-making and the legacy of antiquity, which in the poet's mind rose to the rank of “wieczno-trwałej” [“eternally-permanent”] and “wieczno-wzorowej” [“eternally-the-model”] art, and which he deemed “najwięcej ludzką ze wszystkich sztuk” [“the most human of all art”] (*O sztuce dla Polaków* [On Art For Poles]), encompassed many areas of Norwid's creativity, permeating his everyday life as well. The traces and clues as to the artistic influences, outlined above, beginning with the images of Christ collected on the pages of *Album Orbis*, provide – I believe – an expression of the multidimensionality as well as the profundity of this interest, which in a broader perspective led Elżbieta Dąbrowicz to ascertain, that “following the traces of Norwid's ‘profiles’ one can traverse the entirety of the writer and artist's legacy.”⁴⁸

The most meaningful evidence of Norwid's preoccupation with the profile, which also reveals the artist's inclination to complicate and layer meanings, is – in my opinion – the title emerald of Emperor Tiberius. After all, the version of the image the author of *Solo* preserved links the *acheiropoietos* tradition with the antique formula of imagery and the artistic genius of Raphael, who in the poet's opinion “linię znał jako nikt nigdy nie znał i nie pozna jej” [“knew the pencil-stroke like no one ever had or ever will come to know”] (*Bransoletka* [The Bracelet], PWSzVI, 35), and who, above all, was able to perfectly complete the ancient forms with “łaską w pojęciu chrześcijańskim, wypełniając duchem nieskalanym nieskalaność rysów i profilu” [“Christian grace, filling in the immaculate facial lines and profile with immaculate spirit”] (*Nie ma mienia bez sumienia* [There is no Property Without Conscience], PWSz VI, 545).

Translated by Monika Lutostanski

⁴⁸ E. DĄBROWICZ, *Profile Norwida*, p. 190.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

1. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, sh. 16 *recto*, Biblioteka Narodowa.
2. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, sh. 15 *verso*, Biblioteka Narodowa.
3. Medals bearing the image of Christ and Hebrew inscriptions, in: R. WALSH, *Observations which accompanied a Hebrew Medal submitted to the Inspection of The Royal Irish Academy*, „The Transaction of the Royal Irish Academy” 13(1818), p. 160.
4. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, sh. 17 *recto*, Biblioteka Narodowa.
5. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, sh.19 *verso*, Biblioteka Narodowa.
6. RAPHAEL, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, in: S. GRIBELIN, *The Seven Famous Cartons of Raphael Urbin*, London 1720, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
7. T. HOLLOWAY according to fig. J.H. FÜSSLER, *Silhouettes of Christ*, in: J.C. LAVATER, *Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, London 1792, p. 213.
8. J.C. LAVATER, *L'art de connaître les hommes par la physionomie*, vol.VII, 1820, until p. 190.
9. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, sh. 17 *verso*, Biblioteka Narodowa.
10. C. NORWID, *Album Orbis II*, sh. 20 *recto*, Biblioteka Narodowa.

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SZMARAGD CESARZA TYBERIUSZA –
„PRAWDZIWE” WIZERUNKI CHRYSSTUSA
W TWÓRCZOŚCI NORWIDA

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

Artykuł omawia Norwidowskie próby odwzorowania „prawdziwej twarzy” Chrystusa, utrwalone na kartach drugiego tomu *Albumu Orbis* w postaci niewielkiej galerii wizerunków Zbawiciela. Na zbiór ten składają się pochodzące z różnych źródeł ilustracje oraz Norwidowskie odrisy obcych dzieł, których dobór wyraźnie ujawnia intencję sięgania do tradycji ikonograficznej pierwszych wieków Kościoła. Autorka ustala źródła wizerunków Zbawiciela oraz zwraca uwagę na predylekcję do ujęć profilowych, wpisując ją w szerszy kontekst plastycznej i literackiej twórczości Norwida.

Słowa kluczowe: Cyprian Norwid; *Album Orbis*; Jezus Chrystus; ikonografia chrześcijańska.

THE EMERALD OF EMPEROR TIBERIUS
– THE “TRUE” IMAGES OF CHRIST
IN NORWID’S WORKS

S u m m a r y

The article discusses Norwid’s attempts to reproduce the “true face” of Christ recorded on the pages of the second volume of *Album Orbis* in the form of a small gallery of the Saviour’s images. The collection consists of illustrations from various sources and Norwid’s copies of others’ works, the selection of which clearly reveals the intention of drawing on the iconographic tradition of the first centuries of the Church. The author determines the sources of the Saviour’s images and draws attention to the predilection for profile images, discussing it in the wider context of Norwid’s artistic and literary work.

Key words: Cyprian Norwid; *Album Orbis*; Jesus Christ; Christian iconography.

Translated by Rafał Augustyn

EDYTA CHLEBOWSKA – art historian, PhD, employed by the Cyprian Norwid Literature Research Department (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin), e-mail: edytowo@gmail.com