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NORWID'S LITERARY "ETRUSCAN" WORKS*

When Norwid came to Italy as a young student of fine art in the Florence Academy, he wanted to gain deep insight in the history of the country which was the birthplace of the Western Latin civilisation, and especially the history of its artistic achievements. It was both a need of his inquisitive spirit and the nature of the studies he was planning (sculpture).

Among many relics from the splendid artistic past of Italy, one type evoked particular interest, and not just among Italian scholars searching for their cultural roots in a natural reaction, but in all Europe of the time: the mysterious fine art of the Etruscans, who created the first great civilisation in the Italian Peninsula, were emulated already back in the Renaissance¹ by such Italian masters as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, or Benvenuto Cellini, and glorified by their patrons, especially the Medici, who took pride in having Etruscan roots². The myth of royal Etruria, superior to Rome with its ancient age and civilisation achievements, was

* This paper is a fragment of a longer work titled *Norwid i Etruskowie*, currently in preparation for publication as a book.

¹ Etruscan influences can already be noted with Giotto (in the presentation of Satan and Judas in the Arena Chapel in Padua). See S.K.F. STODDART, *Historical Dictionary of the Etruscans*, Lanham, Maryland-Toronto-Plymouth 2009, p. 92.

Etruscan cellars and demons in the frescos, in particular the Etruscan Charun (Greek Charon), also enriched Dante's infernal imaginings. See A. NIEMIROWSKI, *Etruskowie*, transl. by A. Szymański, Łódź 1990, p. 8.

Benvenuto Cellini modelled his sculptures in bronze (e.g. *Perseus*) after great Etruscan bronzes. The language of Etruscan fine art can also be found in the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, who copied figures from Etruscan frescoes.

² See *Il mondo degli Etruschi. Ciclo di conferenze, Ferrara 24.01.2013*, Quatro parte: M. CESARANO, *Etruria furio d'Etruria: il caso della Campania*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdwQISJRe8E&list=PLLKAKWVu3fx28chx5H2PatIrdEgso0Ct3&index=4> [accessed: 20.08.2015].

far older than the Romantic Italianism³. Already back in the time of the House of Medici it became a highly significant instrument of political rivalry between Florence and Rome⁴. Another wave of fascination in Etruscan past came in the times of the *Risorgimento*. The mystery of the lost Etruscan world, different from the Greek-Roman one and the Christian one, sensual (even “libertine” from the Greek point of view) and at the same time shrouded in grave, funeral shadows, inflamed the imagination of 19th-century archaeologists and amateurs. It also captivated a young Polish artist – Norwid, who came to Italy to study the mysteries of fine art in that ancient Etruria, in the city of Dante and Michelangelo.

The presence of “Etruscan” vase motifs in Norwid’s works – mainly in *Quidam* – was noted by Dariusz Pniewski⁵, and signalled by other researchers at various occasions⁶. It seems, however, that the Etruscan motif – limited it may be – may be carried on further, adding many interesting observations to supplement what is already known about Norwid’s stay in Italy.

It took place in the 1840s – the apogee of the Etruscan madness of the then Europe, from Italy to Great Britain⁷. It was also a time of significant, even spec-

³ For more on the Romantic fascination with Italy and its various literary versions, see O. PŁASZCZEWSKA, *Wizja Włoch w polskiej i francuskiej literaturze okresu romantyzmu (1800-1850)*, Kraków 2003.

⁴ Already in the 15th century, the Franciscan monk Mariano of Florence linked the ancient Etruria with Bible elements in his study *Sulla provenienza, nobiltà e magnificenza della Tuscia*, when he claimed that the Etruscan people took their origin from Noe’s descendant, Homer. The late 15th century brought many treatises on the Etruscans. Cardinal Egidio of Viterbo (15th/16th century), a humanist and philosopher, called Etruria the eternal intercessor and protector of religion in Italy.

⁵ See D. PNIEWSKI, *Starożytnie rzeźby, reprodukcje „etruskich” waz i obrazy poetyckie w “Quidamie”*, [in:] IDEM, *Między obrazem i słowem. Studia o poglądach estetycznych i twórczości literackiej Norwida*, Lublin 2005, pp. 220-251. The author emphasises the impact of “Etruscan” stylistics on Norwid’s aesthetics, especially the monochromatism and linearity in his poetic imagery.

⁶ Earlier mentions of Norwid’s Etruscan interests can be found with J.W. Gomulicki (C. NORWID, *Pisma wybrane*, selected and commented by J.W. Gomulicki, vol. II: *Poematy*, Warszawa 1968, p. 440) and J. Puzynina (“Prawda” w *poematach Norwida*, “Studia Norwidiana” 9-10: 1991-1992, p. 39). In more recent time, M. Karamucka signalled the presence of the motif in the poet’s writings (*Antyczny Rzym Norwida*, Poznań 2016).

⁷ An important role in initiating the craze belonged to a British diplomat, lord William Hamilton (1730-1803), author of a famous study *Antiquités étrusques, grecques et romaines* (Napoli 1766-1767). A powerful impulse for regular archaeological research was the publication of the work of the Scottish author T. Dempster (*De Etruria regali*) in early 18th century in Florence. It was the Enlightenment era which rediscovered the Etruscans: “Started in Tuscany, Etruscology went far beyond Italy and became an important factor which helped the creation and promotion of classicistic European aesthetics”. – W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Sztuka Etrusków*, Warszawa 1971, p. 186. “Enthusiastic local amateurs, inclined to exaggerate the ancient glories of their Tuscan birthplaces,

tacular archaeological discoveries which unearthed interesting traces of the lost Tyrrhenian civilisation⁸. Norwid was thus in the most opportune place in the world to study the mystery of the Etruscans. He could view various private "Etruscan" collections in Tuscany, admire museum collections available to the public, and while in Rome, step into the papal Museo Gregoriano-Etrusco, opened a few years before, or the imposing Campagna Museum.

The issue of Etruscan presence in Norwid's works can be viewed from at least three perspectives. First, one can study the documentary aspect of the issue. Second, one may consider the poet's historiosophic reflection related to the Etruscan civilisation. Third, one can present the literary and graphic outcome of his encounter with the Tyrrhenians.

helped to spread the fame of Etruscan monuments and to encourage an all too often uncritical exaltation of the Etruscans over the other peoples of antiquity. Just as the sixteenth was the century of the rediscovery of Rome, and the nineteenth that of the discovery of Greece, so the eighteenth may certainly be called the century of the discovery of Etruria." – M. PALLOTTINO, *The Etruscans*, transl. by J. Cremona, Indiana University Press, 1975, p. 24. The 18th century brought many important Etruscan-related discoveries (excavations in Volterra, Cortona, Tarquinia, Siena, etc.). Valuable works by G.B. Passeri, F.S. Maffei, A.F. Gori, M. Guarnacci were published; studies on the Etruscan language started (L. LANZI, *Saggio di lingua etrusca e di altre antiche d'Italia*, 1789, ed. 2. – 1824). Back in 1726, the Etruscan Academy in Cortona was established, which was the main centre of research in the field, and issued interesting studies (*Dissertazioni*) on the Etruscan civilisation in 1738-1795. The sessions of the Academy took place at night, which enhanced the atmosphere of mystery about the conducted research. In 1750, Museo Cortonese was opened, with 81 showpieces to start. The Etruscan Museum had been active in Volterra since 1761.

Enlightenment research on the Etruscans was also conducted in France (A.C. Ph. DE CAYLUS, *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, romaines et gauloises*, 1752-62); see M. PALLOTTINO, *The Etruscans*, pp. 24-25.

In mid-19th century, after the apogee of the 1840s, the research slowed down somewhat to then regain strength in its second phase. Already after Norwid left Italy, several Italian centres conducted extensive government-funded excavations, which brought e.g. the discovery of the Villanovan culture, or of remains of many Etruscan settlements and temples. Museums were opened: the National Archaeological Museum in Florence, Museo di Villa Giulia in Rome (in 1889), museums in Bologna, Tarquinia, Chiusi (1871), Orvieto, Fiesole, Marzabotto, Siena, Grosseto, and other ones. Etruscan relics found their way not only to European museums, but also American ones. The Etruscan world became a frequent inspiration to European writers and artists. For instance, Prosper Mérimée's novella *Le Vase étrusque* was published in 1830 in "Revue de Paris".

⁸ The Greeks called the Etruscans: *Tyrrhenoi*. Their Latin name is *Etrusci* or *Tusci*. Etruscans called themselves: *Rasenna*. Livy wrote that Etruscans gave names to two seas surrounding the Italian Peninsula: *Mare Tuscum* (the Tyrrhenian Sea) and *Mare Hadriaticum* (the Adriatic Sea), from the Etruscan colony of Hadria.

The Etruscan details in Norwid's works – his poetry, drama, correspondence, observations, graphic art – consist mainly in motifs related to the history and great figures of ancient Etruria, artefacts left by the lost civilisation, and the continued Etruscan heritage in the culture of Tuscany, both in the Renaissance and in the 19th century. Those motifs are usually not elaborate, they are often a mere mention, note, reminiscence, allusion, poetic image, simile or metaphor. Yet they always carry a strong semantic load.

Traces of the poet's studies on the Etruscan civilisation can be found in his notebooks and his "artistic portfolio" – the three-volume *Album Orbis*. The notes therein uncover an ancient Etruscan work of art "reconstructed" on the basis of erudition, derived from canonical Greek and Roman texts. The notebooks contain e.g. the so-far unnoticed and highly interesting mention of Norwid visiting 19th-century archaeological sites in Italy which were related to the Etruscans (visiting "Porsena's tomb"⁹, see *Notatki z mitologii*, PWSz VII, 286). They prove the Polish artist's unabated interest in the history and culture of Etruria also during his exile in Paris, in the 1860s and later¹⁰, thus after he left Italy never to return. They also prove the exceptionally deep nature of the archaeological passion of Norwid - the art master. Its pioneering character in Polish Romanticism is definitely worth appreciating¹¹.

⁹ The famous labyrinth-tomb belonging to the Etruscan king was already mentioned by Ignacy Krasicki in his encyclopaedic work *Zbiór potrzebniejszych wiadomości* (vol. II): "The Italian LABYRINTH was the tomb of the famous Porsena, king of Etruria. It stood close to the city of *Clusium*. Warron described the edifice and confirmed that it was all made of ashlar. Yet in Pliny's time, no sign of the edifice's ruins was ever left". – I. KRASICKI, *Zbiór potrzebniejszych wiadomości*, vol. II, Warszawa–Lviv 1781, p. 5, <http://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/dlibra/publication?id=279716&from=&dirids=1&tab=1&lp=2&QI=> [accessed 20.07.2017]. Norwid wrote in his notes: "14 pyramid grobu Porsenny (byłem w podziemiu tego grobu)" (PWSz VII, 286) [14 pyramids of Porsena's tomb (I visited its basement)].

¹⁰ For more on the dating of *Album Orbis*, see P. CHLEBOWSKI, *Romantyczna silva rerum. O Norwidowskim "Albumie Orbis"*, Lublin 2009, pp. 16-18. Norwid probably added to his albums until his death in 1883.

¹¹ *Słownik języka Adama Mickiewicza* (K. Górski and S. Hrabiec (eds.), Wrocław 1962) does not include the words "Etruscan/s". Thus despite his fascination with Italy and Rome, Mickiewicz did not share the captivation in that extinct civilisation. The poet only mentioned a pope of the Medici, Leon X, fine art lover, protector of artists, guardian of spiritual, religious art; and Michelangelo, "którego dusza posepna i wyniosła Ignęła silnie do poganizmu" [whose brooding and haughty soul was strongly drawn to paganism] (in the study *O nowoczesnym malarstwie religijnym niemieckim*, [in:] A. MICKIEWICZ, *Dzieła*, Wydanie Rocznicowe, vol. V: *Proza artystyczna i pisma krytyczne*, prep. by Z. Dokurno, Warszawa 1997², pp. 274, 276-277).

The Etruscans are present in the works of Juliusz Słowacki (although the matter requires detailed studies). For instance, in his poetic novel *Lambro* (1833) Etruscan dishes are among the furnishings of Oriental Turkish homes on the island of Ipsara, wrestled from the Greeks:

The archaeological interest also shaped the artistic imagination of the author of *Promethidion* and had impact on the form of his literary work. Many researchers stressed "Norwid's particular place in the 19th-century reception of antiquity

Mrok spada w dymu stambulskiego chmurze,
Gdzieniegdzie tylko z Etrusków wazonu
Widać w połowie wychyloną różę;
Gdzieniegdzie błyszczą sztyletów głowice;

Tam nieruchome wyznaców turbany
Porosły kołem jak łąk tulipany;
Nad turbanami palą się księżyce.

J. SŁOWACKI, *Lambro, powstańca grecki*, [in:] IDEM, *Dzieła wybrane*, vol. I: *Liryki i powieści poetyckie*, prep. by J. Krzyżanowski, Warszawa 1987, p. 219.

Among the Romantics, J.I. Kraszewski was another writer beside Norwid who took lively interest in the Etruscans. Etruscan relics appear e.g. in his novel *Dwa światy*, and in his study *Sztuka u Słowian, szczególnie w Polsce i Litwie przedchrześcijańskiej*, issued in Vilnius in 1860, the writer compared Polish antiquities with Etruscan relics, discerning many formal similarities (e.g. in the shape of the vessels, the form of beehive tombs, etc.). See https://pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Sztuka_u_S%C5%82owian_szczeg%C3%B3lnie_w_Polsce_i_Litwie_przedchrze%C5%9Bcija%C5%84ski%C3%A9j/ca%C5%82o%C5%9B%C4%87 [accessed: 20.07.2015].

Kraszewski's Italian experiences and their literary reminiscences were mentioned e.g. by E. Owczarz (*Włochy i Kraszewski. Metafizyka przestrzeni*, "Prace Filologiczne Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego" 57(2009), pp. 193-209, <http://pflit.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/118/2016/04/pflit-LVII.pdf> [accessed: 15.07.2017].

Of course, the Etruscan motif appeared in Polish literature back in the 18th century. It would have been highly intriguing, as well as beneficial, to reconstruct the reception of Etruscan art and history in the works of Polish authors of the time. Etruscan traces can be found with many of them, e.g. in the works of S. K. Potocki and of A. K. Czartoryski, in the writings of I. Krasicki and of J.U. Niemcewicz. For instance, the Jewish protagonists of Niemcewicz's romance *Lejbe i Sióra, czyli listy dwóch kochanków*, following the English (but also Stanisław Kostka Potocki!) start a faience factory ("fabryka farfur"). In their manufacture, they copy Etruscan vessels or use them as models for original ones, with historical family motifs: "zaczął on od prostych mis i talerzy, sprowadziwszy potem co najpiękniejsze wzory, coraz doskonalsze wyrabia, zaczął nawet na kształt naczyń Etrusków wyrabiać podobne, częścią z dawnymi rysunkami, częścią malując na nich wyjęte z dziejów naszych przygody." [he began with simple bowls and plates; obtaining later the most beautiful of patterns, he made them closer and closer to perfection; he even began to make dishes patterned after Etruscan vessels, some with old-time images, sometimes painting adventures taken from our history on them.] – J.U. NIEMCEWICZ, *Lejbe i Sióra, czyli listy dwóch kochanków*, [in:] IDEM, *Dzieła poetyczne wierszem i prozą*, vol. VII, new edition, Lipsk 1838, pp. 230-231. It is worth noting, however, that the first Polish book on Etruria (by Edmund Bulanda) was published as late as the 20th century (in 1934).

in Poland”¹² and the exceptional character of his poetry built of the matter of “cultural quotations”. Those literary references hold the modest but important Etruscan motif, and that is the focus of this study.

Most Etruscan traces can be found in the works of the 1840s and 50s, which is perfectly understandable, considering the poet’s stay in Italy in precisely that time. They first appear in the “Pompeiiian” poem *To rzecz ludzka!...* [*It’s a Human Matter!...* (1844)], then in *Promethidion* (1850) and the Parisian poem *W albumie* [*In an Album* (ca. 1850)], in *Quidam* (1855-1957), in the unfinished *Noc tysięczna druga* [*1002 Night* (1850)], in the study *Sztuka w obliczu dziejów* [*Fine Art in History* (ca. 1851)], later in the surviving dramatic fragment *Teatr bez teatru* [*Theatre without Theatre* (1855/1856)] and the poem addressed to Deotyma *Odpowiedź* [*Jadwidze Łuszczewskiej*] [*Response to Jadwiga Łuszczewska* (1859/1960)]. However, they are present in Norwid’s later works, too, those of the 1870s and 80s – in the poem *A Dorio ad Phrygium* (1872) and the story *Tajemnica lorda Singelworth* [*Lord Singelworth’s Secret* (1883)]. That collection ought to be broadened to include a few more mentions and observations contained in the poet’s letters to Maria Trębicka (e.g. DW X, 115), Antoni Zaleski (DW X, 44-46), Józef Rusteyka (PWsz IX, 446) and Józef Bohdan Zaleski (PWsz IX, 523). Let us take a closer look at that handful of Norwid’s works where Etruscan traces can be found.

Etruscans were present in the poet’s imagination mainly thanks to the survived masterpieces. Since the 1840s, Etruscan lamps, bowls, vases and tombs became an element of Norwid’s poetic imagery, an important part of his considerations on fine art, and an inseparable element of his historical syntheses. They took a prominent place in the historiosophic poem *To rzecz ludzka*¹³, written “z wysokości dziejów” [from the summit of history]: on the Pompeiiian ruins, during the greatest intensity of the poet’s Etruscan studies. The Tyrrhenian antiquity was included there in the circle of imagery for that which was gone and for that which is never gone, the sphere of eternal and universal values which form a timeless object of inspiration. A look *sub speciae historiae* uncovers the two-fold remnants of human civilisations of ambivalent tenor: meagre “zlepki” [clumps/clusters] (“proch” [ash]) evoking a *vanitas* reflection, and immortal masterpieces fascinating with their artistry despite the passage of ages (“wawrzyn” [laurel]):

¹² M. KALINOWSKA, *Słowo wstępne*, [in:] *Antyk romantyków – model europejski i wariant polski. Rekonesans*, M. Kalinowska, B. Paprocka-Podlasiak (ed.), Toruń 2003, p. 10; see also: *Romantycy wobec antyku: antologia tekstów źródłowych*, selection, introduction and comments by D. Dąbrowska, Szczecin 2006.

¹³ See Z. DOKURNO, *Kompozycja utworów lirycznych C. K. Norwida (do roku 1852)*, Toruń 1965, pp. 73-83.

W pompejańskim aż teatrze,
Z wysokości dziejów patrzę
Na rzecz ludzką...

Jakie zlepki!!...

Czcza Znikomość z Arcydzieli
Wraz, by siostry dwie, stały:
Jedna – pustą ma łzawicę
I wzrok pusty, jak Nijobe;
[...]

Na etruskiej lampie druga,
Acz z powabem Muzy greckiej,
Wzrok oparła; i nie sługa,
Bo z ateńskiej krwi szlacheckiej;
Lecz zniewoli ją do pług
Świat i nowy duch kupiecki!

Proch – a wawrzyn w proch idący,
I czas górą się niosący...

(To rzecz ludzka, PWsz I, 63-64)

[In the Pompeian theatre
I look from the summit of history
Down on the human matter...

Clumps and clusters!!...

Idle Triviality with Masterpiece
Stood together like two sisters:
One – dry-eyed
And empty-eyed, like Niobe;
[...]

The other on an Etruscan lamp
With the grace of a Greek Muse
Rested its eyes; and no servant,
For it comes from noble Athens blood;
But she shall be bound to a plough
By the world and new trade spirit!

Ash – and laurel falling into ashes,
And time flying overhead...]

The poet used an Etruscan artefact to exemplify human genius: the personified “Masterpiece” rests its eyes on an Etruscan lamp, which becomes a *pars pro toto* of fine art created by that ancient civilisation. In that way, Norwid gives that civilisation – quite in accordance with the contemporary belief – the noble rank of a master pattern, the primary source of European fine art. The masterpiece extracted from the tombs of Etruria, whose paradoxically “life [...] was saved in the seat of death”¹⁴, becomes a legible sign of immortal Beauty which conquers the truth of eternal wretchedness expressed in Norwid’s poetry by the Pompeii¹⁵.

The poem’s message is echoed in a fragment of a letter written a few years later (in 1847 in Bagni di Lucca) to Maria Trębicka, which accentuates the share of Etruscan artists in shaping the face of Roman, Western culture. Interestingly, the poet refused any originality to the Romans, presenting them as compilers of Etruscan, Greek and other nations’ achievements. In that statement there is a clear echo of the myth of royal Etruria, surpassing the conqueror with the rank of its fine art:

Potem wracam do mego atelier w mieście, które przeszłością sztuki zasługiwać by mogło na nazwisko *atelier świata* [mowa o Rzymie – R. G.-S.] – choć nie przeszłością *sztuki swojej*, bo nie wyrobili jej Rzymianie – ale greckiej, egipskiej, etruskiej i północnej nawet – wszelkiej [...] (DW X, 115).

[I then return to my atelier in the city which could be called the *atelier of the world* [Rome] for its history of fine art – although not for the history of *its own art*, for Romans did not make it – tis Greek, Egyptian, Etruscan, even Northern – any.]

The poet also saw the Etruscan antiquity continued in the reality of 19th-century Tuscany, where the relics of ancient Etruria were a kind of romantic *coulter locale*. It seems that the ancient perspective dominated Norwid’s view of the land insofar that it was able to eclipse the contemporary panorama at times. In February 1845, on leaving Rome, the poet wrote to Antoni Zaleski: “[...] opuściłem starożytną Etrurię [...] I przyjechałem tu do Rzymu [...]” (DW X, 44)¹⁶ [“I left ancient Etruria [...] And came here to Rome”].

¹⁴ S.K. POTOCKI, *O sztuce u dawnych, czyli Winckelmann polski*, Warszawa–Kraków 1992, p. 55.

¹⁵ See W. SZTURC, *Na Krecie i w Pompei: zmartwychwstanie kurety i skamienienie retora*, [in:] *Antyk romantyków*, p. 457; M. WOŹNIEWSKA-DZIAŁAK, “Pompeja” – *poemat wanitatywny*, [in:] EADEM, *Poematy narracyjne Cypriana Norwida. Konteksty literacko-kulturalne, estetyka, myśl*, Kraków 2014, pp. 79-99.

¹⁶ For the record, it ought to be noted that the ancient name of Etruria was brought back by Napoleon Bonaparte in early 19th century, when he established the Kingdom of Etruria (*Regno di Etruria*) and appointed Louis I of Bourbon-Parma as its ruler. The kingdom was short-lived, however (1801-1807); after just a few years, it was annexed by France under the Treaty of Fontainebleau.

A comment on the portmanteau of Etruscan antiquity with the present, on the immanence of the Etruscan component in Italian fine art, mentality and national character, was put by Norwid in the mouth of the protagonist of *Noc tysiączna druga*. The drama clashes the faults of Italian contemporariness against the arch-classic ideal:

ROGER

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

(*Noc tysiączna druga*, DW V, 106)

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

In *Promethidion*, the Etruscan world is named one of the major areas (in the history of world fine art) of seeking and finding beauty – “profil Boży” [the profile of God]:

– Więc szukał Ind, nurtując granit z lampą w dłoni,
I znalazł to, z czym szukał – szukał Pers w pogoni
I dognał to, czym gonił – szukał Egipt w Nilu
I złowił to, czym łowił – toż Grek i Etruski,
I świata pan – Rzymianin, i Part z koniem w łuski,
(*Promethidion*, DW IV, 108)

[– Thus sought the Indian, digging into granite, lamp in his hand,
And found *what he sought with* – the Persian sought in pursuit
And caught *what he chased with* – the Egyptian sought in the Nile
And caught *what he fished with* – the same with the Greek and Etruscan,
And world master – Roman, and Parthian on his scaled horse]

The poem *W albumie*, in turn, speaks of the fancies of creative imagination, which always finds the commonly available to be in excess, and misses what is currently far:

– Żeby to zamiast cudnych tych cyprysów
 I słoneczności tej, co razi oczy,
 I Colosseum (rudych gniazda lisów!)
 Płaczącej brzozy dopatrzeć warkoczy,
 A zamiast ziemi popiołów i gruzów
 I połamanych waz etruskich – żeby
 Popodlewanych zagony arbuzów,
 I choćby trochę polskiej dotknąć gleby...
 (*W albumie*, PWSz I, 154)

[– If only instead of those lovely cypresses
 And that glare that hurts the eyes
 And the Colosseum (red foxes' den!)
 One could get a glimpse of weeping willow plaits,
 And instead of a land of ashes and ruin
 And broken Etruscan vases – see
 Irrigated fields of watermelon
 And get just a touch of Polish soil...]

The poet knew the sensation from his own experience. He wrote of it in a letter to Maria Trębicka (as he wrote of his plans to leave for Berlin with Zygmunt Krasiński) in 1848:

[...] mam zamiar sztuk-ojczyznę na jakiś czas opuścić – i sztuk-sferę może na czas jakiś – potrzebuję podróży od cyprysów do świerków – ku szaremu niebu i piaszczystem polom [...]

(DW X, 138)

[I intend to leave the homeland-of-arts for a while – and maybe the sphere-of-art for awhile – I need to travel far away from cypresses to spruces – towards grey skies and sandy fields]

The above-quoted poem is a great example of a romantic variant of writing about antiquity: combining antiquity with the landscape of home, which emerged particularly often from behind the Mediterranean scenery in Polish poetry. Italy, called the land of “połamane wazy etruskie” [broken Etruscan vases], appears in the context of the good old “zagony arbuzów” [watermelon fields] on the Polish soil (“gleba polska”). The poet betrays his yearning and inner conflict in choosing between the homeland and Italy, which he often tenderly calls “mamka” [wet-nurse] or “macocha” [stepmother]. Years later, the artist formulates the law of painful non-fulfilment which rules the whole world under the moon:

– Piętnem globu tego – niedostatek:
Dopełnienie?... go boli!...

(*Fortepian Szopena*, PWSz II, 145)

[– Privation is this globe's stigma:
Fulfillment?... pains it!...]

The poem *W albumie* is one of the early diagnoses of that eternal non-consolation of the artist where the yearning for the absent becomes the motive force activating constant striving for completeness. The text also encompasses the North vs. South antithesis, highly significant in Romantic geographical and aesthetic categorisations, and full of meanings. The Etruscan South and non-Etruscan North are two diametrically different spaces of inspirations, two lungs with which the young poet wants to breathe at the same time.

Representations known from ancient frescos and pottery served as the pattern for the scene arrangement of the feast in the house of Marcus Licinius Crassus, found in the surviving fragment of the early drama *Teatr bez teatru* (1855/56). That "subtle story from the ancient world, framed in the festive hustle and bustle in a Polish noble house"¹⁷, seems a fragment of an intended "quasi-ancient historical anecdote", a parallel built on the sense of the past being "a living component of the present, a specific prefiguration of the contemporary"¹⁸. One can find here a theatrical prop which is the identification mark of Etruscan art, namely an Etruscan bowl:

PIERWSZY OBYWATEL

-- Otóż teatr macie --

ŻELISŁAW

Bawił się, mówię, kreśląc po etruskiej misie,

Na której tle czerwonym mirra dogasała.

Twarz w twarz mu *Klodius* siedział – dalej postać stała

Bosa, w bez-fałdowanym płaszczu, jak w kirysie,

A był to *Katon*. – Krassus mówił coś na ucho

Pierwszemu z domowników i było... tak głucho...

(*Teatr bez teatru*, DW V, 273)

[FIRST CITIZEN

-- Here is your theatre --

¹⁷ Z. PRZESMYCKI, [after:] J. AXER, *Norwida teatr bez teatru*, [in:] IDEM, *Filolog w teatrze*, Warszawa 1991, p. 161.

¹⁸ J. AXER, *Filolog*, p. 168.

ŻELISŁAW

He entertained himself, I say, drawing on an Etruscan bowl,
On whose red background the myrrh faded.

Klodius sat face to face with him – further stood a shape
Barefooted, in a fold-less coat, as in a cuirass,
That was *Kato*. – Krassus spoke something in the ear
Of the first house-dweller and it was... so hollow...]

Those were artefacts known very well from excavations, because they were part of the outfitting for the outer world, left with the dead in their tombs. They were also an inseparable element of the representations on the anthropoid alabaster Etruscan sarcophagi. The sensual, life-loving Etruscans imagined the afterlife as an unending feast, and so they presented their dead in reclining poses, as if on a feast. Crowned with laurel or flower wreaths, in exquisite clothing, they often hold in their right hands a round bowl which served both as a food dish and a libations dish¹⁹. The pioneer of Polish archaeology and Etruscology, owner of Wilanów, Stanisław Kostka Potocki, who was the author of an important study on Etruscan art²⁰, a study definitely known to Norwid, wrote appreciatively of the Etruscan bowls (*pateras*):

¹⁹ Such shallow dishes were typically used for making liquid sacrifices (*omphalosphiale*), but it is possible that they were also used by Etruscans for feasts. As cult-related, sacrificial, sacral vessels, they have a permanent place in funeral and sepulchral images. See http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/a/alabaster_cinerary_urn.aspx [accessed: 20.08.2015].

²⁰ The study was a fragment of Potocki's monumental work *O sztuce u dawnych, czyli Winckelmann polski* (Warszawa–Kraków 1992), which was a Polish adaptation of J.J. Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art*. Potocki devoted whole three chapters of his study to Etruscans: to their history (X: *Historia dawna Etrusków w stosunku z sztuką i uwagi nad charakterem ludu tego*), their art (XI: *O sztuce Etrusków w szczególności i o ich dziełach do dziś dnia trwających*) and art related to their neighbours (XII: *O sztuce pogranicznych Etruskom narodów*). Just like Winckelmann, he did not know Greek archaic art, and so believed the Etruscan civilisation to be younger only than the Hebrew and Egyptian ones. He based his study also on the works by T. Dempster and Gori. Multiple times he mentioned the Etruscan collections in the Roman Villa Albani (later Albani-Torlonia), catalogued by Winckelmann, and lord Hamilton's collection. He stressed the similarity of Etruscan art to the Egyptian one, as well as to the Greek one. He wrote of the two migrations (of the Pelasgians and later of Attica inhabitants) from Greece to Tyrrhenia, of king Porsena, of Etruscan augury and bloody wrestling, which were later taken from the Etruscans by Romans; of the fall of Etruria and its conversion into a Roman province; of the Roman plunder of Etruscan artworks (2 thousand statues) in 264 BC. He then discussed the details of works of art which were then believed to be Etruscan: the surviving statues, engraved gems, *pateras*, tomb frescoes, vases, Volterranean alabaster vases, etc. (yet he failed to mention terracotta sculptures) and three styles in Etruscan art.

Beside the art of stone carving, the Etruscans showed remarkable skill in bronze engraving, as proven by numerous pateras. Those were dishes used for religious rituals, such as libations of wine and water, or dripping honey either on the altar or the sacrifice itself. They were given various shapes, but the majority of even those which can be seen on Roman reliefs presenting sacrifices, resemble shallow, handleless goblets. [...] In any case, the Etruscan shallow goblets, with engraved ornaments, resemble plates with a small rim, and clearly an attached handle²¹.

Most Etruscan reminiscences are found in *Quidam* – Norwid's masterpiece derived from Greek and Roman antiquity and saturated with ancient stylisation²²:

– Pod taką dobę do swojej gospody
Syn Aleksandra z Epiru powraca.
Wszedł i dwa palce przyłożył do brody:
Drgnął, błędną ręką płaszcz na sobie maca;
Co gęstsze zwoje, to otrząsnął lepij –
I wybiegł krokiem niepewnym, jak ślepi.
Niewiasta, za nim patrząc z korytarza,
Etruskiej lampy knot podjęła igłą
I poruszyła oliwę zastygłą,
Mrucząc: „Czy miszek? drachmę? nie uważa!”
Tak szepcząc, w ciemność kątów pozierała,
I szła, i milkła, i znów coś szeptała.
(*Quidam*, PWsz, III, 89)

[– At that time, to his inn returns
the son of Alexander of Epirus.
He came in and put two fingers to his beard:
Then winced, felt his coat with a baffled hand;
Each thicker fold, he shook clear –
And ran out in unstable step, like blind.
A woman, glancing after him from the hall,
Needled up the wick of the Etruscan lamp
And moved the stagnant oil,
Muttering: “Was it a purse? a drachma? he missed!”
Thus whispering, she glanced into the shadows,
And kept going, falling silent then whispering again.]

The poet's Etruscan *imaginarium* shows in this poem not only through little props, like the olive lamp (which adds a beautiful play of shadows and light), but

²¹ S.K. POTOCKI, *O sztuce*, vol. II, pp. 31-32.

²² See “*Quidam*”. *Studia o poemacie*, P. Chlebowski (ed.), Lublin 2011.

also in complex images of Etruscan sepulchres with all their furnishings: “dzbany rysowane” [painted jugs], “brązowe złomki” [bronze pieces] and “łzawice szklanne” [glass tear catchers]. Such an image is found in lines 46-49 of chapter XV of *Quidam*. The vividness and detail of the image proves that the author knew those underground spaces very well, and not only from figures and descriptions, but also from own exploration (cf. the mention of visiting Porsena’s tomb).

The abovementioned fragment comes from a longer dialogue set before the feat, between Aleksander of Epirus and the poetess Zofia, on the vanishing skill of feast making – vanishing “przez suchość serca, skąpstwo i namiętność” [“through dryness of the heart, stinginess and passion”]. Immediately, however, the discussion takes on deeper tones, catches on “czas, przestrzeń, nudę – miłość” [“time, space, boredom – love”], to finally become a philosophical dispute on wisdom, schools of philosophy and the various “moral prescriptions” for life advocated by them:

– Podróż moja,
 Że filozofię wszelką ma na celu,
 Czyni, żem dotknął niejednego zwoja
 Pism, i moralnych precept mistrzów wielu –
 [...]

 – I stąd powziąłem
 Wiedzę o różnej praktykach natury.
 O onych – mówił dalej – co popiołem
 Chleb posypując, zstępują aż na dno
 Całości człeka-zbiorowego w czasie
 I tam tykają prawd – tykając, władną.
 O onych – mówił jeszcze – którzy zasię
 Przenoszą mądrość czerpać z żądzы sławy,
 I są współczesnych zwierciadłem promieni.
 O onych, którzy z natchnienia, jak z lawy
 Wulkanu, cacka robią dla zabawy,
 Albo są skrzydły orlimi noszeni – –
 O onych jeszcze, którzy ważą pyły
 Na szalach myśli i są jak mogiły
 Etruskie, dzbanów pełni rysowanych,
 Brązowych złamków, tudzież łzawic* szklanych,
 Wyschłych, zielonych po kropkach, co zgniły –
 [...]
 [...] jak z ucztami, tak z mądrością, kto wie?
 Czy ta się w oczach naszych nie pogrzebie,
 Lub każdy mądrym będzie sam dla siebie.

* *Lacrimatoria* – naczynia do łez szklanne, w grobach znajdowane.
 (*Quidam*, DW III, 201-202)

[

 – My journey,

 For it has all philosophy for its goal,

 Made me touch many a roll

 Of writings, and moral rules of many a master –

 [...]

 – And hence I took

 Knowledge of practice of various kinds.

 Of those, he continued, who sprinkle ash

 On bread and descend to the bottom

 Of the whole collective-human in time

 To there touch truths – and touching, they grasp.

 Of those, he went on, who prefer

 to draw wisdom from a greed for fame,

 And reflect the modern rays.

 Of those who make trinkets from inspiration,

 Like from volcanic lava, for mere pleasure,

 Or are carried on the wings of eagles – –

 And of those who weight dust

 On the scales of thoughts, and are like

 Etruscan tombs, full of painted jugs,

 Bronze pieces, or glassware tear bottles*,

 dried and green from tears gone rotten –

 [...]

 [...] like with feast, so it is with wisdom, who knows?

 Will it not shroud itself in our sight,

 Or each and every one remain wise for own self.

* *Lacrimatoria* – glass bottles for tears, found in tombs.]

That catalogue of contemporary attitudes (seeking truth in the history of the “człek-zbiorowy” [“collective-human”], thoughtless reflection of “współczesne [...] promienie” [“modern rays of light”] and pursuit of fame, re forging the “volcano” of inspiration into “cacka [...] dla zabawy” [“trinkets [...] for mere pleasure”] etc.) also holds such an attitude which makes its holders alike Etruscan tombs: “ważą pyły / Na szalach myśli i są jak mogiły / Etruskie, dzbanów pełni rysowanych” (DW III, 201) [“weight dust / On the scales of thoughts, and are like / Etruscan tombs, full of painted jugs”]. Those ancient graves, even when filled to the brim with masterpieces – works of human genius, proofs of exceptional talent and knowledge – still become a symbol for decay and death, time lapse and outdatedness, an antithesis of life, activity, currentness. Despite their majestic appearance, the tomb-people (like the Gospel’s “whited sepulchres”) do not evoke trust. They hold dead truths, such as are useless and closed away from others.

Weighing dust “na szali myśli” [on the scales of thought], which might otherwise prove sensitivity, intellectual depth and inner completeness, suggests undue focus on details, contemplation of the insignificant and trivial (but also the past and the dead). It is thus a metaphor of vain effort of the mind and detachment from important problems of life, withdrawal from life, confinement in some idle lethargy.

The presence of “wyschłe łzawice” [“dried tear bottles”] was also brought into prominence for a reason. Norwid held a deep conviction that even “łzę trzeba włożyć / Dla prawdziwości bytu” [“a tear needs to be put in / For true nature of existence”] (*Do mego brata Ludwika*, PWSz I, 70). In his poetry, a tear is a condition of authenticity and “całocześnieństwo” [“whole-humaneness”] and the proof of having descended to the depths of existence and having touched the truth. Yet tears which have dried or decayed become a symptom of spiritual erosion and death.

Etruscan graves are in *Quidam* signs of death in “potęga druga” [the second power]: not just as sepulchres filled with corpses, but also graves of an utterly extinct civilisation, present exclusively in the funeral archaeological space, nearly obliterated from history. Aleksander of Epirus seems thus to speak of two forms of non-historicity. Both those who become a mindless pendulum of their times, uncritically immersed in their own “here and now” and those who have fully turned from the present into the “przeszłość niepojęta” [“inconceivable past”], existing in a “graveyard” manner, are eliminated from the works of history. True wisdom, says thus Aleksander, and thereby Norwid, is active and enterprising. Its domain is not death, but life and action.

The late 19th century brought one more interesting variant of Etruscan history in Norwid’s poetry. In the poem *Odpowiedź (Jadwidze Łuszczewskiej)*, the spirit of ancient Etruria is resurrected in Medicean Florence, in the works of the titan of Renaissance – Michelangelo²³:

W marmurów kraju Buonarroti, dziecię,
Pierś mamki etruskiej ssące,
Ruszać się ucząc, chodzi już po świecie;
Gdzie stąpi – to lat tysiące...

Medyceuszów książęca zażyłość
Ku młodzieńcowi pośpieszy,
Krzeseł w senacie zajmie on przez miłość,
Papież go z sławy rozgrzeszy!
Wąłów strzec będzie jak Archanioł Michał,
Mojżesza kształcąc w dział dymie,

²³ See Z. SZMYDTOWA, *Norwid wobec włoskiego odrodzenia*, [in:] EADEM, *Studia i portrety*, Warszawa 1969, pp. 219-276.

I nie na próżno nawet będzie wzdychał
Do Boskie mającej imię.

(*Odpowiedź Jadwidze Łuszczewskiej*, PWSz I, 322)

[In the land of marbles, Buonarroti the child,
Who sucks an Etruscan wet-nursing breast,
Learns to move and walks the world;
At every step – thousands of years...

The princely intimacy of the Medici
Meets the youth on his way,
Love will give him a chair in the senate,
The Pope will absolve him from fame!

He shall guard the city walls like Archangel Michael,
Moulding Moses in the smoke of canons,
And he shall sigh, not in vain,
For Her with a Divine name.]

The cited poem by Norwid was one of two poetic replies to the epistolary homage paid to that rejected “poet and art master” by the Warsaw improviser Jadwiga Łuszczewska, who compared him to Michelangelo²⁴, the Florence genius, whose

²⁴ Łuszczewska’s poem addressed to Norwid reads as follows:

“O trzykroć szczęsny, kto oczy orlemi
Z Buonarrotim trzech gwiazd w życiu szuka!
Choć potok cierpień ściga go gwałtownie,
Choć hydra błędu ślizga się po ziemi,
On się nie lęka, bo ma trzy warownie
Wybudowane nad chmury łzawemi:
Warownią duszy jest sztuka.

O! kiedy człowiek natchnieniem skrzydlaty
Za te słoneczne schroni się okopy,
Natenczas orły całują mu stopy,
Troska na próżno miota się i zżyma...
Już go nie zgoni! ona skrzydeł nie ma.
A tryumfator z chorągwią ztrojoną.

Z potrójną tarczą, potrójną koroną,
Przebiega ciche szafirowe światy,
I każdą gwiazdę pyta jak wyrocznię,
I mieszka z Panem pod niebios namiotem,
Aż na świat ziemski spadnie strudzon lotem

works were seen by the Romantics (e.g. M. Mochnacki) as the embodiment of the ideal “eternal harmony” of form and idea, of body and spirit²⁵. The moved recluse considered that laurel to be like “potu otarcie z czoła” [“wiping the sweat from the brow”], the gesture of merciful Veronica, but he started a polemic with the author.

In the context of the Etruscan theme, which is of interest here, Norwid’s own footnote to the first stanza – placed under the poem and referring to an important detail from Michelangelo’s biography – is of particular importance:

*Mamki etruskiej – Znając naturę twórczości i dłuta Michała Anioła, nie można nie zwrócić uwagi na biograficzny szczegół, iż mamka jego była żoną obrabiającego kamienie rzemieślnika, z okolicy, w której prawie jedyne są mury cyklopejskie (PWsz I, 322).

[*Etruscan wet-nurse – Knowing the nature of Michelangelo’s work and chisel, one cannot overlook the biographical detail that his wet-nurse was a wife to a stone-cutting artisan, from an area which holds nearly only cyclopean walls.]

The poet likely took that detail from Vasari, who described it in the following manner:

After Lodovico’s term as *podestr* ended [after Michelangelo’s birth – R. G.-S.], he returned to Florence and to his villa in Settignano, three miles from the city, where he owned a farm inherited from his ancestors (a place abundant in stone and everywhere filled with quarries of blue-grey sandstone continuously mined by stone-cutters and sculptors, most of whom are born in this area), and Michelangelo was given by Lodovico to a wet-nurse in the villa who was the wife of one of the stone-cutters. Thus, conversing with Vasari on one occasion, Michelangelo jokingly declared: “Giorgio, if I have any intelligence at all, it has come from being born in the pure air of your native Arezzo, and also because I took the hammer and chisels with which I carve my figures from my wet-nurse’s milk.”²⁶

I pokrzepiony do walki pobieży;
Gdy znów się strudzi, w gwiazdach znów odpocznie.
I Tyś, Cyprianie! z takich jest rycerzy!...”

(PWsz VIII, 542)

Deotyma’s poem has the beat of easy optimism, a certainty that art creates an asylum for an artist to protect them against any suffering, to make them practically inaccessible for life blows, and is a constant support for them. Norwid’s vision of work-art “na zmartwychwstanie” [“for resurrection”], struggling against the inert matter, as well as patient “ciosanie krzyża na świecie” [“carving of a cross in the world”], even if it is ultimately positive, is still laced with painful and heroic awareness of the tragedy of human life, including the tragedy of the life of a rejected artist.

²⁵ “In newer times, Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo were the ones able to merge form with essence most exactly in their paintings.” – M. MOCHNACKI, *Myśli o literaturze polskiej*, [in:] IDEM, *Rozprawy literackie*, prep. by M. Strzyzewski, Warszawa–Wrocław–Kraków 2000, p. 115.

²⁶ G. VASARI, *The Lives of the Artists*, translated with an introduction and notes by Julia Co-

Yet there is a clear difference between the account by Vasari and the one by Norwid. The Italian biographer merely mentions a wet-nurse, wife of a local stone-cutter, one of a numerous group in the land of Tuscany (deriving the Buonarrotis basically from counts of Canossa). Norwid calls the woman who fed Michelangelo an "Etruscan wet-nurse"²⁷, performing an important semantic shift. It is characteristic and significant that the Polish poet uses the "Etruscan" adjective also in relation to modern facts and phenomena²⁸, even though that ancient nation had dissolved in the Latin element already around a hundred years before Christ, and the Etruscan language came into disuse and oblivion some two hundred years later (after the 1st century AC). Of course, the memory of Etruscan roots was carefully kept in many families (e.g. the Pompeia, the Plinies, the Maecenases) even long centuries later, and the fact was willingly stressed to emphasise the merits and ancient background of the family line.

Norwid's poem "od-pomina" [re-minds] that the Etruscans enjoyed the fame of stonework masters already back in the antiquity, especially as concerned alabaster, but also other materials found in abundance in their lands (like marble or bronze). Even though few Etruscan stone sculptures survived (it is said that Romans stole about two thousand statues!), the stories of the activity of outstanding Etruscan sculptors, like Vulca, master of sculpture school in Veii, lived on. Even before the Romans, the Etruscans exploited the rich and valuable marble deposits in Luna (as mentioned e.g. by Stanisław Kostka Potocki²⁹) – future Carrara – which ages later served as source of material for Michelangelo, Filippo Brunelleschi and Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini. As a sculptor, Norwid knew of that fact very well.

Having added Etruscan genealogy to Michelangelo with the nanny and wet-nurse of his babyhood, the poet expanded the ideas of the author of *The Lives of the Artists* (1550). He updated the Etruscan myth in modern history of art. He made that myth to an integral part of that history, bridging the gap between the past, sinking in the oldest shadows of history, and more contemporary times. In a word, the lyrical *Odpowiedź (Jadwidze Łuszczewskiej)* is patronised by the concept of cultural continuity.

naway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella, Oxford University Press 1998, p. 415.

Michelangelo's mother: Francesca di Neri di Miniato del Sera, died on 6 XII 1481, when the future artist was only 6. Vasari does not mention the fact.

²⁷ It ought to be remembered that a wet-nurse was an extremely important and often glorified – even heroised – figure in Norwid's poetry (e.g. in his poem *Emil na Gozdawiu*, DW III, 369).

²⁸ See also *Tajemnica lorda Singelworth* (DW VII, 221).

²⁹ S.K. POTOCKI, *O sztuce*, p. 54.

The homage of the young poet was also the starting point for a synthetic comparison of two eras: the Medicean times (the time of rebirth of the artistic Etruscan spirit) and the 19th century – as well as two spaces: the South, with its “etruska mowa” [“Etruscan speech”], and the “non-Etruscan” North. In Romantic texts, those categories translated into a deep cultural and aesthetic opposition. Interestingly, Norwid the “Normand” in this particular case took roots not in the South, but in the Germanic North, with clearly negative values attached³⁰:

Lecz na północy nie etruska mowa!
Marmur się kończy, gdzie lody —
I młot Odyna, nie dłuto, w nich kowa
Ku innym światom przechody!

To, jeśli po mnie co zostawić zdołam
Trzech sztuk bolesną potęgą,
To, jeśli postać jakową wywołam,
Nie będzie formą, ni księgą...

A dziś co kreślę, albo z brązu leję,
To tylko jak w murze ćwiekiem
Więzień – kto inny ma laur i nadzieję,
Ja – jeden zaszczyt: być człekiem.

(*Odpowiedź Jadwidze Łuszczewskiej*, PWSz I, 322-323)

[But in the north, no more Etruscan speech!
The marble ends with the ice —
And tis Odin’s hammer, not chisel, which
Forges passages to other worlds!

If I am able to leave my own trace
With the painful power of three arts,
If I evoke any shape,
it shall be neither form nor book...

And what I draw, or forge in bronze today,
Is only like a prisoner drawing with a nail
On the wall – others have laurels and hopes,
I – only this one honour: that I a human am.]

³⁰ Norwid’s attitude towards the category of North was discussed by E. Kasperski (*Dyskursy romantyków. Norwid i inni*, Warszawa 2003).

The break-up of form, market evaluation of works of fine art, lack of artistic freedom, lack of patrons, arbitrary evaluation of artwork by critics – those and other reasons made the poet consider the 19th century one of the “basest” epochs in the history of art, on the opposite pole to the times of wise patronage of the Medici:

[...] straszące rany czasu tego, Medyceuszów brak, oziębłość...

[...]

Wiadomo również [...], iż Epoka, w której Rafael, Michał Anioł, Leonardo da Vinci, Albrecht Dürer wykonywali dzieła swoje [...] to były czasy najobfitsze w plony sztuki wszelakiej (*Krytycy i artyści*, PWSz, VI, 595-596).

[[...] the frightening wounds of this time, lack of the Medici, the coldness...

[...]

It is also known [...] that the Epoch in which Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Albrecht Dürer accomplished their works [...] were times most abundant in fruit of various fine art.]

Semantically rich is also the juxtaposition of the southern myth of Etruria as the homeland of artists, expressed in the symbol of a sculptor's chisel and culminating in modern times in the masterpieces by Buonarroti – and the bloody Nordic mythology, represented by its highest deity: the one-eyed, violent Odin, given the nickname *Yggr* or *Ygg* (the Terrible). Odin was a destroyer, the god of war and guardian of killed warriors³¹, who were taken from the battlefield by the demonic Valkyries to his seat. He accepted bloody sacrifice of people hanged on trees, pierced with spears, or burned. He was also considered the co-creator of humanity, giver of inspiration and poetry. Yet each element of Odin's knowledge, which made him to the almighty lord of life and death, had been bought for the price of excruciating suffering: in order to learn the mystery of runic writing, he pierced himself with a spear and hanged himself on a branch; for water from the fountain of wisdom, he gave his own eye to Mimir the giant. The hammer mentioned in the poem was actually – contrary to what Norwid writes – the attribute of Odin's son Thor. Contrary to newer weapons, like the spear or the sword, the most ancient weapon: prehistoric hammer symbolises wild, primitive, primeval force. That brutal force is set against the semantics of a chisel: a tool of patient, rational and precise artistic work of a civilised human.

³¹ He was one of the main figures in the myth of the Wild Hunt; during that event, mortals were abducted to the underworld. Ritual invasions in the form of a “wolf-hunt” were considered a way to maintain harmony and balance in the world. In times when people became more “civilised” and settled (as opposed to their ancestors, who were gatherers and hunters), such invasions of wild men from woods and marshes were a counterweight to the “unnatural” character of the sedentary rural or urban life.

The poetic confrontation of the two worlds: the peaceful “Etruscan” South, a domain of civilisation and fine art, against the “non-Etruscan”, barbarian North unfavourable towards fine art, is a reply to the bold comparison proposed by Deotyma. It is a reply explaining the inability of an artist from that Northern sphere, opening the “przechód” [“passage”] only to the funeral part of the world, to attain the status, respect and perfection of form which were once available to Michelangelo under the patronage of the sapient Medici. Odin, hanged on a tree and cruelly tortured, was considered the pagan prefiguration of Christ, and so the reference to his name may additionally enhance the presage of the artist’s inevitable suffering mentioned in the poem. The suffering is to leave an imprint with “bolesna potęga” [“painful power”] on the face of his crippled, incomplete works. The spatial antithesis of the North and the South, barbarism and intellect, idyll and tragedy, beauty and loftiness, gentleness and cruelty, harmony and suffering, etc., translates into an inevitable dualism of the fate of eminent artists – that is the essence of Norwid’s polemics with Deotyma.

Ancient Italian reminiscences came back to life in the poet’s imagination in the 1870s, when – already on the brink of bankruptcy – he yearned to escape from Paris, which revolted him by then, to Italy, for “cheapness” and to aid his health. At that time he was reading Gerson and Skimborowicz’s publication of 1877 – *Wilanów. Album widoków i pamiątek oraz kopie obrazów z Galerii Wilanowskiej*. It was the first album presenting the collections from the Warsaw Wilanów Palace in their 19th-century shape, in the times of August and Aleksandra Potocki, including memorabilia of King Jan III Sobieski (Norwid’s great ancestor) as well as the Cabinet of Antiquities with Etruscan vases and urns collected by Stanisław Kostka Potocki³². It may be added here that those vases had likely been admired by Cyprian when he studied in the atelier of Aleksander Kokular, a Wilanów painter (as of 1805, the Wilanów collections were available for the public to see). It seems that those two factors – the return to Italy, so desired but eventually just imaginary, and the recollection of Wilanów collections – formed the key to re-

³² See W. GERSON, H. SKIMBOROWICZ, *Wilanów. Album widoków i pamiątek oraz kopie obrazów z Galerii Wilanowskiej*, Warszawa 1877. A section of the publication, under the words: “For about two centuries Wilanów has been waiting for a monograph with detailed illustrations, such as was desired by everyone visiting the place”, has a hand-written ironic remark of the poet:

Chcieć a pragnąć – nie jedno!
Dwieście lat „każdy pragnął”
(*Różne napisy i notatki*, PWSz VII, 428).

[Wishing and desiring – not the same!
For two hundred years “everyone desired”]

opening the gate to Etruscan imagery in Norwid's works of "dni przed-ostatnie" ["closing days"].

In a letter to Józef Rusteyko of 1870 and in correspondence of 1872 addressed to Józef Bohdan Zaleski, the writer gives the name of the "etruski szlachcic Mecenasa" ["Etruscan nobleman, Maecenas"] (List do J. Rusteyki, PWSz IX, 446) in order to again clash the greatness of the "golden age" against the misery of the present. Also in that case, antiquity becomes the unfailing criterion for judging current attitudes:

August Imp[erator], światły człowiek, i etruski szlachcic Maecenas słyszeli czytającego Virgiliusa i wiedzieli, co mówię powyżej, i wiedzieli to wszyscy rapsodyści-homerowscy... I nie ma nawet co mówić o tak elementarnej prawdzie... że aż wstyd powtarzać!

Ale niewolnik tego nie zna! – –

Po tym wstępie przeszłę Ci rapsodię pierwszą całą i z innych wyjątki – Ale niemożliwość absolutnej, której ani Homer, ani Virgilius nie umieli, nie potrafili! – na to trzeba być Mickiewiczem (List do J. Rusteyki, PWSz IX, 446)

[Augustus Emp[eror], a sapient man, and the Etruscan nobleman Maecenas heard Virgilius read and knew what I said above, and known it was to all Homeric-rhapsodists... The truth is so elementary it needs not saying... tis a shame to repeat it!

But a slave knows it not! – –

After that introduction, I shall send you the whole first rhapsody, and fragments of others – But I cannot reach the absolute impossibility available neither to Homer nor Virgilius! – I should have to be Mickiewicz for that]

[...] a co do Mecenasa, to ten Mecenasa u Horacego przy skromnym stole siadywał i z glinianej amfory pijał. Żadnego tam "lokajstwa" nikt nie pokaże, kto starożytnych czytać umie. Takich Mecenasów (jak on był, wyraźnie że mający krew starożytną królów etruskich) nie godzi się mieszać z niesłusznie tak zwanymi do dziś, a którzy są kupcy-weneccy i ciżba lokajów (List do J. B. Zaleskiego, PWSz IX, 523).

[...] and as to Maecenas, he sat at Horace's modest table and drank from an earthen amphora. None can indicate any "lackeyness" there who knows how to read the ancient. Tis unbecoming to mix such Maecenasas (as he, so clearly bearing the ancient blood of Etruscan rulers) among those unworthy of bearing that name today, who are Venetian-merchants and a throng of lackeys.]

The patron of Vergil and Horace – Gaius Cilnius Maecenas – came from an old Etruscan family, as proven by his family name Cilnius, taken after his mother in the Etruscan tradition (Etruscan matriarchate) and the Etruscan *-as* ending in Maecenas. In Norwid's interpretation, that Etruscan lineage of Maecenas is a premise to understand his deep attention to fine art, which – free from the domain of soulless mercantilism in antiquity – did not force lackey, servile attitudes with artists.

In 1872, in the poem *A Dorio ad Phrygium*, Norwid mentioned the clear-cut contour images on the “Etruscan” black-figure vases, as well:

Nominalny Czas-dziejów nie trzyma w dłoni
Zamaszystej swej kosi, ani jej ostrzem
Podchwytuje ludzkość i polny kwiat –
On tylko społeczność nominalną
Podsuwa – pod profile postaci różnych.
Tak gdyby kto etruskie czarne rysunki
Na czarne tło przeniósł, znikłyby w tle.

(*A Dorio ad Phrygium*, DW III, 380)

[*Nominal* History-time does not hold
Its sweeping scythe, and it does not
Swipe the blade at people or wild flowers –
It only plants nominal society
– under the profiles of various figures.
If anyone copied black Etruscan drawings like this
Onto a black background, they would disappear.]

The last literary mention of the artefacts of Etruscan artistic culture appears in Norwid’s last novella *Tajemnica lorda Singelworth* (1883). The plot of the work holds two Etruscan motifs, the first of which might be termed “theatrological”.

One of the characters reporting the titular “mystery” of lord Singelworth is a Venetian street improviser – Toni di Bona Grazia, compared to “Arlekin klasycznego z czasów etruskich” [“classical Harlequin of Etruscan times”], and thus, in the words of Sławomir Rzepczyński, “wearing rags (and not a Renaissance domino), which distinguishes him from the sophisticated looks of the “elegant ladies and foreigners”, the group including, of course, lord Singelworth”³³:

Co zaś Tony di Bona Grazia zmierzył okiem, z cieniu galonowanego trikorna iskrzącym, co wyseplunił wargami arlekina (atoli *arlekina* klasycznego z czasów etruskich), czemu nadał ton, potrząsając na swoich piersiach wielkimi dekoracjami z kłów wieprzowych, muszli i błyskotliwych blaszek udziałanymi, to nie trzeba myśleć, ażeby znikomym parsknięciem śmiechu będąc, przemijało jak klask i piana uderzonej wiosłem laguny (*Tajemnica lorda Singelworth*, DW VII, 221).

[And what Tony di Bona Grazia eyed, with eyes flashing from underneath the gallooned tricorn, what he lisped with his Harlequin lips (but those of a classical *Harlequin*

³³ S. RZEP CZYŃSKI, *O umyśle “zgodobliwym”*. “*Tajemnica lorda Singelworth*”, “*Studia Norwidiana*” 14: 1996), p. 107.

from Etruscan times, mind you), what he gave tone to, jiggling the huge decorations made of hog tusks, shells and flashy plates on his chest, that you must not think it be a trivial burst of laughter and pass like the clap and froth of a lagoon under the oar.]

Theatre was inscribed in the spiritual structure of the city on lagoons. It could even be considered its hallmark:

Venetians were known throughout Europe for their love of theatre. It was a passion that touched all classes, from the gondolier to the patrician, and is nowhere more evident than in the extraordinary success of *commedia dell'arte*. This form of improvised comedy first emerged in the Veneto of the sixteenth century although its ancient origins, whether in classical drama or festive ritual, seem undeniable. [...] It was a curious mixture of magniloquence and parody, loud lamentation and broad farce. [...] Comedy thus became a mirror of the world. And then of course it spilled over into the perception of real people and real events³⁴.

The author of the novella also views the world from the perspective of that comedy. A mention of the "Etruscan times" of *commedia dell'arte* proves Norwid's thorough knowledge on the history of the genre. That knowledge stemmed likely from the opinions of ancient authors, in particular Titus Livius and Marcus Terentius Varro, repeated by Polish drama theorists (and dramatists), e.g. Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski³⁵. The folk *dell'arte* comedy (also termed *commedia alla maschera*, *commedia (dell'arte all'improvviso* or Italian comedy), even though it was born in mid-16th century and took its main form during the Renaissance, had its roots deeply in the antiquity³⁶. Its classical (old-Italian) form was significantly different from the later European variants. The metamorphosis concerned e.g. the character of the Harlequin. In the original Italian comedy, the character was a lubberly, boorish oaf from the Bergamo mountains who had come to Venice looking for work. Armed with a wooden sword, he appeared in frayed, patched clothing which would stress his low social position (the Harlequin with refined manners, sharp tongue, and

³⁴ P. ACKROYD, *Venice: Pure City*, Chatto & Windus, 2009, pp. 128-129.

³⁵ When Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski wrote of the beginnings of Roman comedy, he followed Livy in mentioning that comedians were brought to Rome from Etruria: "Stage plays came into spiritual ceremonies. Etruria was famous at that time for augury and proficiency in practices which seem superstitious to us now." – A.K. CZARTORYSKI, *Przedmowa to Panny na wydaniu*, [in:] *Oświeceni o literaturze. Wypowiedzi pisarzy polskich 1740-1800*, prep. by T. Kostkiewiczowa, Z. Goliński, Warszawa 1993, p. 96.

³⁶ The first stage of development of that theatrical genre is believed to be the old Attic comedy. The canon of character types, stage gestures and movement started forming as early as mid-4th century BC; see A. BACZEWSKA, *Europejskie narodziny Arlekina. Korzenie, rozwój i przetrwanie błazna – najślynniejszej postaci komedii dell'arte*, "Iuvenilia Philologorum Cracoviensium" 6(2013), pp. 289-301, www.ejournals.eu/pliki/art/4638 [accessed 20.08.2015].

elegant clothing appeared as late as in the 16th century French version of *commedia dell'arte*). Although a close relation between the Roman comedy and *commedia dell'arte* is not documented anywhere, some analogies suggest that a prototype of the Harlequin may be found already in the comedies by Aristophanes and in Plautus's Roman comedies, which have the character of a *centunculus*, a servant wearing patched robes³⁷.

Still, the question remains what role the Etruscans had in the history of the genre. In the abundant genological structure of *commedia dell'arte*, theatrologists distinguish as many as four motifs: Greek, Roman, Oscan and – at the very foundation – Etruscan:

According to Livy (7.2.4-12), the pre-literary burlesque in Rome developed in several stages: 1. the native tradition of Roman agons, practiced by free young men who threw verbal abuse at one another, 2. Oscan burlesque, of which we only know that it was a comedy of types and it was taken over by young sons of Roman citizens who imitated it in Latin, 3. the merging of those three traditions in a new pre-literary theatrical practice later called *fabula Atellana*, and distinguished – according to Livy – with an agonistic element. To Livy's catalogue, one must add the influence of Etruscans, who ruled Campagna in the 6th and 5th centuries BC, as well the impact of Greek comedians on the Oscan farce. Thus *Atellana* had its roots in four different traditions: Etruscan, Oscan, Roman and Greek; yet none of those elements can be indicated to have the leading role³⁸.

The most important Etruscan innovation included in the Atellan farce (*fabula Atellana*) was the mask (the most famous type was called *Persu* (*Phersu*) or *Per-sunna* (*Phersunna*))³⁹, representations of which can be seen e.g. in Augur tombs in Tarquinia (530 or 520 BC). It is assumed that over time, the Etruscan term "mask" transformed into a "theatrical role", and then – in Latin and many modern lan-

³⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 292.

³⁸ M. KOCUR, *Atellana*, [in:] IDEM, *We władzy teatru. Aktorzy i widzowie w antycznym Rzymie*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego 2005, http://www.kocur.uni.wroc.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=98%3Awe-wsadzy-teatru-rozdziatellana&catid=37%3Abooks-we-wladzy-teatru&Itemid=92&limitstart=1 [accessed 20.08.2015].

³⁹ "The term *Persu* is confirmed in only two inscriptions. Both were found in the Augur tomb in Tarquinia from 530 or 520 BC [...] The *Phersu* mask consisted of two parts:

– a pointed headgear, which was sometimes differently shaped, and in exceptional cases was not worn at all – yet usually the cap had the form of a cone ending with a pompom, and was probably made of leather;

– a face part, also occurring in various variants, but with fundamental unchangeable elements – it was usually pink, typical for male characters; it was also probably made of leather. A characteristic, long and pointed beard was added to it. The mouth opening was cut out, but it seems too small to allow voice production: the *Phersu* mask was mute!" *Ibid.*

guages – in a “person”⁴⁰. As stressed by Mirosław Kocur, a historian and theorist of theatre, the invention of a mask was not the only contribution of Etruscans to the ancient burlesque form:

Etruscan sources of *atellana* are proven not just by the inclusion of the mask. One of Pomponius's *atellanas* was titled *Pannuceati*, which could also be the collective name for the performers. *Pannus* means “rag”, but also “piece of cloth”. *Phersu* painted on the walls of the tomb *di Pulcinella* wears a coat covered with a patchwork of white and black squares, which for Italian archaeologists was an inescapable reference to the Neapolitan Pulcinella, one of the leading characters of the later *dell'arte* comedy (hence the name of the tomb). Performers of Pomponius's *atellanas* may have appeared on stage in a similar costume. It is not possible to say today, however, whether it was the Oscans who took the character of a clown in a colourfully patched costume from the Etruscans, or if it was introduced to the *atellana* by Romans, who much earlier also copied *ludi etrusci* from the Etruscans. Warron confirms dramatic plays being performed in Etruria⁴¹.

Norwid's Etruscan reminiscence related to the character of the Harlequin dressed in patched-up clothes becomes perfectly understandable in the light of the above passage from history of ancient theatre. Yet one may ask for the sense of those far-reaching cultural references in Norwid's work.

The Etruscans are present here as the *arché* of Italian culture and, at the same time, the majestic background of modern-time pauperisation. It is a background which emphasises with incredible strength the caricature features of the current reality, which in turn strongly reminds one of a farce, as it feeds on rumour, is bogged down in muddy, philistine thinking and entangled in equally philistine speech. That flat *circus* of modernity fails in the clash with the great and pure classical tradition. The difference of tone and immeasurable disparity in the style of the two worlds add elements of grotesque to Norwid's prose work.

Yet that is not the end of the “Etruscan” traces in *Tajemnica lorda Singelworth*. Noteworthy is also the presumed baggage of the title character, who is a modern Don Quixote or the captain from *commedia dell'arte*⁴², and who – according to the conjectures of “umysły zgadobliwe” [“guessing minds”] hungry for cheap sensa-

⁴⁰ “Yet perhaps the source of the Latin word *persona* was the Greek term *πρόσωπον* (*prósōpon*), and the Etruscan *phersu* was just an intermediate form in the term's development from Greece to Rome”. Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See K. TRYBUŚ, *Maska lorda Singelworth*, “Studia Norwidiana” 14: 1996, p. 99.

tion⁴³ – takes valises filled with Etruscan vases for his “wertykalne wycieczki” [“vertical journeys”] into the sky:

Że z jak nie bądź staranną delikatnością wnoszone do balonowego kosza puzdro nie zawiera przecież przez to samo prochu-strzelniczego ani żadnej materii palnej, lecz że obejmować się zdaje sprzęt cenny a łomliwy, jakby np. etruską okrągłą wazę albo porcelanową. I że wszystko, co adiunkt obserwatorium najstaranniej przez lunety dociekał, odnosić się zdawa do najosobistszych, lubo oryginalnych, Lorda zwyczajów.

(*Tajemnica lorda Singelworth*, DW VII, 221)

[That the chest, carried into the balloon basket with gentle care, does not have to hold gunpowder or any flammable matter, but it seems to hide some valuable but fragile object, perhaps a round Etruscan vase, or a china one. And that all the observatory’s worker investigated so diligently through the telescope, seemed to relate to the most personal, be they unconventional, habits of the Lord.]

However, Norwid’s “parable of impurities”, woven of mysteries and understatements⁴⁴, is ambiguous. Although the author certainly does not fully identify with the character of the eccentric protagonist, the lord’s dream of liberation from the sewage (especially in the spiritual sense) aspect of reality which seems an inseparable, ironic “shadow of existence” was definitely familiar to Norwid⁴⁵. Yet attempts to disambiguate the meaning of the work lead into divergent paths.

Staged in the theatrical and decadent world of Venetian masks (Norwid and Antoni Malczewski both viewed the world in exactly the same way!), outlined with a dose of irony, the story of the whims of a refined Englishman filled with distaste towards the dirt of the contemporary world who, due to that distaste, flies away into the skies with a baggage of fragile Etruscan vases was sometimes interpreted as a caricature of Romantic escapism and a brilliant satire on the dandyist *spleen*⁴⁶ (the dandyist religion of beauty would justify the cult of artworks coexisting with contempt for barely “perfumed” people). It was sometimes seen as a work on the inability to integrate high values with low ones; or as an allegorical,

⁴³ S. RZEPZYŃSKI, *O umyśle “zgodobliwym”*. “*Tajemnica lorda Singelworth*”, “*Studia Norwidiana*” 14: 1996), pp. 105-112.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ In the poetic letter *Do mego brata Ludwika* of 1844, earth was called “kału stek” [cloacal pack] (PWsz I, 71). In *Assunta* (1870) you read:

Kopnąłem nogą ziemię zwilgotnionę,
Kał odpychając i pochyle kwiatki.

(DW III, 352)

⁴⁶ See K. TRYBUŚ, *Maska lorda*, p. 101.

symbolic story of a "heroic protest of a moralist" calling for a "new understanding of the moral order"⁴⁷; or even as Norwid's artistic testament, in which he bids farewell (spitting from above!) to the degraded, hostile world artfully and with undisguised contempt⁴⁸.

As it was rightly noted by Sławomir Rzepczyński, the name of the lord invites first of all an axiological reflection (even before an aesthetic or historiosophic one), invites to ask a question about the value which dictates the actions of the protagonist, and the values "which the modern world rid itself of"⁴⁹.

It remains unsettled what place in this parable of Norwid's, undoubtedly focused on deep disappointment in the modern world, is taken by the Etruscan vases. It is not actually known what can be found in Singelworth's mysterious luggage, what he wished to protect (beside himself) against profanation in earthly "faeces" (Norwid notes that Venice is a city wallowing... in its own faecal matter). If the luggage really contained ancient relics, the gesture would have to be read as an attempt to salvage from the "odkopnięty" ["kicked-away"] civilisation corroded with hypocrisy and materialism and shrouded in common odour that which is its permanent and uncontested value rising over *vanitas* and triviality. "Z wszystkich rzeczy świata tego" [Out of all things of this world] only the Etruscan relics from the long dead and non-existing world (as opposed to modernity), relics from the land of beauty, order, harmony, but also wisdom and knowledge – those relics embodying the Greek ethos of intellect and faith in the sense of human creativity would be the element worth saving. Placing them in the axiology of the vertical and the "upperness", in the sphere of heavens, ideas and harmony, opposed to the semantics of "lowliness", the "horizontal" and "faeces" (which psychoanalysts relate to money and gold⁵⁰), would be Norwid's testamental "u-oczywistnienie" ["making-obvious"] the value of fine art. In that sense, the meaning of *Tajemnica lorda* would follow the message of the poem *To rzecz ludzka* and the dialogue from *Promethidion*. An Etruscan relic would again be the foundation of true existence, a model of philosophical view of the world and its aesthetic presentation, and eternal fine art would be "chorągiew na prac ludzkich wieży" [the banner on the tower of human works]. The starting point and testamental ending of Norwid's reflections on the Etruscans would meet in the same point.

⁴⁷ B. OW CZAREK, "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth", [in:] *Cyprian Norwid. Interpretacje*, S. Makowski (ed.), Warszawa 1986, p. 216.

⁴⁸ See W. RZOŃCA, *Norwida mit Italii*, "Prace Filologiczne Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego" 57(2009), p. 191, <http://pflit.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/118/2016/04/pflit-LVII.pdf> [accessed: 15.07.2017].

⁴⁹ S. RZEP CZYŃSKI, *O umyśle*, p. 109.

⁵⁰ See B. OW CZAREK, "Tajemnica lorda...", p. 218.

Yet it must be kept in mind that the Etruscan vases in Singelworth's valises are only the product of underdeveloped imagination of observers and of Venetian rumours⁵¹, just like the meteorological or sanitary-digestive motivations for the lord's aeronautics (both equally ridiculous). Their existence is purely probabilistic. The story provides a rather ironic view of common receptions of "etruscanica", i.e. vulgarised, trivialised interpretation by the mob. The only thing the general public, unable to locate its thoughts in important places and issues, remembered from the "archaeological mania" of its era were museum pieces and the whims of eccentric aristocrats related thereto. It absorbed a stereotype. The public understood from the Etruscan world (and the reasons of modern fascination with it) just as much as from Singelworth's dreams of flying, of participating in the possibilities created by modernity and technological progress. In the end, the *etruscomania* was transformed by the shallow public in clichés and absurdity, and Norwid's Italy was demythologised and pulled into reality. However, the story *Tajemnica lorda Singelworth*, written shortly before the writer's death, proves that the Etruscans accompanied the poet until his last days and never truly left his artistic imagination and the space of his philosophical and cultural reflections.

On 29th and 30th May 2015, the British Museum organised a two-day conference on the impact of early Etruscan discoveries on the culture of Europe (*An Etruscan affair: the impact of Early Etruscan discoveries on European culture*)⁵². The topic included, among others, the activity of the academy in Cortona, Etruscan elements in the Roman garden of Ferdinand de Medici, stories of fabricators, famous museum and private collections, and to a lesser extent, the literary resonance of Etruscan findings and revelations. The panorama of European motifs related to the influence of rich and exciting discoveries in Tuscany, Lazio and Umbria on researchers, tourists and artists of Europe, presented during the sessions, can definitely cover also the issue of Norwid's fascination with the Etruscans, clearly visible in his notes and in his literary and graphic work. That Polish voice, quite lonesome in the 19th-century Polish reality, which was eliminated

⁵¹ Norwid had a fantastic grasp of the atmosphere of that Italian city, which owed its wealth mostly to its access to news and fast circulation of information: "Venice was at the centre of news, from East to West and from West to East. [...] He who heard the news first [...] would profit most. [...] So the Venetians ran after the latest news and the latest sensation. [...] The Venetians listened with "elevated ears" for the latest word or information. [...] this appetite for news was considered by some to be a contagion or a distemper. Sir Henry Wotton described "news" as "the very disease of this city." [...] a city that was obsessed with its own communal life. [...] Venice was filled with rumour and intrigue". – P. ACKROYD, *Venice: Pure City*, pp. 87-89.

⁵² See http://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/events/2136_859_Etruscanconferenceprogramme150515.pdf [accessed: 20.08.2015].

from many areas of the then intellectual life due to the political disaster and the resulting repressions against research centres, as well as due to the drama of the impoverishment of Poles in emigration, ought to be remembered and emphasised. In the light of today's research on the artistic echo of the discoveries of Etruscan cities and tombs, Norwid's archaeological passion, expressed in the weave of his literary, historiosophic and aesthetic thoughts, gains a dimension which definitely exceeds boundaries of a private hobby. It becomes an important contribution in saving and maintaining the heritage of Etruscans in the culture and awareness of modern Europe, a contribution equal to the visions of British, Italian or French artists.

Translated by Anna Maria Gernand

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NORWIDOWSKIE „ETRUSKI” LITERACKIE

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

Pobyt Norwida we Florencji – stolicy dawnej Etrurii – w latach 40. XIX w. przypadł na apogeum europejskiego zainteresowania kulturą etruską. We Włoszech działały wówczas liczne muzea etruskie, głównie prywatne, posiadające wspaniałe zbiory pochodzące z wykopalisk. W Europie (we Włoszech, Francji, Niemczech i Wielkiej Brytanii) ukazywało się mnóstwo interesujących i zwykle bogato ilustrowanych publikacji na temat Etrusków. Norwid mógł zaznajomić się ze sporym wyborem tych prac w Bibliotece Uniwersyteckiej w Berlinie, a także w samej Italii. Wydaje się wszakże, że jego pasja etruska zrodziła się już w Polsce, w malarni Aleksandra Kokulara. W latach warszawskich poeta zapewne wizytował wspaniałą Galerię starożytności w Wilanowie (gdzie jego nauczyciel – Kokular, wykonywał różne prace malarzkie) i jako „student” sztuk pięknych musiał znać pionierskie dzieło (i zbiory) S.K. Potockiego *O sztuce u dawnych, czyli Winckelmann polski*, którego trzy rozdziały były poświęcone sztuce etruskiej. Nie bez znaczenia były też kontakty Norwida (krajowe i paryskie) z kolekcjonującymi „etruski” rodzinami Potockich, Czartoryskich i Działyńskich.

Ślady Etrusków znajdujemy zarówno w notatkach, jak i w twórczości autora *Quidama*, od tej z lat włoskich (co oczywiste) aż po przedśmiertną nowelę *Tajemnicę lorda Singelworth*; fascynacja kulturą i sztuką etruską trwała więc do końca życia Norwida. Co ciekawe, w notatkach zachował się też potwierdzony przez samego poetę ślad jego bytności na jednym z najświeższych

stanowisk archeologicznych tamtych czasów: w domniemanym grobowcu etruskiego władcy Porsenny. Wszystkie te fakty czynią Norwida jednym z nielicznych polskich romantyków (obok J.I. Kraszewskiego), którzy byli głęboko i merytorycznie zainteresowani tym archeologiczno-kulturowym tematem. Norwidowskie „etruski” literacko-plastyczne to także ważny, równorzędny wobec wizji artystów brytyjskich, włoskich czy francuskich, wkład polskiego „szukmistrza” w ocalenie i utrwalenie dziedzictwa Etrusków w kulturze (świadomości) Europy nowożytnej.

Słowa kluczowe: Norwid; Etruskowie; sztuka etruska; romantyzm; antyk; Stanisław Kostka Potocki; Wilanów.

NORWID’S LITERARY “ETRUSCAN” WORKS

S u m m a r y

Norwid’s stay in Florence – the capital of the former Etruria – in the 1840s coincided with the height of European interest in Etruscan culture. In Italy, there were numerous Etruscan museums, mainly private ones, with magnificent collections from excavations. In Europe (Italy, France, Germany and Great Britain) a lot of interesting and usually richly illustrated publications on the Etruscans were published. Norwid could have become familiar with a good selection of these works at the University Library in Berlin, and also in Italy itself. It seems, however, that his Etruscan passion was born in Poland, in the paint shop of Aleksander Kokular. In the Warsaw years, the poet must have visited the magnificent Gallery of Antiquity in Wilanów (where his teacher – Kokular, produced various paintings) and as a “student” of fine arts he had to know the pioneer work (and collections) of S.K. Potocki *O sztuce u dawnych, czyli Winckelmann polski*, three chapters of the book were devoted to Etruscan art. Not without significance were Norwid’s contacts (domestic and Parisian) with the “Etruscan” collectors: the Potocki, Czartoryski and Działyński families.

The Etruscans left their mark both in the notebooks and in the works of the author of *Quidam*, from his Italian period (which is obvious) to the novel *Tajemnica lorda Singelworth* written shortly before his death; thus Norwid’s fascination with Etruscan culture and art lasted until the end of his life. Interestingly, the notes also confirm his presence at one of the most recent archaeological sites of that time: in the presumed tomb of the Etruscan ruler Porsenna. All these facts make Norwid one of the few Polish Romantics (alongside J.I. Kraszewski) who were deeply and substantively interested in this archaeological and cultural theme. Norwid’s literary and plastic “Etruscan” works also constitutes an important – equal to the vision of British, Italian and French artists – contribution of the Polish “magician” to saving and preserving the Etruscan heritage in the culture (and awareness) of modern Europe.

Key words: Norwid; Etruscans; Etruscan art; Romanticism; Antiquity; Stanisław Kostka Potocki; Wilanów.

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