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THE EAGLE FROM *RZECZ O WOLNOŚCI SŁOWA*

In Song XIV from the poem, *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*], the majestic image of the Palmyrene ruins not only serves as a background and romantic setting for historiosophic considerations, but is also an integral part of the poet's reflection on the passage of time. Therefore, on one hand, the iconographic layer of the represented world exhibits conventional motifs: "kolumn tysiąca" [a thousand columns], fragments and remnants of buildings against the backdrop of the sky, the lunar glow or the ivy wrapped around the ruins. Since the times of Volney, who popularised Palmyra in the European culture of the 19th century, or rather the remnants of its former glory, the motif of the ruin served as an artistic, poetic and philosophical reflection on the passing of cultures and civilisations. In this context, different authors most often highlighted the impermanence of human creations compared to the power of natural forces or the perfection of the creative act of God. On the other hand, this Palmyrene vision from the final part of *Rzecz o wolności słowa* reveals religious meanings in a balanced and discreet way, while the semantic tension emerges when the notions of "całość" [the whole] and "fragment" collide, lead Norwid along different paths as compared with his great predecessors. The author of *Quidam* reads the ruin in two ways. Similar to Romantics, he views it as a symbol of impermanence and transience, but also as a sign of God's plan to create and redeem the world – a fall that assumes victory, a death leading to rebirth, disintegration unfolding under the influence of force, which "co rozniepodziane złoży" [will put together the dispersed]. It is in the ruins, in the debris and rubble of buildings eroded over time that Norwid indicated that "dzieło zniszczenia i dzieło tworzenia / Harmonijnie się kędyś łączy i spierścienia..." [the work of destruction and the work of creation / is combined harmoniously like a ring...] (DW IV, 272).

While the Romantic depiction seems quite clear, or even obvious, in Song XIV, the religious motivation of the ruins reveals its full meaning, and only in the final lines of the text. In a monograph on Norwid's poem we can read:

Everything here is suspended somewhere between the reality of the fragment which is symbolised by a tiny element of matter: a stone – tangible, real and concrete – and the eschatological reality, called directly – only this once in the text – the Resurrection. The plane of contact between what is scattered, fallen and broken, with the realm of the indestructible "I AM" uttered by the protagonist, is the history of both the individual and the whole humanity. It is through this history, through events, facts, myths, legends, traditions, signs and symbols of culture, as well as through the matter of this fragment, that the ultimate goal, towards which humanity is heading, shines through. The fact that the poet is concerned about these senses is particularly convincing when he uses the formula uttered by the eagle [...].¹

The above commentary referred directly to the following part of Norwid's poem:

W tym momencie dotknąłem palcem Zmartwychwstanie
I wymówiłem słowo: „JESTEM...” – niespodzianie,
I chciałem ręką wtóry kamień podjąć z ziemi...
Lecz zdał mi się ogółem łączny ze wszystkimi...
Zadrżałem znów...
... gdy orzeł – rzekł jak trąba grzmiąca:
„KTO TU TRĄCA RUINĘ, TEN PRINCIPIUM TRĄCA...”
(DW IV, 272)

At this point, I touched Resurrection with my finger
And I uttered the word: "I AM..." – unexpectedly,
And I wanted to pick another stone from the ground with my hand...
But it seemed to me to create the whole with all of them...
I trembed again...
...when the eagle – said like a thundering trumpet:
"WHOEVER TOUCHES THE RUIN HERE, TOUCHES THE PRINCIPLE..."

In the edition of the poem featured in *Dziela wszystkie* [*Complete Works*] (Volume IV was published in 2011), when I was working on *Rzecz o wolności słowa*, I carefully abandoned the commentary deciphering the eagle's symbolism.² I had been less careful 10 years earlier in the mentioned monograph, indicating that the formula quoted above was uttered by the eagle, "symbolising immortality, resurrection, spirit, and perhaps even – according to the Christian tradition – St

¹ P. CHLEBOWSKI, *Cypriana Norwida „Rzecz o wolności słowa.” Ku epopei chrześcijańskiej*, Lublin 2000, p. 276.

² See DW IV, 428.

John himself.”³ The indication was weakened by the phrase: “and perhaps even,” although the suggestion I made to identify the eagle with the figure of the “fourth” Evangelist was clear and undisputable. In turn, the absence of this commentary in the explanatory section of the critical edition of the poem in *Dziela wszystkie* is not only explained by the commenting strategy adopted by the editorial team for the entire edition, although this aspect was not insignificant, but also by the lack of conviction and certainty as to the legitimacy of this attribution. The commentary in the monograph indicated the source of this idea – I was not its first author. By the way, I must add that the bibliographic reference was not precise. In the commentary to this text I referred to one of the articles by Alina Merdas, which she published in her book *Ocalony wieniec*.⁴ It is necessary to make it clear, for the sake of order, that Merdas was not the discoverer of the “apostolic” comparison *eagle = St John*; a comparison that is in a way suggestive and even imposing in the textual setting of the final part of Song XIV in the poem. Before Alina Merdas, Jacek Trznadel reached for the symbol of the fourth Evangelist in his book *Czytanie Norwida*, where he aimed to show the mythologisation of the lyrical hero (the poet’s *alter ego*) through Christ. Thus, Trznadel interprets the poem’s conclusion as building a great unity of man with God’s Logos, the participation of Logos through word in man. Trznadel writes:

The poet, using the word “touches” the cause of Christ-Logos, and that is why in the ruins of Palmyra, a voice reverberates which echoes the Evangelist. We remember what John the Evangelist says, who, according to the accepted symbolism, is the EAGLE [...].⁵

Subsequently, Trznadel recalls the famous Prologue from the Gospel of St John, dedicated to the Logos which completes the picture he outlined and builds a kind of triad: The Eagle – St John – The Word. The starting point here is the identification of the poetic symbol – the eagle, considered to be St John, triggers a sequence of analogies and metaphorical associations (their accuracy and logic is less important). But is such a figural interpretation correct? Does Norwid’s eagle, which undoubtedly arouses exegetical curiosity, have any other extra-symbolic connotations?

As always, the invaluable Zofia Stefanowska comes to our aid. In her already classic article, *Norwidowski Farys*, she draws attention to inspiration from Vol-

³ P. CHLEBOWSKI, *Cypriana Norwida „Rzecz o wolności słowa,”* p. 276.

⁴ A. MERDAS, *Pieśń i boleść, [in:]* EADEM, *Ocalony wieniec. Chrześcijaństwo Norwida na tle odrodzenia religijnego w porewolucyjnej Francji*, Warszawa 1995, p. 156.

⁵ J. TRZNADEL, *Czytanie Norwida. Próby*, Warszawa 1978, pp. 319-320.

ney's *Les Ruines* found in Norwid's *Rzecz o wolności słowa*, especially in Song XIV. Palmyra owed its literary career to this French philosopher and historian. "The loud description of its ruins in the first chapters of *Les Ruines* popularised the name of the ancient city, consolidated its image and gave rise to a certain stereotype of meditation on the ruins, which could still be found in Romantic literature [...]"⁶ – observed Stefanowska, adding information about a press clipping related to the ruins of Palmyra which Norwid pasted into his *Notatki z mitologii* [*Notes on Mythology*].⁷ It is only surprising that the author of *Strona Norwida*, revealing links to Volney, reaches only to *Les Ruines* in the Polish translation form 1804: *Rozwaliny, czyli Uwagi nad rewolucjami narodów*. Although Stefanowska also mentions another work by Volney, *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie* (1787) – much more important from the point of view of Palmyra itself – she quotes and refers only to the former work, i.e. *Les Ruines*.⁸ Perhaps her epistemological vigilance was weakened here by the fact that – as Stefanowska herself states – "in his *Voyage*, Volney quoted a description of Palmyra from Robert Wood's work from 1753 (*The Ruines of Palmyra otherwise Tedmor in the Desert*)"⁹ because the Frenchman did not make it to Palmyra? Not because he did not want to. He just

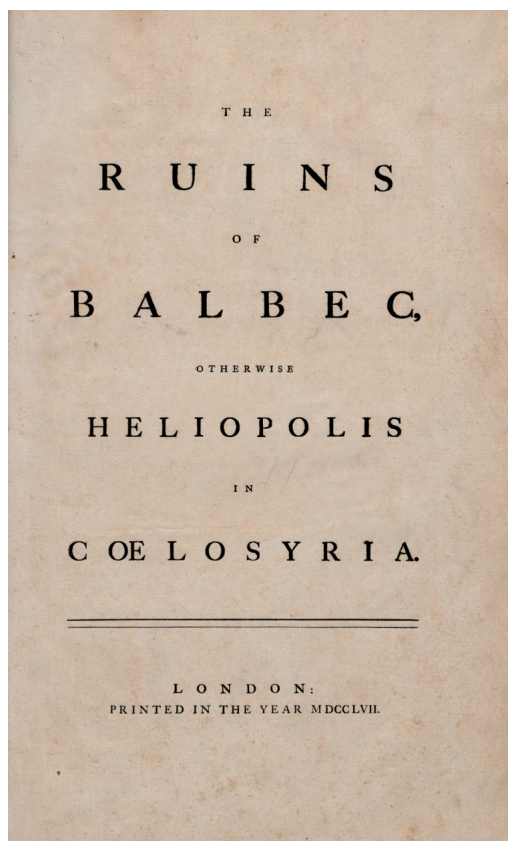
⁶ Z. STEFANOWSKA, *Norwidowski Farys*, [in:] EADEM, *Strona romantyków. Studia o Norwidzie*, Lublin 1993, p. 123.

⁷ The ruins of Palmyra were discovered in the early 17th century by the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle. It was also reached by the French explorer Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1630). At the beginning of the 18th century, the Swedish ruler Charles XII sent a large expedition to this area – accounts and drawings from this expedition are kept in the archives of the University of Uppsala. Amateurs and adventurers also visited that place, including the famous "emir" Seweryn Rzewuski.

⁸ Z. STEFANOWSKA, *Norwidowski Farys*, pp. 123-125 and passim.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 126. Robert Wood (1717-1771) was a British traveller, scholar, official and politician. Between 1750 and 1751 he travelled through the western coast of Asia Minor together with the wealthy young scholars from Oxford: James Dawkins and John Bouverie, and the Italian draughtsman Giovanni Battista Borra. The aim of the expedition was to explore the places mentioned in Homer's works. Expanding the area of their travels to southern Syria, they made accurate measurements and made maps and drawings of ancient metropolises: Palmyra and Balbec [also: Baalbek]. Apart from the above mentioned work, the results of their work were also published in *The Ruins of Balbec, otherwise Heliopolis in Coelosyria* (London 1757; a French version was also published). These were among the first publications to provide a systematic description of ancient buildings. Both works had a great influence on neoclassical architecture in Great Britain, continental Europe and America. The book dedicated to Palmyra, and especially its drawings of Palmyrene inscriptions, contributed to the development of later research on the regional writing system, especially the two works: one by the Englishman John Swinton (*An explication of all inscriptions in the Palmyrene language and character hitherto Published. In five letters from the Rev. Mr. John Swinton of Christ-Church, Oxford and F.R.S., to the Rev. Thomas Birch, D.D. Sacred R.S.*; published in "Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society," London 1753), and by the French researcher Jean-Jacques Barthélemy.

could not get that far. He travelled in a peculiar way – he was not accompanied by a large team, he did not involve porters or guides, nor did he use animals or hire companies specialising in such escapades. He travelled to Egypt and Syria on foot, leaving Marseille in the last months of 1782, having only a backpack, a rifle and 6,000 pounds of gold hidden at the waist. In the 18th century, a trip to those parts of the world was a big challenge for a European; it involved considerable logistical difficulties. It was also an extremely expensive and, of course, dangerous undertaking. It must have cost a lot of effort to cover great distances through the desert on horseback, camel or mule, but to cover those distances on foot, alone, would be an almost impossible task even today. Volney not only used Wood's description in his work, but also used his drawings and the map of the city – it served many generations of archaeologists back in the last century.

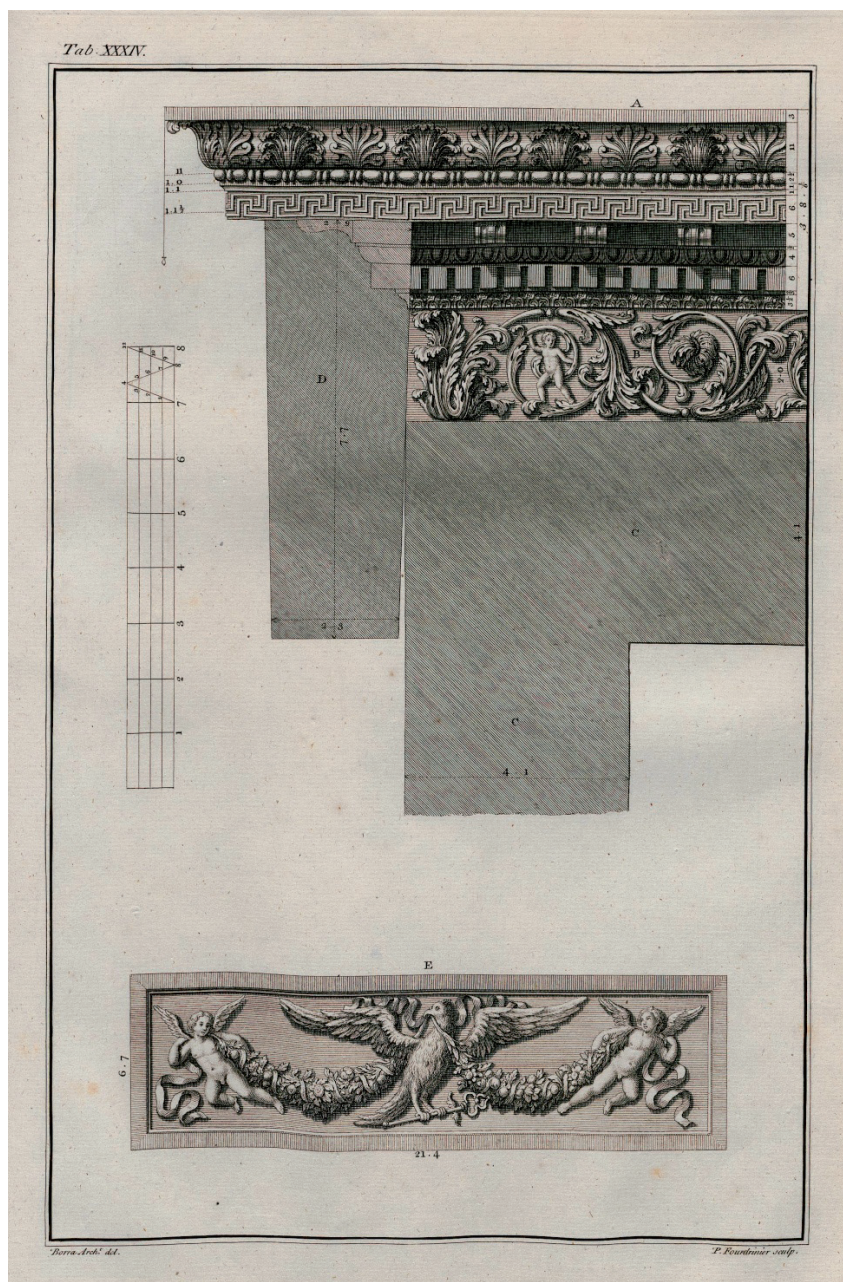


1. R. Wood. *The Ruins of Balbec*. London 1757 / title page

While in the case of *Les Ruines*, the historiosophic reflection was more important than the moving literary representation, *Voyage* involved the artistic sense to a much greater extent; although – it must be admitted – the description was not a particularly strong domain of the writing style of Constantin-François Chasseboeuf de La Giraudais. At the time when his *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte* was first published a year after his return to Paris in a rather modest, one-volume form and two years later in a fuller two-volume form, its author was regarded not only as the new Herodotus (probably mainly due to the way he travelled), but also as the new Christopher Columbus. Owing also to the skilful advertising efforts by the author and publishers, the work became immensely popular. It was reissued many times in many countries of the Old Continent and outside Europe. Its quick subsequent editions, e.g. from 1807, 1820 or 1860, only consolidated its position.

Stefanowska merely mentions in her article the original, first edition of Volney's *Voyage*, but is completely silent about the Polish editions of this work. The first, two-volume *Podróż do Syrii i Egiptu. Odbyta w roku 1783, 1784 i 1785. Z dwiema mappami i 4ma kopersztychami przez P. Volney* was published in Kraków as early as in 1803 and translated by Roman Markiewicz (ca. 1772-1844).¹⁰ Moreover, the Polish edition of *Voyage* was published a year before the Polish edition of *Les Ruines*. It is difficult, of course, to indicate unequivocally which edition Norwid could have used when he was writing the verses of Song XIV of *Rzecz o wolności słowa* – was it one of the numerous French editions, or was it perhaps the Polish edition, or maybe even the one just mentioned? In the absence of appropriate documentation, it is difficult to state this unequivocally.

¹⁰ Roman Markiewicz was a physicist who gave lectures in physics and in physical geography and meteorology at the Jagiellonian University. He was a highly regarded author of various works and textbooks in this field of knowledge, e.g. *Rozprawa o naturze i zasadach fizyki* (Kraków 1814). He also wrote works with very peculiar, even for the 19th century, titles, e.g. *Rozprawa o ondulacjach czyli falistościach czytana dnia 15 maja 1830* (Kraków 1830). He was also a translator – in addition to Volney's work, he translated a report by George Leonard Staunton (1737-1801), a member of George Macartney's diplomatic mission to China, entitled: *Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (1797). The Polish version, published four years later, was entitled *Podróż lorda Makartney posła W. Brytanii do Chin w roku 1792, 1793 i 1784*, Parts 1-2, Kraków 1801.



2. R. Wood. *The Ruins of Balbec*
– Table XXXIV: moulding and frieze with the eagle motif

If Norwid's *Rzecz o wolności słowa* was inspired by a description of Palmyra, he must have reached for *Voyage*, not *Les Ruines*, where the description is exceptionally bland and short, or – as Stefanowska puts it – not “particularly stimulating one’s imagination.”¹¹ The question of the authenticity and originality of the description itself here is less important than its content. Volney not only limits himself to quoting Wood, but also introduces his own commentary – not devoid of the work of his own imagination, though inspired by the book written by the English traveller:

[...] Such a large number of Corinthian columns, with few walls and thorough structures, gives an extraordinary romantic effect.” That is the description provided by P. Wood.

Without a doubt, the impression of such a view cannot be expressed; but in order for the reader to get a closer look, I attach here a plan of perspective. In order to achieve their full effect, one must complete the proportions using imagination. One has to imagine this tight space, these pillars as delicate as columns, whose very base is higher than a man; one has to imagine that this row of standing columns takes up more than 1300 fathoms, and covers a heap of other buildings hidden behind them. In this vastness, there is a palace, of which only the courtyard and the walls are left; there is a church, of which the columns are in half knocked down; there is a portico, a gallery, a triumphant gate; there is a multitude of columns, but their order is destroyed by the fall of many of them, they stand there in a row so long that it resembles a row of trees, they fade away in the distance and seem to be only long lines for the eye.¹²

Volney then draws up a list of the city’s main ruins, which “explains in particular the main objects of the view of Palmyra.”¹³ The French historian and philosopher primarily emphasises the charm and importance of one of the temples:

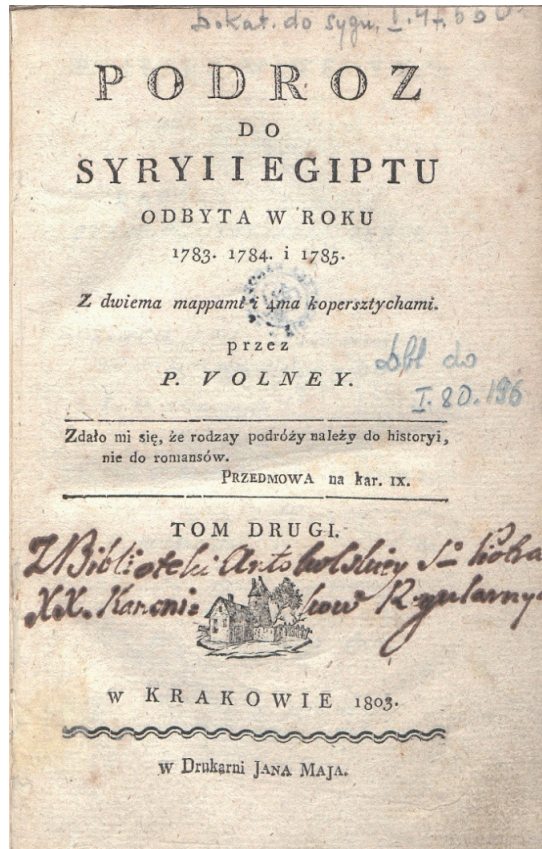
Above all, the architecture has spent its wealth and developed its magnificence in the temple of the sun, the deity of Palmyra. The square perimeter of the courtyard, which closes it, measures 679 feet on each side. A double row of columns stood inside along this perimeter; in the middle of the empty square the church shows another façade of 47 feet, 124 on the side, and around it there stretches a row of 41 columns; by an extraordinary coincidence, the gate is in the west, not east. The vaulting of this gate, lying on the ground, gives us a glimpse of the celestial zodiac, expressed evenly as in our part of the world: on the other, there is a bird, of the same shape as in Balbec, placed on a bottom covered with stars. It is noteworthy for historians that the façade of the vestibule has 12 columns as in Balbec, but it should make the artists even more puzzled that these two façades are similar to the Louvre’s colonnade, erected by Perolt, before we knew the prints which portrayed them; the only difference is that the Louvre’s columns are combined into two, while in Balbec and Palmyra they are isolated.¹⁴

¹¹ Z. STEFANOWSKA, *Norwidowski Farys*, p. 127.

¹² C.F. VOLNEY. *Podróż do Syrii i Egiptu*, Vol. II, Kraków 1803, pp. 211-212.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.



3. C. F. Volney. *Podróż do Syrii i Egiptu*. Kraków 1803 / title page

To solve the mystery of the “bird of the same shape as in Balbec,” we must go back to a few dozen pages earlier. There, Volney describes the ruins of a Lebanese city known in ancient times as a place of worship for the Phoenician sun god:

Considering the extraordinary splendour of the Balbec church, we will be rightly surprised that Greek and Latin writers spoke so little about it. Mr Wood, who checked them up in this matter, found a mention in just one passage from John of Antioch, who attributes the erection of this building to someone similar to Emperor Antoninus. The preserved inscriptions are in line with this view, which explains very well why the columns used are Corinthian, since this architecture was unknown, only in the third Roman century, but to confirm this view all the more so, one should not refer to the bird carved over the door of the church of Balbec; if its curved beak, great claws and the staff of Mercury which it held in them, are to portray

it as an eagle; the tip on its head, similar to that of many pigeons, proves that it is not a Roman eagle; moreover, it can also be found in the church of Palmyra, and therefore seems to be an Eastern eagle, dedicated to the sun, which was the deity of these two temples. Its worship has been preserved in Balbec since ancient times. His statue, similar to that of the idol of Osiris, was moved from *Egyptian Heliopolis*. It was worshipped there with the rituals that *Macrobius* describes in the interesting book of *Saturnalia*. P. Wood rightly guesses that from this worship comes the name of Balbec, which in the Syrian language means the *city of Baal*, that is the *city of Sun*.¹⁵

The Great Temple described here (also known as the Temple of Jupiter), dating back to the first century AD, resembles in its shape and grandeur the temple in Palmyra. It was dedicated to the Mesopotamian deity Baal – in Palmyra this deity was worshipped together with the god of the moon (Aglibol) and the god of the sun (Yarhibol) in the form of a divine triad. The Palmyrene temple of Baal was the centre of religious life in the city; it was consecrated in 32 AD. Its architectural layout combined the ancient Middle Eastern and Greco-Roman styles. It was 205 metres long, or 673 feet long according to Volney and was surrounded by walls and columns. In the middle of the complex there was a courtyard with the actual temple construction, situated on the podium, with two separate sanctuaries surrounded by a colonnade composed of Corinthian columns – it was only interrupted by the entrance gate, situated on the long side, with high stairs leading to it from the courtyard. Probably the ruins of these two sanctuaries are described by Volney – presumably, the remains of the northern sanctuary dedicated to Baal as a solar deity. This space was known for its relief depicting seven planets surrounded by twelve zodiac signs and sculptures of the procession. It should be assumed – taking into account Volney’s description – that the image of the examined “Eastern” eagle (as a French scholar and traveller emphasises) was on the beam of one of the entrance gates to the sanctuary of Baal.¹⁶

This image of the eagle was probably apotropaic. It seems, therefore, that associating it with the figure of St John – as explicitly suggested by Jacek Trznadel,

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 185-186.

¹⁶ Today it is more commonly called the Temple of Bel. For basic information on Palmyra, including the Temple mentioned here, see K. MICHAŁOWSKI, *Palmyra*, Warszawa 1968; A. SADURSKA, *Palmyra – narzeczoną pustyni. Dzieje i sztuka*, Warszawa 1968; M. GAWLIKOWSKI, *Palmyre. Le temple palmyrénien. Etude d'épigraphie et de topographie historique*, Warszawa 1973; M. GAWLIKOWSKI, M. STARCKY, *Palmyre*, Paris 1988; T. KAIZER, *The Religious Life of Palmyra: A Study of the Social Patterns of Worship in the Roman Period*, [s.l.] published by Steiner 2002 (Vol. IV: *Oriens et Occidens*), and in particular the following books: P. COLLART, J. VICARI, *Le Sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre. Topographie et architecture*, Vols. I-II, Rome 1969 (this item is dedicated to another temple, located near the Temple of the Sun – the authors also provide many remarks on that one); H. SEYRIG, R. AMY, E. WILL, *Le Temple de Bel à Palmyre*, Vols. I-II, Paris 1975.

Alina Merdas and the author of this text in the monograph on *Rzecz o wolności słowa* – does not hold up to the comparative criticism. It would require conducting a subtle and very balanced interpretation, using the intermediate planes of Norwid’s imagery, which could at most only outline, on the horizon of a philological research, the possibility that Trznadel and later commentators considered as a certain figural arrangement related to the person of St John. A supporting clue could be the fact – of which the researchers and commentators of Norwid’s works are probably still unaware – that the Temple of Baal in Palmyra was transformed in Byzantine times into a Christian church. This is the first conclusion that can be drawn from this comparative argument. The second conclusion indirectly stems from the former – the final symbolic scene in *Rzecz o wolności słowa* takes place in the Palmyrene Temple of the Sun, or more precisely, in its ruins. The proof would not only be the image of the rows of columns, “jakby skamieniała lira” [resembling a fossilised lyre], but also the vision of the eagle – on one hand, concrete and real in its iconographic and archaeological objectivity, and on the other hand, personified under the influence of poetic vision. The third conclusion – in the previous interpretations, the eagle from the final part of *Rzecz o wolności słowa*, was maintained in the convention of fantastic imaging, extracted somewhat by force. Here we have a hero who crosses the desert and reaches the ruins of Palmyra – here, under the influence of meditation and an unusual meeting, an eschatological and historiosophic reflection is born. The eagle utters the formula that is key to the whole poem. This fragment is quoted once more below:

Zadrzałem znów...

... gdy orzeł – rzekł jak trąba grzmiąca:

„KTO TU TRĄCA RUINĘ, TEN PRINCIPIUM TRĄCA...”¹⁷

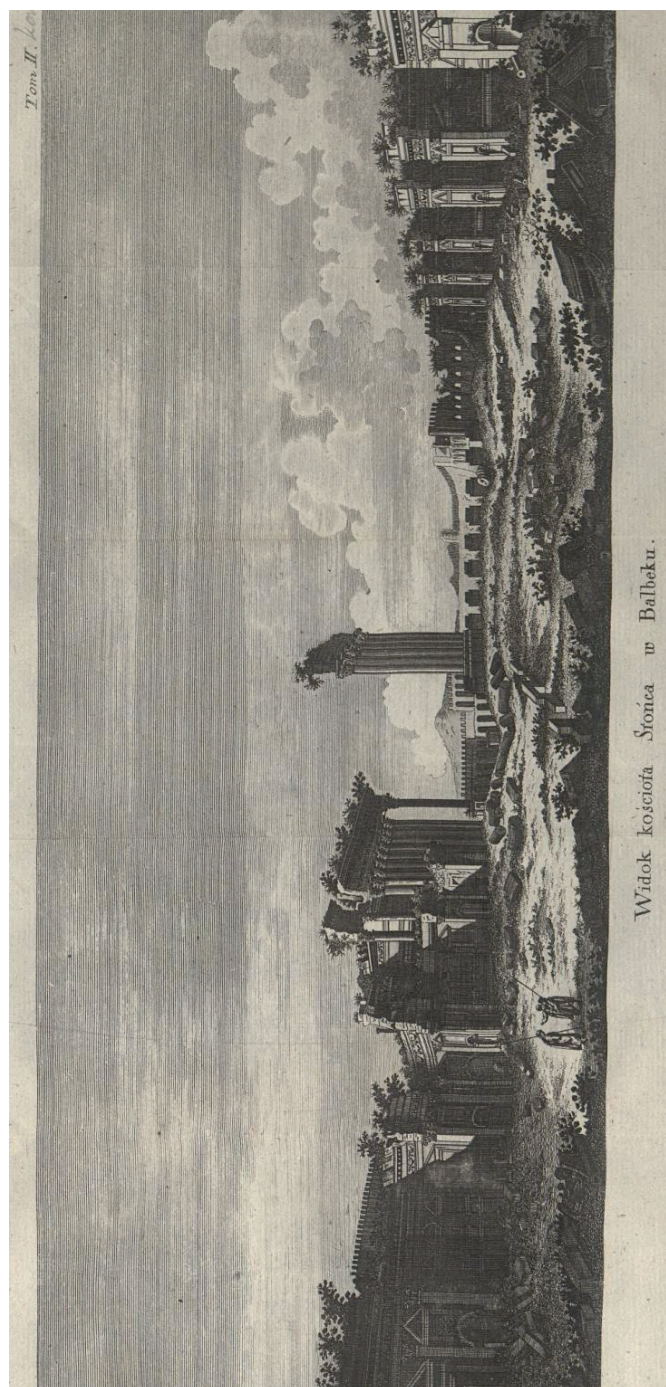
(DW IV, 272)

I trembled again...

...when the eagle – said like a thundering trumpet:

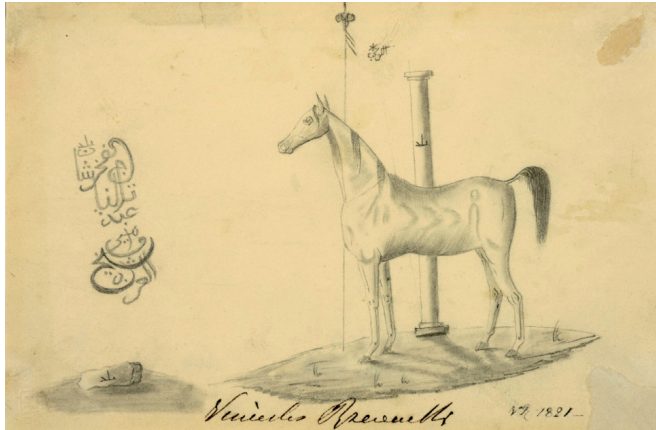
“WHOEVER TOUCHES THE RUIN HERE, TOUCHES THE PRINCIPLE...”

¹⁷ Elżbieta Lijewska has pointed out to me that in the layer of representation, the quoted fragment resembles one of the verses of the Apocalypse, when the eagle announces the sounds of the trumpets of three angels: “As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: ‘Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!’” (Revelation 8, 13; NIV).



1. C.F. Volney. *Podróż do Syrii i Egiptu* – a print depicting a view of the Temple of the Sun in Balbec

The figuratively depicted bird appears almost like a *deus ex-machina*, which is completely unprepared and at the same time unmotivated in the text itself. Avoiding here concretisation in favour of Romantic vividness (this is probably the last so powerful image in his work, fuelled by the style of his great predecessors), Norwid does not make the interpretation any easier. The context evoked, indicating that Norwid's vision was inspired by Volney's description of Palmyra and the Palmyrene Temple of the Sun (Baal), developed through analogous description of Balbec, makes the outlined situation realistic. The eagle's figurative and symbolic character does not lose its distinctiveness, but gains archaeological and iconographic concretisation. The real source of imagery does not change the message and meaning of the text, but changes the basis for shifts in terms of semantics and the metaphor in the poem's central scene.



5. S. Rzewuski. *Koń* [Horse] – National Library

It cannot be ruled out that Norwid referred here not only to Volney, but also to the aforementioned Wood as an archaeological source for his poetic inspirations. The book by Wood, or rather by Wood, who was a traveller, and James Dawkins, an expert on antiquity, was published not only in English, but also had a French edition (*Les ruines de Palmyre, autrement dite Tedmor, au desert*). This trail of influence is indirectly given in the already quoted fragment when the lyrical hero touches with his finger – as he puts it himself: “ZMARTWYCHWSTANIE” [THE RESURRECTION], uttering the biblical and evangelical: “JĘSTEM” [I AM] and trying to “ręką wtóry kamień podjąć z ziemi” [pick another stone from the ground with his hand]. This evocative image probably has its source in the first and the

most important inscription recorded by the Englishmen: “Σ. Ω. E.” – read by the authors of *The Ruins of Palmyra* in the context of archaeological attribution by Norwid probably in the spirit of sacred symbolism connected with Christianity.¹⁸

¹⁸ One of Norwid’s drawings is connected to the Palmyrene inscriptions. It is a copy of a drawing by Waław Rzewuski, which Norwid made and sent in 1862 to Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki. In his letter he wrote:

Racz przyjąć na ręce Twe do ilustrowanego pisma polskiego wierny przerys z oryginalnego szkicu Emira Tadż-Ul-fehra, Waławu hr. Rzewuskiego, który to rysunek zupełnie jest tej samej co niniejsza kopia wielkości i linia prawie w linię takż – jeno że ołówkiem skreślony. Na tej kartce zarysowany przez Emira u Pani N[atalii] D[zierzbickiej] w albumie Jej, znajdziesz trzy odrębne części i monogram: *VR 1821*. / Główna część rysunku przedstawia najczystszej rasy i idealnej prawie genezy konia arabskiego, rasy tej, z której koń dla Proroka przygotowany miał być i ma być. Stoi ten koń u mety – meta jest kolumną palmyrańską – ostatnią kolumną miasta Salomonowego z głoską na kolumnie – która, co by znaczyła? nie wiem – i z napisem u żeleżca dzirytu tuż zatkniętego położonym, którego nie rozumiem. Drugą częścią rysunku jest kamień ostatni miasta zburzonego z tąż samą głoską, która na kolumnie jest wryta. Trzecią częścią jest napis, który wiernie przerysowałem, ale który mi jest nieczytelny. / Chciej, Drogi Panie Kazimierzu, uczynić, aby ta jedyna możebna i zupełnie wierna kopia rysunku Emira Waławu nie zaginęła, bo tak się stało, że drugiej nie potrafiłbym wykraść (PWsz IX, 22-23).

Please accept to the Polish illustrated magazine a faithful copy of the original sketch made by Emir Taj-Ul-fehr, Count Waław Rzewuski. The original drawing is the same size as this copy and each stroke almost the same as this one – but drawn with a pencil. On this page outlined by Emir in Mrs N[atalia] D[zierzbicka]’s album, you will find three separate parts and the monogram: *VR 1821*. / The main part of the drawing depicts the purest breed and almost ideal pedigree of the Arabian horse, the breed of which the horse for the Prophet was and is to be prepared. This horse stands at the finish line – the finish line is a Palmyrene column – the last column of Solomon’s City with a sound [sign] on the column – which, what it would mean? I do not know – and with an inscription on the metal tip of the djerid stuck in it, which I do not understand. The second part of the drawing is the last stone of the destroyed city, with the same sound engraved on the column. The third part is the inscription, which I have faithfully copied, but which is illegible to me. / Dear Mr Kazimierz, please make sure that this only possible and completely faithful copy of Emir Waław’s drawing is not lost, because I will be not able to sneak another one.

Norwid’s fears, unfortunately, turned out to be justified. Wójcicki did not reproduce the drawing in “Tygodnik Ilustrowany” – the authors of *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, Vol. II: 1861-1883 (Poznań 2007, p. 78) indicate that the reason was Wójcicki’s dismissal from the position of the editor-in-chief of the magazine. Norwid’s letter quoted above has been preserved in the collections of the National Library (ref. BN IV 6291 c. 231-232), but not the abovementioned drawing. Its reproduction was included by Z. Przesmycki in the pre-war edition of Norwid’s letter to Wójcicki (see *Wszystkie pisma Cypriana Norwida po dziś w całości lub fragmentach odszukane*, Vol. VIII: *Listów część pierwsza*, Warszawa 1937, p. 405). Natalia Dzierzbicka, in whose album the poet found a copy of Rzewuski’s drawing, was a distant relative of Marcei Lubomirski’s mother, who looked after his father Józef in Paris. In the description of *Kopia szkicu Waławu Rzewuskiego (Emira Tadż-Ul-Fehr’a)* included in the yet unpublished volume of Edyta Chlebowska’s *Katalog prac plastycznych Cypriana Norwida*, we read that on the left side at the top there is “Rzewuski’s signature written in

At the same time, it is significant that Wood and Dawkins indicate that the mentioned inscription appears in many places in Palmyra, on various architectural elements, and also on those which in their present state are only small fragments of the ruins. In their book, in the section entitled *Inscriptions*, we read:

Upon the architrave of the door of the most entire mausoleum, in that vale [See Plate II Fig. 41.] through which we arrived at Palmyra; it is repeated in a larger character, higher up, on the front of the same building. The letters $\epsilon. \omega. \epsilon.$ are used for $\Sigma. \Omega. E.$ as well in this, as in all the inscriptions of Palmyra. As this contradicts a rule established by antiquarians (who have decided, that those letters are not to be met with in that form on coins, or marbles before the time of Domitian) we were careful in examining the date, which is very legibly in both inscriptions, $\Delta \bar{\iota} T$ and being read from the right to the left (the only way the dates of Palmyra are intelligible) makes the 314th year of the \bar{A} era † of Seleucus, answering to the 3d-year of Christ. We took, as exactly as we could, from the marbles, the shape of the character, which is bad, and have observed the same number of lines. We are at a loss whether to attribute so much bad spelling, and different ways of spelling the same word, as may be observed in these inscriptions, to the mistakes of the engraver or to their ignorance of the Greek language at Palmyra. Longinus complains that he found it difficult to find a person there to copy Greek.¹⁹

The remarks above probably do not change the general direction(s) of the reading of the final scene of *Rzecz o wolności słowa*, and in a sense also the whole work. However, they broaden the circle of the poet's source readings, which were, or at least could have been, a starting point for his creative imagination. These Palmyrene "archaeological sources" indicate – not for the first time in Norwid's works – that his poetry is usually based on concrete, often material facts. The shift to the metaphorical plane has its constant cause in the real, in this case historical, world of the Palmyrene ruins, the ruins of its Temple of the Sun. Hence the correct recognition of the essence of things (including the things of this world) is in such cases motivated not only by the obvious philological or historical duty of the commentator, but also by the strategic need for the exegesis of the text, obviously, provided it assumes non-utilitarian epistemological goals.

Arabic 'Taj-al-Fahr [Wacław] servant of the amin [amen] sign Sheikh al Arab [Arab elder]'. An attempt to decipher the sign on the column was made by Z. Stefanowska (see EADEM, *Norwidowski Farys*, p. 12). The original drawing by Rzewuski – the one depicting a horse at the finish line (by the Palmyrene column) – can be found in the collections of the National Library (inv. no. Fig. 3177). Similar, although not identical, works can also be found in Rzewuski's main work, in his manuscript *Sur les cheveux orientaux et provenants des races orientales* (National Library, MS 5678 IV, Vols. I-III). This work has recently been published in French, Polish and English in 9 volumes: Warszawa 2017).

¹⁹ *The Ruins of Palmyra otherwise Tedmor in the desert*, London 1753, p. 25.

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THE EAGLE FROM *RZECZ O WOLNOŚCI SŁOWA*

S u m m a r y

The article attempts at explaining the motif of the eagle which appears in the final Song XIV in the poem *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*]. Previous scholars have unambiguously associated this symbolic vision with the apocalypse and with the figure of St John. The reading of Volney's *Travels through Syria and Egypt*, supported by the source description of Palmyra's ruins from Robert Wood's *The Ruines of Palmyra, otherwise Tedmor, in the Desert* (1753), points rather to an archaeological source of Norwid's imagery – the image of the ruins of the Palmyrene Temple of the Sun (Baal).

Key words: Palmyra; Norwid; Volney; Wood; ruins; temple; eagle; *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*].

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