

life, until eventually the truth of his observations came to full view. Obvious stylistic differences between the “baroque” Norblin and the “classicist” David made scholars overlook some otherwise significant similarities between the works of both artists as regards framing, arrangement of scenes, composition, poses of human figures, etc.

First, the object of consideration is *King Popiel and His Court* [Król Popiel w otoczeniu dworu], the first in a series of illustrations to Ignacy Krasicki’s [satirical poem] *Myszeida*, made in 1777. Thus far, the whole series has been interpreted as a document illustrating the initial stage of Norblin’s discovering the “truth” about the contemporaneous Poland. As it turns out, though, the analysis of the composition indicates that in fact it does not refer to the realities of Poland, but to David’s painting, *Death of Seneca*, which it uniquely transforms, maintaining, however, in the inseparable connection of form and content, some crucial features of the model. Another interpretation focuses on the etching, *Alexander the Great and Diogenes* (1786), which thus far has been treated as another step in the process of Norblin’s abandonment of the academic conventions when – in Porębski and Kępińska’s opinion – a classic theme from ancient history allegedly transforms into a visual critique of the feudal social relations in Poland. Yet, quite on the contrary, the present analysis demonstrates that Norblin’s etching is deeply rooted precisely in the tradition of the Paris Academy. Distinct references to the paintings of David – again *Death of Seneca* and *Belisarius* – are juxtaposed with inspirations with the art of Charles Lebrun: on the one hand, the group of “Apollo Served by Nymphs,” which, according to Lebrun’s drawings, was sculpted by François Girardon, and on the other, the most famous painting of Lebrun, *Persian Queens at the Feet of Alexander*. Inasmuch as in his dialogue with David’s painting Norblin revised the tragic images of the dying Seneca and begging Belisarius, the basis of that revision was not the “truth” of Polish reality, but Lebrun’s models of the representations of the cosseted Apollo and benevolent Alexander, which resulted in the reversal of the meanings of David’s paintings. While the characters painted on the latter’s canvases are unhappy, suffering victims of cruel tyrants, maimed or sentenced to death, Norblin shows total carelessness of Diogenes who ignores the king’s favors. If David’s paintings may be interpreted as accusations of the evil and thoughtless imperial power, against their background Norblin’s *Alexander and Diogenes* appears, on the contrary, as an allegory of the king’s friendly, caring, and benevolent majesty, taking heed of the subjects’ welfare and open to the wisdom of philosophers.

The next analyzed representation by Norblin is his famous vision of *Oath of Allegiance to the Constitution of the Third of May*, thus far considered to have opened a new stage of the artist’s development, when he ultimately rejected the ballast of the French artistic conventions, conveying nothing but the truth of the immediately experienced events. Opposing the interpretations which treat this representation as a documentary record of a specific situation, made “on the spot” by an eyewitness present in the Parliament hall, the author of the essay claims that the painting must have been executed at least a few months later, in the process of revising David’s drawing *Oath at Jeu de Paume*. Norblin’s image of the Chamber of the Senate was constructed in a way that explicitly indicates the absence of the spectator at any place which may be assumed to have been the actual point of view according to the principle of “here and now”. The perspective diagram determines the position of the spectator’s eyes on the level of the window cornice, rather than on that of the galleries, which makes the vantage point quite absurd. The subsequent revisions of the painting’s composition in its versions of 1791, 1797, and 1804-1806 seem to significantly correspond to the changing evaluation of the event, particularly as regards the confrontation of the king and the people represented by the members of parliament and the public. The earliest sketches, thus far considered the closest to “authentic observation” of the event, in fact turn out the most distant from the actual look of the parliament hall and