

Fragile presence. On the floristic-verbal note of Cyprian Norwid's 'Book of Memorabilia'*

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Among the archivalia we inherited from Zenon Przesmycki-Miriam, the so-called 'Book of Memorabilia' by Cyprian Norwid¹ was luckily preserved. In it, a handful of artefacts survived, such as letters received by the writer (and artist), tickets, an excerpt from a ship boarding pass from a journey to America, and photographic portraits of acquaintances. This 'Book of Memorabilia' also contains a page with three dried leaves and the following note: 'Leaving prison 1846' ['Wychodząc z więzienia 1846'].² This floristic-verbal composition is one of four elements placed on page 44: above it, there is a fragment from a Polish-Rusyn calendar, next to it a small watercolour portrait of doctor Johann Friedrich Dieffenbach, and then the leaves: a pasted-in piece of paper with a handwritten signature of 'Pani Horn' [Mrs Horn]. Both of the aforementioned individuals supported Norwid when he was in prison.³ Here, the former inmate also gave a 'grateful' mention to 'the un-

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1 In a footnote to an article on the album *Umarli żywi* [The dead living] by Teofil Lenartowicz, Arkadiusz Krawczyk juxtaposes it with the 'Book of Memorabilia' by Norwid, treating both collections as autobiographical forms. That said, Lenartowicz focusses more on his works, while Norwid focusses on his life adventures (A. Krawczyk, "W świecie pamiątek samotnika znad Arno. Refleksja nad albumem 'Umarli żywi' Teofila Lenartowicza" [In the world of memorabilia of a loner living by the Arno. A reflection on the album 'The dead living' by Teofil Lenartowicz], in: *Sztuka Edycji* [The Art of Editing] no. 1 (2019), p. 79).

2 On the title page of the 'Book of Memorabilia', recorded in the catalogue as 'Memorial book', page numbering given later. See: C. Norwid, [Book of Memorabilia], National Library of Poland, p. 44, <https://polona.pl/item-view/e1e8c70e-9675-438a-b8b5-9ee71ef24d21?page=114> (accessed 23 October 2024).

3 Doctor Dieffenbach, a famous surgeon, brought about the transfer of Norwid to the prison clinic. Mrs Horn was the wife of a doctor who led the hospital.

known woman', who would walk the gardens and whom he most likely spotted from the window of the prison clinic.⁴

Researchers would refer to the 'memorabilia' from the summer of 1846, establishing the chain of events associated with the Berlin prison episode of Norwid, when he was first summoned to the Russian embassy in Berlin and then arrested shortly afterwards and subsequently placed at Hausvogtei.⁵ Thanks to the persistent endeavours of friends and acquaintances, he was released on 27 July of the same year, but, at his request, he stayed a few more days in the prison hospital. It is not known precisely when Norwid left the hospital. We do know, however, that upon leaving, he was collecting leaves. I believe this small detail deserves a moment of attention.

LEAVING

I will not delve into the chain of biographical events related to the heightened political temperature of the second half of the 1840s.⁶ I do want to, however, look more closely at the combination of words and leaves, which was testimony to the moment constructed by Norwid, a type or equivalent of a diary entry, which can also be interpreted as a quasi-artistic form, taking into consideration the rather large collection of uses of the 'leaf' theme in his pieces. Moreover, the aforementioned theme has a long tradition in literature and art,⁷ and, in no small part, it co-creates the nineteenth-century imaginarium.⁸ A yellowed, autumnal leaf would fall

4 C. Norwid, [Book of Memorabilia], p. 44.

5 Norwid turned up at the secretary of the Russian embassy in Berlin after 10 June 1846, his arrest took place in the second half, or towards the end of June. The precise dates have not yet been determined. See: Z. Muszyńska, "Norwid w więzieniu berlińskim" [Norwid in the Berlin prison], in: *Pamiętnik Literacki* [Literary Memoir] no. 1 (1961), pp. 195–214; Z. Trojanowiczowa, Z. Dambek, in cooperation with J. Czarnomska, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida* [A diary of the life and art of Cyprian Norwid], vol. 1: 1821–1860 (Poznań: 2007), pp. 218–228.

6 The reviewer of the *Kalendarz...*, Bogdan Burdziej, stated that the issue of Norwid's imprisonment has not yet been sufficiently clarified, and that a search of Russian archives could bring new material (idem, "Wedle rozmaitości względnej kalendarza". Norwid 'przemysłony' [According to the relative miscellany of a diary'. Norwid 'thought-through'], in: *Studia Norwidiana* [Norwid studies] vol. 34 (2016), p. 194).

7 In Greek antiquity, even in the *Iliad*, the human condition subjected to the tyranny of time was compared to the short lifespan of a leaf ('As is the generation of leaves, so is that of humanity. / The wind scatters the leaves on the ground, but the live timber / Burgeons with leaves again in the season of spring returning. / So one generation of men will grow while another dies.' [transl. by R. Lattimore (Chicago: 1951)]). One of the poems by Mimnermus, depicting this identification, is quoted by Krystyna Bartol in the article "Elegijne nastroje. Wczesna elegia grecka i nie tylko" [Elegaic moods. Early Greek elegy and more], in: *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Literacka* [Poznań Polish Studies. Literary Series], no. 18 (2011), p. 17.

8 Sad poems and leaves from the body of poetic work of Stefan Garczyński, Teofil Lenartowicz and Adam Asnyk have been studied by Wojciech Hamerski (idem, "Trzy zwiędłe liście, trzy smutne



Fig.1. On a piece of paper pasted into the 'Book of Memorabilia', Norwid placed three dried, separate leaves and a caption, completing at the bottom the empty space between them: 'Leaving prison 1846'. Source: Polona. [Book of Memorabilia], p. 44, scan 144.

in many an elegy of the time. Leaves would be put into albums of friendship, books, and picture frames.⁹ A new genre gained incredible popularity: a *feuilleton*, or feature article, taking its name from the French *feuille*, meaning both a leaf and a page.¹⁰ Norwid's post-imprisonment leaves can, therefore, be included in the rich

wiersze (Garczyński, Lenartowicz, Asnyk)" [Three withered leaves, three sad poems (Garczyński, Lenartowicz, Asnyk)], in: *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Literacka* no. 18 (2011), pp. 125–145).

- 9 On the romantic culture of the album of friendship, see: J. Beinek, "Kamień na smętarzu, karta w imionniku..." (uwagi o sztambuchu romantycznym) [A stone at the cemetery, a page in a diary... Note on the Romantic album of friendship], in: *Roczniki Humanistyczne [Annals of Arts]* issue 1 (2007). The researcher states: 'The contents of an album of friendship, conveyed by entries, signatures, dried keepsakes or locks of hair, are a record of existence', and this record gives them a certain immortality (ibidem, p. 294). See: the same author, "Cultural texts: Polish and Russian albums in the age of Romanticism", in: *Rocznik Antropologii Historii [Anthropology of History Yearbook]* no. 1–2 (2011), pp. 173–192.
- 10 Characterising a *feuilleton* as a genre and literary phenomenon, Norwid used a comparison to the plant world. 'What to the realm of natural beauty is, for example, the family of so-called parasitic plants, entwining a rock and a tree, often damaging them slowly, and providing an arabesque pattern, which in architecture (now with supra-natural beauty) replaces said plant realm... that, in the political sphere, is the *feuilleton*. The directly prevailing truths go beyond the boundary of the *feuilleton*, they constitute the main part of a journal. The *feuilleton* is political lyricism.' (C. Norwid, "O felietonie felieton" [A *feuilleton* on the *feuilleton*], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie [Complete texts]*,

assortment of images and cultural micro-practices. At the same time, their tangible, ephemeral materiality (paradoxically transfixed in time!) begs the question of authorial intent, of the relationship with a situation that is specific, unique, and irrefutable in its factuality.

Labelling the three leaves with the present participle 'leaving', Norwid preserved precisely the moment of leaving, 'leaving' rather than 'having left' prison. At the same time, he puts emphasis on the leaves and the act of collecting them. Therefore, he considered the combination of words and plant detail as a more faithful record of the moment than writing up a purely verbal note. A joint branch does not connect the leaves. A conjectural gesture connects the verbal, present participle element, and the plant element.

As the page with this floristic-verbal artefact is included in a collection of miscellanies known as 'Book of Memorabilia', it is hard to resist the impulse to interpret it as an act of remembering an important biographical moment. I believe, however, that this imposing categorisation eclipses the autocommunication intention, which takes precedence over remembrance. It would seem that a formula used by Juri Lotman, who at one point discussed this category in reference to types of culture, is at play here. In autocommunication, when the sender is simultaneously the receiver of the message, it is all about clarifying the inner state of the person writing in order to experience one's own individuality, in the need for self-knowing or auto-therapy...¹¹ According to the semiotics scholar, in a message of this kind, a tendency manifests itself by which to reduce words and replace them with symbols that are beyond the verbal; after all, the sender communicates and records content that is known to them.

Autocommunication about leaving prison was formulated in an overly economical, yet not simplistic, manner, as it was conveyed through the poetics of a rebus. The shortness of registration does not remove individual imprint. It does not, however, reveal itself directly, *expressis verbis*, but rather as an effect of a relationship between words and leaves, verbal and visual components. The verbal element is syntactically and semantically incomplete. Moreover, the present participle form 'leaving' does not determine whether it relates to 'I' or 'he'. An iconic (leafy) element turns out to be a vital supplement to the message. The inscription under

vol. 7, p. 185). The edition of the *Pisma wszystkie* referenced in the article was prepared by J.W. Gomułicki, vol. 1–11 (Warsaw: 1971–1976).

11 J. Lotman, *Autokomunikacja: „JA” i „INNYY” jako adresaci. (O dwóch modelach komunikacji w systemie kultury)*, [Autocommunication: 'I' and 'Other' as addressees. (On two models of communication in the system of culture)], in: idem, *Uniwersum umysłu. Semiotyczna teoria kultury* [Universe of the mind. A semiotic theory of culture], transl. and foreword by B. Żyłko (Gdańsk: 2008), pp. 81–90. [Quotation in English translated from the Polish edition].

the three leaves does not, therefore, serve as a description to those, as one would readily think, but co-creates a rich syntactic structure with them. One can assume that the full sentence would be: 'Upon leaving prison, I was collecting these leaves'. At the same time, this added iconic element constitutes something more than just an equivalent of an unsaid remainder of the sentence. When we look at the three leaves (and there are three, not without reason), the hand that picked them one by one presents itself, with the whole sequence of its movements. The leaves are significant, because they were gathered at a specific moment, which is memorable: upon leaving prison. The message, multi-faceted in terms of its sign, conveys the drama of crossing the boundary between incarceration and freedom. Leaves as an emblem of the world beyond the walls command one to think of the lack of any prospect in that world of resisting organised state violence. On the other hand, however, their undoubted materiality, intentionally preserved forever, gives the creator of this artefact a sense of certainty that the world beyond the walls is not a fleeting illusion. Does the 'leaving one', through gathering leaves, prove to himself that he can now do something that had been taken away from him in prison? Something only seemingly insignificant?... This is because, in this specific situation, a small action returns the freed man to himself and allows him to regain a natural rhythm of life, a point to his own biography. The three leaves are rhythmically accompanied by two amphibrachs: wy – **cho** – dząc / z wię – **zie** – nia [leaving prison]. It would seem that, pasting in the leaves and adding text, Norwid recorded this reclaimed (step by step, leaf by leaf) contact with his own freed self. He greeted himself at liberty.

LEAVES AMONG LEAVES

Let us look at the writings of Norwid before 1846 to search for literary antecedence of the leafy message, that is, stylistic figures utilising leaves. One must say up front that there are not many of those. They sometimes appear as an element of a Spring or Autumn landscape, sometimes as part of a simile. The poet highlights their colour palette and other characteristics perceived with the senses: the springtime leaves are green, fresh, and the autumnal ones are yellow, dry, rustling, or even rotten, putrid. Already in his youth poems, there is a split in the poet's imaginium: although he mainly writes in an atmospheric way about leaves as creations of nature, the culturally marked 'bay' also appears. I will revisit it later. In the poems from the first half of the 1840s, written in Italy, there also appear single leaves evoking the inner state of the subject. In *Do mego brata Ludwika* [To my brother Ludwik], the poet confides in his brother about his resigned disposition: 'For I lost

the habit of trusting in happiness, / As with faith in Autumn, this emblem of midnight, / I look upon every little leaf...’ [‘Bo odwyknałem w szczęście mieć ufności, / Bo z wiarą w jesień, tym północy godłem, / Na każdy listek patrzę...’].¹² In another, incomplete poem, composed most likely in 1844, a belief in one’s unlimited abilities sits next to powerlessness:

Tu Kolumbowe miałem stanowisko
Na oceanie mej osobistości,
I tu opadłem, jako na mrowisko
Opada listek,
Na małym – w wielkiej ćwicząc się stałości.

Here, I had a Columbus stance.
On the ocean of my being,
And here I fell, as on an anthill
Falls a leaf,
Upon the small – to practice in grand permanence.¹³

The single leaf seems to be the intermediary between the ‘small’, individual experience of the world, and its beyond-individual, beyond-human, ‘grand’ realm. The crossing between these scales began to fascinate Norwid early on, and it remained a preoccupation for years.

If, among the ‘leafy’ quotations, one were to look for such that would show the closest similarity to the scene with leaves in the ‘Book of Memorabilia’, one would have to point to the fragment of a letter from Norwid to Maria Trębicka, dated 3 July 1848:

A jeżeli Pani się podoba dawnemu słudze swemu kilka słówek odpisać, to adres jego tak jak dawniej, bo u niego wiele tak jak dawniej, nie postępowy to bowiem człowiek, lecz z-stępowy – idzie sobie do grobu po pochyłościach życia tego – liście czasem zrywając bliżej nad ścieżką wychylone, jak podróżny nudą oplątany.

And if Madam would please to write a few words back to her old servant, his address is as it used to be, because many things are as they used to be for him, for he is not a progressive man, but a down-gressive one – sauntering down the slopes of this life towards his grave – sometimes gathering leaves that dip down closer to the path, like a traveller in boredom entwined.¹⁴

The similarity is that, both in the above quotation, and in the memento from 1846, the subject is depicted as picking leaves. The syntax with the present participle is also analogous. In the quoted passage, the present participle accompanies the leaves, ‘sometimes gathering leaves’, and thus signals an act characteristic of a ‘down-gressive’ person. The main difference, however, is that the post-prison autocommunication was about a singular, unique act of returning to oneself. The fragment from the letter refers to a general formula – a visual (alegorical) summary of fate. It is, therefore, hard to resist establishing a genetic relation between the beyond-verbal behaviour attested by a note and the epistolary picture of a ‘down-gressive’

12 C. Norwid, “Do mego brata Ludwika” [To my brother Ludwik], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 1 (first printed: *Przegląd Naukowy* [Science Review] vol. 1 (1845), no. 4).

13 Idem, “[Tu Kolumbowe miałem stanowisko]” [Here, I had a Columbus stance], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 2, p. 267.

14 Idem, *Dziela wszystkie* [Complete works], vol. 10, ed. J. Rudnicka (Lublin: 2008), p. 159.

man. Without jumping to conclusions, I will just add that in both cases, the gathering of leaves contains (unexpectedly) a touch of defiance. The severity of prison oppression is broken up by the free (if not involuntary) gesture of gathering leaves. On the other hand, the 'down-gressive' man, picking leaves out of boredom, goes against progress, which, in the second half of the 1840s, was talked and shouted about so much. I only intend to highlight the act of aesthetisation, marked both in the 'Book of Memorabilia' and in the letter. The subject leaving prison ascribes to his becoming free a form according to his own invention, liberating also in the internal experience from the oppression he was subjected to. And in the fragment of the letter to Trębicka, the same gesture of picking leaves becomes an allegory of a 'down-gressive' man, walking into his grave without protest. The overly figurative nature of the text, in the context of epistolary contact, gave rise to the publisher's suspicion that it was a means for Norwid to encode information relating to his place of residence, thereby keeping it from undesired readers of the correspondence.

Let us pause for another moment at the gathering of leaves. In literary pieces, one will also find at least several such gestures. In the previously cited *Wspomnienie wioski* [Memory of the village], a nightingale 'happily picks at leaves of fragrant jasmine'. In *Pompeja* [Pompeii] from 1847 or 1848, a tourist visiting the city dug out from volcanic ash, upon meeting the spirits of two of its former inhabitants, 'picks at a leaf' ['skubie liść'] in embarrassment, like a 'girl playing "he loves me – he loves me not"' ['dziewczę, które z sobą gra w stokrotkę']. Still 'picking at a leaf', he musters the courage to ask one of the 'shadows': 'I would be happy to know, / Who I am so lucky to sit with here and speak to?' ['rad bym wiedzieć, / Z kim szczęście mam zamieniać słowo i tu siedzieć?'].¹⁵ In a different poem from the Italian period, the poet advises the female addressee to 'play green' with a leaf collected at a cemetery. In the later tragedy, *Kleopatra i Cezar* [Cleopatra and Caesar], the queen of Egypt, saying farewell to Caesar, 'picks at a rose', and then gifts the ruler of Rome 'a leaf': 'take then also [apart from the lion – E. D.-P.] this rose leaf... / At once an image of strength and weakness / Let them remind you of Egypt...' ['weź także [prócz lwa – E. D.-P.] i ten róży listek... / Siły obraz i obraz słabości zarazem / Niech ci przypomną Egipt...'].¹⁶

'Picking' at leaves is a play with oneself, an act partly unconscious and pointless, yet not entirely unimportant because it is noticed and noted. It can surely also be

15 Idem, „Pompeja” [Pompeii], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 3, p. 20.

16 Idem, „Kleopatra i Cezar” [Cleopatra and Caesar], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 5, p. 64.

As an aside, I will add that 'leaf' in Norwid's language also means a 'flower petal', which is in line with the linguistic norm of the time (e.g. in the Linde dictionary). Wojciech Hamerski is wrong to correct the interpretation of Zofia Mocarska-Tycowa relating to the leaf as a petal of a white rose (W. Hamerski, „Trzy zwiędłe liście...”, p. 137).

a spell to tell one's future. In literary pieces, the figures within seem free from the responsibility of pushing the plot forward or conveying the ideological message of the work, liberated from the author's didacticism or moralizing. The situation changes when the leaves become an element of interaction with another person. Cleopatra, who picks at a rose, simply picks at a rose. At the moment of offering a 'leaf' to Caesar, she begins to use symbolism. The relationship between the two characters becomes a meeting point of civilisations. The 'leaf' of a rose added to the lion that is gifted to Caesar is transformed in just one moment into a symbol of Egypt – a symbol of its vulnerability, which points to Cleopatra herself, her femininity. In its nature, picking at leaves is more suitable for a woman (mainly for a 'girl') than it is for a man, which is also confirmed by the passage from *Pompeja*.

In the 'Book of Memorabilia' by Norwid, two more plant trinkets have been preserved: a stem and a single leaf, with no verbal additions. Only the author himself knew what they meant to him. Leaves, according to testimony by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, were also part of the décor of Norwid's office, which the writer visited in the Summer of 1858 while the poet was away. Kraszewski was intrigued particularly by the cross made by Norwid, with marks of wounds of the crucified replacing the figure of Christ. He also noted other elements of the interior design, which highlighted its private character: 'from his album of drawings, the artist puts some memory, on which he wants to feast, in a frame hanging opposite the bed, and leaves it for several weeks, sometimes longer, until he fancies a change. In different frames: some dried-up leaves, remnants of some life' ['ze swego albumu rysunków artysta wkłada w ramy wiszące naprzeciw łóżka wspomnienie jakieś, którym chce się karmić, i zostawia go kilka tygodni, czasami dłużej, dopóki fantazja nie przyjdzie odmienić. W innych ramkach zeschnięte liście, szczątki jakiegoś życia'].¹⁷ The original form of a crucifix begs the viewer's reflection, and the 'dried-up leaves' defy interpretation. Kraszewski was left with nothing else but to see within them a conventional sign of a melancholy mood or disposition. The auto-communicative sense eluded the beholder.

A similar moment of meeting with the ambiguousness of a memento was registered by Norwid himself in the letter dated 12 June 1862, addressed to Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki:

W Anglii raz nocą zatrzymawszy się na stacji bocznej, małej, nieuczęszczanej, spojrzałem na ryciny w sypialni mojej zawieszone i zobaczyłem za ramami na papierze rozpięty figowy liść z podpisem

One night in England, having stopped at a roadhouse, small, not frequented, I looked at the drawings hung up in my bedroom, and I saw behind the frame a fig leaf, stretched out on paper, with a slop-

17 J.I. Kraszewski, *Kartki z podróży* [Letters from travels], vol. 2, footnotes and afterword by P. Hertz (Warsaw: 1977), p. 318.

niedbale nabazgranym: 'Myssolunghi – roku 182... z okna urwany.' Gospodarz hotelu tego podrzędnego w miasteczku małym nie wiedział, co znaczy liść, data i podpis.

pily scrawled note: 'Myssolunghi – year 182... picked through a window.' The innkeeper of this second-rate hotel in the small town did not know what the leaf, date, or note meant.¹⁸

For the traveller, the leaf meant more than it did to the host, but it still only allowed one to hypothesise; it did not offer answers as to who hand-picked it and 'scrawled' the text. Both the impressions written up by Kraszewski and the fragment of Norwid's letter reveal the autocommunicative dimension of framed leaves. He, who preserved them, did it for himself and for reasons known only to himself.

LAUREL

Apart from leaves in the 'Book of Memorabilia' in Przesmycki's archives, one other item survived (which, again, is hard to believe): a leaf, which Norwid gifted to Jadwiga Łuszczewska-Diotima, labelled a 'leaf from the wreath of Tasso' ['liść z lauru Tassa'].¹⁹ This phrase suggests that it is about a laurel from the poet's wreath, regardless of its questionable origin. Torquato Tasso would be depicted with a laurel wreath on his brow,²⁰ though, harassed by his enemies and afflicted with psychiatric disorders in his life, he never received the honour of being crowned on the Capitoline Hill, as it was practiced in the Renaissance. As described by Lucjan Siemieński, everything was prepared for the poet's triumph, but death stood in the way of completing the act of crowning with laurels. The wreath prepared for the ceremony was laid on the grave of the deceased.²¹

18 C. Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 9, p. 23.

19 [Listy i wiersze Cypriana Norwida] [Letters and poems of Cyprian Norwid], National Library of Poland, p. 203, scan 403–404, <https://polona.pl/preview/2ca674b8-57c2-4b00-9f08-fc86640e988c> (accessed 23 October 2024).

20 Torquato Tasso is depicted in a wreath in, among others, a lithograph by Jan Feliks Piwarski, a copper engraving by Friedrich Fleischmann. A scene in which a gravely ill Tasso receives a wreath in San Onofrio monastery was painted by Rudolf von Alt. On the biographical legend of Tasso according to Eugène Delacroix, Charles Baudelaire and Norwid, see: O. Płaszczewska, "Piękno w zwierciadle piękna – Torquato Tasso w wizjach Delacroix, Baudelaire'a i Norwida" [Beauty as reflected in the mirror of beauty – Torquato Tasso in the visions by Delacroix, Baudelaire and Norwid], in: eadem, *Przestrzenie komparatystyki – italianizm* [Comparative literature and its spaces: Italianism] (Cracow: 2010), pp. 439–454. Tasso was not 'crowned with laurels' in either of these approaches.

21 L. Siemieński, "Laur i laureaci" [Laurel and laureates], in: idem, *Dziela* [Works], vol. 1: *Varia z literatury, historii, archeologii i przyrody* [Varia on literature, history, archaeology and nature] (Cracow: 1881), pp. 49–50. On the wreath, we can read as follows: 'The triumphant wreath was laid on the grave of the poet, who often lacked a candle by which to write. One of his sonnets is addressed to a female cat, whom he invites to come to his window to cast some light with her eyes for him in the night' (ibidem, p. 50).

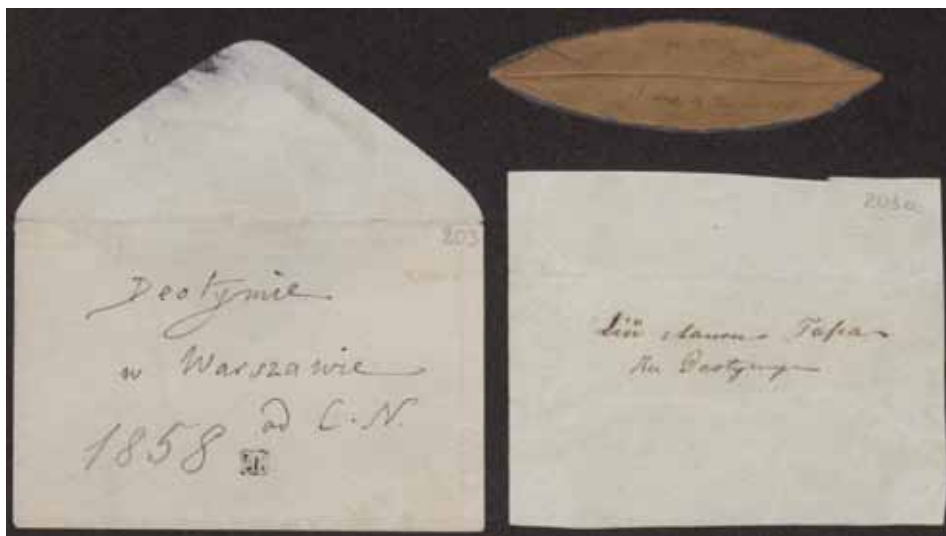


Fig. 2. Laurel leaf mailed to Jadwiga Łuszczewska (Diotima) by Norwid, in an envelope with the following note: 'To Diotima in Warsaw from C.N.' and a description: 'A leaf from Tasso's laurel wreath for Diotima'. Directly on the leaf, the poet placed a keepsake inscription, partly faded, with the place and date of 'picking' of the memento: 'Roma, 16 luglio 1847'. Source: Polona. [Listy i wiersze] [Letters and poems], p. 203, scan 403–404.

Norwid sent the letter to the Warsaw 'bardess', likely referring to this belated and unfinished ceremony.²² It does not seem, however, that it could originate from the wreath kept in the San Onofrio monastery, where the author of *Jerusalem Delivered* spent the final years of his life and where he died. It is hard to suspect the giver of this kind of vandalism. The floristic present, however, is a memento of a visit to this place on 16 July 1847, as the inscription written directly on the leaf blade attests. Norwid probably collected it, following in the footsteps of other tourists, curious about the places linked to the biographies of famous personages.²³ These keepsakes were provided by the so-called tree of Tasso. That, however, was an oak,²⁴ not a laurel tree, and the leaf mailed to Diotima is undoubtedly a laurel leaf.²⁵

An analogous memento gave Siemieński inspiration for the poem *Na liść z wieńca Tassa. Przysłany z Rzymu* [On the leaf from Tasso's wreath. Sent from

22 In the poem *Italiam! Italiam!*, the landscape in which Tasso wrote *Jerusalem Delivered*, was associated with the 'pink' laurel trees (C. Norwid, "Italiam! Italiam!", in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 1, p. 77).

23 See: *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, ed. N.J. Watson (Basingstoke: 2009).

24 Tasso's oak is the topic of a watercolour by Harry Johnson from the second half of the nineteenth century (*Tasso's Oak in the monastery garden of San Onofrio, Rome*).

25 On visiting San Onofrio, see: *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, vol. 1, p. 267. Earlier, in 1843, Norwid was visiting a hermitage in Ferrara, where Tasso resided – St. Anne's hospital. He wrote about it many years later, in 1864, in a letter to Marian Sokołowski, mentioning the inscriptions left there by Byron and Lamartine.

Rome]. The author writes that it was ‘a leaf picked at San Onofrio from Torquato’s wreath’ (from the wreath, not the monastery tree), albeit seeing the laurel as a ‘bloody thorn, / Which turned into bay, entwines the bard’s temple / As a shroud envelops him with the rags of fame’ [‘cierń krwawy, / Co się w wawrzyn przerzucił, skroń wieszczą oplata / Gdy go całun powija pieluchami sławy’].²⁶ Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki hypothesised that the leaf was sent to Siemieński by Norwid.²⁷ There is no date under the poem *Na liść z wieńca Tassa*, published in the volume of *Poezje* [Poems] in 1863, and then in *Dziela* [Works] in 1882. In *Poezje*, it sits next to the poem *Do Teofila Lenartowicza bawiącego w Rzymie* [To Teofil Lenartowicz sojourning in Rome], which suggests that the former poem is also linked with Lenartowicz.²⁸ The poet, who came to Rome in 1855, also visited San Onofrio, which he later documented in a letter (or minor long poem), *Torquatowi Tasso na San Onofrio* [To Torquato Tasso at San Onofrio], included in *Album włoski* [Italian album] from 1870.²⁹ Despite circumstances that could point to Lenartowicz, it seems highly probable that it was Norwid who sent Siemieński the leaf. Albeit, not necessarily in 1856, which Gomulicki leaned towards, as did the authors of *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida* [A diary of life and work of Cyprian Norwid] (in a poem from that year, *Duch Adama i skandal* [Spirit of Adam and scandal], one can find a simile of a laurel and a thorn). Another date also cannot be completely ruled out – a date from the end of the 1840s. Siemieński was, after all, the recipient of Norwid’s *Zarysy z Rzymu* [Sketches from Rome], written in 1848. The courtly suffering of Tasso, displayed in the work by Siemieński, resonates with the revolutionary, anti-feudal atmosphere of the late 1840s. It is impossible to guess what comment accompanied the leafy parcel from Rome. However, it probably did not contain a comparison of a laurel leaf to a thorn, if it put the poem’s author in a polemical mood: ‘This is not a leaf, but a bloody thorn’ [‘To nie liść, a jedno cierń krwawy’].

As to when Diotima received the leaf gifted to her, we also cannot be sure. It would seem to correspond with the letter to her mother, Magdalena Łuszczewska,

26 L. Siemieński, “Na liść z wieńca Tassa. Przysłany z Rzymu” [On the leaf from Tasso’s wreath. Sent from Rome], in: idem, *Poezje* [Poems] (Leipzig: 1863), p. 243.

27 J.W. Gomulicki, “Norwid a Tasso” [Norwid and Tasso], in: *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny* [Neophilological Quarterly] issue 3 (1955).

28 L. Siemieński, “Do Teofila Lenartowicza bawiącego w Rzymie” [To Teofil Lenartowicz sojourning in Rome], in: idem, *Poezje* [Poems], p. 244. In *Dziela* [Works] (v. 9) the piece *Na liść z wieńca Tassa* has different neighbours. It is followed by *Do*** [To ---]* (L. Siemieński, *Dziela* [Works], vol. 9 (Warsaw: 1882), pp. 150–151).

29 Lenartowicz mentioned an oak, underneath which Tasso would sit with Saint Philip, as well as the wreath of the deceased poet (T. Lenartowicz, *Album włoski* [Italian album] (Lviv: 1870), pp. 47, 49). Lenartowicz added a footnote to the poem, about his participation in the ceremony of moving Tasso’s remains from one grave to another in 1858 (ibidem, pp. 184–185).

dated 1855, in which the author refers to Diotima's improvisational performances, clad in a wreath and 'appropriate dress': 'not everyone is allowed to be a poet without a wreath and toga, or rather (which is especially true here): NOT ALL TIMES AND SOCIETIES ALLOW ONE TO BE A POET WITHOUT A WREATH AND A TOGA' ['nie każdemu wolno być poetą bez wieńca i togi, albo raczej (co tu jest szczególnie prawdziwym): NIE W KAŻDYM CZASIE I SPOŁECZEŃSTWIE WOLNO JEST BYĆ POETĄ BEZ WIENCA I TOGI'].³⁰ A theatrical costume was used to distance one from the audience and thus to offer protection from unsympathetic critics. The author of the letter closed his epistolary argument with a humorous punchline: 'Romans believed – that lightning does not strike a laurel tree – I do not know, whether lightning does not indeed strike a laurel, and in truth I doubt that, but the fact that laurel fragrance does deter repugnant insects is a thing even Professor Waga³¹ will not deny' ['Rzymianie wierzyli – że piorun w drzewo laurowe nie uderza – nie wiem, czy piorun, owszem, wątpię nawet, ale że woń laurowa wstrętne oddala owady, to rzecz, której i Pan Waga nie zaprzeczy'].³² Did the 'leaf from Tasso's wreath' constitute the second punchline: a sign of approval for the 'pomp' of the poetess? A leaf to her theatrical wreath? A leaf from the real (if not quite) wreath of a real poet?

The leaf sent to Diotima weaves itself into the exchange of correspondence and poems between Norwid and the Warsaw poet (or, with Magdalena Łuszczewska) from the 1850s and the early 1860s.³³ First, the poet addressed the poem *Rzeczywistość i marzenia (!)* [Reality and dreams (!)], from America (1854) to Jadwiga. Then, there was the aforementioned 1855 letter, and she, on the other hand, replied by letter and poem (1857). He then reacted to this reaction with a letter (1858) and two poems. Their correspondence gained a public dimension when Diotima provided her letter to the initiators of the 'commemorative collection' *Po ziarnie* [Grain by grain], published in 1861,³⁴ attaching Norwid's poem *Odpowiedź* [Reply], a slightly later

30 C. Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 8, p. 243. Wreath as an attribute of improvisational performances by Diotima was displayed on the title page of *Improwizacje i poezje* [Improvisations and poems] (Warsaw: 1854), as per the design by Juliusz Kossak (lithograph by Maksymilian Fajans).

31 Antoni Waga (1799–1890) – Polish naturalist, traveler, writer and educator, teacher of Norwid (editor's note).

32 C. Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 8, p. 243.

33 Olaf Krykowski wrote on the epistolary-poetic relations of Norwid and Diotima (idem, "Deotyma – 'Dziesiąta Muza' Norwida" [Diotima – 'the tenth Muse' of Norwid], *Studia Norwidiana* (2020), vol. 38, pp. 5–20), pointing to the two phases of the poet's attitude to the 'bardess': the first was definitely affirmative, and the second (from the 1860s) – critical. The scholar did not take into consideration the leaf in the relationship between them.

34 *Po ziarnie* [Grain by grain] was to support, materially and morally, Walerian Tomaszewicz, writer and philologist affected by loss of eyesight. The initiators of the collection, however, had to change the intention from charitable to commemorative, due to the writer's death.

work than *Deotymie. Odpowiedź* [To Diotima. A reply]. She also mentioned the illustration element of this exchange: 'Shortly afterwards I received the most pretty drawing, sketched by a masterful hand and enveloped with evangelical breath'.³⁵

The 'laurel' leaf with an inscription pointing to the year 1847, when Norwid made it his property and kept it for nearly a decade among his humble belongings, despite changes of address, including a journey across the Ocean, was transformed, however, through the act of gifting. In its original form, it was not a typical souvenir of a tourist; it had an autocommunicative meaning: musing on a leaf, Norwid regarded himself in the tragic fate of Tasso. He was asking about his own fate. Although the poet later wrote in a poem beginning with an incipit [Klaskaniem mając obrzękłe prawice] [(Their hands swollen from clapping)], that he took 'no single leaf, nor its tiniest tooth' ['listka jednego, ni żabczka w liściu']³⁶ from the 'laurels' of 'giants' (transl. by D. Borchardt, New York: 2011), his predecessors in poetry, the leaf of Tasso, which he adopted, could still play a role in verbalising this metaphorical refusal to inherit (even if unconscious, or not made conscious straight away). The laurel leaf gifted to Diotima meant something else now: it corresponded with the epistolary and poetic variants of the theme. It resonated with, among others, a fragment of a 'reply' to the poem, in which the female poet revered Norwid as 'bard-sculptor-painter', likening him to Michelangelo Buonarroti. The addressee reacted to this ill-timed 'crowning' with a rhetorically exaggerated and 'insincere' concern:

Drzę i o Ciebie – Sapho!... Któż słyszał albowiem	For you, too, am I concerned – Sappho!... For whoever heard
Wawrzynu liściem, ż y w y c h pot ocierać z czoła?	Of wiping the sweat off the brow of the living with a bay leaf?
Kto słyszał równać (tego nigdy nie-do-powiem)	Whoever heard of comparing (this I will-never-say)
Do Salvatora, albo Michała Anioła!...	To Salvatore, or Michelangelo!...
Prze-bóg, proroki tylko (chwilami wolnemi	Great-god, prophets merely (from time to time
Kamieniowane) z pompą oddawane ziemi,	Stoned) with pomp offered to the earth,
Ludzie, dla których ż y w e obowiązki znikły,	People, for whom the living duties are no more,
Ci, co innego! – takim laury kwitnąć zwykły.	Those – that is different! – for those the laurels are used to flourish. ³⁷

35 "List Deotymy do Cypriana Norwida" [Letter from Diotima to Cyprian Norwid], in: *Po ziarnie. Zbiorek pamiątkowy* [Grain by grain. A commemorative collection], published by J. Prusinowski, M. Krupowicz (Warsaw: 1861), p. 126.

36 C. Norwid, "[Klaskaniem mając obrzękłe prawice]" [(Their hands swollen from clapping)], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 2, p. 15. A different leaf-gift appears in the poem "[Daj mi wstążkę błękitną]" [Give me a blue ribbon]: 'I would sometimes be gifted with small things by God / A fallen leaf, stuck to the window pane' (idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 4, pp. 541–542). A leaf, if small and elusive, was enlarged thanks to the attention given to it. In the poem *Rzeczywistość i marzenia (!)* [Reality and dreams (!)], Norwid warned Diotima against 'Grand-masters', who will give her a 'curse of the laurels' (idem, "Rzeczywistość i marzenia (!)", in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 1, p. 225).

37 Idem, "Deotymie. Odpowiedź" [To Diotima. A reply], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 1, p. 288 (emphasis as per the edition cited). When I read about wiping off sweat with a bay leaf, I remember a passage from *Zwolon*, which mentions the wiping off of blood with a laurel leaf (idem, "Zwolon", in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 4, p. 53).

Tasso, not mentioned by name, fits closely into the category of ‘stoned’ in life and buried with ‘pomp’.

In the poem printed in the ‘commemorative collection’, Norwid again refused to take the laurels from the poetess: ‘And all that I draft or make from bronze to-day, / Is but like a nail hammered into a wall / By a prisoner – someone else has the laurel and a hope / I – but one honour – being a man’ [‘A dziś co kreślę albo z brązu leję, / To tylko jak w murze ćwiekiem / Więzień – kto inny ma laur i nadzieję / Ja – jeden zaszczyt – być człkiem’].³⁸ The comparison to a prisoner could also refer to Tasso’s biography as a distant backdrop.

The leaf from San Onofrio, in the context of the relationship with Diotima, becomes an ironic commentary to the esteem the ‘bardess’ showed him, at first privately and then in public. The gifted ‘bay’ provokes a sarcastic disdain for that reaction as something contrary to the customary disregard for the work of artists during their lifetime. In the second poem, on the other hand, the poet did not consent to being likened to Buonarroto, revealing a non-culpable unproductivity of the artist from the ‘North’.

Bay or laurel leaves that crown one ironically appear more frequently in Norwid’s works. In his early poems, the ‘desire’ for them is strongly off-putting (*Marzenie* [Dream]).³⁹ It is not a worthy motivation for either actions (*Dumanie* [Musing]) or works (*Adam Kraft*). In his letters, Norwid writes with disdain about the ‘crowned’ writers who enjoy popularity. ‘Mature’, overly grown bay trees from the aforementioned poem [Klaskaniem mając obrzękłe prawice] [Their hands swollen with clapping], deplete native soil.

But different works are possible. The ‘village nightingale’, *gęślarz* [lute] in *Wspomnienie wioski* [Memory of the village], does not sing for applause: to it, ‘every leaf is a bay leaf’ [‘liść każdy jest liściem wawrzynu’].⁴⁰ We find an unusual example of the laurel theme in *Tyrtej*. The eponymous character is crowned by accident, in a way by nature itself: he gets entangled in laurel bushes. Egeina is telling her visually impaired husband what has happened: ‘There is no more path beyond... I allowed you to walk as per the impulse that carried you, and here you have your whole forehead entwined in laurel branches’ [‘Ścieżki już nie ma dalej... pozwoliłam ci kroczyć na wolę niosącego cię zapędu, aż oto uwikłałeś całe czoło w gałęzie lauru’].⁴¹ She draws a more general observation from this small occurrence: ‘Indeed, the grand poets left a vacancy too great in their wake...’. She speaks this thought

38 C. Norwid, “Odpowiedź” [Reply], in: *Po ziarnie*, p. 128.

39 Idem, “Marzenie” [Dream], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 1, p. 23.

40 Idem, “Wspomnienie wioski” [Memory of a village], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 1, p. 13.

41 Idem, “Tyrtej. Za Kulisami” [Tyrtej. Behind the scenes], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 4, p. 495.

while ‘removing his [Tyrtej’s – E. D.-P.] hair from the leaf’ [‘odczepiając mu [Tyrteji – E. D.-P.] włosy z liścia’],⁴² which we find out from the stage directions.

In the passage quoted, a laurel is presented with a dual meaning: as a symbol of fame and as a plant in its native environment, in countries of the South. We often come across that second sense in the works of Norwid, who spent several years in his youth in the ‘land interspersed with laurels’ (Italy⁴³), and who then returned there in his memory and imagination. In one of the poems referring to this sojourn, he contrasted the sun and shade of the South with that of foggy North: ‘If only the sunshine, as it does in Sorrento, / Could through the laurel leaves glide in a meandering way: / Bah!... but here, it is all enshrouded in mists’ [‘Żeby to słońca blask, tak jak w Sorrento, / Przez liście lauru się prześlizgał kręto: / Bah!... ale wszystko tu owiane mgłami’] (*W albumie* [In an album]).⁴⁴ We can find the shade of broad laurel leaves (and also laurel trees in bloom) in *Białe kwiaty* [White flowers]:

Niebieskiej uroczystości cisze są w Albano za Rzymem, nad jeziorem, które odbija w sobie Castel Gandolfo – tam, kiedy zadzwonią na Angelus, a niebo jest chmurki nieświadome i jezioro nieświadome zmarszczki, laury wtedy wiśniowe nieporuszonymi i szerokimi liśćmi swymi cień, jak one cichą, rozrzucają po ścieżce krętej nad wodą, a przy skale, jak gzyms u gmachu starożytnego, uczepionej.

The stillnesses are of a solemn blue in Albano, outside Rome, by a lake, which bears upon itself the reflection of Castel Gandolfo – there, when they ring the bells for Angelus, and the sky is unaware of a little cloud, and the lake unaware of a wrinkle, then the cherry-coloured laurels, with their unmoved and broad leaves, cast a shadow, silent as they are, upon a path that is winding by the water, and by a rock, clinging on like a ledge to an ancient building.⁴⁵

These leaves also cast a shadow in *Quidam*: ‘Under these laurels, whose broad leaf / Is cut-through with rays of multi-coloured lamps’ [‘Pod tymi laury, których liść szeroki / Lamp różnobarwnych złamały promienie’].⁴⁶ Elsewhere, we can still read about the ‘wild aroma of laurel’ [‘dzikiej lauru woni’].⁴⁷ Laurel trees, although common in landscapes of the South, catch one’s attention in Norwid’s works with the intensity of their being, thanks to the perception highlighting the play of light and shadow, heat and chill, the depth of colour (most often red), and dizzying strength of their aroma. In this context, laurel wreaths do not partake in the contrasting of cultural and natural order. In the tragedy *Kleopatra i Cezar* [Cleopatra and Caesar], the eponymous heroine explains the background of the tradition of

42 Ibidem.

43 C. Norwid, “Noc tysiączna i druga” [Night one thousand and two], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 4, p. 100.

44 Idem, “W albumie” [In an album], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 1, p. 154.

45 Idem, “Białe kwiaty” [White flowers], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 6, p. 192.

46 Idem, “Quidam”, in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 3, p. 86.

47 Idem, “Próby” [Attempts], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 3, p. 475.

wearing wreaths: ‘the village experience instructed / To cool down one’s temples with leaves – and hence the wreaths / During feasts, adopted still today...’ [‘doświadczenie pouczyło gminne / Liśćmi ochładzać skronie – i stąd wieńce poszły / W czas uczt, przyjęte do dziś...’].⁴⁸ She also asks a doctor about the type of wreath that would soothe a ‘heaviness of a head over-used’ [‘ciężkość głowy nadużytej’]. The response-prescription she gets is that it is bay, though slightly poisonous, ivy, as it is the most cooling, etc. In Southern countries, a laurel wreath has a symbolic meaning that is closely linked with its use, as dictated by the climate. Where the laurel leaf is called ‘bay’ leaf⁴⁹ – it is completely different: ‘laurels are thorns’ [‘laur to ciernie’].

The leaf from Tasso’s wreath is a symbolic summary of the fate of the poet, though, at the same time, it does not cease to be a leaf, a part of a plant. It can still be seen and touched in this natural form. Like the leaves from 1846, this laurel leaf was also included in the hybrid syntax encompassing words and gestures, used, however, for objects of a larger scale: letters and poems. Like them, it first fulfilled the role of autocommunication, before it became a present for Diotima: something of a conversational talisman, which was supposed to protect her from bad luck, and simultaneously directing towards a path of mature artistry.

Ivy

Norwid mentioned other keepsake leaves that had a significance for him when he wrote to Bronisław Zaleski on 29 October 1879: ‘Upon an ivy leaf – added to the first: from the grave of dear departed Zofia – I look, writing’ [‘Na liść bluszczu – dodany do pierwszego: z grobu drogiej pamięci Zofii – patrząc, piszę’].⁵⁰ I will focus on the part most clear to me, that is ‘from the grave... of Zofia’ [‘z gro-

48 Idem, “Kleopatra i Cezar”, p. 92.

49 In the play *Aktor* [Actor] we can read as follows:

‘Mnie błogo,
Ze rozliczne są sławy, bo równe być mogą.
Owszem – gdy jeden człowiek swym talentem
może

Rozgrzać choćby na chwilę lodowate morze,
To przypomina furję sceny w Neapolu:
Kraj, gdzie wawrzynów nie zwą
liśćmi-bobkowymi,
Ziemia się sama wieńczy... nie, jak łazarz, z bólu
Przykłada liść do rany dłońmi zwątlalymi...

– Sława powinna zdrową mieć płeć – lica hoże –
Swobodę w ruchach...

I feel blissful
That there are various fames, for they can be equal.
Indeed – when one man can with his talent

Warm up, if only for a moment, an ice-cold sea,
Then he is reminiscent of the scene of fury in Naples:
A country, where laurel trees are not called ‘bay-leaves’,

The earth crowns itself... not, like Lazarus, out of pain
Pressing leaves against the wound with weathered
hands...

– Fame should be of a healthy sex – fresh complexion –
An ease of movement...

(Idem, “Aktor” [Actor], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 4, p. 441).

50 Idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 10, p. 135.

bu [...] Zofii’], by implication: Zofia Węgierska. She was a friend of both the writer and the addressee of the letter, a hard-working Paris chronicler for Polish magazines (supplement to *Czas* [Time], *Biblioteka Warszawska* [Warsaw Library], *Gazeta Codzienna* [The Daily Newspaper], *Kurier Wileński* [Vilnius Courier], *Bluszcz* [Ivy]), who died on 8 November 1869. Therefore, Norwid still remembered her over the years. Not long after Zofia’s death, he pressed Zaleski, who did print-making, to record on paper the image of her flat at rue Laval 25 and publish it as a wood carving or etching. In the next letter, he praised the small living space of the departed over the drawing rooms of Polish aristocratic women, granting her the awareness of a posthumous existence of national community: ‘One had to be truly a posthumous daughter of the Nation without a public life and with vanishing literature, so as to do, with one branch of ivy picked in a cemetery somewhere and with four walls, that, which no senator’s chamber full of senator’s means can do!’ [‘Trzeba było być prawdziwie że córką pogrobową Narodu bez życia publicznego i z zatracaną literaturą, aby z jednej gałęzi bluszczu urwanego gdzieś na cmentarzu i z czterech murów zrobić to, czego żadna komnata senatorskiego pochodzenia i środków senatorskich pełna uczynić nie umie!’].⁵¹ He also prophesised about the destruction of a community which, apart from individual cases, does not understand its condition: ‘Such a community will not live, for just is the hand of Him, for whom there never was and never will be anything tiny and anything grand’ [‘Taka społeczność istnieć nie będzie, albowiem sprawiedliwą jest prawica Tego, dla którego nic małego i nic wielkiego nigdy nie było ani bywa’].⁵² If one were to juxtapose the funerary letter (with ivy as a symbol of the afterlife) and the leaf from the grave of Zofia, then there is an apparent closeness of the form of remembering her with the occasional hermeneutics of her drawing room. Norwid was rather alone in his reading of the flat called *Sofiówka* [Zofia’s place]. Shortly after the death of Węgierska, Leon Kapliński wrote about the lady of the house, and the location itself, in a very different way:

51 Idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 9, p. 433 (emphasis as per the edition cited). Ivy also adorned Assunta’s dwelling:

‘Trudno napotkać przyjemniejsze wnętrza:
Bez-przymusowo owdzie wszystko czyste,
Zza ściany przyszedł bluszcz i się wypiętrza
W leniwe wience, w siatki przezroczyście,
Których latorośl jedna drugiej krętsza –
Aż ledwo oko do białych ścian trafia,
Gdzie malowana świeci litografia...’

‘It is hard to come by interiors more pleasant:
Everything is effortlessly clean there,
Some ivy came from beyond the wall and lifts itself up
Into languid wreaths, into sheer nets,
Of which each branch is more meandering than the next –
So much so, the eye struggles to find the white of walls,
Where the painted lithograph shines...’

(Idem, “Assunta”, in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 3, p. 277).

52 Idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 9, p. 433 (emphasis as per the edition cited).

żyła zawsze samotnie, i zaledwie kilku bliższych przyjaciół znało ten maleńki, powabny salonik, na ulicy Laval, gdzie wszystko ładem, układem i smakiem odpowiadało estetycznemu poczuciu, zawsze uprzejmej dla odwiedzających gospodyni. Tam niekiedy w godzinie wieczornej, jedynie od pracy wolnej – wśród rycin mistrzów, wśród medalionów, szkiców, posążków i biustów, oplecionych pnącym się po ścianach bluszczem – wybijała w rozmowach żywych i opowiadaniach lepsza połowa tego świetnego talentu, tej niezwykłej duszy, którą czytelnicy z jednej tylko znali strony.

she always lived alone, and only a few closer friends knew this tiny, charming drawing room, on Laval street, where everything was aesthetically pleasing with its neatness, layout and taste of the hostess ever-kind to visitors. In this place, sometimes, in the evening hours, just free from work – among the sketches of masters, among locketts, drafts, figurines and busts, entwined in ivy trailing along the walls – shot through in animated conversation the better half of this great talent, this unique soul, of which the readers only knew one side.⁵³

The author of the quoted article emphasised the private character of the interior, and the radiating of the hostess's personality onto its scenery.

Interestingly, in the surviving letters of Węgierska to Norwid, ivy can be easily overlooked, due to all the many other mentions of plants, mostly flowering types. The small drawing room, which she herself writes about, smells of roses: 'In *Sofiówka* there is plenty of sunshine and roses' ['W Sofiówce dużo słońca i róż']; 'Musing in this way, I took the weight of boredom all the way to *Sofiówka*. Here, having quickly breathed the smell of roses on the doorstep, I found next to them your pink letter' ['Tak dumając aż do Sofiówki niosłam brzemień naleciałych nudów. Tu, zaraz w progu odetchnąwszy wonią róż, obok nich znalazłam Twój różowy bilecik'],⁵⁴ and Zofia sends Norwid flowers all the time: for example, orange blossom, but also daisy, tuberose and other, unnamed ones, subverting at the same time the social norm according to which it is rather the man who gives presents to the woman.⁵⁵ Kapliński mentions the botanical passion of Węgierska, inherited from her father:

Młodziutka dziewczyna pod przewodnictwem ojca rzuciła się z zapalem do uczenia botaniki. Nie było na grzędach ogrodu, ani na łąkach, ani na niwach wiejskich jednego kwiatu, jednej rośliny, którejby dorastająca panienka nie umiała nazwać po polsku i po łacinie. To upodobanie do przyrody, do kwiatów, roślin zachowała Zofia przez całe swe życie, a można by nawet zaważyć, że znajomość naukowa i języ-

The young girl, led by her father, threw herself with passion into studying botany. There was not a single flower, a single plant in the garden, in meadows, or in the village fields that the adolescent lady could not name in Polish and in Latin. This love of nature, of flowers, plants, Zofia kept her entire life, and one could even notice that the scientific and linguistic knowledge of Polish flora later shone through under

53 L. Kapliński, "Zofia Węgierska. Studium literackie" [Zofia Węgierska. A literary study], in: *Rocznik Towarzystwa Historyczno-Literackiego w Paryżu* [Annual of the Historical-Literary Society in Paris] (1869), p. 230. Wincenty Korotyński, in a obituary after Węgierska's death, also mentioned her Parisian flat: 'There, surrounded by piles of books and magazines, in a solitary, quiet room dappled with flowers, she would write her reports, the loss of which is hard to replace' (W. Korotyński, "Zofia Węgierska", in: *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* [The Illustrated Weekly] no. 101 (1869), p. 274).

54 „Listy Zofii Węgierskiej do Cypriana Norwida” [Letters of Zofia Węgierska to Cyprian Norwid], ed. I. Kleszczowa, in: *Pamiętnik Literacki* issue 3 (1976), pp. 194, 196.

55 As is evident from the letter to Joanna Kuczyńska, Norwid also kept a fair few plants at his place (rue Lallier 3): 'I could not really leave for lands of myrtle and cypresses, but instead I brought into my atelier myrtle, laurels, carnations etc., which blossomed every day, and now they are inside and green' (C. Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 10, p. 436).

kowa flory polskiej przebiła się później pod piórem piszącej, w niektórych opisach, wrażeniach, a nawet w całym stylu, który na kształt grząd ogrodowych mienił się nieraz barwami najrzadszych i najpowabniejszych kwiatów.

the writer's quill, in some descriptions, impressions, and even in her whole style, which, like garden patches, was shimmering with the colours of the rarest, most graceful blooms.⁵⁶

It is therefore not a surprise, that she would always weave flowers into letters. There was also a plant theme in a dream Zofia had, which she re-told to Norwid in the final letter, when her illness intensified:

wnet dogoniłam Ciebie odchodzącego w ciemnym korytarzu i wnet wyszliśmy na jasność księżycową do ogrodów pełnych najmisteczniejszych woni – i tak pojąc się wszelako, szliśmy aż do kwitnącego myrtu, gdzieś usiadł i zaczął mi czytać z wielkiej księgi takie prześliczne rzeczy, jakich na ziemi nikt nie wygłasza...

I soon caught up with you, as you were leaving in a dark corridor, and we soon went out into the lunar brightness, into gardens full of the most mystical fragrances – and thus enjoying ourselves, we went to the blooming myrtle, where you sat down and started to read to me from a great book such beautiful things nobody else on Earth says...⁵⁷

Judging by the myrtle, this garden must have been in Italy, which Norwid once characterised as a country where 'there are no other trees, only cypresses, myrtles, olive and laurel' ['innych drzew nie ma, jeno cyprysy, mirty, oliwa i laur'].⁵⁸

Considering Zofia's epistolary habits, in which letters mixed with flowers, the ivy leaf from her grave constituted a kind of closure of this exchange – the final floral gift.

In relation to Węgierska's passion for flora, the fragment of *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On freedom of speech] by Norwid, read out in 1868 and printed straight after thanks to, among other things, the endeavours of his friend, is puzzling. In the relevant passage, *Rzecz...* is placed in opposition to poetry, likened to a herbarium:

Ale – któryż to pisarz? księgarz? lub czytelnik?
Tą się zabawi rzeczą?...
...kiedy to nie zielnik
Złożony ze stokroci i tych roślin wonnych,
Które kwitną u Wieszców w ich rytmach
bez-zgonnych
Kiedy to nie jest żaden z tych złotych pejzaży,
Gdzie babilońska wierzbą nad wodą się skarży
[...]
Ani zieloność miękka, ni bluszcz – grobów syty;
Tylko – spólny interes *rzeczy-pospolitej*!

But – which *writer*? *Bookseller*? Or *reader*?
Will entertain this?...
...when it is not a herbarium
Composed of daisies and those fragrant plants,
Which bloom at the Bards' in their death-less
rhythms
When it is not any one of those golden landscapes,
Where Babylonian willow complains above the
water (...)
Or not the soft greenery, nor ivy – satiated on graves;
But – the common cause of *Res-Publica*!⁵⁹

56 L. Kapliński, "Zofia Węgierska...", p. 220.

57 "Listy Zofii Węgierskiej...", p. 207.

58 C. Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 8, p. 278.

59 Idem, "Rzecz o wolności słowa" [On freedom of speech], in: idem, *Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. 4, eds. S. Sawicki, P. Chlebowski (Lublin: 2011), p. 247 (emphasis as per the edition cited). A herbarium did not always have a negative connotation for Norwid. In the meta-textual poem *Finis* from *Vade-mecum*,

Could it have been the visits to Węgierska's rose-scented drawing room that provoked him, contrarily, to oppose 'florid' poetry? He seemed to have resisted the alluring charm of *Sofiówka*, the femininity of the hostess, intimate atmosphere, so as to promote, contrary to those, the issues vital to the 'common cause of *Rzeczpospolita*'. Węgierska did not hold his tirade about the 'daisy' against him. She would keenly adopt the role of a pupil in the presence of a master, she even admitted to feeding on his broad erudition, and she wrote about it, referring once again to plant-insect associations: 'Upon your knowledge I live, like a silkworm on a leaf' ['Na twej wiedzy jak jedwabnik na liściu żyję'].⁶⁰

But Węgierska's drawing room could also play a different part in the imagery from *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On freedom of speech]. This is because the long poem concludes with an imaginary journey to the ivy-infested ruins of Palmyra. This ivy, however, does not portray the powers of nature reclaiming a place, where all that is left of a civilisation are ruins, but creates a harmonious whole with them – it fills in the holes left by time, like an architectural ornament:

Księżyc stał za strun owych skamieniałych kratą,	The moon stood behind the bars of these petrified strings,
Bluszcz dopełniał, gdzie linię czułeś zbyt szczyrbatą,	Ivy smoothed out where the line was too jagged,
I jako dłutem ryty, szedł przez białe łomy,	And as if carved with chisel, it led through white rock fragments,
Lekszy od ornamentów, równie nieruchomy. Nakreślony harmonią tak, że niepodobna,	Lighter than ornaments, yet just as still. Sketched with harmony in such a fashion, that it is impossible
By zeń bez szwanku gałąź odprysnęła drobna, Kto zaś nie barbarzyńiec, ten w ruiny tumie	A small branch could break away with no damage, And he who is not a barbarian, he will not in this ruin cathedral
Bluszczu nie tknie, lub całość mniej odeń rozumie!	Lay a finger on the ivy, or else he understands it all less than it does! ⁶¹

Norwid would look upon ivy with an artist's eye. Already in the earlier times he was interested in the templates of forms in architectural ornamentation:

Wiemy, jak Callimachus, rzeźbiarz grecki (koszyk pelen akantu na grobie dziewczyny młodej widząc), kapitelowi korynckiemu nieśmiertelne dał kształty. Wiemy, że jońskiego kapitelu zakręcone na skro-	We know how Callimachus, Greek sculptor (seeing a basket full of Acanthus on a young girl's grave), gave immortal shape to the Corinthian capital. We know, that the curved plaits on the temples of the
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he compared the author's 'I' to a 'Flora-scholar' compiling a herbarium. The comparison is surprising, considering how little space is given to the kingdom of plants in the entire collection:

'Tak Flory-badacz, dopełniwszy zielnik, Gdy z poziomego mchu najmniejszym liściem Szeptął o śmierciach tworów, chce nad wnijskiem	'Thus the Flora-scholar, on completing a herbal, When from horizontal moss with a tiniest leaf He whispered of deaths of creations, wants, above the entry
Księgi podpisać się... pisze... śmiertelnik!	To the book, to sign his name... he writes... a mortal!

(Idem, "Finis", in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 2, p. 139).

60 "Listy Zofii Węgierskiej...", p. 199.

61 C. Norwid, "Rzecz o wolności słowa", p. 271.

niach dwa warkocz z jednej pisarze z stroju dziewic, drudzy z rogów barana ofiarnego (na świątyni węglach zawieszonych) nie bez przyczyn wywodzą. Wiemy, iż kariatydy są brankami z Kariatis, zdobitych pomnikami tryumfalnymi – wiemy nareszcie, że lombardzkich kolumn strzelne kibicie z longobardzkich włócznie i namiotów w północnych Włoch pałace marmurowe architektury sztuką przeszły.

Ionic order are seen by some writers, not without reason, as the dress of virgins, and by others as sacrificial ram's horns (hung upon the quoin of a temple). We know, that a caryatid are the maidens of Kariatis, adorning triumphant statues – we know, finally, that the shooting strings of Lombardian columns turned from the Longobard's spears and tents into the marble palaces of northern Italy, through the art of architecture.⁶²

If Norwid was interested in the rooting of forms in life, one can assume that in his practice he also stayed true to this role. It would seem that there is a relationship between the ivy complementing the ruin of Palmyra and the ivy the poet wrote about after the death of Węgierska, turning a plant brightening up a drawing room into a lively principle of its existence. Thus, he ennobled the humble flat by Laval street, but did he not falsify its atmosphere at the same time?

LEAF-LET, LEAF-LETS, LEAVES

The leaf-lets picked by Norwid on his way out of prison in 1846, preserved to this day in their physical form (and also available via computer thanks to digitalisation) as well as others, which survived in the 'Book of Memorabilia', and additionally, one among Diotima's epistolaries and the second, which left a mark in the letter to Bronisław Zaleski: I considered these objects worthy of attention and reflection, due to their liminal existence between the orders of nature and culture, between trans-verbal behaviours and their form, and value recorded in the shape of a communication, addressed to oneself or to another person. Gathering leaves, deciding on keeping them as meaningful objects, Norwid acted as an unmistakable product of his age, in which the culture of memento flourished, biographical tourism was undertaken, as well as herborising...⁶³ At the same time, however, he did it for personal reasons and reasons directed at him (or, in his presence) in the first instance, and thus reasons that are hard, and sometimes even impossible, to decode from the outside. Paradoxically, it is precisely the limited readability of the gestures discussed here and the strong opposition to interpretation that seemed to me an epistemically promising starting point for reflection, a reflection that would also

62 Idem, "Do obywatela Dmochowskiego – rzeźbiarza" [To citizen Dmochowski – sculptor], in: idem, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 6, p. 369.

63 Herborising, or collecting and drying of plants for educational purposes, was something Jean Jacques Rousseau was devoted to in the later years of his life. However, as stated by Piotr Śniedziwski, it had a melancholy and less botanical character. See: P. Śniedziwski, *Melancholijne spojrzenie* [A melancholy view] (Cracow: 2011).

encompass the leaf theme in Norwid's literary work, widely branched out and usually original.

Small, fragile and separate artefacts from 'Book of Memorabilia' allow, as I believe, for a refreshing approach to the Norwid imaginarium, thanks to the ability to cross-over the event-focussed attitude with a tabular one, ordering the verbal resources and artistic devices of the poet. Every leaf begs to be seen within a specific lyrical or fictional situation, and then to be related to the categories of approaches which emerge through the course of reading the writer's (and artist's) entire oeuvre. A differentiation clearly comes through of modifier leaf-lets (usually appearing in the plural) and non-modifier ones – singular. Somebody who notices an unnamed 'leaf-let', presents oneself as an enthusiast of marginalia, of transient, chance phenomena, prone to be lost or overlooked. 'Leaf-lets' defined in terms of genre, of a symbolism fixed in tradition, incorporate the author who uses them into the centuries-old universe of meanings. Thus, in Norwid's work, there is a co-existence of the leaf theme, a Romantic theme⁶⁴, so to speak, linked with elusive emotional states of the subject, as well as the classic laurels, ivies, olive branches... In which I see an apparent – and tangible – character of a transitional age.

*Translated by Maria Helena Bryś
verified by Jerzy Giebułtowski*

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64 Leaves became an important emblem of Romanticism, thanks to *Dziady cz. IV* [*Forefather's Eve pt. 4*]. The Priest addresses Gustaw with a common phrase 'you're trembling like a leaf', children comment on his outlandish dress by saying 'And in his hair, grass, leaves and twigs' (transl. by Ch.S. Kraszewski). In the raving story of the stranger, a fir tree branch turns into a cypress one: '... this was / A cypress seedling merely when I took / It from her hand in parting. Now just look: / I bore it with me, set it in the loam, / Watered it with my tears far from my home – / Just look how it has grown. A sturdy tree, / A thickly leaved sublimity!' (A. Mickiewicz, *Forefather's Eve*, transl. by Ch.S. Kraszewski (London: 2016)). When the Hermit, still not recognised as Gustaw, waves the fir branch in the Priest's and children's faces, a branch which, in his internal world, is a cypress branch grown from a single leaf, the extent to which he is imprisoned within his own imaginings or memories becomes clear.

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ABSTRACT

A note, intriguing in its floristic-verbal hybridity, was preserved in the so-called 'Książka pamiątek' [Book of Memorabilia] by Norwid from 1846. This artefact, fragile in its materiality, recorded the moment when the young poet and artist left Berlin prison. This form of expression, composed of small leaves and words, can be interpreted in the context of the romantic culture of memory, but it also constitutes a case of self-communication (according to the definition by Juriy Lotman) in a unique situation, only retrospectively equipped with the function of commemoration. The floristic-verbal note can also be juxtaposed with several other analogous messages in the body of work by Norwid (a laurel leaf for Diotyma, an ivy leaf from the grave of Zofia Węgierska). It can also be included in the rich topic of plants, significant to Norwid's work, as it turns out, in many ways, from the early to the final years, connecting and transforming in its own way the classical and Romantic imaginarium in the spirit of the transitional era.

KEYWORDS: Cyprian Norwid (1821–1883), autocommunication, plant topics, [Book of Memorabilia]