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**Juliusz Słowacki's Notebook from His Travels to Greece and the East as a
Romantic Open and Syncretic Work.
Translating a Journey into Poetry³**

Abstract

Juliusz Słowacki (1809-1849), together with Adam Mickiewicz, is one of the most important Polish Romantic poets. After the failure of the November Uprising (1830-1831), he lived in Western Europe as a political émigré. He was politically involved in the cause for Polish independence, while also being a profoundly European Romantic poet. He has been hugely influential on Polish literature, as well as on the national imagination of subsequent generations.

This article, resulting from a research and editing project dedicated to Słowacki's travel notebook (*raptularz*), characterises the complex, syncretic nature of the Romantic oeuvre, unifying travel sketches and poetry writing into a highly personal, open whole. The poetry that comes into being during the poet's travel to Greece and the Orient is derived from a holistic experience of places and events. The scholarly work on the manuscript, its material aspect, and the implications of the encounter with the world of which it testifies opens a series of editing and research questions. The appreciation of the Romantic travel as an experience that finds a multimodal expression requires a transdisciplinary approach. On the other hand, Słowacki stands apart from other Polish writers of his time, who focused on consolidating the support for the cause of national independence; as a representative of a European margin, without an independent homeland, he occupies a distinct position in relation to other Oriental travellers; therefore, his work requires a transcultural approach.

Keywords: Travel writing; Romanticism; Polish poetry; multimodal expression; transcultural dimension

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Résumé

L'album de Juliusz Słowacki du voyage en Grèce et en l'Orient comme une œuvre ouverte et syncrétique du Romantisme.

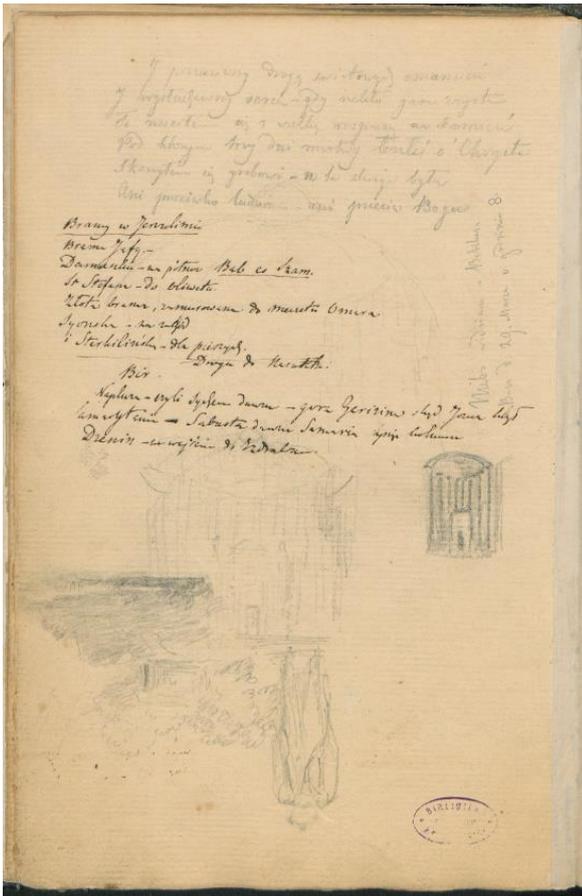
La traduction d'un voyage en poésie

Juliusz Słowacki (1809-1849), à côté d'Adam Mickiewicz, est un des plus importants poètes romantiques polonais. Après la défaite de l'insurrection de novembre (1830-1831), il est devenu un réfugié politique en Europe occidentale. Il était préoccupé par la cause de l'indépendance polonaise, sans perdre le statut d'un poète profondément européen. Il a exercé une influence très profonde sur la littérature polonaise et l'imagination nationale des générations suivantes.

L'article présenté comme le résultat d'un projet de recherche et d'édition, dédié à l'album personnel de voyage (*raptularz*) de Juliusz Słowacki, caractérise la nature complexe et syncrétique de l'œuvre romantique qui unifie les dessins de voyage et la poésie dans une entité ouverte et hautement personnelle. La poésie née pendant le voyage du poète en Grèce et en l'Orient est dérivée de l'expérience holistique des lieux et des événements. Le travail académique sur ce manuscrit, son aspect matériel et les implications de la rencontre avec le monde dont il offre le témoignage ouvre plusieurs questions d'édition et d'interprétation. L'appréciation du voyage romantique comme une expérience qui trouve une expression multimodale exige une approche transdisciplinaire. D'autre part, Słowacki occupe une place particulière en relation aux autres écrivains polonais de son temps, qui accentuaient la nécessité de consolider le support pour l'indépendance nationale ; comme un représentatif d'un marge de l'Europe, dépourvu d'une patrie indépendante, il se différencie par rapport aux autres voyageurs en Orient, ce qui justifie une approche transculturelle.

Mots-clés : Écriture de voyage ; Romantisme ; poésie polonaise ; expression multimodale ; dimension transculturelle

Juliusz Słowacki (1809-1849) – next to Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) – was the greatest and the most important Polish Romantic poet, one of the celebrated “bards”, or “soothsayers” (*wieszczowie*), who helped to preserve the national identity after the partitions of Poland. The figure of Słowacki was surrounded with an almost ritualised admiration. No wonder, thus, that over the past several decades, philological and editing work on the texts of both Mickiewicz and Słowacki defined the main trends in Polish textology; and the most important concepts of Polish editing developed during the research on their works. This editing effort focused not only on major, but also minor manuscripts (i.e. private notes, correspondence, etc.) that were recognised both as important national memorabilia and the documents of the epoch, suitable to become the object of academic study. Among those documents, there are several travel diaries and sketchbooks containing both fragments of poetry and drawings. They provide a unique insight into the creation process in which the inspiration rooted in the existential experience of a voyage becomes poetry. The coexistence of the poetic word and images perceived during the travel, captivated through more or less elaborated sketches and drawings, is a fascinating aspect of that process of almost alchemical transformation of the natural and cultural world into a poetic vision.



Card no. 53 v. The page with listed names of the gates of Jerusalem (in ink) and three drafts of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (in pencil). When the page is upside down, the poet drafted a figure of an unknown man in a long robe (caricature?). On the right, side a note about the sky in Betheshban (Lebanon). At the top of the page a set of verses (in pencil), unpublished by Słowacki, proving the poet's profound spiritual experience during the night spent at the tomb of Jesus. See commentary: Urszula Makowska, Rysunki w Raptularzu wschodnim. Komentarze. – In: *Raptularz wschodni Juliusza Słowackiego. Edycja – studia – komentarze*, vol. 2. Op. cit., p. 449-453.

In the context of the celebration of the great Romantic “soothsayer”, considerable scholarly and public attention has been paid also to travel notes, personal albums, and drawings of Słowacki, and the interest in facsimile editions arouse. In 2009, an important Polish editorial Ossolineum published Słowacki's *Album rysunkowe z podróży na Wschód* [*Album of drawings from the journey to the East*], reproducing not only the early versions of the poems written by the hand of their author, but also a series of sketches and drawings that Słowacki, just like many travellers of his time, liked to produce all along his peregrinations⁴. Meanwhile, yet another travel notebook of the poet, for a long time (for nearly 80 years!) regarded as irretrievably lost, burned during the Second World War, was unexpectedly found in the Russian State Library in Moscow by professor Henryk Głębocki

⁴ Juliusz Słowacki. Ewa Grzęda (ed.). *Album rysunkowe z podróży na Wschód*. Wrocław, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2009.

(Jagiellonian University). This rediscovery was a great sensation in Polish scholarly circles. It gave rise to a research project financed by the National Science Centre, realised at the University of Warsaw. As a result, an facsimile edition of *raptularz* (Romantic travelogue) has been published, accompanied by a carefully prepared critical edition of the texts and two volumes of commentaries, studies and interpretations⁵. Also a dedicated website has been created, facilitating the access of the unspecialised public, including the youth, to the research results⁶. The team included leading researchers and editors of Romantic literature, experts on Słowacki's oeuvre, among other, Jacek Brzozowski and Zbigniew Przychodniak, who are currently working on a new edition of Słowacki's works (the first such broad project of publishing Słowacki's legacy since Juliusz Kleiner's *Dzieła wszystkie*, and one compatible with the latest knowledge on the poet's output). The team also included Marek Troszyński, a pioneer in publishing text drafts from the mystical period that the poet did not publish in his lifetime. He was also the publisher of Słowacki's journal from the late period of his oeuvre⁷. Also historians and art historians were invited to join the team. As the travel notebook is full of visual descriptions of the sites Słowacki visited, historians of Middle Eastern culture, Hellenists, and even an Egyptologist played an important role. The team also brought together young researchers from different disciplines, who contributed with fresh ideas and creativity, also in terms of digital concepts. The team's leader was Maria Kalinowska.

I. Editorial and literary perspectives

The works of Słowacki are a very special, tough challenge for editors. Born in 1809 in Krzemieniec (today: Kremenets in Ukraine), Juliusz Słowacki lived as an émigré in Western Europe from the 1830s. He died in 1849 in Paris. The scholars organise his oeuvre into several periods, considering the most important dividing ridge in his writing to be the so-called mystical turning point (ca. 1842). After this point, radically changing the way he wrote, the poet stopped publishing his works (although he did not stop writing). On the contrary, his creative activity intensified greatly, but he was no longer concerned about his renown as a writer, believing instead that he was fulfilling an important

⁵ *Raptularz wschodni Juliusza Słowackiego*, 3 vol. Warszawa, Wydział „Artes Liberales” Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego – Wydawnictwo DiG – Centrum Polsko-Rosyjskiego Dialogu i Porozumienia – Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, 2019. The detailed account of the manuscript's fate and its rediscovery in the library in Moscow is given by Henryk Głębocki. *Zaginiony raptularz Słowackiego odnaleziony po 70 latach w Moskwie*. – In: *Raptularz wschodni Juliusza Słowackiego*, vol. 2. Op. cit., p. 69-75.

⁶ Project's website: <https://slowacki.al.uw.edu.pl/>

⁷ Juliusz Słowacki. Marek Troszyński (ed.). *Raptularz 1843-1849*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Topos, 1996.

mission of a spiritual nature.

After the mystical turning point that completely changed the way he wrote, Słowacki produced works which he did not finish or close, creating an unusual open world of recurring characters and motifs that connected Europe's mythical heritage with themes from the history of Poland and Europe. All this effort was aimed at discovering the spiritual truth about humankind and history. Building his mystical system and creating a new type of literary work, Słowacki made use of themes from the theology of both Western and Eastern Christianity. Słowacki published very few of the works that we today refer to as mystical. Most of them remained in manuscript form and were organized by editors in accordance with their own understanding of this difficult and multidimensional output. The most important editor of Słowacki's mystical works, but also of the poet's entire oeuvre, was Juliusz Kleiner, whose edition of the complete works – *Dzieła wszystkie* – of Słowacki is still the primary edition of the poet's works used in research and teaching⁸. Other great Polish philologists and editors also worked on editions of Słowacki's output, and their impressive achievements cannot be overestimated.

However, for several decades the work done has come under criticism from the academic community: it has been shown that eminent editors and textologists publishing Słowacki's mystical works, though having great and unquestionable achievements in this area, at the same time distorted them to some extent. They interpreted this output in the way that was the most familiar to each of them, namely in accordance with their own ideas about the works in question, which was obvious but also meant staying within a given editor's own literary horizon. Meanwhile, Słowacki's mystical works overstepped the boundaries of the literary conventions of the time.

A great deal has been written about editors' inevitable and essentially unintentional interference in Słowacki's mystical works. Today we interpret Słowacki's output differently than Juliusz Kleiner or his predecessors did; or, more precisely, we are inclined to organize these works differently than our predecessors. What makes contemporary trends in the editing of Słowacki's works so different from earlier approaches, especially Kleiner's editing project? With substantial simplification, we can risk formulating the following oppositions reflecting this changing approach to Słowacki's mystical output: Kleiner organized Słowacki's works according to set genre and subgenre patterns (Romantic drama, tragedy, epic poem, lyric poetry, etc.), whereas today we can see that Słowacki went beyond this framework and these patterns, making the works impossible to enclose within clear literary criteria. Kleiner aimed to “close” Słowacki's works and fill in the gaps in texts that he considered to be unfinished; today, we try not to use the “unfinished” category in studies on Słowacki's works,

⁸ Juliusz Słowacki. Juliusz Kleiner (ed.). *Dzieła wszystkie*. vol. 1-11. Lwów, 1924–1933. Second edition: vol. 1-18 (vol. 16-18 with Władysław Florian). Wrocław, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1952–1975.

perceiving them as open, multidimensional, sometimes intentionally fragmentary. From the mass of the poet's writing, Kleiner tried to extract the main text and view it in terms of a final text, classifying the other fragments as earlier versions or abandoned variants⁹. Thus, he applied a hierarchy that today's researchers of the mystical output refuse to accept. In 1979, at a session on the mystical Słowacki that brought a breakthrough in contemporary thinking about the poet, an expert on Słowacki and his work, Stefan Treugutt, expressed anxieties that we share also today: "How do we [...] organize this legacy? Imagine a completely passive approach of the researcher, the editor, to Słowacki's late output, the effect of consenting to his attitude, and thus also to his way of writing, and thus a special multi-levelness, an equivalence of every fragment with a whole that is impossible to record [...]"¹⁰. Of course, Treugutt rejected this passivity and contemplated various ways in which this output could be organized in editing; he considered different possibilities, for example organizing "texts with a similar affinity to some aspect of genesian teaching" according to "problem areas"¹¹.

Stefan Treugutt's questions – from 1979 – are also relevant today, as we still face problems related to what he referred to as "genesian philology"¹² (derived from Słowacki's mystical system, called "genesian"), namely the necessity of developing separate, perhaps unique rules for publishing the mystical output, which Treugutt characterizes as follows: "In a series of internal experiments, Słowacki became convinced of the unity of all phenomena, of the spiritual unity of the agentive cause of evolution and the perfection of forms."¹³ It is also worth adding that of course, in 1979, when philologists were debating the special editing challenges faced by publishers of Słowacki's late texts, there were no computers, no digital editions and no internet, whereas the new civilizational situation provides us with new tools which are very useful in this kind of project.

Let us return to the main theme. One could venture to say that the studies that have been produced on Słowacki's mysticism in the research currents emerging in the last years since the conference have influenced the approach toward the editions of his earlier, pre-mystical texts. The emerging editing and textological problems with the special, unique output comprising the works of Słowacki the mystic, as outlined briefly here, have sensitized the researchers to issues related to Słowacki's works that were unfinished, multi-variant, and also to those that were never published and did not function in the social space in the poet's lifetime. Of course, this hypothesis is impossible to prove, but many years of observing the trends in Polish philology lead to the suggestion that there is a

⁹ Cf. Maria Janion, Maria Żmigrodzka (eds.). *Słowacki mistyczny. Propozycje i dyskusje sympozjum, Warszawa, 10-11 grudnia 1979*. Warszawa, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981, p. 27–40. See also p. 14.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 27.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

connection between the changing perception of Słowacki's mystical output and new tendencies in the textology of his earlier works. The team's wish was to edit Słowacki's late texts differently today, but we also think differently about his earlier pieces, especially the unfinished or unpublished ones; today we are more interested in the process and the dynamic than in the final, closed text; we are more fascinated with texts seen in the dynamic of creation and transformation than in their static and closed final form. Of course, this kind of perception was also influenced by general tendencies in philology, especially genetic criticism which looks at a work through the aspect of its creation, transformation and possible multiple forms.

In recent years, literary historians as well as editors have attached special importance not only to Słowacki's late, mystical works, but also his earlier, pre-mystical output – works that the poet did not publish and did not finish, e.g. one of the greatest Słowacki's dramas, *Horsztyński*, was never finished. Here, we are speaking of the traditional understanding of a work being “unfinished”, which is different from what we see in the poet's mystical output. Despite the difference between the work of the writer and the work of the mystic, and between the poet's pre-mystical and mystical creative process, one needs to note the quality of the author's decision (not to publish a work), which is significant for a textological study. It is also important to consider how to approach a text that “cannot be closed”. A text that cannot be closed can be a fragmentary, “crumbling” work, a kind of ruin of a work that cannot come to fulfilment. But it can also be a work that is open to a multidimensional wealth of meanings, only suggesting an experienced fulfilment which is impossible to express fully (this is the case of Słowacki's mystical output). However, not closing a work can also mean – as is the case of *Horsztyński* – a special dynamic of aesthetic or world-view forces which prevent the writer from ultimately crystallizing his stance or from making a final choice. And in this situation (which we can see precisely in *Horsztyński*), both a literary historian and a theatre director or an editor will be interested mainly in showing the tension between the forces that made it impossible for the work to be completely closed, fully defined. In *Horsztyński*, this is mainly the world of irony, which questions the stable existential and religious meanings of reality, but the poet still did not find a way to turn the creative force of Romantic irony into the focus of the Romantic world.

All the above factors, only a general outline of them being given here, defined the current situation in research on the works of Słowacki and determined our research team's interest in one particular phenomenon, namely Słowacki's travel notes found in the notebook from his journey to the East – to Greece, Egypt and the Holy Land.

The work on *Raptularz* was based on the team's members' previous experience in editing and textual criticism, namely the experience of preparing the editions of two of Słowacki's texts: a little-

known mystical drama entitled *Agesilaus*¹⁴ and a poem from his Eastern travels entitled *Podróż do Ziemi Świętej z Neapolu* [*Journey to the Holy Land from Naples*]. *Agesilaus*, written by Słowacki in his late period, probably ca. 1843, refers to events from the history of ancient Sparta. The protagonist is King Agis who reigned in 244-241 BC and wanted to restore Sparta to its former glory, but his reforms failed, and he was murdered. Working on the new edition of *Agesilaus*, it was necessary to examine several questions similar to those posed by researchers in 1979 during the famous conference on the mystical Słowacki. It was also necessary to move away from what had been proposed by Kleiner, who treated this work as an unfinished tragedy in a form reminiscent of ancient tragedy (with some Shakespearian elements), and who reconstructed the vague, unfinished parts according to the pattern he had identified. Departing from Kleiner's proposal was difficult, given how strongly it had affected our reception of Słowacki's works, but it was necessary to present the drama not merely as one stylized as an ancient tragedy and left unfinished. This move allowed the work's dynamic to become more visible, in particular the way it oscillates between drama, narrative and poetry, between contemporary politics and ancient history, between autobiography and narrative distance...

The team's members' other editing and textological experience directly related to working on an edition of Słowacki's travel notebook was the edition of a poem written under the influence of the journey – and the time of that journey, of which a large part is found in the notebook. The poem, *Journey to the Holy Land from Naples*, almost finished and even written in the diary in such a way that it looks like a fair copy prepared for publication, was never published by Słowacki. Editors published it already in the 19th century, after the death of poet, under this title, together with a piece entitled *Agamemnon's Tomb* that Słowacki had published in 1840. Following the poet's suggestion, they incorporated this piece into the poem as its canto VIII.

The work on editions of Słowacki's travel poem has a long editing and textological tradition. As it has been mentioned earlier, Słowacki did not publish the poem, but he gave it a title and largely finished it during his Greek journey; that was when the canto I and cantos III to VII were written. Canto II is missing – we suspect that this might not be due to its being lost or the poet having not finished it, but that it could be a sign of the Romantic ironist playing with his readers, though we cannot be certain. Almost immediately, practically from the beginning of the poem's publication history, the editors combined the cantos, that only existed in a manuscript form, with *Agamemnon's Tomb*, which the poet had published as an addition to his historiosophical poem *Lilla Weneda*, with a very personal fragment related to *Agamemnon's Tomb* in terms of composition and problem, and with the canto IX,

¹⁴ Concerning this edition, cf. Maria Kalinowska, Waning worlds and budding hopes. Anti-idyllic visions of antiquity in Polish Romanticism. – In: *The Missing Link: Classical Reception the "Younger" Europe*, edited and with an introduction by Zara M. Torlone, *Classical Receptions Journal*. 2013, vol. 5, no. 3, p. 320-335.

also unpublished by Słowacki and – let us add – not found in the poet's travel diary.

What were the intentions of the publishers who “compiled” the poem from such different parts? Is it legitimate to create such an “assemblage” of fragments so diverse in character (especially when they project different communication situations, different relations between the author and the reader)? Editors were guided by recognized artistic qualities shared by all the fragments: a common meter (sestina), the theme in the fragments (Greek travels), and the poet's mentions of writing a travel poem.

Until now, editors and textologists treated Słowacki's travel diary solely as a notebook, a collection of rough drafts without its own communicative and artistic value, and one that does not form a separate whole. Our team presents a different approach to this diary: to us, it is an integral whole, and it is this whole that we are studying and describing. Publishing Słowacki's poem *Journey to the Holy Land from Naples*, we sought a different principle for organizing and integrating the piece than one which could integrate the whole diary: that principle was the theme of Greece (the poem is exclusively concerned with the Greek part of Słowacki's great journey) and the historiosophical reflections on the Poland-Greece parallel. Thus, the edition of this poem is always a compromise between identifying the poet's various decisions (to print or not to print the poem's individual parts) and an editing tradition that brings all the aforementioned fragments together.

Working as a team on the poet's travel diary today, we are looking for a principle for organizing and integrating not the poem nor the individual pieces within it but bringing together the entire travel diary of Słowacki. This is the direction our work is taking. Our approach is, in a way, opposite to that of editors of the individual pieces recorded in the diary. Editors of the individual works extract these texts from the diary as a whole, whereas we are trying to “blend” them into that whole, to see them as a part of the diary as a whole.

The diary is one of the notebooks from Słowacki's Greek and Eastern journey. Apart from the poem *Journey to the Holy Land from Naples*, it contains some very diverse, heterogeneous material: poems at different degrees of completion, drawings and watercolours, different kinds of notes, fragments of prose, plans of future works, remarks about material read and sites visited, but also notes on expenses and a list of Arabic words. However, we are not assuming that this is just an incoherent rough draft, a collection of random jottings and notes. We are concentrating on what integrates the diary; we are trying to see the diary as a whole and to discover the principle that integrates this extremely diverse material.

One of our research hypotheses (and the simplest one, one might add), involves integrating this varied and heterogeneous material around the theme – or rather the experience – of travel, or perhaps

also the poet's playing with the convention of Romantic travel writing¹⁵. However, we also want to see this diary as a fragmentary and open work, as the journal of a Romantic artist travelling around the sites of the greatest importance for European culture (the Holy Land, Egypt, Greece, Italy) and experiencing a deep spiritual transformation. He starts the journey as a Romantic ironist and ends it at the Tomb of Christ, and a night spent in Jerusalem at the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre changes him, opening the way to a mystical experience.

II. The contribution of transcultural humanities

The travelogues of Juliusz Słowacki, elaborated on the occasion of his journey to the Holy Land in 1836-1837, have been usually seen in a national perspective that privileged the poet's musings on Polish affairs for which the dislocation in space, due to the travel, offered a novel opportunity. At the same time, they have been treated as a document for the study of Słowacki's biography, as well as his mental, intellectual, and spiritual evolution. Nonetheless, a unique travel document that the *raptularz* represents opens many more research perspectives. It can also be interpreted in a larger perspective of the current discussion on “mutual othering” or cross-cultural encounter between the Europeans and the East (the expression has been used by Ahmed Idrissi Alami in the title of his book confronting the Moroccan and European travel writing in a similar chronological framework¹⁶).

The study of Słowacki's travelogue may contribute to the re-evaluation of cross-cultural encounters in their full variety. The specific case of the Polish poet offers a testimony of non-hegemonic construction of the Orient as an image and a concept. Evidently, the foundations of such a research perspective have been laid by Edward Said in his seminal work *Orientalism*, dedicated to the analysis of the hegemonic Western discourse on the East¹⁷. As it is easy to understand, at that initial stage, several decades ago, the main aim was to deconstruct the most influential discourse. Nonetheless, Słowacki as a representative of a European margin, a poet without independent homeland, occupies quite a distinct position.

Słowacki as a European traveller to the East is defined by several overlapping, yet perhaps

¹⁵ Cf. paper presented at the conference within the *East looks West* project, Sofia, 2005: Maria Kalinowska. European Identity and Romantic Irony: Juliusz Słowacki's Journey to Greece. – In: Wendy Bracewell, Alex Drace-Francis (eds.). *Under Eastern Eyes. A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe*. Budapest, Central European University Press, p. 223-235.

¹⁶ Ahmed Idrissi Alami, *Mutual Othering. Islam, Modernity and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Encounters in Pre-Colonial Moroccan and European Travel Writing*. New York, SUNY Press, 2013.

¹⁷ Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. New York, Pantheon Books, 1978.

partially contradicting traits. On the one hand, he is undoubtedly a participant of the Western culture, since he had lived in Western Europe for a considerable time; nonetheless, all his attitudes and beliefs present a specific, East-European inflection. The whole idea of travelling to the East is derived from the Byronic paradigm; by the time Słowacki departed for his journey, such a travel had already become a fashionable activity, an element of the new Romantic culture in formation. His itinerary, significantly, is inscribed in the pattern established by his West-European predecessors. But the map of his dislocations also contains a layer derived from his specific, East-European destiny. Having spent his youth in Krzemieniec and Wilno, i.e., in contemporary Ukraine and Lithuania, he travels westwards after the defeat of the November Uprising (1830-1831) and becomes one of the Polish émigrés in France. It is important to see the Parisian metropolis in which Słowacki finds a temporary refuge as a fulcrum on the global map that emerges at that time. It is from Western Europe, through Italy and Greece, that his journey eastwards begins. The premises and motivations of this voyage, such as the Byronian example or the wish of crowning his cultural and spiritual formation with the experience of direct contact with the antiquities and famous locations of the East (the aspiration of completing his Grand Tour), are not only characteristic for the epoch, but also deeply Western.

At the same time, Słowacki's position differs from that of any French or English traveller by his all-pervading awareness of loss and lack of homeland. After the defeat of the Polish uprising, he is politically disinherited. The literary expression of exile, so dear to the Romantic imagination, takes in his case a very palpable, non-fictional turn. Lack of political sovereignty evidently excludes any possibility of imperialistic attitude. The purpose of his travel notes cannot be reduced to Alami's conclusion, stating that European travel writers of the pre-colonial period "helped consolidate public support for high imperialism"¹⁸. Polish writers of the time focus on quite a different aim: that of consolidating public support for the cause of national independence. This is why, in many ways, Słowacki's vision of the East falls short of communitarian inscription; it remains at the level of mere private writing, forming a counter-current in relation to the dominant, nation-centric line, that is by no means absent in Słowacki's way of thinking. Nonetheless, a constant effort of breaking the exclusivity of the national preoccupations may be seen. The nation-centric mentality is epitomized by Słowacki's literary rivals, not only Mickiewicz, but first of all such rivals as those belonging to the group of followers of the Catholic line, associated with "Tygodnik Literacki". Słowacki himself resumed his "problem" in a satirical self-portrait, where he says about himself:

"Ja mu zaś to jedno tylko zarzucę, że nienarodowy. [...] Zamiast naszą staropolską duszę malować – on wyszukuje Bóg wie czego po świecie [...]"¹⁹

¹⁸ Alami. *Mutual Othering*. Op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁹ Juliusz Słowacki. Krytyka krytyki i literatury. A humoristic article in *Oređownik naukowy* (September 1841).

“I can only censure him for one thing: he is not national. [...] Instead of painting our old Polish soul – he searches for God knows what throughout the world”²⁰

During his journey to Greece and then farther to the East (Egypt, the Holy Land, Lebanon), Słowacki could enter into a direct, almost intimate contact with the material and spiritual legacy not only of the nation, but also of the Mediterranean civilisation, transcending his exclusively Polish, localised identity. The *raptularz* testifies of the mystical depth of his Christian experience connected to such events as his nocturnal visit of the Holy Sepulchre that may be seen as a transformative experience, a turning point in his spiritual evolution. He departed for his journey in a state of spiritual depletion, full of doubts and unanswered questions concerning his religious stance. Alienated from the familiar reality by his travel, by his almost total ignorance of the local language and system of writing (although he tries to write down phonetically a few Arabic words and expressions he could gather from his guides), Słowacki is forced to abandon not only the usual modes of behaviour, but also the usual ways of understanding the world. Finally, as a lonely traveller stepping into the Middle Eastern night, he is radically stripped, so to speak, of his cultural integument, encountering the world in a state of a-cultural nakedness. Surely, it could be a transformative experience.

The notes from Słowacki's journey to the East may thus be read as a document of a progressive deculturation. Certainly, the poet was in a constant intellectual contact with the European literary imagination of the Orient; before his journey to the East, he had even created Orientalising poetical romances, such as *Duma o Waławie Rzewuskim*, contributing to the process of mythification of yet another Polish traveller, Waław Rzewuski, a (presumable) explorer of the Arabian desert. Yet undoubtedly, the actual journey to the East was for Słowacki an occasion to get rid of many an Orientalising stereotype. On the other hand, the search for mystical depth may have predisposed him to a truly transcultural experience. The term “transcultural” is used here in quite a radical meaning: as a notion permitting to captivate the liminal, alienating experience of expulsion from a culture as a system of meaning construction. This radical immersion into the transcultural could, at the same time, bear the mark of the Christian notion of kenosis. Thus, at least in the culminating moments of this hypothetical transcultural experience, Słowacki might be confronted with an absolute obscurity, unable to construe meanings, out-of-joint with the rest of humanity, facing a radical, transforming loneliness that shapes his evolution towards the mystic or even, much later in his spiritual and poetic evolution, the “genesic” stage, in which his sensibility took quite a universalist turn, transgressing cultural and denominational boundaries. The “genesic” system, created by Słowacki later on in his life, connected various strands of cultural legacy into a single “history of the Spirit” (“historia Ducha”). Nonetheless,

²⁰ Translation by E. Ł.

the journey and the confrontation with alien reality may be seen as a stage of cultural kenosis, preparing that ulterior formulation.

Some further comments concerning the terms “transcultural” and “transculturation”, that have been present in the vocabulary of humanities for more than a decade, may still be useful. “Transcultural” is already a concept with quite a long history and several meanings. It appeared first in the domain of ethnology. The anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortiz coined the term transculturation as early as 1947 to speak of the cultural convergence that he could observe in Afro-Cuban musical expression. The aspect put in the limelight in this early formulation of the notion was not only the passage from one culture to another, but rather the merging of cultural strands. The new term was supposed to go beyond the patterns of acculturation (acquiring a culture) and deculturation (uprooting a previously acquired culture, that was often seen as a target in colonial circumstances). What Ortiz preferred to observe was neoculturation, i.e., the formation of a new cultural paradigm, based on merging cultures. His main work, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, was for a long time a forgotten text; it was published in English as late as 1995; this is why the fortune of the term was made chiefly in the 1990s. A similar understanding is present in *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, where Mary Louise Pratt defines transculturation as the process in which “subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture”²¹. The transculturalist turn goes thus in the direction of abandoning the typically postcolonial, dichotomous models that clearly differentiate and oppose the concepts of “self” and “other”. Finally, a specific understanding of transculturality is associated with Wolfgang Iser, who in late 1990s noticed that contemporary social and individual identities are formed by more than one culture. More recently, in parallel to the decline of postcolonial school, the keywords of humanities shifted towards the concept of cultural globalization. In the beginning of the 21st century, the main task was to create a conceptual language for the study of globalization, to give a name to different phenomena of “worlding”. The term “transcultural” became quite popular in the domain of literary studies, illustrated by Arianna Dagnino, who systematically studies the “transcultural writing”, understood essentially as the literary texts written by dislocated subjects, moving away from their original culture. She creates her own extensive vocabulary for this new field of global writing, speaking of “transpatriants”, “transspace” etc.²² On the other hand, an interesting definition of the term “transculture” has been proposed by a Russian-American essayist Michail Epstein. His starting point

²¹ Mary Louise Pratt. *Imperial Eyes. Travel writing and transculturation*. London – New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 6.

²² Arianna Dagnino. *Transcultural Writers and Novels in the Age of Global Mobility*. West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 2015.

is the appreciation of the Russian culturology²³. In reference to this tradition, he nonetheless traces his own definition of transculture, which is quite radical: the transculture according to his definition consists in “being beyond”, “radical otherness”, “supra-cultural creativity”, “a new sphere of cultural development that transcends the borders of traditional cultures” [...] as “it overcomes the isolation of their symbolic systems”²⁴.

An even more radical understanding of the term “transcultural” may also be proposed. It implies the possibility of transgressing one of the basic limitations of the human condition: the inalienable inscription of the individual in a given culture not only as a static, overwhelming structuration of meanings, but also as a dynamic mechanism of meaning production. It would thus imply not only the possibility of crossing the frontier dividing one culture from another, but also an almost catastrophic collapse of the entire culturally determined structure of human experience (possibly an experience that might approach the Christian notion of kenosis). This radical possibility of “getting out of cultured humanness” may be seen as the universal core of mystical aspirations.

Słowacki was neither an imperial agent nor a colonial explorer comparable to the figures that appear in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, such as Lawrence of Arabia or Gertrude Bell. He was a modest, private traveller, completely exposed to what can be called “radical otherness”, according to the expression used by Michail Epstein. His situation of the encounter with the Orient is non-hegemonic in all its concrete, down-to-earth aspects. There is no imperial homeland, in fact there is no homeland at all. There is no knowledge, neither; nothing to put him in the line of the Oriental experts analysed by Said. Certainly, the paradigmatic figure of the “Oriental expert” who studies Arabic in Oxford before putting his or her feet on the Oriental sand is typical for the later period of fully developed colonial expansion. Nonetheless, Słowacki, with the clumsy list of Arabic words penned on one of the pages of his travelogue, is very far from such epistemological horizons. Contrary to many Europeans who already in the first half of the 19th century were coming to the Orient with a degree of specialised knowledge, the Polish poet did not possess any previously developed expertise. He could have read the available accounts of the Orient and its history, but not beyond the level of the informed general public of his time. In his notebook, one can find an approximative transcription of some basic Arabic expressions, probably copied from any casual conversation guide that was just available for him²⁵. In

²³ Culturology is a specific branch of Russian humanities that found its earliest expression in the works of Nikolai Danilevsky (1822-85) and Pavel Florensky (1882-1937), culminating in the 1960s-1980s with works by Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), Aleksei Losev (1893-1988), Yury Lotman (1922-93), Vladimir Bibler (b. 1918), Georgy Gachev (b. 1929), and Sergei Averintsev (b. 1937). It is characterized by a holistic approach to the diversity of the cultural phenomena.

²⁴ Michail Epstein. Transculture. A broad way between Globalism and Multiculturalism. – In: *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 2009, vol. 68, no. 1, p. 330.

²⁵ A detailed analysis of this curious vocabulary list has been provided by the Arabist Magdalena Kubarek, Uwagi o dykcjonarzu arabskim Słowackiego (z perspektywy arabisty). – In: *Raptularz wschodni Juliusza Słowackiego*, vol. 3. Op. cit., p. 413-423.

this aspect, his minimal competence contrasts even with that of another Polish traveller, Wacław Rzewuski, who came to the Orient already with some previous linguistic skills. In fact, skills to which he attributed a great importance, transforming the Arabic script into some sort of personal signature in his own, highly idiosyncratic French-speaking travelogue, *Sur les chevaux orientaux et provenants des races orientales*. Contrary to Słowacki, Rzewuski focused almost exclusively on Arabian horses and illustrated his travelogue not just with landscapes or casual views of ancient ruins, but with detailed, almost anatomical sketches of those animals. On the other hand, while sketching the land and its inhabitants, it was not the picturesque that he was after; his aim was much more descriptive, even if the precision was to subscribe an egotistic and self-mythifying vision²⁶.

Słowacki did not come to the Orient with any determined epistemological project of exploring geographic, artistic, philological or – like in the case of Rzewuski – hippic realities. He was not a colonial scholar on a research mission. He did not even possess an excess of money, the first condition to buy the Orient as did the travellers analysed by Edward Said (it is not by accident that his monograph begins with an interpretation of an experience of the European in an Oriental brothel). In his journey, Słowacki might even rely on the support of his relatively richer companion to finance the expedition. Many notes in his personal notebook reflect this not altogether comfortable feeling of dependence, while the poet puts down, perhaps with a note of sarcasm, that Brzozowski “paid for the camels” (“zapłacił za wielbłądy”). This is a reason why the typical European arrogance in confrontation with the local inhabitants might be very distant from the poet's predominant attitude.

Not an Oriental expert, not an explorer, he is something else. He regarded himself as a pilgrim, i.e., a traveller for whom the spiritual motivation comes to the fore. From the contemporary perspective, one might see in him an early tourist, although the experience of the tourist is by definition a superficial, merely epidermal contact with the Oriental reality. Certainly, the Romantic poet tried to reach deeper, even if the Orient seems to constantly slip out of his grip. Nonetheless, Słowacki builds up an insight in this reality, which is mostly a poetical and spiritual one. It opens up a perspective of a mystical Eremos, i.e., the experience of the spiritually charged Desert as a specific space of transgression, where the cultured system of meaning production must collapse. Through solitary confrontation with radical otherness, Słowacki delves deep into his own human nature, beyond the cultured attitudes, gestures, automatic patterns of behaviour. In his notebook he describes his nocturnal wake at the Holy Sepulchre, in a temple that he can still recognize as Christian and inscribe in the system of coordinates of his own culture. Yet at a given moment there is a couple of strangers that

²⁶ Cf. Tadeusz Majda. *Podróż do Arabii: o koniach kohejlanach, beduinach i przygodach w Arabii (na podstawie rękopisu Wacława Seweryna Rzewuskiego „Sur les chevaux orientaux et provenants des races orientales”)*. Warszawa, Biblioteka Narodowa, 2004.

penetrate into the church, pray for a little while, and before leaving, kiss Słowacki's hand. “Zupełnie nie umiałem się znaleźć” – “I didn't absolutely know how to behave”, how to respond to this gesture, he writes down in his notebook. This is one of the rare moments in which his encounter with the otherness leads him beyond the familiar zone of socializing, of communicating, in a functional and proficient way, with other individuals. He produces some hypothesis related to these strangers, he presumes they might be a married couple that had made a vote of praying each night in the sepulchre, yet his dominating experience is that of the darkness that surrounds him, as well as uncertainty and vagueness of signs, gestures, attitudes. Delving into the tenebrous, a-cultural sphere of mystical experience, he knows nothing for sure. What is more, a similar feeling of insecurity, of fluctuating meanings accompanies him not only during his nocturnal visit to the Holy Sepulchre, but in every single moment and circumstance of his Oriental journey. It pervades the image of the Orient that he builds up in his private notes.

Conclusion

In the context of mystical kenosis, of the poet's stepping out of the usual cultural condition, the act of sketching acquires a particular importance. It cannot be reduced to the thoughtless reproduction of the social paradigm of the Romantic travel in which such sketches might play the same role as the contemporary touristic photography. On the contrary, drawing the places he visited, Słowacki searches to grasp the reality that constantly slips out of his mental grip. On some pages of his travelogue, one may observe a direct connection between the visual exploration of the world and its verbalisation in a poem. Such is the case of Słowacki's contemplation of the so-called Treasury of Atreus in Mycenae, that in the 19th century was known as the “Agamemnon's tomb”. On his sketch of the site, only partially exposed at the time, one can see the drawing of a small tree-like plant that germinated in the triangular opening over the lintel of the entrance²⁷. The same plant is mentioned in the poem *Grób Agamemnona* [*Agamemnon's Tomb*]. Verbalising its presence, Słowacki inscribes it into a category: it becomes a “dąbek” (little oak) and the object of a transgression. The poet confesses of having mutilated the plant, removing one of its leaves; nonetheless, the sacrilege goes unpunished, encountering only the silence of the dead, the absence of revengeful spirits. The emptiness of the tomb utterly leads to the poet's own creative silencing, since the sunbeam transformed into a string is broken without a groan.

²⁷ The drawing on the verso of the page 68; cf. *Raptularz wschodni Juliusza Słowackiego*, op. cit., vol. 1. Cf also the commentary of Maria Kalinowska, *Grecka wędrówka poety – notatki na marginesie „greckich” stron Raptularza*. – In: *Raptularz wschodni Juliusza Słowackiego*, vol. 3. Op. cit., p. 188-193.



Card no 68 v. The drawing of the Tomb of Agamemnon (the Treasury of Atreus) in Mycenae. See commentary: Urszula Makowska, Rysunki w Raptularzu wschodnim. Komentarze. – In: Raptularz wschodni *Juliusza Słowackiego. Edycja – studia – komentarze*, t. II. *Edycja – komentarz – objaśnienia*, op. cit., p. 565-574; M. Kalinowska, *Grecka wędrówka poety – notatki na marginesie greckich stron Raptularza*. – In: Raptularz wschodni *Juliusza Słowackiego. Edycja – studia – komentarze*, vol. 3. Op. cit., p. 188-193.

Nonetheless, in spite of everything, Słowacki writes about his experience. Having completed his journey to the East, having descended into the obscurity of the Oriental night (in both a proper and a symbolic sense), he finds his words anew. The interpretative question that arises is to know to what degree the act of drawing, as an intermediary cognitive step between the moment of viewing and the moment of naming the objects of perception, is crucial in the creative process, building a bridge between the experience of the journey and its poetic expression.

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