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ON *THE DEATH OF SAINT JOSEPH*.
NOTES ON THE BOOK BY JAN ZIELIŃSKI

Cyprian Norwid witnessed at least two instances of mystification connected with Raphael Santi and his works. The first, connected with the broader Romantic cult of the Renaissance painter as an artist or a priest of the arts, was initiated by the Academy of Saint Luke. Until 1833, when Raphael's tomb was uncovered, its members claimed to be in possession of the artist's skull. Before the backstory of this mystification was uncovered, however, visits to the exhibition started by members of the academy were an important destination of 19th-century Roman peregrinations. The French press of the 1830s compared the cult of the alleged painter's skull to that of a relic, although at the same time emphasising – through allusions to the artist's affair with Fornarina – that he was no saint¹. It seems that the piece *Rozmowa umarłych* [*Dialogue of the Dead*], which marks Norwid's poetic return years after the discovery of this spectacular hoax, is precisely an echo of the atmosphere present, among others, in the pages of the French press²,

¹ "Crâne de Raphaël," *Journal des artistes: annonce et compte rendu des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure, lithographie, poésie, musique et art dramatique*, 1883, Issue of 13 November, pp. 315-317.

² In articles devoted to Raphael's work, speculation about his private life and, in relation to that, the negative influence that Fornarina is said to have had on the artist's painting skills, has often taken the lead. For a more detailed exposition of Raphael and Fornarina's relationship in 19th-century literature and art, see M. LATHERS, *Bodies of art. French Literary Realism and the Artists' Model*, Lincoln 2001, pp. 63-85. The author of *Quidam* was definitely unconcerned with Raphael's personal life, especially the painter's relationship with Fornarina, elevated by many biographers and authors of the then popular "novels about artists," as well as painters (e.g. Ingres, who painted the pair of lovers in his pieces several times), to the most intriguing plot of the

concerning both the cult of the artist and numerous speculations – in Norwid’s opinion – far from the actual subject of the works by the Renaissance master. In one of his footnotes to Byron’s literary dialogue with Raphael, Norwid included an extensive explanation of the words that the Renaissance painter addressed from the afterlife to this world – to those “little ones” who “głowę przyznali mu cudzą” [gave him another man’s head]³:

Przez wieków dość, bo aż do panowania zeszłego papieża, pokazywano w Akademii Ś-go Łukasza w Rzymie czaszkę bardzo piękną, jako czaszkę Rafaela Sanzio uważaną; gdy jednak za pontyfikatu zeszłego Ojca Ś-go otworzony był grób Rafaela w Panteonie, z przyczyny iż Tybru wylewy zachodziły aż tam i zepsować go mogły, pokazało się, że ona czaszka w Akademii Ś-go Łukasza odwiedzana przez wieków parę nie była wcale czaszką Rafaela! Myślę, że wystarczający to jest dowód, o ile nie trzeba ufać pewnym anegdotom historycznym, lub mając zaufać onym, dobrze jest pierwiej do bezpośrednich źródeł zstąpić. Historia jako umiejętność samoistna jest to jeszcze bardzo młodziuteczkie dziecko, wieku prawie jednego nie liczące, i lubi się bawić różnymi wokabułami, jak na przykład następujące wokabuły: Rafael, Fornarina, Beatrice, magnetyzm, jezuityzm etc (PWSz I, 282).

For many centuries, until the reign of the last pope, a very beautiful skull was exhibited in the Academy of Saint Luke in Rome, which was believed to be that of Raffaello Sanzio; but when, during the pontificate of the previous Holy Father, the tomb of Raphael in the Pantheon was opened, because the floods of the Tiber had reached that place and might have spoiled it, it turned out that the skull in the Academy of Saint Luke, visited for several centuries, was not that of Raphael at all! I think that this is sufficient proof that one should not trust certain historical anecdotes, or if one has to trust them, it is good to consult the direct sources first. History as a skill in its own right is still a very young child, hardly one age old, and

artist’s life. Just as Flaubert, in his *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, dismissed presumptions about Raphael’s privacy by briefly stating that Fornarina “était une belle femme, inutile d’en savoir plus long,” Norwid revealed his distance from presumptions about the Renaissance painter’s amorous relationship by twice dismissively referring to Fornarina as “wokabuła” [a vocabulary item] (See PWSz I, 282). Mickiewicz did not remain indifferent to the 19th-century speculation about the relationship between Raphael and his muse, in whose opinion the artist: “[...] gradually let go of the teachings of that pure and serene spirit which had been his inspiration in Perugino’s studio and in the Siena monastery. [...] His Madonnas took on the expression of Fornarina, and his apostles the expression of Greek philosophers”. See A. MICKIEWICZ, *Dziela*, Vol. V, Warszawa 1955, p. 287.

³ It may be added that the author of *Assunta* was not alone in his indignation. Years later, in 1846, the deception of the members of the Academy of Saint Luke was also alluded to by none other than Łucja Rautenstrauchowa, who recalled in “Biblioteka Warszawska”: “The Academy of Saint Luke, without any reason, began to boast of possessing the head of the painter from Urbino and showed a skull. When asked, where did they get it? They replied that Maratti, putting up the bust, had taken it out of the coffin and entrusted her with it”. See Ł. RAUTENSTRAUCHOWA, “W Alpach i za Alpami,” *Biblioteka Warszawska*, 1846, Vol. 4, p. 265.

likes playing with various vocabularies, such as the following vocabulary items: Raphael, Fornarina, Beatrice, magnetism, Jesuitism, etc.

The second mystification, to which the poet and great admirer of Raphael succumbed, was a major mystery for researchers until the 2010 publication of Jan Zieliński's book *Obraz pogodnej śmierci: Norwid, Rafael, Maratti i "Śmierć świętego Józefa"* [*The Image of a Serene Death: Norwid, Raphael, Maratti and "The Death of Saint Joseph"*]. A brief reminder: in a letter to Joanna Kuczyńska, dated "ca. 15 August 1862" by the publisher of *Pisma Zebrane* [*Collected Works*] and by Jadwiga Rudnicka in the second volume of *Listy* [*Letters*] in the latest edition of *Dziela wszystkie* [*Complete Works*], the poet gave an account of a visit to a Parisian exhibition which featured, as he wrote: "nieznany obraz Rafaela, Śmierć świętego Józefa – arcydzieło!!" [an unknown painting by Raphael, *The Death of Saint Joseph* – a masterpiece!!]. The author of *Assunta* mentioned this event and the emotions associated with it to Kuczyńska in two letters:

Od kilku dni pokazują nieznany obraz Rafaela, „Śmierć świętego Józefa” – arcydzieło!! – pokazują za opłatą – poszedłem tam i wszedłszy, a zobaczywszy obraz, poszedłem prosto i zapomniałem zapłacić, co skoro zobaczono, nic mi nie powiedziano, a gdy wychodząc, przypomniałem sobie, że nie zapłaciłem, właściciel mi na to: „Pan nie powinienś płacić” – a ja mu na to: „Przepraszam pana, owszem” – a on mi na to: „Jeśli tak, to ja przyjmę, ale dam panu fotograf obrazu” – a ja mu na to: „Zaiste, że tego nie odmówię” – więc dał mi fotograf, który czy Pani chce, żebym Jej przesłał? – mały jest, w list da się włożyć.

Ale zdarzenie ciekawe! Szkoda, że takich nie więcej!! (DW XII, 99).

For some days they have been showing an unknown painting by Raphael, "The Death of Saint Joseph" – a *masterpiece!!!* – they are exhibiting it for a fee – I went there and, having entered, and having seen the painting, I went straight in and forgot to pay, which, although it was noticed, I was told nothing, and when, on leaving, I remembered that I had not paid, the owner said to me: "*Sir, you should not pay*" – and I replied to him: "Excuse me sir, but I should" – and he said to me: "If that is the case, I will accept it, but I shall give you a photograph of the painting" – and I replied to him: "Indeed, that I shall not refuse" – so he gave me the photograph. Would you want me to send it to you? – it is small, I can put it in the letter.

What an interesting event! It is a pity, there are not more of those!!

In an extract from the second letter we read:

Więc posyłam już Pani fotograf nowo znalezionej arcydzieła i posyłam książeczkę treści, którą posyłam *sous-bande*, aby przeszła wszystkie wymagalności granic. Każdy może widzieć, co za treść druku posłanego. Chciałem czekać, aż Pani objawi życzenie posłania tej rzeczy rzadkiej i ciekawej dla każdego chrześcijanina, bo każdy chrześcijanin artystą jest w pewnym względzie – ale czekać nie mogę, bo może nie miałbym czasu, i tyle, ile go mam

w tej chwili ku temu. W dopisku zacząłem pisać, jaką drogą dziwną dostał mi się ten fotograf – gdzie pokazują obraz, nie chciano przyjąć ode mnie opłaty wnijscia, lubo nikt mię tam nie zna i lubo bardzo starannie ubranym dnia tego będąc, nie mogli wnioskować, że oszczędność mą wyręczają. Kiedy zaś naległem, abym nie robił wyjątku, dano mi za to fotograf i książeczkę, a te, jako lupy zdobyte, posyłam Pani. Może kiedyś wyjątkowa ta okoliczność stanie się zasadą społeczną i gdziekolwiek wnijdę, będą mi dawać różne piękne rzeczy, a wtedy będę miał konia i ładne rękawiczki, i będę bardzo przyzwoitym człowiekiem, i ożenię się.

Tymczasem dostała mi się „Śmierć świętego Józefa”.

Wracam do moich robót. (DW XII, 102)

Thus I am already sending you a photograph of the newly found masterpiece and I am sending the booklet with content, which I am sending *sous-bande* to meet all the border control requirements. Everyone can see the content of the print sent. I wanted to wait for you to reveal your wish to be sent this thing, which is rare and interesting for every Christian, because every Christian is an artist to some extent – but I cannot wait, because I might not have as much time as I have for that at the moment. In a note, I began to describe the strange way I obtained this photograph – in the place where they exhibit the painting, they did not want to accept the entrance fee from me, even though no one knows me there and, being very well dressed that day, they could not conclude that they were saving my money. But when I insisted that I should not make an exception, they gave me a photograph and a booklet, and these I send to you as my acquired spoils. Perhaps one day this exception will become a social rule, and wherever I enter they will give me various beautiful things, and then I shall have a horse and nice gloves, and I shall be a very decent man, and I shall marry.

Meanwhile, I was given “The Death of Saint Joseph”.

I am getting back to my work.

However, as Jan Zieliński investigated, the painting attributed to Raphael at the time turned out to be a work by Carlo Maratti – such was the information provided by the Leipzig *Illustrierte Zeitung* of 8 November 1862, quoted by the researcher⁴. Apart from the course of the Parisian exhibition and the press echoes related to it, the central focus of the researcher’s interest was the impact that the visit to Galerie Corbet had on Norwid’s later work⁵. Zieliński also read a number

⁴ The content of the aforementioned press release is as follows: “A relatively small painting, depicting the death of St. Joseph, was recently found in Rome and exhibited, with Raphael being identified as its author. However, it turned out that it was not his painting, but that it came from under the brush of Carlo Maratti; there is a copy of this painting, the work of Robert van Audenaerde, under which the name of the painter who created the original is engraved. Maratti painted the thing for the chapel dedicated to St. Joseph in the Church of S. Isodoro in Rome”. Cit. after: J. ZIELIŃSKI, *Obraz pogodnej śmierci: Norwid, Rafael, Maratti i “Śmierć świętego Józefa,”* Lublin 2010, p. 76.

⁵ Bernadetta Kuczera-Chachulska, in her review of Jan Zieliński’s book, raised some doubts about the actual influence of the content of Abbé Nicolle’s booklet on the poet’s later work. See B. KUCZERA-CHACHULSKA, “Na marginesie książki Jana Zielińskiego ‘Obraz pogodnej śmierci:

of literary and epistolary statements written after 1862 by the author of *Assunta* as self-ironic, camouflaged references to his own naivety. It is difficult to say when exactly the poet became aware of the mystification related to the false provenance of the painting attributed to Raphael (one can assume that it was November 1862, to which I will return later).

It is worth providing a commentary on the press information cited by Zieliński in his book, confronting the poet's account with the press reports on the Parisian exhibition, as well as supplementing the investigations of the researcher, who in the conclusion of his book wrote:

The question of Raphael's possible authorship has not been definitively clarified, because it is impossible to do so without access to the painting. Nor is it known what happened to the painting next and where it is now if it has survived. It might have been sold, although certainly not even approximately for the astronomical price demanded by Abbé Nicolle, otherwise it would have entered the annals of the art market – besides, once it was revealed that it was probably a Maratti painting, the price must have fallen dramatically⁶.

At first, the exhibition of the painting, and later – the details of the mystification – were reported primarily in the French press, which – for obvious reasons – was much closer to Norwid than the press published in Prussia. Let us therefore take a look, in chronological order, at those press reports that the poet may have encountered. At the same time, this will give us insight into the promotion strategy of the exhibition.

It seems that in the Parisian press, the information about the possibility of buying a booklet containing a description of a previously unknown painting by Raphael was preceded by mentions of where the artwork would be exhibited and the desired price for its sale. The booklet, authored by Abbé Nicolle – the painting's owner – and entitled *La merveille de l'art religieux ou description d'un nouveau tableau original inconnu du RAPHAEL*, was mentioned in a short note in *La Presse* on 4 July 1862. This mention is very interesting, not only because it allows us to determine more precisely the timeframe of the work's promotion, but also to assume that it refers to the first edition of the booklet⁷. The announcement read as follows:

Norwid, Rafael, Maratti i Śmierć świętego Józefa' – kilka uwag," *Wiek XIX: Rocznik Towarzystwa Literackiego imienia Adama Mickiewicza*, 2013, Issue 48, pp. 579-584.

⁶ J. ZIELIŃSKI, *Obraz pogodnej śmierci*, p. 77.

⁷ It is likely that the mention in the current issue of *Bibliographie de la France* of 12 July is devoted to the publication of the booklet invoked by the quoted press reference. See J. ZIELIŃSKI, *Obraz pogodnej śmierci*, p. 13.

La merveille de l'art religieux ou description d'un nouveau tableau original inconnu du RAPHAEL, représentant LA MORT DE SAINT JOSEPH, annoncé dans le numéro 119 de L'observateur Romain, par l'abbé Nicolle, secrétaire de S. Em. le cardinal di Pietro. Se vend passage Choiseul, 47 rue Marengo et passage Vero-Dodat, 1 à 3; galerie de Valois, 185⁸.

The contents of the last (most likely the fourth edition of the booklet) were quoted in full by Jan Zieliński, who characterised it as follows:

[...] written with extraordinary insight, being in a way a model of ekphrastic precision and meticulous analysis, it was at the same time a confessional text, a kind of prayer. This is indicated by the words: “miracle” in the title (alluding to the titles of pious lives of saints), references to pietistic tradition, confessional passages, and the inclusion of a photograph of a “holy” image in imitation of the pictures attached to devotional booklets⁹.

It seems, however, that Abbé Nicolle's use of the word “miracle” (*merveille d'art*) in the booklet's title, as well as in later advertisements devoted to the painting, was not due to the stylisation of the publication into a confessional text, but was dictated primarily by pragmatism, i.e. knowledge of the realities of advertising at the time. Browsing through the Parisian press of the 1850s and 1860s, it is easy to see that this was the convention at the time with regard to writing about masterpieces, both in broader articles and in the headlines of advertisements announcing exhibitions of specific works of art or auctions. It is a fact, however, that the owner of the painting paid particular attention to ensuring that the descriptions of the work appearing in the press conformed to the contents of his booklet, which was a kind of instruction manual on the desirable way of writing about *The Death of Saint Joseph*. This is demonstrated by a letter from Abbé Nicolle, published on 25 July in *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*¹⁰.

It can be assumed that a few days after the posting of information about the possibility of buying this important – from the point of view of the painting's promotion – booklet, the actual attempt to sell the work began. The issue of “Le Siècle” of 13 July 1862 published an advertisement with an eye-catching headline (“À DIX MILLIONS le chef d'œuvre de Raphaël et de la peinture ou original inconnu représentant LA MORT DE SAINT JOSEPH”), informing of the sum desired by the owner for the sale of the painting, the place of display and the conditions under which it would be made available:

⁸ *La Presse*, 1862, Issue of 4 July, p. 3.

⁹ J. ZIELIŃSKI, *Obraz pogodnej śmierci*, p. 65.

¹⁰ See *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 1862, Issue of 25 July, pp. 3-4.

À DIX MILLIONS le chef d'œuvre de Raphaël et de la peinture, ou original inconnu représentant LA MORT DE SAINT JOSEPH.

Celui qui donnera le premier la somme de demandée emportera le tableau sans concurrence; les droits de reproduction seront traités à part. Exposé gratis à partir de mardi 15 juillet, galerie Colbert, 17, tous les jours, de 1 heure à 5 heures du soir, excepté le dimanche.

Le lundi et le jeudi sont réservés aux personnes qui, voulant le voir plus à loisir, sans toutefois dépasser une demi-heure, paieront 5 fr¹¹.

The above announcement was also published on the same day in *Journal de débats politiques et littéraires*¹², and the following day also in *La Presse*, in the section “Avis divers” (headline: “A DIX MILLIONS”). On 14 July, the mention appeared again in *Le Constitutionnel*¹³. Another “pool” of advertisements saw the light of day on 17 July – publications appeared in *La Gazette de France*¹⁴, *Le Temps*¹⁵, *Le Figaro*¹⁶. The content of the advertisement in *La Gazette de France* was slightly modified in comparison to the others, as it stated that Tuesday and Friday were reserved for the admiration of the painting by the clergy and members of religious communities¹⁷. On 20 July, in turn, an announcement was published in *Le Temps*, from which one could learn that the address of the exhibition and the conditions of access to it had been changed: “Exposé tous les jours, galerie Colbert 17, de une heure à cinq heures. À cause de l’affluence, il sera prélevé chaque jour 1 fr. pour droit d’entrée. Le dimanche seul est gratuit”¹⁸. It can therefore be assumed that about a week (two?) after the exhibition began, the price of admission or “entrance fee” was reduced from five francs to just one.

¹¹ *Le Siècle*, 1862, Issue of 13 July, p. 4.

¹² *Journal de débats politiques et littéraires*, 1862, Issue 13 July, p. 4.

¹³ *Le Constitutionnel*, 1862, Issue of 14 July, p. 4.

¹⁴ *La Gazette de France*, 1862, Issue of 17 July 1862, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Le Temps*, 1862, Issue of 17 July, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Le Figaro*, 1862, Issue of 17 July, p. 8.

¹⁷ “À dix millions le chef d’œuvre de Raphaël et de la peinture ou original inconnu représentant LA MORT DE SAINT JOSEPH. Celui qui donnera le premier la somme demandée emportera le tableau sans concurrence. Les droits de reproduction seront traités à part. Exposé gratis à partir de mardi 15 juillet, galerie Colbert, 17, tous les jours, de 1 heure à 5 heures du soir, excepté le dimanche. Le lundi et le jeudi sont réservées aux personnes qui, voulant le voir plus à loisir, sans toutefois dépasser une demi-heure, payeront 5 fr. Le mardi et le vendredi de 10 h à midi sont réservés à MM. les ecclésiastiques et membres des communautés”. Cit. after: *La Gazette de France*, 1862, Issue of 17 July, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Le Temps*, 1862, Issue of 20 July, p. 3.

Four days later, the announcement was reprinted in *Le Temps* and in *Le Figaro*¹⁹ unchanged²⁰. In turn, the mention of 25 July in *Le Constitutionnel* emphasised above all the information about the change of exhibition location within the Galerie de Colbert. This time the announcement did not mention the title of the painting on display, presumably already well known to the Parisian public²¹. Further announcements were published, *inter alia*, on 27 and 31 July and 7 and 10 August in *Le Temps*²². In *Le Constitutionnel* of 11 August 1862, the content of the announcement was expanded to include information on the possibility of buying a photograph showing the painting²³.

Finally, on 28 August, *Le Figaro* published an ironic commentary on the promotional measures accompanying the exhibition:

Paris est, depuis quelques jours, inonde de brochures et de prospectus qui annoncent le chef d'œuvre de Raphaël, une peinture de 10 millions.
Paul se Saint-Victor a estimé le tableau 100 fr.
Edmond et Jules de Goncourt l'ont estimé 40!²⁴

In a way, this remark undermines the credibility of Raphael's authorship (although it is worth bearing in mind that the Goncourt brothers' estimate of the painting may have been dictated at the time by their well-known immense dislike of the oeuvre of the author of the *Sistine Madonna*).

Two issues of *Gazette de la France*, dated 6 and 11 September, provide us with further information on the promotion strategy for the painting. As it turns out, the earlier issue reprinted in its entirety a booklet by Abbé Nicolle, the content of which was an autonomous article (entitled: *La merveille de l'art religieux ou TABLEAU ORIGINAL, INCONNU DE RAPHAEL. Annonce dans le no 119 de*

¹⁹ *Le Figaro*, 1862, Issue of 24 July, p. 8.

²⁰ *Le Temps*, 1862, Issue of 24 July, p. 4.

²¹ "Le chef d'œuvre de Raphaël et de la peinture est transféré boulevard des Italiens, 12, 2^e étage, visible tous les jours, excepté le dimanche, de midi à 4 heures, et de 7 à 9 heures du soir". Cit. after: *Le Constitutionnel*, 1862, Issue of 25 July, p. 4.

²² *Le Temps*, 1862, Issue of 27 July, p. 3; *Le Temps*, 1862, Issue of 31 July, p. 4; *Le Temps*, 1862, Issue of 7 August, p. 3; *Le Temps*, 1862, Issue of 10 August, p. 4.

²³ "Pour la plus grande facilité des étrangers, le chef-d'œuvre de Raphaël ou la *Mort de Saint Joseph* sera exposé gratis les 14, 15, 16 et 17 août, de 10 h. du matin jusqu' à 7 h. du soir. Vu au réflecteur de 7 à 10 h. du soir, on paiera 1 fr. Boulev. des Italiens, 12, 2^e étage. La photographie se vend au lieu de l'exposition". Cit. after: *Le Constitutionnel*, 1862, Issue of 11 August, p. 4.

²⁴ *Le Figaro*, 1868, Issue of 28 August, p. 6.

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO par l'abbé Nicolle)²⁵. In a later press mention, on the other hand, the element drawing particular attention is the way the painting is described as the most beautiful canvas ever made and, more importantly, one that should enter the collection of some French exhibition institution²⁶.

Quite different in character from the biting commentary in *Le Figaro* was Maxime Vauvert's article *La mort de Saint-Joseph. Tableau du Raphael, découvert par l'abbé Nicolle*, published on 27 September 1862 in *Le Monde Illustré*. Its content must undoubtedly have been to the liking of Abbot Nicolle, as it is evident that the author of the description was inspired by a booklet written by him. In *Le Monde Illustré*, the owner of the painting was introduced to readers as "the secretary of the eminent Cardinal Pietro." In addition to a brief description of the work, the article also states that the painting won the admiration of Overbeck himself, referred to here as "the greatest of artists who wanted to admire the scene" (it is worth mentioning here that his authority had already been invoked in the aforementioned booklets)²⁷. More importantly, a print of the exhibited painting was published for the first time in the same issue of the weekly magazine²⁸. Judging by the signatures ("Boucourt" and "Chapon"), its authors were Etienne Gabriel-Bocourt (1821-1905) and Leon-Luis Chapon (1836-1918).

It is therefore possible to conclude that at the end of September 1862 it was still assumed that the artist of the canvas on display was Raphael. It also seems that viewers of the work and press readers were reassured of this belief at least until the end of the Parisian exhibition, which was supposed to end in October – or so it was announced. Indeed, according to a short notice in *La Gazette de France* on 4 October, the owners of the painting decided to exhibit it abroad. They also announced that it could be viewed without the need to pay an entrance fee (could

²⁵ 1862, Issue of 6 September, p. 3.

²⁶ 1862, Issue of 11 September, p. 3. "Nous avons assisté hier à une réunion de peintres éminens, qui venaient, en quelque sorte, s'agenouiller devant le plus grand et le dernier chef d'œuvre de Raphaël: *La Mort de saint Joseph!* Après la brochure remarquable de M. l'abbé Nicolle, insérée dans notre numéro du 6 de ce mois, nous n'essaierons pas d'en donner une nouvelle description. Nous nous bornerons, simplement, à rendre nos impressions par ce seul mot: *L'ange de l'inspiration dictait... Raphaël peignant*. Il est inutile de dire l'effet saisissant.... Inouï qu'a produit sur ces artistes cette toile incomparable, incontestablement la plus belle qui ait jamais existé. Formons les vœux plus sincères pour qu'une telle œuvre (d'ailleurs restée inconnue jusqu'à nos jours) ne quitte pas la France et en devienne le plus bel ornement".

²⁷ M. Vauvert, "*La mort de Saint-Joseph. Tableau du Raphaël, découvert par l'abbé Nicolle*," *Le Monde Illustré*, 1862, Issue of 27 September, p. 199.

²⁸ *Le Monde Illustré*, 1862, Issue of 27 September, p. 197.

it be that interest in the exhibition in the Passage Colbert was waning?²⁹ On the same day, a short “explanation” was published in *Le Constitutionnel* shedding some light on the acquisition of the work by Abbé Nicolle in Rome in May 1862 during a furniture sale. The note contained information which, after all, had already been declared by the painting’s owner in the July booklets accompanying the Paris exhibition:

Le tableau de chevalet de Raphaël, la *Mort de saint Joseph*, volé a Raphaël lui-même, si longtemps recherché en vain et inscrit au catalogue de ses œuvres comme tableau perdu, a été retrouvé le 2 mai 1862, à Rome, dans une vente de meubles à l’encan, par l’abbé Nicolle. Ce tableau, encore visible gratuitement boulevard des Italiens 12, va incessamment à l’étranger³⁰.

What is also interesting about the above mention is the way in which the narrative of the supposedly lost painting, which the contemporary people could confront with the publications on Raphael’s oeuvre. After all, *The Death of Saint Joseph* is presented as a painting whose title was recorded in a catalogue of the painter’s lost works. Jan Zieliński pointed out that, in fact, this painting titled *The Death of Saint Joseph* has not been mentioned either in contemporary monographs devoted to the work of the Renaissance master or in 19th-century biographies³¹. Perhaps this aspect was brought to the attention of Norwid’s contemporaries by specialists dealing with Raphael’s work – the above assurance may have appeared to experts as unconvincing or casting doubt on the clergyman’s previous assertions.

On 12 October, a letter from Abbé Nicolle was published in *La Presse*³² and in *Le Constitutionnel*³³, in which he assured that the painting would leave France on 14 October. He stressed that *The Death of Saint Joseph* had been on display for four months for free (which, as we know from the content of the first exhibition announcements in July, is not true). He also mentioned the number of booklets printed – according to his assertions, they had a circulation of fifteen thousand. The clergyman argued that the author of the painting was undoubtedly Raphael, and in addition to this provenance, he also stressed the “impeccability” of the

²⁹ *La Gazette de France*, 1862, Issue of 4 October, p. 2. *Le Siècle* of 2 October, on the other hand, contained similar information: “On peut encore voir gratuitement (boulevard des Italiens, 12) la *Mort de saint Joseph*, par Raphaël; mais qu’on se hâte, car ce tableau partira bientôt pour l’étranger”. *Le Siècle*, 2 October 1862, p. 3. Le tableau de la *Mort de Joseph*, par Raphaël, part incessamment pour l’étranger; il continue d’être visible, gratuitement, boulevard des Italiens, 12”.

³⁰ *Le Constitutionnel*, 1862, Issue of 4 October, p. 2.

³¹ J. ZIELIŃSKI, *Obraz pogodnej śmierci*, p. 11.

³² *La Presse*, 1862, Issue of 12 October, p. 3.

³³ *Le Constitutionnel*, 1862, Issue of 12 October, p. 3.

work. Two days before the date of his previously declared departure from Paris, the owner emphasised the value of the canvas even more strongly. One can assume that he was keen to sell the painting immediately, especially to public collections, as is particularly evidenced by the conclusion of his letter: “En voilà plus qu’il n’en faut pour assurer à la fois le succès du tableau et la gloire du musée appelé à le posséder”³⁴.

It is difficult to determine the exact date of the end of the exhibition at the Passage Colbert. It is known, however, that at the end of October the painting was on display in Brussels (according to later comments on the whole affair – in the “cercle artistique,” i.e. most probably in the “Cercle des anciens élèves” of the Academy of Fine Arts)³⁵. On 30 October, a note was published in *Le Constitutionnel*, this time pointing to strict evidence of Raphael’s authorship³⁶. The note reported:

On vient de découvrir à Bruxelles, au bas du tableau de la mort de saint Joseph, par RAPHAEL, l’empreinte du monogramme et la signature du maître avec la date de l’année dans laquelle a été peint ce tableau. Voici le monogramme IL. RA Sanzio A. 1520.

Cette date confirme toutes les conjectures faites par l’abbé Nicolle³⁷.

Much more detail about the circumstances of the finding of the signature was presented in the pages of *La Gazette de France* on 1 November 1862. It turned out that the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph* was not only by Raphael, but was also supposed to be his last work – after all, the painter had died in 1520. The discovery was purportedly made by Charles Frowein:

Sur les indications d’une artiste-amateur de Bruxelles, M. Charles Frowein, M. l’abbé Nicolle, propriétaire du tableau, la *Mort de Saint-Joseph*, par Raphaël, a découvert à l’extrémité inférieure du manteau bleu du Christ l’empreinte du monogramme suivant : IL RA, et au-dessous *Sanzio*. Plus bas encore la même artiste, M. Frowein, a aperçu une date portant: A 1520, ou l’an 1520. Cette découverte, dont tous les Bruxellois se sont déjà convaincus par leurs yeux, confirme l’opinion de M. l’abbé Nicolle sur l’authenticité de ce chef d’œuvre

³⁴ *La Presse*, 1862, Issue of 12 October, p. 3.

³⁵ W. B., “La légende des cinq Raphaël de l’abbé Nicolle,” *Le Cabinet de l’amateur et de l’antiquaire: revue des tableaux et des estampes anciennes, des objets d’art, d’antiquité et de curiosité*, 1864, Issue 29-30, p. 16.

³⁶ Jan Zieliński reported that information about this signature first appeared in the New Year’s issue of *Le Temps* (1863) with the publication of a letter by Elisa Nicolle, who, *inter alia*, asserted that “Raphael’s last masterpiece was sold at auction in the same house or in a house adjacent to the one in which Raphael lived.” Quoted by J. ZIELIŃSKI, *Obraz pogodnej śmierci*, p. 29.

³⁷ *Le Constitutionnel*, 1862, Issue of 30 October, p. 2.

incomparable et sur l'authenticité de ce chef d'œuvre incomparable et sur l'époque de la vie de Raphaël, à laquelle il faut se rapporter; le chiffre peut se lire en entier dans les photographies signées Laverdet. *La Mort de Saint Joseph* est donc le dernier chant du Cygne d'Urbino³⁸.

These are all the testimonies from the time – as it turns out – of the painting's first exhibition in Paris that I was able to find. How did the people of the time assess the promotional efforts accompanying the exhibition of the work? Here, I take the liberty of slightly disrupting the chronological order of the press releases cited. An interesting commentary on the subject is provided in the article *La légende de cinq Raphaëls par abbé Nicolle*, by W.B., published in two consecutive issues of "Le Cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire: revue des tableaux et des estampes anciennes, des objets d'art, d'antiquité et de curiosité" of 1864. The author wrote that, in addition to the booklet, the display of the painting was accompanied by numerous posters with the inscriptions "DIX MILLIONS... le célébré tableau de Raphaël, la Mort de Saint Joseph"³⁹ (which we already know thanks to the book *Obraz pogodnej śmierci*). He also pointed out that the high sale price quoted by the owner made it obvious that an original work was involved⁴⁰. The demanded sum was therefore not only "part of the promotional strategy of the painting,"⁴¹ but was also one of the attempts to lend credibility to the alleged originality of the work. According to the article, the discovery of the alleged Raphael painting was first reported in *L'Osservatore Romano*, while according to the author, the discovery of the previously unknown Raphael painting was first reported in French Catholic magazines (their titles are not cited) and in periodicals such as *L'Union* and *Journal des villes et des campagnes*. Exhibited in the summer and autumn of 1862 at Galerie Colbert, the work, framed in a mahogany frame, was extremely popular. "All Paris rushed to see this painting," "how could a clergyman be suspected of fraud?" – wrote W.B.⁴²

The promotion of the painting was therefore extensive, hence Jan Zieliński's hypothesis that Abbé Nicolle "exposed himself to derision and silence by the professional press" and the claim that the booklet characterised by "[...] precision of analysis and piety – combined with a mercantile, marketing approach, must have constituted a peculiar whole for the liberal, anticlerical public opinion of the whole of Paris"⁴³ can be dismissed.

³⁸ *La Gazette de France*, 1862, Issue of 1 November, pp. 2-3.

³⁹ W.B., "La légende des cinq Raphaël de l'abbé Nicolle," p. 16.

⁴⁰ W.B., "La légende des cinq Raphaël de l'abbé Nicolle," p. 16.

⁴¹ J. ZIELIŃSKI, *Obraz pogodnej śmierci*, p. 28.

⁴² W. B., "La légende des cinq Raphaël de l'abbé Nicolle," p. 15.

⁴³ J. ZIELIŃSKI, *Obraz pogodnej śmierci*, p. 65.

However, we should return to Norwid, who got lost in the whole story. In his letters to Kuczyńska in August, the poet depicted himself as a visitor who, when confronted with the work of the Renaissance master, forgot to pay for the opportunity to see the painting. Leaving Galerie Colbert involved returning to mundane matters – “a gdy wychodząc, przypomniałem sobie, że nie zapłaciłem” [and as I was leaving, I remembered that I had not paid], the poet wrote. This particular contemplation of the painting was said to have been noticed by its owner, who is supposed to have said to Norwid: “Pan nie powinien płacić” [Sir, you should not pay]. According to the poet’s account, the man insisted first, after which he told Norwid that he would accept payment, but in return would give him a photograph of the painting. The narrative of this “curious event” was continued by the poet in his next letter, and without waiting for Kuczyńska’s reply, he most likely sent the photograph, which he received together with a booklet that accompanied the exhibition. Norwid stressed that this special treatment he received was neither due to sociability nor to the fact that he was dressed shabbily. The poet once again stressed that the way in which he interacted with the masterpiece had been noticed. And it was for this reason that he did not have to pay to see the painting. Our attention is drawn to the way Norwid describes the importance of the painting. He writes that it is “rzecz to rzadka i ciekawa dla każdego Chrześcijanina” [a rare and interesting thing for every Christian], and not, for instance, for an aesthete or art lover. He calls the booklet, which contained a detailed description of the work of art and a photograph depicting the painting, “zdobyte łupy” [acquired spoils]. Is it possible then to think that the sighting of the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph* was for Norwid more than just an aesthetic experience? It seems that Norwid is looking at *The Death of Saint Joseph* from – to use Charles Taylor terms⁴⁴ – a “spiritual horizon.”

A different tone, much more distanced, emerges from Norwid’s letter to Kuczyńska, which the publishers dated mid-September 1862 (i.e. about two months after seeing the painting for the first time). In this letter, the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph* is evoked explicitly for the last time:

Osoba*** nie gra w karty i myślę, że jest rządzą bardzo w interesach.
Za obrazek Rafaela dają dwa miliony – właściciel chce trzy. (DW XII, 115)

Person*** does not play cards and I think he can manage business very well.
They give two million for Raphael’s picture – the owner wants three.

⁴⁴ Cit. after: J. WINNICKA-GBUREK, *Krytyka – etyka – sacrum. W stronę aksjologicznej krytyki artystycznej*, Gdańsk 2015, p. 146.

It very curious that the poet does not call the painting a “masterpiece” as before, now it is “obrazek” [a little picture], as if its value in Norwid’s own eyes has depreciated. Could it be that the reason for this lack of enthusiasm for *The Death of Saint Joseph* was precisely the promotional efforts that Abbé Nicolle and his sister had initiated?

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Would the French capital not hear any more about *The Death of Saint Joseph* after the exhibition? It is not the case, as Zieliński wrote, that “(...) the painting, around which there was so much hype in Paris, soon disappeared,” and those “who believed that they were dealing with Raphael’s masterpiece were not interested in keeping up the subject that testified to their incompetence.”⁴⁵ It should be noted that after the revelation that the author of the painting was not Raphael, articles continued to appear in the Parisian press upholding the narrative that the artist of the painting in question was the Renaissance master. For instance, it is worth mentioning the already quoted Maxim Vauvert, who was the author of another article, this time published in the periodical “Les veillées chrétiennes” on 26 November 1862 (almost three weeks after the disclosure in the Leipzig press that the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph* was Raphael’s work). In the same issue, the print from the already cited September issue of *Le Monde Illustré* was used as the cover of the magazine⁴⁶.

As it turned out later, the owners of the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph* did not abandon either its display or attempts to sell it. The scandals and ambiguities surrounding their actions meant that they were still subject of many articles in the French press, especially towards the end of 1862 and 1863, and at the beginning of 1864 (more on this in a moment). Zieliński had the right intuition when he wrote that the case of the painting attributed to Raphael must have had a European scope⁴⁷, because after visits to Paris and Brussels, Abbé Nicolle and Elisa Nicolle went, among others, to Berlin, Dresden, London, etc.

The issue of the painting was of particular interest in 1863, due to another attempt to sell the work. *Le Moniteur Universel* of 22 January 1863 and *Le Consitutionnel* of 4 February announced an auction of the painting, which was to

⁴⁵ J. ZIELIŃSKI, *Obraz pogodnej śmierci*, p. 76.

⁴⁶ M. VAUVERT, “La mort de Saint-Joseph. Tableau du Raphaël,” *Les veillées chrétiennes*, 1862, Issue of 26 November.

⁴⁷ J. ZIELIŃSKI, *Obraz pogodnej śmierci*, p. 75.

take place in London on 11 February⁴⁸. How did the announced auction proceed? Briefly, and moreover ironically, it was reported on 12 February 1863 by E. Paccard in “Mémorial de la Loire te la Haute-Loire:”

C'est aujourd'hui, 11 février, qu'a dû être vendu aux enchères publiques, à Londres, sur la mise à prix de 600.000 fr. la *Mort de Saint-Joseph*, tableau de Raphaël, acheté à Rome le 2 mai 1862 dans une vente de meubles qui a eu lieu dans la maison qu'habitait Raphaël. On dit que le roi de Prusse avait offert un million de cette œuvre magistrale. Puissent les vendeurs ne pas se repentir de n'avoir pas accédé à ce désir de S.M. prussienne!⁴⁹

It seems that the aforementioned assurances did not lead the Parisian public to believe in the authenticity of the painting. This is evidenced, for example, by a commentary published in *La France* of 27 February 1863, which referred to the backstory of the Brussels demystification. It shows that the local artist, M. Picque⁵⁰, who “had lived in Italy for a long time,” recognised the painting as a composition by Carlo Maratti. At the end of the commentary, the author referred to the London auction in a clearly ironical tone: “if they say Mr Rothschild offered him 4 million for this painting, Abbot Nicolle should be sorry, because today he will have to find an amateur”⁵¹. The matter was also revisited a few days later in *La Presse* in the section “Beaux-Arts”. The issue of 3 March 1863 reported:

On n'a peut-être pas oublié ce tableau de sainteté attribué à Raphael – la *Mort de saint Joseph* – que tout Paris fut impudemment sollicité de visiter l'an dernier, et dont les propriétaires demandaient des sommes extravagantes. C'était, en réalité, une toile qui valait quelques écus et qui reproduisait une composition bien connue d'un peintre de la décadence italienne, Carlo Maratte. Le bruit courut récemment que ce tableau avait été adjugé, en vente publique, à Londres, pour le compte du roi de Prusse, et le gouvernement prussien a pris la peine de faire circuler une note dans les journaux allemands pour protester contre cette mystification.

Ph. Burty

According to later sources, the London auction was not the last attempt to sell the work. The case had its finale almost a year later. In the issue of the monthly magazine *Le Cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire: revue des tableaux*

⁴⁸ “Vente du tableau. La mort de Saint Joseph par Raphaël.” *Le Moniteur Universel*, 1863, Issue of 22 January 1863, p. 5.

⁴⁹ E. PACCARD, “Courrier du matin. Correspondances particuliers du MEMORIAL,” *Mémorial de la Loire te la Haute-Loire*, 1863, Issue of 12 February, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Most likely Charles Picque (1799-1869).

⁵¹ *La France: politique, scientifique et littéraire*, 1863, Issue of 27 February, p. 3.

⁵² *La Presse*, 1863, Issue of 3 March, p. 2.

et des estampes anciennes, des objets d'art, d'antiquité et de curiosité, in the column "Ventes publiques," one can find information that on 25 January 1864 five paintings by Raphael were sold in Paris⁵³. The second part of the article by the author with the initials W.B. corresponds with this report. It turns out that in 1863, Abbé Nicolle and his sister returned to Rome and announced that this time they were in possession of four other authentic paintings by the creator of the *Ascension*. From Rome they travelled to Paris, where on 12 December 1863, by order of the President of the Civil Court of the Seine(?), it was ordered that seven paintings belonging to the clergyman and his sister be sold to public auction houses (including allegedly no longer one but a total of five works by Raphael, plus one landscape by Claude Lorrain and a painting *Capucine méditant* by an anonymous artist). I will skip the brief descriptions of these works (which are included in W.B.'s article) and turn to the auction itself, which will in part make it possible to provide answers to Jan Zieliński's speculations about the further fate of the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph*, as well as the final price for which the painting was sold. Obviously, the press had to address the issue of the court-ordered auction of works of art, especially in the case of a painting which had aroused so much speculation. Thus, on 12 January 1864, "Journal de débats politiques et littéraires" reported:

M. l'abbé Nicolle et sa sœur possèdent, à ce qu'il paraît, une superbe collection de tableaux. Raphaël y est représenté par plusieurs œuvres, et notamment par une toile qui a les proportions d'un tableau de chevalet. La signature (RAPHAEL SANZIO, ANNO 1520) en affirme l'authenticité et ne permet pas de douter de son origine. Cette toile retrace la *Mort de saint Joseph*. Beaucoup d'amateurs qui la connaissent en font le plus grand cas; elle a été fort appréciée à l'étranger.

Par suite d'incidents inutiles à rappeler, ce tableau et la collection de M. Nicolle vont être vendus en France. Le 12 décembre dernier, M. le président des référés, statuant à propos d'une difficulté qui lui était soumise, a ordonné que la *Mort de saint Joseph*, ainsi que les autres toiles de Raphaël que possède M. l'abbé Nicolle, seraient vendues à l'hôtel Drouot par le ministre de Me Linné, commissaire-priseur, et a chargé M. Franquin, en qualité de séquestre, de faire transporter ladite collection de l'hôtel du Louvre, où elle était déposée, à l'hôtel de la rue Drouot.

L'exécution de cette ordonnance ayant rencontré quelques obstacles, M. le président a été de nouveau saisi de la difficulté. Le 5 janvier, M. le président, après avoir entendu M. Franquin, séquestre désigné dans la présente ordonnance, M^e Giry, avoué, dans l'intérêt des propriétaires de l'hôtel du Louvre, et M^e Boutet, avoué de M. abbé Nicolle et de sa sœur, a ordonné que, le 6 janvier, les susdits tableaux seraient transportés à l'hôtel Drouot, où ils resteraient déposés après avoir été revêtus de la signature du séquestre *ne varietur* jusqu'au jour de la vente, qui a été fixée au 25 de ce mois. (*Le Droit*.)⁵⁴

⁵³ *Le Cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire: revue des tableaux et des estampes anciennes, des objets d'art, d'antiquité et de curiosité*, 1864, Issue 31-32, p. 17.

⁵⁴ *Journal de débats politiques et littéraires*, 1864, Issue of 12 January, p. 3.

A week later, the auction was somewhat more cautiously covered in *Le Moniteur Universel*, in the column “Ventes mobilières.” The newspaper did not present the abovementioned paintings as unquestionable works by the Renaissance master, but as works “attributed to Raphael”:

VENTE judiciaire aux enchères publiques, DE TABLEAU ATTRIBUÉS À RAPHAEL, dont un principal représentant la mort de Saint Joseph, a été exposé à Paris, Londres, Berlin, Bruxelles, Dresde, Turin, Florence, Bologne et Rome, et gravé dans *le Monde illustre*, du 26 septembre 1862, rue Drouot, hôtel des commissaires-priseurs, salle, n. 1^{er},

Le lundi, 25 janvier à trois heures,

Exposition publique les 23 et 24, de une heure à cinq, et le jour de la vente jusqu'à trois heures.

On trouve le catalogue chez Me Lainné, commissaire-priseur, rue Richer, no 49, commis pour procéder à cette vente⁵⁵.

We learn from the contents of the announcement that the auction was accompanied by a catalogue. The sale of works of art at the Hôtel Drouot auction house (opened in 1852) was preceded by a booklet published in January 1864 entitled *Description des 7 tableaux appartenant à Mlle et M. l'abbé Nicolle qui seront vendus à l'hôtel Drouot*. Its title page stated the exact place and date of the auction (25 January 1864), and indicated it took place as a result of a court decree: “par le ministère de Me Ch. Lainné, Commissaire-Preneur, commis à cet effet par une ordonnance de référé rendue par M. Le président du Tribunal civil de la Saine, le 12 décembre 1863”⁵⁶. The artefacts on display for the sale could be viewed for three days (on Saturday and Sunday, 23-24 January, as well as on Monday, the day of the sale).

The first work described, to which the most space was also devoted, was – as one can easily guess – the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph* (again referred to as “Raphael’s last work”). Below are excerpts from the mentioned booklet, concerning the work attributed to the Renaissance artist:

Peinture à huile avec pâte rouge prétoire sur toile, redoublée sur le châssis même de Raphaël d'après les antiquaires; sans aucune restauration; mesurant 47 cent. de large sur 34 de haut; contenant trois personnages en pied et trois têtes d'anges; chef d'œuvre édité pour la première fois dans le *Monde illustré* du 27 septembre 1862; signé à la partie inférieure du manteau du Christ: Raphaël (RA entrelacés. Voir le premier monogramme dans le Dict. de Siret), au-dessous : Sanzio, et plus bas daté A. 1520⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ *Le Moniteur Universel*, 1864, Issue of 19 January, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Description des 7 tableaux appartenant à Mlle et M. l'abbé Nicolle qui seront vendus à l'hôtel Drouot*, Paris 1864.

⁵⁷ *Description des 7 tableaux*, p. 1.

An important point to lend credence to the narrative that the artist of the painting was Raphael was the signature. The author (authors?) of the booklet cited the circumstances surrounding its finding:

Cette signature et cette date vérifiées après M. Charles Frowein de Bruxelles, par les sommités artistiques et civiles de huit capitales et dont l'authenticité n'a été contestée par personne, montrent que ce tableau a été fini l'année même de la mort de Raphaël, arrivé le 6 avril de l'an 1520. Aussi a-t-il été considéré en Europe comme le résumé de la vie artistique du peintre, le compendium des principales beautés qui distinguent ses œuvres capitales.

The authors also wrote that a print of the painting was published for the first time in the issue of *Le Monde Illustré* cited above. They also pointed to some of the periodicals in which the painting had been previously described (citing titles such as *L'Union* (issue of 2 September 1862), *Le Journal du Bruxelles*, *Algemmeine Preussische Zeitung*, as well as *L'Osservatore Romano* of 18 and 19 November 1862)⁵⁸.

The booklet not only contained descriptions of the auctioned works, it also reprinted a number of opinions on the authenticity of the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph*. Its authors also referred to the first Parisian exhibition, writing that the painting had already been on public display for four months free-of-charge, which was accompanied by posters on all the walls of the capital. The booklet also mentioned exactly where the painting had been exhibited so far⁵⁹. The authors of the booklet also referred to an earlier attempt to sell the work in London⁶⁰.

Once again, these documents and assurances were not convincing to the people of Paris. It is evidenced by the price for which the painting was sold, as well as the fact that no experts attended the auction itself. Let us now present the actual auction proceedings. In *Le Cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire: revue des tableaux et des estampes anciennes, des objets d'art, d'antiquité et de curiosité* W.B. described the start of the auction of the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph*:

La première enchère sur le Saint Joseph est à 6 francs! Enfin, avec le temps, plus d'une demi-heure, on monte jusqu' 1.000, puis 1.240, et l'adjudication est prononcée (...)⁶¹.

⁵⁸ *Description des 7 tableaux*, p. 2.

⁵⁹ *Description des 7 tableaux*, p. 7.

⁶⁰ *Description des 7 tableaux*, p. 7.

⁶¹ W.B., "La légende des cinq Raphaëls de l'abbé Nicolle (suite)," *Le Cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire: revue des tableaux et des estampes anciennes, des objets d'art, d'antiquité, et de curiosité*, 1863, Issue 31-32, p. 20.

However, the course of the auction was reported primarily in the current press. A commentary on the auction was published, *inter alia*, in *Le Moniteur Universel* on 28 January 1864. It went into more detail, mentioning the auctioneer's comments prior to the auction, who stressed that he did not guarantee either the authenticity or non-authenticity of the work. The author also indicated that the painting had been purchased by "some Englishman." He also mentioned the approximate prices at which the other canvases were sold⁶².

On the same day, the article "Sept tableaux de Raphaël pour 1,620 francs" in *Le Figaro* reported much more, although the title of the report – which contained a mistake since not all the paintings sold at the time were attributed to Raphaël – suggests that the press authors were no longer following the case closely. The article mentions, *inter alia*, the loans of Abbé Nicolle and his sister, the non-repayment of which resulted in a forced auction. It also describes the course of the auction and quotes the name of the buyer of the painting⁶³. The reporter writes that the buyer had one and a half million francs prepared – one can assume that he was convinced of the painting's authenticity. The mistake in the title of the report that I pointed out above definitely outraged the sister of Abbé Nicolle, Elisa Nicolle, whose letter published in the same newspaper on 7 February was a response to the above article. The co-owner of the painting continued to argue for its authenticity. The owners of the paintings were sufficiently discredited, which the newspaper's authors did not fail to ironically point out, as they included a short commentary just below the letter⁶⁴.

⁶² *Le Moniteur Universel*, 1864, Issue of 28 January, p. 2: "La vente de six tableaux que l'on disait être de Raphaël avait attiré avant-hier, à l'hôtel des commissaires-priseurs, un public extrêmement nombreux. Ces tableaux appartenaient à l'abbé Nicolle et à sa sœur, et c'est en vertu d'une ordonnance de référé rendue le 12 décembre dernier par M. le président du tribunal civil de la Seine qu'ils se trouvaient à la salle de ventes. Les ouvrages de Raphaël sont trop connus et trop recherchés pour que la découverte subite de six tableaux nouveaux ne fût pas pour le monde artistique un véritable événement. Malheureusement, le public connaisseur s'est montré quelque peu incrédule, non sans raison peut-être, et malgré le ton affirmatif d'un opuscule dans lequel on avait groupé toutes sortes de preuves et de témoignages, personne n'a voulu croire à l'authenticité de ces Raphaël. Avant de commencer la vente, M. Charles Linné, commissaire-priseur, a déclaré qu'il ne garantissait absolument rien relativement à l'auteur présumé des tableaux, et cette loyale déclaration n'était pas faite, on en conviendra, pour diminuer l'incrédulité des acheteurs. Aussi la *Mort de saint Joseph*, le plus important de ces six tableaux, ne s'est-il vendu que 1.240 fr. Ce qui est bien peu pour un Raphaël. C'est un Anglais qui l'a acheté. Les autres ont été adjugés à 70 et 50 fr., sauf une *Madonne Adorata*, qui a été payé 110 fr. par l'Anglais susdit. Le total de la vente a produit 1.530 fr. (Pays.)"

⁶³ "Sept tableaux de Raphaël pour 1,620 francs," *Le Figaro*, 1864, Issue of 28 January, p. 6.

⁶⁴ *Le Figaro*, 1864, Issue of 7 February, p. 6.

So much for a brief account of that stuffy atmosphere hovering around the alleged painting by Raphael, which must have been familiar to Norwid. In the context of the information cited above, my attention was drawn to a fragment of another letter by the author of *Assunta*, namely one addressed to Bronisław Zaleski. It shows that in April 1868, the poet was (most probably) an observer at an auction of paintings at Hôtel Drouot, where, after all, the final sale of the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph* had taken place four years earlier. To the addressee of his correspondence he recommended:

[...] należałoby się Tobie zbliżyć do administracji Hôtel Drouot – nie wyjawiać planu nikomu – zrobić dwie lub trzy akwaforty z współcześnie sprzedawanych kapitalnych obrazów, pejzaży mistrzów... i albo współcześnie, albo w tydzień po sprzedaniu oryginału byłoby to łatwo i dobrze zbyte. (PWsz IX, 361)

[...] it would be appropriate for you to approach the administration of Hôtel Drouot – without revealing the plan to anyone – make two or three etchings of great paintings sold presently, landscapes by masters... and they could be easily and well sold either at the same time or a week after the original was sold.

Perhaps it is the content of the advice quoted above that constitutes a premise, not really camouflaged, testifying not to the poet's "naivety" so strongly emphasised in Zieliński's book, but allowing us to believe that the author of *Assunta* learnt the market mechanism of selling paintings by great masters (or works whose authorship was dishonestly attributed to them for this purpose)? Norwid was apparently also aware that Hôtel Drouot did not enjoy fine reputation as a place to sell works of art.

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WOKÓŁ ŚMIERCI ŚWIĘTEGO JÓZEFA
GŁOSA DO KSIĄŻKI JANA ZIELIŃSKIEGO

Streszczenie

Artykuł przybliży francuskie źródła prasowe, dotyczące płótna eksponowanego w paryskiej Galerie Colbert latem 1862 roku, którego autorstwo przypisywano wówczas Rafaelowi. Admiratorem tej ekspozycji był Cyprian Norwid, który pod wpływem przekonania o obcowaniu z arcydziełem renesansowego mistrza napisał dwa przejmujące listy do Joanny Kuczyńskiej, w których dzielił się wrażeniami z wystawy. Przywołane źródła stanowią uzupełnienie książki Jana Zielińskiego i przybliżają kulisy mistyfikacji podziwianego przez poetę obrazu, a także jego późniejsze losy.

Słowa kluczowe: Rafael Santi; *Śmierć św. Józefa*; renesans; Carlo Maratti; Cyprian Norwid; Jan Zieliński.

ON THE DEATH OF SAINT JOSEPH.
NOTES ON THE BOOK BY JAN ZIELIŃSKI

Summary

This article introduces French press sources discussing the painting *The Death of Saint Joseph* exhibited in Galerie Colbert in Paris during the summer of 1862, whose authorship was attributed at the time to Raphael. One admirer of the exhibition was Cyprian Norwid. Under the impression that he was in the presence of a Renaissance masterpiece, he wrote two touching letters to Joanna Kuczyńska, in which he shared his impressions of the exhibition. The cited sources supplement the findings contained in the book by Jan Zieliński, reveal the inside story behind the mystification, and narrate the future fate of the painting admired by the poet.

Keywords: Raphael; *The Death of Saint Joseph*; Renaissance; Carlo Maratti; Cyprian Norwid; Jan Zieliński.

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