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## Juliusz Słowacki's Notebook from His Travels to Greece and the East as a Romantic Open and Syncretic Work. Editing Issues

Juliusz Słowacki – next to Adam Mickiewicz – is the greatest and most important Polish Romantic poet. Over the past several decades, editing and textology 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 research on works by Mickiewicz and Słowacki.

The works of Słowacki have been and still are a very special challenge for editors and, I would also add, an extremely tough challenge. 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. We divide his oeuvre into several periods, considering the most important dividing line in his writing to be the so-called mystical turning point (ca. 1842) when, radically changing the way he wrote, the poet stopped publishing his works but did not stop writing. On the contrary: his writing intensified greatly, but he was no longer concerned about his renown as a writer, believing instead that he was fulfilling an important 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 the poet's entire oeuvre, was Juliusz Kleiner, whose edition of the complete works – *Dzieła wszystkie*<sup>1</sup> – of Słowacki is still the primary edition of the poet's

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<sup>1</sup> J. Słowacki, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. J. Kleiner, vol. 1-11, Lwów, 1924–1933. Second edition: vol. 1-18 (ed. 16-18 with W. Florian) – Wrocław, 1952–1975.

works used in research and teaching. 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 their work has come under criticism from the philologist 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 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 "being unfinished" category in studies on Słowacki's works, perceiving them as being open, multidimensional, sometimes intentionally fragmentary. From the mass of the poet's writing (see the illustration presenting a manuscript from the mystical period), 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 variants<sup>2</sup>. 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, one expert on Słowacki and his work, Stefan Treugutt, asked, expressing fears that we today also share, "How do we ... organize this legacy? Because, 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 his way

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<sup>2</sup> S. Treugutt, *Słowacki mistyczny. Propozycje i dyskusje symposiumu*, Warszawa, 10-11 grudnia 1979, ed. M. Janion, M. Żmigrodzka, Warszawa, 1981, pp. 27–40. See also p. 14.

of writing, and thus a special multi-levelness, an equivalence of every fragment with a whole that is impossible to record..."<sup>3</sup> Of course Treugutt rejected this passivity and contemplated various ways in which this output could be organized in editing, considering different possibilities, for example organizing "texts with a similar affinity to some aspect of genesian teaching" "according to problem areas"<sup>4</sup>.

Stefan Treugutt's questions – from 1979 – are also relevant today, as we still face problems related to what he referred to as "genesian philology"<sup>5</sup> (from Słowacki's mystical system, called "genesian"), namely the necessity to develop 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 perfection of forms"<sup>6</sup>. It is also worth adding that, of course, when philologists in 1979 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 other, new tools which, as I believe, are very useful in this kind of project.

Let us return to our main theme. I would risk the hypothesis that these intensively developing studies on Słowacki's mystical works influence the approach to 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 researchers to issues related to Słowacki's works that were unfinished, multi-variant, and also 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 trends in Polish philology allow me to offer the idea that there is a connection between the changed perception of Słowacki's mystical output and new tendencies in the textology of his earlier works. We want 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 a final and closed text; we are more fascinated with texts seen in the dynamic of creation and transformation than in their static and closed final form.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 32.

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 of Słowacki's drama's, *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 category of the author's decision not to publish a work, which is significant for a textological study, and also 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 fully express (this is the case with Słowacki's mystical output). However, not closing a work can also mean – as is the case with *Horsztyński* – a special dynamic of aesthetic or worldview forces which prevent the writer from ultimately crystallizing his stance or from making a final choice. And in this situation (which we can see in *Horsztyński* precisely) 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 has still not found 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 my 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 team includes leading researchers and editors of Romantic literature, experts on Słowacki's oeuvre, e.g. Prof. Jacek Brzozowski and Prof. 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 k

knowledge on the poet's output. The team also includes Prof. Marek Troszyński, a forerunner in publishing the text drafts from the mystical period that the poet did not publish himself, and publisher of Słowacki's journal from the late period of his oeuvre. We have also invited historians, art historians (because the travel notebook is full of visual descriptions of the sites Słowacki visited), historians of Middle Eastern culture, Hellenists and an Egyptologist to work with us, as well as young researchers from different disciplines, who bring fresh ideas and creativity to the team, also in terms of digital concepts.

I have the honour of heading this team; in this work I take advantage of my own experience in editing and textology gained from preparing editions of two of Słowacki's texts: a little-known mystical drama entitled *Agesilaus* and a poem from his Eastern travels entitled *Journey to the Holy Land from Naples*. *Agesilaus*, which Słowacki wrote in his late period, probably ca. 1843, refers to historical 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*, I had to ask myself questions similar to those posed by researchers in 1979 during the famous conference on the mystical Słowacki. I also had to move away from what had been proposed by Kleiner, who treated this work as an unfinished tragedy whose form is reminiscent of an ancient tragedy (with some Shakespearian elements), and who reconstructed vague, unfinished parts according to the pattern he had identified. It was with the utmost difficulty that I "tore away" from Kleiner's proposal (that was how strongly it had affected our reception of Słowacki's works) and saw that this was not just a drama stylized as an ancient tragedy and not finished by Słowacki. I had to try to forget about Kleiner's edition to see the work's dynamic, the way it oscillates between drama, narrative and poetry, between contemporary politics and ancient history, between autobiography and narrative distance...

My 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, 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 eight.

Work on editions of Słowacki's travel poem have a long editing and textological tradition. As I have mentioned, Słowacki did not publish the poem, but he gave it a title and largely finished it during his Greek journey; that was when canto one and cantos three to seven were written. Canto two 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. Editors almost immediately, practically from the beginning of the poem's publication history, combined the cantos that only existed in manuscript form with *Agamemnon's Tomb*, which the poet had published as an addition to his historiosophical poem *Lilla Weneda*, and with a very personal fragment related to *Agamemnon's Tomb* in terms of composition and problem, and with canto nine, also unpublished by Słowacki and – let us add – not found in the poet's travel diary.

What were the intentions of publishers who "compiled" the poem from such different parts? And 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 intentions 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. The team I head 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*, I 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 only 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 or the individual pieces within it, but bringing together the entire travel diary of Słowacki. And this is the direction our work is taking. Our approach in a way is opposite to that of editors of the individual pieces recorded in the diary. Editors of the indivi

dual 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 dictionary 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, I 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 Romantic travel writing. However, we also want to see this diary as a fragmentary and open work, as the journal of a Romantic artist travelling around 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. Which hypothesis and which thread in the work of our team turns out to be the most important, will emerge during our studies and is still an open question.