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Reading Venice

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CONTACT

90-236 Łódź, 171/173 Pomorska St., p. 3.85
tel. +48 42 635 68 93, e-mail: czytanieliteratury@gmail.com
<https://czasopisma.uni.lodz.pl/czytanieliteratury/>

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Editorial



The year 2020 has been a special time: it has been marked by the pandemic, lockdown and quarantine. Never before have we felt so isolated, closed off and immobile and we have never been subject to such radical restrictions on social contacts, movement and travel. That is why we need movement, unlimited space and open trails. This issue of *Czytanie Literary* was created in the circumstances of essentially hermetic isolation. When we were planning it, nobody thought of any dire “epidemic” in the near future. And yet, by an astonishing coincidence or a surprising twist of fate, we decided then to go on an expedition to Venice, a unique and an incomparable place as if we had somehow felt that we would desperately need this journey later.

It is common knowledge that everyone has their own Venice, including those who have never been there. The city on the lagoon is not so much a reality – though its existence is completely real – as it is a kind of simulacrum, created through overlapping and multiplying cultural images over the centuries. Even when wandering around the labyrinthine space on a summer or winter morning, we are more enslaved by what is established in tradition than trapped in the actual topography where sooner or later either GPS or a Venetian who we happen to meet will allow us to find the way. In European mythical geography, Venice occupies a separate place, characterised by a certain “overvalue.” None of the European cities has evoked such strong feelings and conflicting emotions. It is a city-model, a city-symbol that over the centuries has aroused feelings as diverse and contradictory as admiration, fascination, fear, and even aversion or abomination.

In this issue, above all, let us go to Venice following the route set out by Polish writers, from Old Polish authors to contemporary ones. It is therefore a journey that takes place simultaneously in time and space, during which we discover the image of the City that has evolved over the centuries. According to the 16th and 17th century writers, *La Serenissima* was an attractive political model for Poland: the Noble Republic was modelled on the structure of Venetian rule, which was perceived as the foundation of civil order and praised for its republican achievements. The eighteenth-century accounts of journeys are still full of delight with the smoothly functioning system of power in the Republic of Venice, worthy of imitation in the anarchising national reality. In the nineteenth century, Venice became the centre of the first political emigration of Poles after the Kościuszko Uprising and

the Third Partition. The two once mighty Republics were similar due to their the political situation: the loss of independence and the same invader, Austria, and, moreover, the same goal, namely the restoration of sovereignty. But that is also when the dark legend of Venice begins to function: taking advantage of the political weakness of other countries, flourishing thanks to the greed of the inhabitants and constructed on the denunciation and behind-the-scenes machinations of the Council of Ten, and most importantly, restricting the freedom of the individual. In the nineteenth century, the city on the lagoon underwent another metamorphosis in literary representations, following the publication of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Byronic tropes will be taken up by many travellers, and the aesthetic admiration of the City will be combined with the thought of its ruin and demise. It is very interesting to see Mickiewicz's attitude – reconstructed from Odyńiec's account – to *La Serenissima* marked by feelings of disapproval, aversion, and abhorrence with the imperialism of the Republic of Venice, which took freedom away from nations and individuals.

In his canonical *Obrazy Italii* [Images of Italy], Paul Muratoff wrote: "There are two Venices. One which still celebrates some festival, still resounds with the bustle, carries on smiling and relaxing lazily on St. Mark's Square, on the Piazzetta and on the Riva degli Schiavoni. (...) And the second Venice sometimes allows us to feel loneliness, does not comfort us and does not fill us with glamour (...). Narrow streets suddenly startle us with their seriousness and silence. (...) What was only a picturesque detail on the Piazzetta, namely a black gondola, a black scarf on the shoulders of a Venetian woman, appears here in the austere, almost solemn character of an eternal ritual. (...) perhaps the gondola that brought us here from Venice so smoothly and quietly is only a shadow or perhaps these waters are the waters of death and oblivion?" Between these two visions there are twentieth-century literary images of the city on the lagoon, starting with one of the most important texts realising the myth of Venice: the novella by Thomas Mann. This path was also followed by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz or Waław Kubacki, who used the topoi which are fixed in the culture to symbolise real spaces. And Adam Wiedemann, a contemporary traveller, no longer continued the gesture of reactivating tradition, but wrote a humorous account of his stay in the Adriatic city, and finally asked about the possibility of saying something "new" about Venice today and the only positive answer can be found in the record of one's own "invalid" subjective perception. This may prove impossible, however, since the evocative vision of Venice recorded in paintings, books, films seems more vivid than its direct experience.


In addition to the expedition to present-day and historical Venice, the issue proposes exploring other seemingly already-discovered territories. We also suggest re-reading Jaworski's *Historie maniaków*, *Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego* by Gombrowicz, the early prose of Konwicki as well as works of Tuwim in order to see the unrecognised spaces in them. In the section "Reviews and Discussions," we encourage you to get to know all the faces of Grochowiak the poet and the specificity of British postmodernism as perceived by the Ukrainian researcher. Finally, it is worth reading two interviews:

the first one, with Prof. Jerzy Kandziora about his long-standing relationship with Stanisław Barańczak, and the second one, with Prof. Hubert Orłowski, devoted to his several-decade-long fascination with the works by Thomas Mann. Both interviews are unexpectedly connected by the author of *Death in Venice*, appearing this time primarily as the author *The Magic Mountain*. In this way, like a glimmer on the water, the canonical Venetian text returns in a blurred reflection at the end. As it was rightly pointed out by Manuela Gretkowska, an author of a very personal guide to the City: "Perhaps with this density of population and wealth, the pressure of history and passions Venice is a suspension of intermingling times, mirror reflections, water, the living and the dead. It appears the way you want to know it, depending on which chapter you start reading it. Preferably *da capo*, at the end, starting again." Now, let us embark on this never-ending journey, let us read...

Krystyna Pietrych

READING
VENICE

MICHAŁ KURAN
University of Lodz

 0000-0002-0378-2453


Member since 2019
JM14483

Venice in Polish Literature of the Latter Half of the 16th Century and in the 17th Century as a Model Political System, a Leading Centre in the Fight Against the Ottoman Empire, and the Centre of the Pilgrimage Culture

SUMMARY

The aim of the study is to present at least three reasons why Old Polish writers of the latter half of the 16th century and 17th century wrote about Venice. The first one was the admiration in the nobility-ruled republican political system which emerged in the Republic of Venice, and which was considered as an attractive model by Old Polish thinkers and writers. They, e.g. Palczowski, Górnicki, and Wolan, expressed their convictions in their treatises. The second reason was that of the struggles of Christian states with the Ottoman Empire. Venice constituted the first potential ally and often a leader of European armies intended to participate in the often-planned anti-Muslim crusades. The study references the accounts of the visions of Venice as a leader of crusades as inscribed in the exhortation-related literature. The third reason was the perception of Venice as a safe port for pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land and, more broadly, to the territory of the Ottoman state via the sea. Its image emerged from the accounts of Old Polish pilgrims, travellers, and escaped slaves.

Keywords

Republic of Venice, crusade, pilgrimages to the Holy Land, political system of the Republic of Venice, 16th and 17th-century Polish literature, Venetian-Turkish rivalry, Polish-Italian cultural contacts

The image of Venice in Old Polish literature constitutes an extensive and significant part of Polish-Italian relations which have developed over many centuries. Realising the importance of those relations, researchers such as Henryk Barycz, Alojzy Sajkowski, and Tadeusz Ulewicz¹ eagerly described panoramas approximating individual stages in the development of the countries' bilateral literary and cultural contacts. Polish-Italian relations had several kinds of foundations: confessional (mind you, Rome was the capital of the State of the Church, which was the destination of various pilgrimages in celebration of consecutive major anniversaries), cultural (Italy was the cradle of the Renaissance; Florence and Rome were visited in the 15th century by, e.g. Gregory of Sanok and Jan Długosz),² dynastic (queen Bona Sforza, Duchess of Bari and Rossario, was the daughter of Gian Galeazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan),³ academic (Polish youth travelled, especially in the 16th century, to study in Italy choosing Padua, Bologna, and Rome), trade, and finances. Florence, Milan, Genoa, and Venice, "called 'the second Byzantium,'" were admired by visitors.⁴

Both Venice itself as a municipal centre and the Venice Republic as a state which included Padua, key for the history of Renaissance sciences in Poland, and the local university, played a fundamental role in the shaping of Polish awareness in sciences (philology, philosophy, etc.), political notions, trade contacts, the fulfilment of publishing initiatives, urban culture (visits, celebrations), and theatre (musical ones in particular). Additionally, they fulfilled the leading role in the struggles against the Sublime Porte,⁵ and, finally, they had a near monopoly in pilgrim traffic within the route leading to the Holy Land.⁶ Overview studies on the significance of Venice in culture have been written by, e.g. Mieczysław Brahmer, Stanisław Kot, Bronisław Biliński, and Grzegorz Franczak.⁷

¹ Henryk Barycz, *Spojrzenia w przeszłość polsko-włoską* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich - Wydawnictwo, 1965); Alojzy Sajkowski, *Włoskie przygody Polaków. Wiek XVI-XVIII* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1973); Tadeusz Ulewicz, "Związki kulturalno-literackie Polski z Włochami w wiekach średnich i renesansie. Ogólny szkic panoramiczny," in *Literatura staropolska w kontekście europejskim (Związki i analogie). Materiały konferencji naukowej poświęconej zagadnieniom komparatystyki (27-29 X 1975)*, edited by Teresa Michałowska and Jan Ślaski (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich - Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1977), 21-67; idem, *Iter Romano-Italicum Polonorum, czyli o związkach umysłowo-kulturalnych Polski z Włochami w wiekach średnich i renesansie* (Kraków: Universitas, 1999).

² Joanna Olkiewicz, *Kallimach doświadczony* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1981); Grzegorz Franczak, "Hierosolymitanorum processio. I pellegrini polacchi tra Venezia e Dalmazia," in *La Dalmazia nelle relazioni di viaggiatori e pellegrini da Venezia tra Quattro e Seicento*, edited by Sante Graciotti (Rome: Bardi Editore, 2009), 239.

³ Maria Bogucka, *Bona Sforza* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, 1998), 24-28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵ See Mieczysław Brahmer, *Powinowactwa polsko-włoskie. Z dziejów wzajemnych stosunków kulturalnych* (Warsaw: PWN, 1980), 206-211 (ch. XIII. "Pod urokiem Wenecji").

⁶ Danuta Quirini-Poplawska, "Pobyt w Wenecji pielgrzymów udających się do Ziemi Świętej w XIV i XV wieku," in idem, *Italia Mia. Studia z dziejów Italii i powiązań polsko-włoskich w późnym Średniowieczu i Renesansie* (Kraków, 2016), 163-166.

⁷ Brahmer, *Powinowactwa polsko-włoskie...*, 206-211; Stanisław Kot, *Venezia vista dai Polacchi nel corso dei secoli*, (Venezia: Dr. Francesco Montuoro - Editore, 1947); Bronisław Biliński,

Padua, located near Venice, was the destination chosen by students who studied in Italy in the Renaissance. Visitors to Padua included writers, such as Klemens Janicjusz, Marcin Kromer, Stanisław Orzechowski, Szymon Marycjusz z Pilzna, Jan Kochanowski, Andrzej Patrycy Nidecki, Stanisław Warszewicki, Stanisław Ilowski, and Łukasz Górnicki⁸. Jan Zamoyski was the chancellor of Paduan legists, it was there that Wawrzyniec Goślicki published in 1568 *De optimo senatore*, and Paweł Palczowski in his work *Status Venetorum* analysed the Venetian political system⁹. People of letters also visited Venice and mentioned it in their works.¹⁰

In the poem "Włoskie miasta co przedniejsze" [The More Superb Italian Cities] included in *Pielgrzym włoski albo krótkie Rzymu i przedniejszych miast włoskich opisanie* published in 1614, Stanisław Grochowski, offering a descriptive synthesis of Venice, indicated its three main features: wealth, a close relationship with the sea, and the patronage of St. Mark; he wrote: "Wenecyja: bogata, morzem otoczona / K temu Marka ś[więtego] ma w niebie patrona"¹¹ [Venice: rich, surrounded by the sea / Additionally, it has St. Mark as its patron in heaven].

Various guides and descriptions of Venice indicate how Poles were fascinated with the city. Such descriptions were written by Andrzej Wargocki, the interpreter in the travels of Breidenbach and Krzysztof "the Orphan" Radziwiłł, which he published as a kind of appendix to the 1610 treatise *O Rzymie pogańskim i chrześcijańskim książ dwoje*. The description covered: information that Venetians originated from Trojans, a detailed description of St. Mark's Church (marble floors, walls covered with marble slabs, painted ceiling, pillars, five doors and their decorations, the roof, brass cast horses from Roman times, a painting of St. Mark, the choir, the altar, the ciborium, paintings of St. Dominic and St. Francis located in

"Viaggiatori polacchi a Venezia nei secoli XVII-XIX (saggio preliminare: esempi ed osservazioni generali)," in *Venezia e la Polonia nei secoli dal XVI al XIX*, a cura di Luigi Cini (Venezia-Roma: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1968), 341-417; idem, "Venezia nelle peregrinazioni polacche del Cinquecento e lo «Sposalizio del Mare» di Giovanni Siemuszowski (1565)," in *Italia, Venezia e Polonia tra umanesimo e rinascimento*, a cura di Mieczysław Brahmmer (Wrocław, 1967), 233-290; Franczak, *Hierosolymitanorum processio...*, 235-254.

⁸ See, e.g. Danuta Quirini-Popławska, "Podróże polskich duchownych do Padwy w XV i XVI wieku; wstępne rozpoznanie," in *Itinera clericorum. Kulturotwórcze i religijne aspekty podróży duchownych*, edited by Danuta Quirini-Popławska and Łukasz Burkiewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum, 2014), 249. This includes numerous details regarding the studies of Poles in Padua and further subject literature.

⁹ See Kot, *Venezia vista dai Polacchi...*, 22; Karol Koranyi, "La costituzione de Venezia nel pensiero politico della Polonia," in *Italia, Venezia e Polonia. Tra umanesimo e rinascimento*, a cura di Mieczysław Brahmmer (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1967), 206-214; Ulewicz, *Iter Romano-Italicum Polonorum...*, 187-203.

¹⁰ See Biliński, *Venezia nelle peregrinazioni...*, 254-256. The researcher indicated references in the works by Janicjusz and Kochanowski.

¹¹ Stanisław Grochowski, *Włoskie miasta co przedniejsze* (Kraków: [Mikołaj Lob], 1599); [reprinted in:] idem, *Rzym nowy szczęśliwszy nad stary* (Kraków: [?], 1610), issue B_{2v}; [reprinted in:] *Pielgrzym włoski albo krótkie Rzymu i miast przedniejszych włoskich opisanie. Teraz nowo z włoskiego na polski język przełożone. Przez Franciszka Cesariusa. Przydane są od tegoż drogi i gościńce cudzoziemskie, rachując wszędy dalekość ich na mile własne każdego Państwa, przy tym też wiadomość niemieckiej i włoskiej monety* (Kraków: Dziedzice Jakuba Siebeneichera, 1614), p. 41v. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish]

the sacristy, the contents of the treasury), the nearby tower, an enumeration of buildings (churches, monasteries, hospitals, etc.) and streets, the ceremony of the Doge of Venice tossing a ring into the sea marking the beginning of Venice's rule over the Adriatic, the organisation of the rule, the structure of the treasury (including taxes), a description of the Armoury, the craftsmen working and the war gear gathered there, and the war ships moored in the port. The author held the military potential of the Republic of Venice in high esteem.¹²

A synthetic presentation of Venice both as a republic/state and a city, with descriptions of its landmark buildings, which for their appearance and the specificity of the institutions evoked respect or even admiration for their systemic solutions, can be found in an account of an educational journey completed by Prince Janusz Wiśniowiecki in 1613–1618. The visit to Venice occurred in the summer of 1614:

<p>Forum Julijuszowe, Gryzonowie kędy I możności weneckiej widzieć forty wszędy, Uczone Patawijum i attyckie one Święte Muzom pasieki z Hyblu przeniesione, Skąd na chyżej gondule po szumnej Adryi Do dziwnej i bogatej płynie Wenecyi, Której nie mur trojaki ani przykre skały, Ale morskie, nawalne toczą zewsząd wały, Znamienite Cyklady z morza wyglądają, Parlamenty, kościoły po morzu pływają, A na złotej kolumnie, leżąc, lew ogromny Trzyma w nogach reiment — niezbity, [niezłomny Prawodawca narodów, i słucha go morze Po wschodowe daleko pałające zorze. Tam senat i do twarzy podobne ojczyste Na tysiącu filarach sali przezroczystej Widział one efory w togach opuszczonych Przestrzegając wolności sobie poruczonych; I Arsenal, i inne artyleryskie dziwy, I tak dawno zbierane Markowe archiwy¹³.</p>	<p>Anniversary forum, Some Grisons And the ability to see Venetian forts [everywhere, The learned Patavium and the Attican one The holy apiaries for the Muses moved from [Hybel, From the swift gondola on the rough Adria Travels to the strange and rich Venice, Not by walls or nasty rocks, But walls of tempestuous sea surround, The superb Cyclades peer out from the sea, Parliaments, churches flow on the sea, And on a gold column, lying, a huge lion Holds a regiment in his legs — unabashed, [steadfast The lawmaker of nations, and the sea listens [to him To the far eastern sea. Senate there and to a face similar to the [home one On a thousand pillars of a transparent hall Saw those ephors in long robes Observing the freedoms entrusted to them; And the Armoury, and other artillery [wonders, And so long ago collected Mark's archives.</p>
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¹² "Wenecja," in Andrzej Wargocki, *O Rzymie pogańskim i chrześcijańskim. Księgi dwoje* (Kraków: Drukarnia Łukasza Kupisza, 1610), 137–146. See Biliński, *Viaggiatori polacchi a Venezia...*, 356.

¹³ Samuel Twardowski, *Książę Wiśniowiecki Janusz*, edited by Roman Krzywy (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2014), Biblioteka Dawnej Literatury Popularnej i Okolicznościowej, vol. 13, 60–62, lines 369–388.

Venice was only an intermediate stop during that journey. The Prince travelled all the way to Naples. The return trip occurred in 1618, and it also ran through Venice: "(...) w Lombardyją zatym / Kinie ku Wenecyi, którą wnet opuści"¹⁴ [Therefore into Lombardy / Towards Venice, which he soon shall leave].

The city itself and the organisation of the Venetian Republic, as well as its strong presence in the region, indicated the success which Venice achieved in the international arena, and the esteem it enjoyed particularly in the north and the south. It radiated northwards by dint of its attractive political model, which was similar to that which existed in the Roman republic, and which was treated as the role model for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, despite some clear differences (it was not based on any efficient administration, and the set of szlachta freedoms were closer to anarchy while Venetian nobility had to observe predefined rules). In the south and the east, it was considered as a seaborne military and trade power, competing for centuries with the Sublime Porte, and as a strong and important player in the Mediterranean and the nearby seas.

Venetian Republic as an attractive political system

The attractiveness of the Venetian model for visitors from today's Poland resulted from the fact that it was viewed as the fulfilment of the idealistic assumptions developed already in ancient Greece, Aristotle's principle of politeia, and the ideas preserved in Plato's *Republic*.¹⁵ Venice was considered the second Sparta.¹⁶ The model admired in szlachta's Poland was continued by the republic system of ancient Rome. The Republic of Venice – the only Italian state that avoided the dangers entailed by its political system, a feat not achieved by other Italian republics,¹⁷ which lost their independence – was considered by my Old Polish writers as a continuator of the Roman model. The Old Polish writers, and also the authors of Polish political thought, were convinced that after Rome and Venice it was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that was the third state in which the republican political system was being introduced with positive results. Venice was the role model, yet they saw similarities between it and the Commonwealth.¹⁸ The republican model of governance was described by, e.g. Donato Giannotti, a Florentine (*Libro della repubblica de Viniziani*, 1540), and Casparo Contarini, a Venetian (*De Magistratibus et Republica Venetorum*, 1543).¹⁹ The many visits by Poles and the extensive stays in Venice

¹⁴ Ibid., 72, lines 506–507.

¹⁵ Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, "Admirabilis ordo. Polacy wobec mitu Wenecji," in *Literatura, historia, dziedzictwo. Prace ofiarowane Profesor Teresie Kostkiewiczowej*, edited by Tomasz Chachulski and A Grześkowiak-Krwawicz (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich, 2006), 68.

¹⁶ Claude Backvis, "Jak w XVI wieku Polacy widzieli Włochy i Włochów," in idem, *Szkice o kulturze staropolskiej*, selected and edited by Andrzej Biernacki (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975), 732; Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, "Rzeczpospolita – pojęcie i idea w dyskursie politycznym Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów. Rekonesans," *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, issue 65 (2012): 27–28.

¹⁷ Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, *Admirabilis ordo...*, 69.

¹⁸ Ibid., 73.

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 69.

of people who upon returning to the Commonwealth became part of the opinion-making intellectual elite had a major impact on the propagation of the principles of the political system in the Commonwealth in the latter half of the 16th century and in the early-17th century. I am referring to not only poets and philologists, e.g. Kochanowski and Nidecki, but also to political writers: Stanisław Orzechowski²⁰, Marcin Kromer, Wawrzyniec Goślicki, Łukasz Górnicki, Stanisław Warszewicki, Andrzej Wolan²¹, Paweł Palczowski,²² the author of the description of the political system of Venice, and Jan Zamoyski,²³ an ardent promoter of Venice's republican achievements.²⁴

The model enabled the reconciliation of civil liberties, the strength of the state outside it, and the equality of all people under one law.²⁵ In Poland, the indications of the efforts to implement the model were visible in the statements by Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski when he demanded equal liability for szlachta, peasants and townspeople in terms of the penalty for murder,²⁶ and by Orzechowski, who argued that the king was not above the law but rather was subject to it.²⁷ Therefore, Venetian liberty also meant the attenuation of the monarch's power – it was thus understood by some members of the Commonwealth's elite and it was in that form that they wanted to implement the Venetian model. Polish political writers of the golden age praised not so much Venetian liberty as the order and discipline that existed in the state, which they wanted to transfer into the Slavic state. Orzechowski also saw much value in the solution of banishing those representatives of the Venetian state who when fulfilling their diplomatic missions would accept any gifts from a foreign ruler. He offered the example of Ermolao Barbaro (1454–1493), a translator of Aristotle's works, who accepted the Patriarchate of Aquileia from Pope Innocent VIII. Orzechowski wrote: "(...) the Venetians' severe judgement was not reduced either by the respect of his house, or the size of his mind, or emperor's reason, or papal help: he had to pay for his deed with his absence from the Venetian Republic."²⁸

²⁰ See fragments indicating his support for Venetian political solutions in *Rozmowa około egzekucyj*a and *Quincunx* by T. Ulewicz (*Iter Romano-Italicum Polonorum...*, 233).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 234.

²² Paweł Palczowski, *Status Venetorum, sive Brevis tractatus de Origine et Vetustate Venetorum* (Cracoviae: Officina Lazari, 1604).

²³ J. Zamoyski, *De Senatu Romano libri duo* (Venice: Jordano Zileto, 1563).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 234.

²⁵ Grzeškowiak-Krwawicz, *Admirabilis ordo...*, 70.

²⁶ Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, *Ad Serenissimum et Inclitum Regem Poloniae Sigismundum Augustum Lascius sive de poena homicidi* (Cracoviae: Hieronim Vietor, 1543).

²⁷ Stanisław Orzechowski, *Dyjałog abo rozmowa około egzekucyj*ej Polskiej Korony oraz *Quincunx* – the fragment was quoted in Ulewicz, *Iter Romano-Italicum Polonorum...*, 233. Orzechowski supported the reason behind the principle by referring to history, and he added a side note: "The Venetians hang their prince." According to the writer: "Venetian history provides that in the single sentence «For Venice to be only one!» the Venetians allowed their prince to be hanged in the square in front of St. Mark." According to Jerzy Starnawski that was a reference to a story Doge Mariano Faliero from 1355. He supposedly entered an arrangement with the plebeians against the nobility. Vide Stanisław Orzechowski, "Quincunx," in idem, *Wybór pism*, edited by Jerzy Starnawski (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo, 1972), BN I 210, 477–478.

²⁸ Stanisław Orzechowski, "Quincunx," 473.

The education received by later Polish elites in Padua and student visits to Venice, and the admiration they had for the republican system of the Republic of Venice were reflected in the treatises and dialogues of Polish writers of the Renaissance and the early Baroque. I am referring to the writings by Paweł Palczowski, Łukasz Górnicki, Andrzej Wolan, Stanisław Orzechowski, Jan Zamojski, and Stanisław Warszawicki.

Palczowski was the author of a work which offered a comprehensive description of Venice's political system.²⁹ The eight-chapter treatise discussed the origins of Venetians, described the territories which belonged to the state, including its seaward colonies (it was a kind of a chorography of the lands which belonged to Venice and the city) and its wealth; it discussed the institutions included in the organisational structure of the Republic ("Venetiae dependet principaliter a tribus magistratibus, nimium Concilio magno, Ordine Senatorio, Principe"³⁰); it also discussed the income and expenditures of the Venetian state, offered a specification of the war gear and principles of financing wars ("nervus belli est pecunia"³¹), and provided examples of ancient leaders; it also discussed wartime successes, the need for bravery and good luck, and Venice's neighbouring states. The work included references to the more recent history of Venice: to people and events, wars in particular.

Wolan's fifteen-chapter-long treatise drew inspiration from a work by Contarini; the author following the findings of his compatriot predecessors treating those as a common good.³² The initial five chapters were used to define the essence of liberty in the historical, philosophical (e.g. Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero), and social contexts. Chapters four through nine were used to analyse the relationships between law and liberty in the Commonwealth, while the final set of chapters (from the ninth to the fifteenth) raised the need to reform the legislature and judicial system (including the topics of unequal application of the penalty for murder, and szlachta excesses).³³

In *Rozmowa Polaka z Włochem o wolnościach i prawach polskich*, Górnicki discussed the issue of the election of the ruler still remembering the election of Stefan Batory. He considered the Venetian model, which drew inspiration from its Roman predecessor, as a model worth emulating. He argued that an election inside a closed room instead of in the field enabled a community to maintain its control over the elected official. He believed that the election of a ruler should not occur under the pressure of gifts offered by candidates to rulers-elect, nor should it be the outcome of a ruse. Górnicki discussed the notion of liberty and how it differed from wilfulness, which the Italian (one of the interlocutors) condemned. The interlocutors were also interested in

²⁹ Ulewicz, *Iter Romano-Italicum Polonorum...*, 234; Biliński, *Viaggiatori polacchi a Venezia nei secoli XVII-XIX (saggio preliminare: esempi ed osservazioni generali)*, 354-355.

³⁰ Paweł Palczowski, *Status Venetorum* (Cracoviae: Officina Lazari, 1605), vol. 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 38.

³² Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, *Admirabilis ordo...*, 71, 74-75; Roman Mazurkiewicz, "Wstęp," in Andrzej Wolan, *De liberatate politica sive civili * O wolności Rzeczypospolitej albo ślacheckiej (Humaczenie Stanisława Dubingowicza)*, edited by Maciej Eder and Roman Mazurkiewicz, volume's academic editor Waclaw Uruszczak (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2010), 42, 47.

³³ Vide Mazurkiewicz, *Wstęp*, 28-30.

how the Sejm functioned and how laws were passed. The Italian concluded that one should proclaim such laws which would not offer any loopholes for crime or abuse. The interlocutors discussed the notion of personal security. In Poland, it was supposed to be ensured by personal guards and easy access to weapons, while in Venice by the fear of the inevitable punishment for committing a crime. The Italian argued that fear of a sentence for deed in violation of the law was much better than wilfulness. Górnicki discussed the judiciary to some extent. He presented the absurd nature of the solutions in place in the Commonwealth which ensured impunity for the wealthy and perjurers. The Italian considered Sejm's royal court as being ineffective. He concluded that in practice the judiciary in Poland was broken. The Pole boasted that in his state a person could be sent to jail only after a sentence of guilt was passed. The Italian believed that confinement should also be considered a preventive measure used for preventing criminals from committing further crimes. He offered the examples of counterfeiting money and murder. The Italian interlocutor also condemned marriage between close relatives, and he accused Poles of polygamy and the practice of exchanging wives. He saw that as an outcome of the suspension of secular jurisdiction of sentences issued by religious courts. The impairment of the judiciary led in Poland to a spike in crime rates. The Italian accused Poles not only of indifference regarding the fates of those captured into Tatar-Turkish captivity, but also regarding the roguery occurring in households in the form of property disputes ending in relatives murdering each other. The Italian also accused Poles of excess in clothing, the fact of drawing inspiration from fashion while ignoring other good habits, e.g. that of drinking, emulating the Turkish way, water instead of alcoholic beverages: "Ci, którzy u was poturecku chodzą, wino niż wody wolą"³⁴ [Those who walk in your country the Turkish way, prefer water to wine]. Through the Italian's lips, the writer also condemned visits to Italian hot springs for improving one's health, and so-called educational trips, in which Venice was often the destination. He believed that szlachta youth should learn the art of war and serve its homeland in borderland garrisons, defending it against the Tatars. Italy should, then, be visited for study by people with considerable experience, who would be able to transfer the good traits onto the Polish soil. That was the way in which the Republic of Venice achieved its praiseworthy political status: "Bo co owo młódź ślecie do Włoch dla tańców, dla lutnie, nie przyniosą owi z sobą tego, co by Koronie było zdrowo, ale to przyniosą, czego nie umieć zdrowiej było"³⁵ [What is the merit sending your youth to Italy to dance, to play, as they will not bring with them that which would make the Crown healthy, instead they bring that which cannot make it healthier]. The Italian also defined what a proclaimed law should be – that it should be based on natural law. The Pole was apprehensive about excessively strict law, which would result in many instances of banishments or defections to

³⁴ Łukasz Górnicki, "Rozmowa Polaka z Włochem o wolnościach i prawach polskich," in idem, *Pisma*, edited by Roman Pollak, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1961), 378.

³⁵ Ibid., 380.

hostile neighbouring countries. The Italian argued that it was Venice that was closer to the Porte, and despite its severe laws no one was fleeing it. He also discussed the Italian judiciary, in which murder was punishable by death unless it was committed in self-defence or in defence of defenceless people (women). He rebuked the Polish penalty for murder which consisted of paying a fine for every head killed, i.e. the so-called *główszczyzna*. The dialogue included a criticism of the system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the form of a comparison of its legal solutions to those on which the Venetian democracy was founded.

The treatise *Droga do zupełnej wolności* also raised the issue of the operation of courts in the Commonwealth. The opinion journalist expressed his support for courts operating in a continual manner, and he criticised the time-limited six-week royal court, which issued sentences only every other year. He compared that situation to pilgrims travelling from Venice to the Holy Land who would put people who knew how to navigate the water from their big ship into a small boat and would only invite them back when a storm would come nigh. In following the Venetian model, the writer postulated that senators and deputies should fulfil their obligations year-round living throughout that time by the king. He discussed the organisation of state bodies, emulating their Venetian counterparts, in the judiciary. He considered the custom of voting through *apella* as a method worth emulating, though he appreciated even more the Venetian method of ballot voting, i.e. using canvas balls; he described the system in detail.³⁶ The voting using balls and coloured boxes was supposed to support the freedom of decision as it guaranteed the confidentiality of the process. It was also supposed to eliminate the never-ending displays of oratory skills by deputies, who often formulated their positions matching their fellow politicians and not speaking in reflection of their own conscience. That is because the legal system should be based on strict punishment for criminal deeds and rewarding for merits. According to the Venetian model, the power of a ruler was supposed to be complemented by a twelve-person senate. Offices were supposed to be term-based: the upper office was supposed to have a term of eighteen months, and twelve months in the case of senators. The writer opposed the filling of offices for life. As Górnicki argued, the high quality of Venetian solutions was proven by their long history. He did not conceal the fact that he was using Contarini's work, adapting his solutions to match the Polish reality. He expanded on the notion of the application of public prosecution. The topic also appeared in *Rozmowa*. The council of twelve was also to operate as a public prosecutor while the king was supposed to judge. The writer argued in favour of an independent financing of the members of the senate to avoid bribery. The king and the senate were supposed to be monitored by a council consisting of 16 people. Górnicki also discussed the defence system, which was supposed to be based on a continuous presence of the army at the borders and in castles erected there. He opposed the argument that «*nic Polakom po mocnych zamkach, Polak polem stoi i w polu się bije, nie*

³⁶ See Górnicki, "Droga do zupełnej wolności," in idem, *Pisma*, 494–495.

za murem (...)»³⁷ [Poles should have no interest in strong castles, Poles have many fields and they fight in the fields, not behind walls]. He argued that both Sparta and Venice lasted so long because of their fortifications in the form of seas. Górnicki saw the trade of abducted Commonwealth citizens as an outcome of the lack of fortifications: “(...) jeśli naszej braciej, naszych sióstr, ciotek i innych powinnych, które w Carogrodzie na rynku sprzedają jako ine bydło, boli krzywda?”³⁸ [if our brothers, our sisters, aunts and other relatives who in Tsar-gord in the market square are sold like cattle, feel the harm?] According to him the remedy for that situation would have been the maintenance of a continuously sitting Sejm and an army at the borders. In emulating the Venetian model, he also argued for establishing a national treasury and a tax collection system. He believed that fiscal encumbrance should be permanent and low. He argued that orphans and their property, in order to avoid abuses in the form of exploitation and harm, should be cared for by the state, i.e. the council of the twelve to be precise. The advantage of the Venetian model over the legal system of the Commonwealth also consisted of the fact that the Venetian system of governance underwent modifications if needed, while the organisational structure of the rule in the Commonwealth was unalterable, which made it increasingly inefficient and incompetent.³⁹

Therefore, even though people in the Commonwealth in the 16th century admired the political system of Venice, none of its solutions were transferred into the Polish legal system. Most were content with superficial analogies, and slogans, especially about freedom and the functioning of democratic parliamentary institutions, which in practice meant close to nothing. Finally, most feared Venetian discipline and consistency in enforcing the law, including punishments. Szlachta’s freedom meant wilfulness; Venice offered rich sons of magnates a chance to use it during their foreign educational travels.

Venice as the leader in the fight against the Ottoman Empire

The Republic of Venice was present in the struggles with the Ottoman Porte in 1443–1444. Before that it maintained regular relations with the sultan, considering the benefit of being able to conduct unhindered trade. Its participation in the anti-Islamic crusade announced by Pope Eugene IV in January 1443 consisted of sending galleys, 12 of which reached, together with the pope’s galleys, to the shores of the Dardanelles. They prevented the 40,000-strong Turkish army from crossing onto the Balkan Peninsula. Sultan Murad II did, however, cross the Bosphorus at Rumelihisarı on Genoan ships around 20 October 1444. Soon afterwards, on 10 November, the sultan’s army defeated Christian armies at Varna.⁴⁰ The Ottoman Porte

³⁷ Ibid., 516.

³⁸ Ibid., 518.

³⁹ See also Stanisław Tarnowski, *Pisarze polityczni XVI wieku*, introduction and notes Bogdan Szlachta (Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, Księgarnia Akademicka 2000), 727–745.

⁴⁰ See Danuta Quirini-Popławska, “Republika Wenecka wobec akcji antyturskiej w latach 1440–1444 na tle sytuacji politycznej w Europie,” in idem, *Italia mia...*, 147–160.

openly stood in opposition to the Republic of Venice only after the erection of Rumelian Castle on the Bosphorus in 1452, when Venetian ships ignored a demand to submit to Turkish inspection, and as a result three ships were fired upon, two fled and one sank; Turks executed the ship's survivors and impaled the captain.⁴¹ Venetians sent a fleet of 15 galleys and two transport ships towards Constantinople, yet they did not reach the fight in time.⁴² Neither did they engage sufficiently in the crusade organised by Pope Pius II in 1464. When the Venetian fleet reached Ancona, the pope died, so the ships returned to Venice.⁴³ In 1470, Negroponte (Chalcis), the capital of the largest and the most important Venetian colony located in Euboea, fell into Turkish hands.⁴⁴ In 1473, Venetians were able to defend the Albanian city of Scutari from the Turks. The struggles with the Ottoman Empire continued in the following years. Venice lost the island of Lemnos and its Krujë castle in Albania, and most of the lands in the country, as well as lands in continental Greece; at the beginning of 1480, Turks seized Otranto in Apulia. In 1479, it signed a treatise with Mehmed II, which was confirmed two years later by Bayezid II, his successor.⁴⁵ The rule of the sultan and his successor meant 42 years of peace for Venice, with the exception of 1499–1503 when the emperor felt threatened.⁴⁶ In the course of their struggles with Suleiman the Magnificent, Venetians were able to defend Corfu in 1537, yet they lost numerous islands near the Peloponnese. Venice did not receive support either from other Italian states, France or the Empire. The anti-Turkish alliance between the emperor, the pope and Venice signed in 1538 ended in a fiasco at Preveza near Epirus and the signing of an unfavourable peace treaty in 1540. Andrea Doria, a Genoan, contributed to the defeat.⁴⁷ Peace lasted until 1565 when the Turks attacked (unsuccessfully) Malta.⁴⁸ The Venetians' attempt a day before the Turkish attack on Cyprus to gather a broad coalition against the Ottoman Porte ended in a fiasco. Pope Pius V and King Philip II of Spain declared aid. The failed expedition of 205 allied ships did not reach even the island, which Turks seized in 1570 conducting massacres in Nicosia and Famagusta.⁴⁹ 1571 brought another maritime victory of the Holy League, which consisted of Venice, the State of the Church, and the Kingdom of Spain.⁵⁰

For the anti-Turkish propaganda to achieve the results intended by their authors, they had to not only consider the political reality, but also be written in Latin. In the initial period, Orzechowski's *De bello adversas Turcas suscipiendo* (1543, A4v) and *Turcica secunda* (1544, book C_{7v}) were the most

⁴¹ John J. Norwich, *Historia Wenecji*, trans. Jakub Bartoszewicz, 2nd edition (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo AB, 2015), 320.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 321–325.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 340–341.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 345–346.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 348–353.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 438.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 451–452.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 462–463.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 470–476.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 476–483.

noteworthy (after many years, translated into Polish with the intention to enable general access to the principles of the anti-Turkish league in the country); in them, Venice was referenced only as one of the Italian states which might participate in the league intended to conduct a total land and maritime war against the Turks.⁵¹ In a similar manner, Venice's participation in the crusade/league was depicted by Bartłomiej Georgiewicz, a former Turkish slave and later an anti-Turkish writer who published his exhortations throughout Europe in Latin, German, Italian, and Polish: "If Venetians and the Portuguese gathered their sea army, Angles, Poles and other princes added their knights, and especially if that Emperor advised, Soliman would no longer oppose Karolus than Darius opposed Alexander, than Xerxes opposed Themistocles, or than Antiochus opposed Judah Maccabee."⁵²

Calls directed towards the Republic of Venice to participate in a general Christian anti-Turkish league were not uncommon even later in Polish anti-Turkish literature. Those can be found in period anti-Turkish literature, e.g. in works by Maciej Strykowski, Józef Wereszczyński, and Wawrzyniec Chlebowski. They appeared on a regular basis at least between 1550 and 1650.⁵³ The most significant work, which painted a panoramic view of the relations between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Porte, was Krzysztof Warszewicki's narrative poem *Wenecyja* first released in 1572, and later in 1587. Warszewicki's work was later used by various poets who raised the anti-Turkish theme, e.g. Józef Wereszczyński, Marcin Paszkowski, and Wawrzyniec Chlebowski.⁵⁴

When writing the *Wenecyja* narrative poem, Krzysztof Warszewicki applied the convention of a lament uttered by personified Venice. The historically-viewed relations between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Porte were the work's main theme. The history of Turkey's power – described in the form of a presentation of consecutive rulers of the vigorously unfolding empire – constituted another major component⁵⁵.

The author found reason for the lament, and an encouragement to engage in a fight against the enemy threatening the Christian world in a recent seizing of Cyprus (in 1570) by the Turks and the cruelty they inflicted in

⁵¹ Stanisław Orzechowski, *Oksza na Turka*, trans. Jan Januszowski (Kraków: Drukarnia Łazarzowa, 1590), 12, 128.

⁵² Bartłomiej Georgiewicz, *Rozmowa z Turczyńcem o wierze krześcijańskiej i o tajności Trójce Świętej, która w Alkoranie stoi napisana* (Kraków: Helena Unglerowa, 1548), book C₁.

⁵³ More on anti-Turkish literature: Juliusz Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Zygmunt III* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1971), 233–310; Piotr Trafiałowski, „*Imago Turci*”. *Studium z dziejów komunikacji społecznej w dawnej Polsce (1453–1572)* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2013), 119–235; Wołodymyr Pyłypenko, *W obliczu wroga. Polska literatura antyturcka od połowy XVI do połowy XVII wieku* (Oświęcim: Napoleon V, 2016), 93–105, 165–166; Michał Kuran, “Anti-Turkish literature in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1575–1733,” in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, Volume 14: *Central and Eastern Europe (1700–1800)*, edited by Davide Thomas, John A. Chesworth (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2020), 471–493.

⁵⁴ Teodor Wierzbowski, “Przedmowa,” in *Wenecyja. Poemat historyczno-polityczny z końca XVI wieku*, published by Teodor Wierzbowski (Warsaw: Drukarnia Józefa Bergera, 1886), XXXII–XLJ; Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce...*, 239, 241–242, 248–250.

⁵⁵ The work was discussed by, e.g. Pyłypenko, *W obliczu wroga...*, 98–100.

Nicosia and Famagusta.⁵⁶ According to him, an opportunity for a counter-attack was a recent victory in a maritime battle at Lepanto. In its first edition, the work was ascribed to Walenty Dembiński, Chancellor of Poland. The second edition was ascribed to Andrzej Tęczyński, a Krakow voivode. As the author stated in the first dedication, the aim of the narrative poem was to familiarise szlachta readers with the history of the struggles of the Republic of Venice with the Porte, and to present the consecutive stages of the growth of the Ottoman dominance. Using a relatable example (analogies in terms of the political system), the szlachta was supposed to learn how to prevent the calamity with which Venice was struggling. The writer depicted the Porte as an untrustworthy opponent interested in their expansion and using schemes for momentary gains (that, in fact, was a common motif in anti-Turkish literature). He saw the alliance, which should have bound Christian states, as obliged to stand in solidarity in defence of Venice. The passage read: "A zwłaszcza z strony tego spólnego nieprzyjaciela imienia chrześcijańskiego, tureckiego okrutnika, który przykładem przodków swoich, nie dzierząc nikomu nigdy ni wiary, ni przymierza, jedno póki mu się zda albo póki mu go potrzeba, targnął się na weneckie państwo bez żadnej przyczyny mimo przysięgę i przymierze dane"⁵⁷ [And especially from the common enemy to the Christian name, the Turkish brute, who in following the examples of his predecessors, not ever observing anyone's faith or alliance, only as long as it is useful or necessary for him, attacked the Venetian state without any reason despite the oath it gave and alliance it entered]. Warszewicki considered the seizing of Cyprus as a prelude to a Turkish march to capture Italian lands.

The personified Venice in the initial rhymed part of the speech instructed the recipients identifying the factors which led the state to its downfall. According to him, the main ones included a lack of solidarity or agreement between the members of the Christian side, which was a result of their disregard for the Turkish threat. Therefore, he called for a united cooperation in fighting the enemy, who has been a natural enemy for generations ("z przodków, z przyrodzenia" [ancestor after ancestor, by birth] – book Bv, line 43), who had hostility towards all Christians in their blood, which Venice had proven with its extensive experiences. The speaker also warned readers against Turkish ruthlessness and a practice of establishing favourable tactical alliances only to break them once they were no longer beneficial. The Porte seemed an unreliable partner, a fact about which Venice was trying to warn readers. The self-presentation of the speaking persona is worth considering – it expressed a praise of Venice as a city and a state:

Jam ona Wenecyja, panna niezgwałcona,	I am Venice, unraped maiden,
Wszech miast słusznie królowna na świecie	Justly named the princess of all the cities in
[rzeczona.	[the world.
Jedennaście set i coś lat, jakom stanęła,	Eleven hundred and some years since
	[I emerged,

⁵⁶ Norwich, *Historia Wenecji*, 477–478.

⁵⁷ [Krzysztof Warszewicki], *Wenecyja*, [Krakow]: Mateusz Siebeneicher, 1572, sheet A_{3v}.

Kiedy ono Attyle stroga broń słyęła.
 Jednym dziwem na świecie mnie też
 [poczytają;
 Ci sami lekceważą, co mię nie widają.
 Mam to zdawna, że wiary brońię i Kościoła,
 Żem włoskich państw ozdobą, żem
 wszytkich cnót szkoła.
 Były już łupem nieraz miasta, państwa
 [drugie;
 Wiodąc ziemią i morzem z różnymi narody
 Wojny częstokroć wielkie o miłe swobody,
 Wszakże nigdy nie z chęci, ale przymuszona,
 Nienawiścią ze wszech stron będąc
 [ogarniona⁵⁸.

When Attila's severe weapon was known.
 I am also considered a wonder of the world;
 I am scorned by those have not seen me.
 I have had it long, that I defend faith and the
 [Church,
 That I am a gem of Italian states, that I am
 the seat of all virtues.
 Other cities and states have been looted
 [before;
 Waging land and sea wars with other nations
 Often grand wars for pleasant liberties,
 But never for wanton, forced rather,
 By hatred surrounded from every side.

The self-praise covered the long history of the city-state, its uniqueness – it seemed a new wonder of the world, which was proven by people visiting the capital of the Republic; and its virgin state, i.e. that it had never been captured by enemies. It wished to play the role of a defender of Christian faith in the international arena, and considering its organisation it perceived itself as a leader in promoting social attitudes which increased social welfare. The self-praise also covered the city-state's perfection, which was reflected in its military strength, a point which the Venetian army was not able to prove either on land or, especially, at sea. It stressed that it had led just wars, that is in defence of its land and non-material values (i.e. the freedom of its republic), and that persevered despite the hatred of its enemies (i.e. competing with other Italian cities, and the Ottoman Empire). The *Porte* in particular, according to the persona, wished to deprive Venice of its seaward colonies and its freedom viewed as a political achievement.

The core of the argument was a historical *narratio* which presented the struggles of the Republic of Venice with the Ottoman *Porte*, also depicting the consecutive stages of the spread of the Turkish dominance under the rule of consecutive sultans. The account of the fall of Cyprus and especially the fights for Nicosia and Famagusta, which ended in massacres of their inhabitants, constituted a major plot. When the Turks were capturing the first of the port cities:

Tu kto mi da oczam lzy albo tę wymowę,
 Bym oplakać jako chcę, powiedzieć umiała,
 Jaka Bogu i ludziom krzywda się tam stała.
 Bo zgoła nic w nieszczęsnym mieście nie
 [zostało,
 Co by się wszeteczeństw, mordy nie zmazało.
 (..)

That who pressed tears into my eyes or the
 [expression,
 Which would help me mourn as I wanted to,
 The harm done there to God and man.
 As there is nothing left in the ill-fated city,
 Which could erase the disgraceful deeds, the
 [killing.
 (..)

⁵⁸ Ibid., book B₃.

<p>Niesłychanej swejwolej pełno było złości, Każdy broił co zachciał aż do żądliwości. Ani lata, ani stan, ni rodzaj, żadnego Wolnym nie uczyniły od gwałtu sprośnego⁵⁹.</p>	<p>There was much of wilfulness and rage, Everyone did what they pleased until all [desires. Neither the years, nor the state, kind, neither Have freed it from the foul violence.</p>
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The massacre of the inhabitants of Famagusta, whose inhabitants and defenders were promised that their lives would be spared, was depicted without any bloody details. The further details of enslavement, the discussion of the religious motivations behind the conquest conducted by Muslims, and deliberations on the ethics of war – including on dominance and the readiness to engage in fight instead of consenting to an ill peace – led to a call to undertake a joint armed mission. The speaking persona referred to the anti-Turkish league entered into by the State of the Church, Spain, and Venice on 25 May 1571.⁶⁰ As a wartime wake-up call, the personified Venice listed the benefits of such an alliance. The essence of the argument consisted of threads in the history of the Ottoman Empire: its origin and the art of conquest.⁶¹ In the account fulfilled in the form of a condemning speech, the persona mentioned the loss of Thessaloniki and Negroponte. The following argumentative part of the reasoning featured the example of Hungary as a warning for Christian states to avoid any alliances with the Porte. The reasoning was intertwined with warnings, encouragements, and discussions of knightly and religious values, laments, a diagnosis of the international situation, an evaluation of the attitudes and the actions of European states. In presenting an ill image of the enemy, Venice called for a new crusade, bearing in mind the loss of Cyprus and the attack on Friuli.

In Warszewicki's narrative poem, Venice seemed a leader in the fights against the Ottoman Porte; a player which knew the enemy the best, and who sustained significant losses to him. That gave it the moral legitimacy to formulate admonitions towards all Christian states. The defeat of enemies was supposed to mean a return of the golden age, a securing of freedoms, and avenging wrongs.

Maciej Strykowski condemned the loss of numerous Greek islands around the year 1570, the fratricidal fighting between Christian states, and the fact of inviting the Turks to alliances during wars waged against other Christian states in his 1575 work *O wolności Korony Polskiej i Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*.⁶² He also saw the weakening of the morals of the Venetian fleet after Lepanto:

<p>Patrzmyż i na Wenety, co wojną słynęli, Zemdleli, co na morzu przedniejszymi byli.</p>	<p>We also look at Venetians, who were famed [in war, Those who had been the greatest in the seas [weakened.</p>
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⁵⁹ Ibid., book [B₁], lines 162–166, 171–174.

⁶⁰ Ibid., book Bv, lines 245–270.

⁶¹ The historical *narratio* covered lines 295–890.

⁶² See also Pyłypenko, *W obliczu wroga...*, 96–98.

Wziął im Selim królestwo Cypr prawie obfite, Kandyją z Korfem mają, lecz prawie podbite ⁶³ .	Selim took their kingdom of Cyprus abundant, They still have Candia with Corfu, though [almost conquered].
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In addition, the writer saw the diplomatic virtuosity of the Turks, who defeated one Christian state by entering an alliance with another. Such practices also harmed Venetians who eagerly had used the same strategy: "Wziąwszy z Węgry przymierze, Wenety zwojował, / Tych zaś zjednał, a włoskich miast kilka zhołdował"⁶⁴ [Having established an alliance with Hungary, Venetians vanquished, / They won over those, and forced several Italian cities to pay homage].

Strykowski knew well that Venetians did not exploit the success they achieved at Lepanto. He knew that had they counter-attacked and could have reclaimed their recent losses. Dissent brought ruin on the recent allies. He thus depicted the course of events:

Wziąwszy pokój z Niemcami, z Wenety [wojował I wydarł im mocą Cypr, królestwo przesławne, Wziął miasta Nikozyją, Famagustę dawne. A gdy Joan Austryję z papieżem, z Wenety Armatę mu poraził, zaskrobał się w pięty. Bo gdy naszymi wtenczas tryumf skończyć [chcieli, Cypr, Rodys z insułami inszymi by mieli. Lecz ich zwiodła niesforność, łakmstwo, [niezgoda, Zaczym ich podybała za niedbalstwem [szkoda. Iż Wenetowie sławy tak zacnej dostawszy, W pokój z Turki wstąpili, z dary się [kłaniawszy ⁶⁵ .	Having accepted peace with Germans, he [fought with Venetians And he took by force Cyprus from them, [a superb kingdom, He took the cities of yore: Nicosia, Famagusta. And when Joan took Austria with pope, from [Venice A cannon shot, fell off of his heal. Because when they wanted to end our [triumph then, They would have had Cyprus, Rhodes with [other isles. Yet their unruliness, greed, discord betrayed [them. And that followed with harm for their [negligence. Venetians having received such huge fame, Entered a peace with Turks, bowing with gifts.
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Strykowski referred to the events of September 1574. Yet the writer called on Polish and Lithuanian nobility to participate in the anti-Muslim campaign arguing that Italian, German and Spanish knights were waiting for them to join.

Jan Smolik wrote in the final decade of the 16th century a poem which belonged to the collective exhortation directed personally to selected European rulers (the emperor, the king of the Commonwealth, the king of Spain,

⁶³ Maciej Strykowski, *O wolności Korony Polskiej i Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, Kraków: Mikołaj Szarfenberger 1575, 15v.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 19. He also listed some of the recent losses incurred by the Republic of Venice: "(...) bo dwa zamki stracił, / Lecz Modon Wenetom wziął, tym sobie zapłacił" [he lost two castles, / but he took Modon from Venetians, thus paid for everything] (ibid., 35).

⁶⁵ Ibid., 36.

the Moscow Tsar, and all Christian rulers), in which he called upon Venetians to participate in an anti-Muslim crusade. The author argued that it was intended not to achieve confessional benefits but political and economic ones. The fact of the removal of the Ottoman Porte was supposed to enable the regaining of former Greek colonies, ensure the freedom of seafaring, and help increase the profits from safe trade. A decisive victory over the Turks was supposed to bring peace and stability:

Już wy możni Weneci z swego Arsenalu
(Pomścicie się też łatwie choć starego żalu).
Ruszcie śliczną armatę, galer i okrętów,
Nie bójcie się na morzu nijakich odmętów.
Bo macie Neptuna sobie przychylnego,
Fawonijus też doda wiatru pogodnego,
Który was zaprowadzi pod cypryjskie brzegi,
Tam gdzie nie zawadzą zimnych krajów śniegi.
A wy puśćcie swe działa pod cną Fomagustą,
By ją też na mały czas uczynić i pustą.
Co jeśli się wam szczęśliwie powiedzie,
Niechże wasza armata pod Rodys pojedzie.
Tam też skuście, co może stateczna Bellona,
W której się rozkochała panonijska strona.
A gdy się tam ukażą wojska wasze wodne,
Bez pochyby uczynią studnie, rzeki smrodne
Przez częste trupy zbite, które i tam, i sam
Leżeć będą na pował; uleknie się i Cham.
Wiecie, że wspólne mocy łatwie pożyć mogą
Tego nieprzyjaciela, a nie inszą drogą
Może być zwyciężony. Przeto nie mieszkajcie,
Ale się co wsko do swych municyij udajcie.
Nie żałując ni czoła, ni skarbów nałożyć,
By też i Wenecyją do czasu zubożyć.
Boć się wam to w krótkości zaś może
[nagrodzić,
Kiedy wam w Dalmacyjej i w Grecyjej
[szkodzić
Nikt nie będzie. A czasu wdzięcznego pokoja
W ojczystym Arsenale będzie wisieć zbroja,
Którą teraz zaprawdę trzeba wyhecować,
Która tęga a słaba, by wiedzieć, spróbować.⁶⁶

Oh, you wealthy Venetians from your Arsenal
(You shall avenge easily even the oldest of
[griefs].
Move your beautiful cannon, galleys and ships,
Don't be afraid of some depths in the sea.
Because you have Neptune favouring you,
Favonius shall also add fair weather wind,
Which shall lead you to Cyprus' shores,
Where no snows of cold states can reach.
And you shall release your cannons at the
[worthy Fomagusta,
To empty it for a short time as well.
If you are successful,
May your cannon move to Rhodes.
There, too, seduce that which the steady
[Bellona may,
Whom the Pannonian side had beloved so.
And once your maritime armies appear there,
They will surely fill wells and rivers with the
[stench
Of the many corpses killed, which both here
[and there
Shall lie around; even Cham shall dread.
You know that joint forces shall cut down
[more easily
That enemy, who cannot be defeated
In any other way. So stop waiting,
And go to your municipalities.
Not begrudging your strength, or your wealth,
What can impoverish even Venice.
Because that may shortly reward you,
When in Dalmatia and Greece
No one will cause damage anymore. And in
[time of graceful peace
In your native Arsenal your armour shall hang,
Which now must be polished,
To test which is strong and which is weak.

⁶⁶ Jan S[molik], "Ad amplissimum Senatam Venetum," in idem, *Otucha na pogany: wszystkim potentatom chrześcijańskim* (Krakow: [Siebeneicher Jakub], 1594), book [A_{iiij}].

The reasoning was built around the Venetian Arsenal, which contained a strong fleet capable of success as it was favoured by gods and nature supported by the experience of Venetian sailors. The poet argued that an armoury should be kept in the Arsenal, yet only upon becoming victorious. He saw and appreciated the special nature of the Republic's maritime army.

In the later period, i.e. in the 1610s, when anti-Turkish literature published in Polish listed the potential members of an anti-Turkish league, Italian states were perceived jointly; authors regularly referred to Italians. The name Venice did not appear. The profiles of those texts indicated that the centre of gravity of such a mission consisted of conducting an expedition and struggles conducted on land. Ships were used for transporting armies when the goal was to conquer Palestine – the Holy Land. There was talk of concurrent land and maritime fighting. That was the case in Marcin Paszkowski's 1620 work *Bitwy znamienite tymi czasy... z nieprzyjacioły Krzyża Świętego z roku 1620*, and in his 1615 work *Pobudka narodom chrześcijańskim w jedność miłości chrześcijańskiej na podniesienie wojny zgodnie przeciw nieprzyjacielowi Krzyża Świętego*. During the Thirty Years' War, Venice tried to remain neutral. In 1645, the Turks began a war over Crete. The Republic was nearly alone in its defence of Candia after the fall of the fortress and the island in 1669.⁶⁷ In 1684, Venice joined the league of Christian states, who managed to permanently reclaim from the Porte some of the lands it seized in past centuries (e.g. Transylvania and Hungary) and seas (e.g. Morea, Santa Maura, and Egina). The crowning of those successes was a peace treaty signed in Carlowitz in 1699.⁶⁸

Venice as a transfer port for pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land

The issue of the role of Venice as the chief centre of pilgrim traffic to and from the Holy Land in past centuries has long been the focus of Italian researchers⁶⁹, and it has been raised in the studies by Polish scholars⁷⁰. The major importance of Venice in the travels of pilgrims was discussed by Bronisław Biliński, Tadeusz Ulewicz, and Grzegorz Franczak.⁷¹

Jan Tarnowski, the author of the first Polish journal from his 1518 pilgrimage to the Holy Land, only referenced Venice as a place from where he set off for a voyage; he wrote: "W dniu św. Prokopa, który przypadł

⁶⁷ Norwich, *Historia Wenecji*, 554.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 568.

⁶⁹ Ugo Tucci, *I servizi marittimi veneziani per il pellegrinaggio in Terrasanta nel Medioevo*, *Wenecja: Università di Venezia* 1991; *La Dalmazia nelle relazioni di viaggiatori e pellegrini da Venezia tra Quattro- e Seicento*, edited by Sante Graciotti (Rome: Bardi Editore, 2009).

⁷⁰ For example Danuta Quirini-Popławska, "Pobyt w Wenecji pielgrzymów udających się do Ziemi Świętej w XIV i XV wieku," *Peregrinus Cracoviensis* 1998, issue 6: 27–45 [reprinted in:] idem, *Italia Mia...*, 163–180; idem, *Wenecja jako etap podróży do Ziemi Świętej (XIII–XV w.)*, in *Peregrinationes. Pielgrzymki w kulturze dawnej Europy*, edited by Halina Manikowska, Hanna Zaremska (Warsaw: Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1995), 126–143.

⁷¹ Biliński, *Viaggiatori...*, 352–353; idem, *Venezia nelle peregrinazioni polacche del '500...*, 241–249; Ulewicz, *Iter Romano-Italicum Polonorum...*, 191; Franczak, *Hierosolymitanorum processio...*, 237–245.

w niedzielę, rozpoczęliśmy podróż z Wenecji (...)”⁷² [On St. Procopius, which occurred on Sunday, we set off from Venice]. The traveller did not mention his return journey. Jan Goryński’s account of his 1560 pilgrimage did not include any information on his visit in Venice on route to the Holy Land. His description began with his arrival in Jaffa. The fact that he departed from Venice was indicated indirectly by a piece of information about the origin of the ship: “Po wieczery patron okrętu naszego (...), mniemając też, aby żołdaci beli, którzy by się dowiedzieć chcieli co by był za okręt (...), posłał tłumacza w barce małej, opowiadając im, iż jest okręt wenecki, który przyszedł z pielgrzymy (...)”⁷³ [After supper, the patron of our ship (...), possibly to let soldiers who were there know what ship it was (...), sent an interpreter in a small barge, who told them it was a Venetian ship which arrived with pilgrims (...)]. The description of the return journey also omitted any reference to his visit in the city of doges. The pilgrims did, however, visit Cyprus, which still belonged to the Republic of Venice, they made land in Famagusta, where they admired structures included in the obligatory programme of the pilgrimage trail (St. Catherine’s Church), and they visited salty lagoons and Limassol. The account focussed mainly on the selection of the appropriate ship for the remainder of the voyage, and finalising administrative and living matters.⁷⁴

The topic of Prince Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł’s visit to Venice on his way to the Holy Land was discussed by Bronisław Biliński, Leszek Zinkow, and Grzegorz Franczak.⁷⁵ Radziwiłł treated Venice as an administrative centre convenient for finalising matters associated with his further journey to the Holy Land: applying for and receiving documents, acquiring a loan, and selecting a ship (a galley). He first visited Venice and stayed in its vicinity in 1580–1581. He reached the city in late April or early May and he remained there until 24 April of the following year. At that time, he explored the city visiting, e.g. St. Mark’s Basilica, the vault, and he met Nicolò da Ponte, Doge of Venice. He eventually abandoned his original intention to set off for the Holy Land as he received news of a plague raging at the destination.⁷⁶ Therefore, his next stay in Venice no longer had the aura of freshness and first impression. Radziwiłł knew the people there and the relations

⁷² “Dziennik podróży Jana Tarnowskiego do Ziemi Świętej z 1518 roku,” trans. Robert Sawa, introduction and edited by Dariusz Chemperek, *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, issue 49 (2005): 187.

⁷³ “Peregrynacja do Ziemi Świętej Jana Goryńskiego,” in *Dwie peregrynacje z XVI wieku* (Warsaw: Władysław T. Baranowski, 1914), Prace Komisji do badań nad historią literatury i oświaty, vol. 1, 263–264.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 281–289.

⁷⁵ Leszek Zinkow, “Wenecja na trasie peregrynacji Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła «Sierotki» do Egiptu i Ziemi Świętej,” in *Terra Culturae. Obszary, transfery, recepcje kultury. Studia oraz szkice o kulturze i historii*, edited by Łukasz Burkiewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum, 2018), 143–156; Franczak, *Hierosolymitanorum processio...*, 242–245.

⁷⁶ See Tomasz Kempa, *Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł Sierotka (1549–1616). Wojewoda wileński* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 2000), 114–115; vide also Szczepan Kalinowski, “Pielgrzymki Radziwiłłów w XVI i XVII wieku,” *Peregrinus Cracoviensis*, issue 15 (2004): 65–74; G. Franczak, *Hierosolymitanorum processio...*, 245; L. Zinkow, *Wenecja na trasie peregrynacji Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła...*, 149.

between them; he was able to focus on preparing the planned journey. In the account translated from Latin into Polish by Andrzej Wargocki (originally edited as the prince's journal and translated into Latin by Tomasz Treter) published in the form of four letters in 1607, which existed in circulation in that form (in parallel to the Latin version)⁷⁷ until the mid-20th century, the arrival of the pilgrim in Venice was the first event which received a specific date. The Lithuanian magnate arrived in the city of doges on 8 December "(...) w samo święto Poczęcia Najświętszej Panny"⁷⁸ [right on the holiday of the Conception of Virgin Mary]. Owing to his earlier connections and royal letters of recommendation, Radziwiłł had no problem acquiring a letter of recommendation from the previously acquainted doge de Ponte for Venetian captains who fared the Mediterranean and whose native ports were located in seaward parts of the Republic of Venice. He also visited Joannes de Candia, at that time the prosecutor of the Holy Land residing at the Francis della Vigna monastery,⁷⁹ and guardian Jerome de Bressa, who was twice the superior of the Franciscan monastery in Jerusalem (he lived there 12 years in total), to receive directions from them on how to organise his travels. Radziwiłł was keen to set off after 6 January as he intended to reach the Holy Land by Easter. Encouraged by his friends, he chose an already thirteen-year-old galley which belonged to the Tornelli merchant family. It was captained by Augustine de Giacomo. The choice was dictated by the vessel's considerable speed and its "fortuitous" nature. The magnate thus described the size of the ship: "nie był ten wprawdzie wielki, bo tylko sześćset beczek brał"⁸⁰ [it was not necessarily large as it could only take six hundred barrels]. Thus, Radziwiłł revealed the reason for selecting the ship and approximated his decision-making process. Clearly, what counted was fortuitousness in the sea, speed, and an experienced crew. He decided based on advice from trustworthy locals. The choice proved correct considering the fate of the vessel Ruggina (presumably a regularly faring ship carrying pilgrims to the Holy Land), which sett off later. It was destroyed in a storm near Istria, and its passengers returned to Venice.⁸¹ Two other ships aboard which Radziwiłł might have travelled through Egypt sank – one near Ragusa, the other near Kerkyra. He was discouraged from using those by his friends who argued that the ships had inexperienced captains. Prior to his departure, the pilgrim had to receive a permit for his journey from the pope. Radziwiłł only requested a renewal of his previously issued permit. The letters were supposed to authenticate the prince in the eyes of Palestine's Christians. The necessity of holding an authenticating letter was supposed

⁷⁷ Vide also Franczak, *Hierosolymitanorum processio...*, 242.

⁷⁸ Mikołaj K. Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja albo Pielgrzymowanie do Ziemi Świętej Jaśnie Oświeconego Pana [Jego] M[ości] P[ana] Mikołaja Chryzstofa Radziwiłła, księżęcia na Ołyce i Nieświeżu, hrabie na Szydłowcu i Mir, wojewody wileńskiego, szawelskiego etc. starosty. Przez Jego M[ości] Ks[iędza] Tomasza Tretera, kustosa warmieńskiego, językiem łacińskim napisana i wydana...*, trans. Andrzej Wargocki (Kraków: Szymon Kempinius, 1611), 11.

⁷⁹ See Franczak, *Hierosolymitanorum processio...*, 245.

⁸⁰ Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja albo Pielgrzymowanie do Ziemi Świętej...*, 12; Zinkow, *Wenecja na trasie peregrynacji Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła...*, 150.

⁸¹ See Zinkow, *Wenecja na trasie peregrynacji Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła...*, 151.

to eliminate tourists and pilgrims of other faiths from pilgrim trails, though it is common knowledge that protestant churches disputed the merit of engaging in pilgrimages. Christians feared, according to Radziwiłł, that they would behave inappropriately, which could result in persecutions of Palestinian Christians and them being captured into slavery by Turks. Usually, monks had to pay ransom for such people.

Radziwiłł spent his stay in Venice developing his various contacts, visiting figures, and exploring the location. When describing a journey through Egypt, he mentioned a very large and expensive diamond which he viewed "at a merchant" in the city of doges already in 1580. The precious stone, worth 18,000 szkuds, became the property of rich black merchant, who supposedly gifted it to the sultan as an attachment to a request to punish Asan Basha who ruled Egypt with an iron fist.⁸²

The departure was delayed so much that Radziwiłł spent the period of Lent in Venice. The sublimity of the event was stressed by the pathos of the statement. Additionally, Radziwiłł indicated the two-stage nature of the process:

Aż w sobotę tedy, przed niedzielą przewodnią, roku Pańskiego 1583 dnia 16 Aprila, około 22 godziny, w bacik wsiadszy w Wenecyjej, do klasztoru S[anctae] Mariae della Gratia zakonu ś[więtego] Hieronima na wyspie przy płynęliśmy (...), a stamtąd w porcie Malamocy, po zachodzie słońca do okrętu wszedszy, o godzinie trzeciej w noc, podnieśliśmy kotwice na świtanie dnia tego (był 17 Aprila) odbiwszy się, gdy przez dzień i noc, zaś dzień drugi lekki wiaterek powiewał, odnogę tergestyńską minęliśmy.

[On Saturday, then, before the leading Sunday, in the year 1583 of our Lord on the 16th of Aprilis, around 10 in the evening, having boarded a boat in Venice, we arrived at the monastery of Saint Mariae della Gratia of the order of Saint Jeronimo on the island (...), and from there in Malamoca, having boarded the ship after midnight, at three at night, we raised the anchor at dawn of that day (it was 17th of Aprilis) having set off, when through day and night, and on the second day a light breeze blew, we passed the Tergeste's arm].⁸³

When describing his stay in Venice and the related endeavours, Radziwiłł did not mention the procedures of granting a loan or a warranty, services which he was supposed to utilise during the voyage. Those details, naturally occurring in the accounts by pilgrims and Venetians, appeared when after pilgrims were mugged on Italian land, the magnate tried to avoid prison for unpaid dues, so he searched for a creditor who having considered him credible, would allow him to take a loan ("szukaliśmy kupca jakiego znajomego, lecz nie znalazzsy, gdy naszej drogi przewodnicy, prędziej odprawy barzo się upominali, gospodyni też, bacząc na nas prawie oszarpane odzienie, a pieniądze nie widząc, groziła urzędem"⁸⁴ [we sought

⁸² Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja albo Pielgrzymowanie do Ziemi Świętej...*, 258.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 17; Zinkow, *Wenecja na trasie peregrynacji Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła...*, 151-152; Franczak, *Hierosolymitanorum processio...*, 245.

⁸⁴ Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja albo Pielgrzymowanie do Ziemi Świętej...*, 347.

some familiar merchant, but having found none and since our guides were demanding payment, as did our hostess, considering our almost tattered garments and not seeing any money, she threatened us with the authorities]. Since Radziwiłł could not find any familiar merchant in Ancona, he went to the governor. The letters which he presented to the latter were supposed to give him credibility. He needed a warranty which would enable him to take a loan: "(...) prosiłem (...), żeby kupcowi któremu za mnie ręczył, za dwieście sztuków, tylko póki bym do Wenecyjy nie dojechał"⁸⁵ [I asked (...) him to warrant me before a merchant, for twenty szkids, until I would reach Venice]. His requests failed, in fact, the governor lost his position soon afterwards, and the magnate found a representative of Quintillus, a Venetian merchant. He pawned his valuables with him, which he was able to hide from the bandits. That was not, unfortunately, enough to continue his journey to Venice, where Radziwiłł had appropriate contacts. He intended to send Jerzy Kos, his servant, to the city yet the travel to and fro would take a week. A return to negotiations with the merchant offered a glimpse into the entire set of documents and letters of recommendation which Radziwiłł was using during his stay on the Mediterranean, both in the Holy Land and in Egypt. The magnate gained the merchant's trust only upon presenting to the potential creditor documents which he received from Venetian merchants, whom the merchant knew not only personally but also was familiar with their handwritings and seals. The sums of warranties which Radziwiłł had were not insignificant:

(...) nie do końca nam dowierzał, zacyzm ukazałem mu *litteras Passus* Ojca Świętego, króla polskiego i księżęcia weneckiego. (...) Ukazowałem też mu do tego listy od przedniejszych kupców weneckich, które on dobrze znał, tak samych, jako i ręki ich i pieczęci, a te listy były pisane do Syryjey, Egiptu, Kairu, żeby mi tam ich faktorowie dodawali pieniądze, których suma do kilkuset tysięcy cekinów przychodziła; dla czego już barziej ufał, gdy baczył, jako się i listy między sobą, i z moim imieniem, i z powieścią zgadzały (...)

[he had not believed us before I showed him *litteras Passus* by the Holy Father, the king of Poland, and the Venetian prince. (...) I also showed him letters from major Venetian merchants, and he was familiar both with the people and their hands and seals, and those letters had been written to Syria, Egypt, Cairo, so that there their factors would add me money, the sum of which reached several hundred thousand sequins; that he trusted more when he saw how the letters matched each other, and my name, and my story].⁸⁶

That once again confirmed Radziwiłł's excellent knowledge and contacts with Venetian merchants. One could even argue that the success of the entire journey depended on his extensive contacts with Venetians.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 348.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 350.

Radziwiłł documented his participation in Venetian celebrations of St. Mark, the city's patron: "Nazajutrz (było św. Marka) szliśmy do kościoła i byłem na procesyjnej, którą po wszytkim weneckim państwie z wielką ceremoniją obchodzą"⁸⁷ [The following day (it was St. Mark's day) we went to church and I joined a procession in which is known throughout the Venetian state for its ceremonious character].

He remained in almost constant contact with Venetians during his journey. In *Peregrynacja albo pielgrzymowanie*, Radziwiłł recorded the names of Venetians who fulfilled the functions of consuls, praetors, and more (Marcus Antonius Venereus, Venetian praetor),⁸⁸ Marcus Securius – tax collector,⁸⁹ Nicolaus de Ponte – doge,⁹⁰ Fr. Joannes de Candia – prosecutor of the Holy Land,⁹¹ Vincentius Morosinus – praetor,⁹² Francis Testarosa, Venetian agent in Tripolis,⁹³ Lauretnius Pacificus – companion to the Holy Land,⁹⁴ Thomas Candiota, deputy consul in Damietta,⁹⁵ Paweł Marian – a Venetian, French consul in Cairo,⁹⁶ Francisco Sasso, emissary of Pope Gregory XIII in Alexandria,⁹⁷ Jerzy Emo – a Venetian, a consul in Egypt,⁹⁸ Jeronim Witalis – a merchant.⁹⁹

Venetians were authoritative figures for the magnate; he heeded their opinions regarding the choice of ship, captain, crew, and regarding trade affairs. For example, he confirmed information about the size of fruit exports from Zakynthos relying on the opinion of a local tax collector and merchants: "(...) co i Marcus Securius Wenet, natenczas tam mytnik, i inшы kupcy za rzecz pewną twierdzili"¹⁰⁰ [what was indicated by Marcus Securius Wenet, a tax collector there at that time, and other merchants as certainty]. Radziwiłł also recorded Venetians' maritime habits. Due to the Turkish threat, Venetian galleys were not allowed to fare alone. A voyage had to be conducted in the company of at least another vessel.¹⁰¹

The magnate visited and described a fortress located on one of Venetian islands. It was a proof of basing the strategy of operation on the Republic of Venice, which had many dispersed territories in the form of strips of land located on the continent and numerous islands and peninsulas, on fortified structures, which with their architectures shaped the landscapes of their related lands, being both footholds of Venetian culture and trade: "Forteca ta miała pięć baszt dziwnie obronnych, działały

⁸⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁹¹ Ibid., 11.

⁹² Ibid., 19. See also G. Franczak, *Hierosolymitanorum processio...*, 248.

⁹³ Ibid., 176.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 172.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 185.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 193.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 193.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 323.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 254.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 326.

i żołnierzem przednie obwarowana. Port ma barzo szeroki, który stawić do dwu tysięcy naw, a drugie mające z dział bić, kiedy by potrzeba ukażała może¹⁰² [The fortress had five towers strangely fortified, guarded first with cannons and soldiers. It had a very broad port, which could fend off up to two thousand ships, and shooting cannons if need be]. The locations were staffed with strong military crews: "Bo iż tam forteca wielka, tedy Wenetowie niemało ludu chowają"¹⁰³ [Since the fortress is great, Venetians keep there many strong]. The magnate decided not to describe the Crete-located fortress in Candia (Turks captured it as late as in 1669). He only stated: "O położeniu miasta Kandyjej i o obronie jego, która jest wielka, dział mając dostatek przednie znacznych, iż drudzy pisali, ja zaniecham"¹⁰⁴ [About the location of the city of Candia and its defences, which are huge, having many major cannons, I shall refrain from writing as others did write that].

Radziwiłł recorded Venetians' military activities at sea and on land; he noticed their considerable activity; he was able to record the high dynamism of their actions, and, thanks to an outside point of view, appreciate the role of Venetian Arsenal as the leading arms factory. He thus presented his observations on Crete:

Siódmego dnia listopada przyplęnęło galer weneckich dwanaście z Korcyry, siedm gwardyi, która strzeże około Krety (odwoziły kawalery z Malty, co je byli poimali Wenetowie), a pięć nowych, które oni zowią arcyle i stoją w Arsynale albo przy cekauzie, że czasu wojny, abo jakiej potrzeby je wyprawują. Bo galer nigdzie nie robią, jeno w Wenecyjej, a stamtąd je potym rozsyłają, dokąd ukazuje potrzeba [On the seventh day of November, twelve Venetian galleys arrived from Kerkyra, seven large detachments which defended around Crete (they were escorting troops from Malta whom Venetians captured there), and five new ones, which stood in the Arsenal or by the workshop ready for war or another need. Galleys are done nowhere else but in Venice, and then they send them out from there where they are needed.¹⁰⁵

A view on the Venetian Arsenal and its expanse from the outside, from distant territories and provinces, and from the perspective of military activity at sea of the ships normally stationed in Venice enabled him to assess in practice the significance of the military potential of the Republic and the special role of that part of the city for maintaining its position in the international arena, particularly in political activities conducted in reference to its potential enemies. The Arsenal was a native port and an exceptional factory – a military centre which enabled the Republic to be the regional political leader, or at least a major player.

¹⁰² Ibid., 313.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 304.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 302.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 302–303.

The magnate was aware of the existing political situation, and how the Venetian state functioned. He described the processing of complaints against soldier gambolling not only in theory but also in practice: “Kiedyśmy byli w Zarze, skargę czyniono na sto dwudziestu człeka żołnierskiego, które Senat Wenecki teźże naszej nawie od wyspu Krety posyłał, gdzie *praetor* rozkazał tudzież, aby szkody każdemu płacili”¹⁰⁶ [When we were in Zara, a complaint was filed against one hundred and twenty soldier strong, whom the Venetian Senate sent to our ship in Crete, where *praetor* ordered payment of damages to all]. Radziwiłł also recorded a successful action by “special forces” conducted in Alexandria, the aim of which was to remove the relics of St. Mark: “(...) gdzie długo ciało święte po męczenniku leżało, aż go Weneci przemyślnie a potajemnie (...) wzięwszy do Weneccyjej zawieźli, z uczciwością wielką, o czym mówi historyja”¹⁰⁷ [where the holy body of the martyr lied, until Venetians ingeniously yet secretly (...) brought to Venice, with great honesty, of which history talks]. This passage indicates how important it was for Venetians to establish a kind of origin myth associated with the cult of St. Mark and the basilica devoted to him.

Radziwiłł described Venetians’ ability to govern, manage space and property acquired at any location: “(...) na noc potym do Kawuzy, przez dolinę obfitą i wesołą, kędy szlachcic wenecki zamnożył cyprysowy gaj i pięknym rzędem drzewa rozsądzone stoją”¹⁰⁸ [for the night Kawuza, through a bountiful and merry valley, where a Venetian noble spread a cypress forest and trees stand in beautiful lines].

Venetians settled not only in territories which belonged to the Republic, but also for other reasons, both for trade and even reasons of morality. They often left a permanent mark. In Tripoli, the magnate encountered the following situation:

Jest tam także wedla morza wieża z kamienia kwadratowego, nader wysoka, z herbami jednego szlachcica weneckiego, który z jedną murzynką grzech cielesny popełnił (co tam w chrześcijanach gardłem karzą) trudność wielką miał i taką wieżę groszem swoim zmurowaną, ledwie się okupił

[There is also there, by the sea, a tower of square stone, very high, with the emblems of a Venetian noble, who committed a carnal sin with a Negro (which is punishable by death among Christians there), he had much trouble and he erected such a tower with his money the moment he came into money].¹⁰⁹

He also visited the ports which belonged to the Republic of Venice many times, e.g. Kythira (Cerigo Cytherea), one of the Ionian Islands.¹¹⁰ Many of those offered opportunities to admire the relics of the ancient world and an

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 20.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 262.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 301.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 168–169.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 318.

excuse to spin cultural reflections.¹¹¹ The Republic's ports on the Adriatic also offered an opportunity to come into contact with Slavs.¹¹²

The story of his visit in Tripoli offered an introduction into the world of successful trade relations. Harmonious cooperation brought mutual benefits: "Słudzy jego wielką mieli przyjaźń z Franciszkiem Testarosą, agentem w tych miejscach Rzeczypo[spolitej] Weneckiej, która przyjaźń była między nimi, gwoli cłu od towarów, gdyż od nich tenże agent płacił"¹¹³ [His servants had great affinity with Francis Testarosa, an agent in those locations of the Republic of Venice, which affinity was between them, in view of goods tax, as the agent paid that]. Radziwiłł also described the loading of ships, and the port life in Tripoli: "(...) nadto okręty weneckie, i które w chrześcijańskie strony jachały, naładowane jeszcze nie były, a o mnie się też barzo pilno, kto bym był pytano (...)"¹¹⁴ [also Venetian ships, and those which were to set off to Christian parts, were not yet loaded, and they were very careful about me, to whom I talked].

Venetians were present almost throughout the area of the Mediterranean. No wonder, then, that Radziwiłł met with them to acquire loans or gain information. They also constituted a reliable source of information about people and the oriental world. For example, the magnate echoed the opinion of a Venetian merchant regarding people bought out from Turkish captivity: "Kupiec niejaki wenecki, który w Kairze długi czas mieszkał, twierdził za rzecz pewną, że z tych okupionych ledwie co bywa dobrego"¹¹⁵ [One Venetian merchant, who lived in Cairo for a long time, claimed that those bought out are rarely any good].

Having completed his journey through the Holy Land, Radziwiłł sent some of his things to Venice, which he considered a safe port, a kind of a starting point where he could store his belongings without fear while engaging in further travels: "Potym gotowałem się w drogę i rzeczy do okrętu weneckiego, w którymśmy byli przyjechali, wnieść rozkazawszy, zostawiłem przy nich sługę jednego, aby ich w najętej komorze strzegł i do Włoch zawiózł (...)"¹¹⁶ [Afterwards I was getting ready for departure and having ordered to load my belongings on the Venetian ship aboard which we had arrived, I left one servant with them, so he guarded the rented chamber and escorted to Italy]. With the belongings, the servant was escorting Ms. Siekierzka, a Pole, whom the prince evacuated from Palestine.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ See Hieronim Kaczmarek, "Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła *Sierotki* «podróż po starożytnym świecie»,” *Baltica Posnaniensia*, issue 4 (1989): 343–351.

¹¹² See Józef Magnuszewski, "Dwa południowosłowiańskie epizody podróży do Ziemi Świętej księcia Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła zwanego *Sierotką*,” in *Polska – Jugosławia. Związki i paralele literackie*, edited by Halina Janaszek-Ivaničkova and Edward Madany (Wrocław, 1987), 29–37; idem, "Dwa renesansowe itineraria: Radziwiłła *Sierotki* i Václava Vratislava. *Miscellanea*,” in *Słowiańszczyzna zachodnia i południowa. Studia i szkice literackie* (Warsaw: PWN, 1995), 63–77.

¹¹³ Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja albo Pielgrzymowanie do Ziemi Świętej...*, 172.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

The magnate was often received in Venetian ports by the Republic's officials as an official guest. He was usually received lavishly and with honours, ensuring proper allowances. That was possible thanks to appropriate Venetian letters: "Miano mi było tu dać parę galer, które by mię do Włoch odwiozły, jakoż miałem na to list od Rzeczypospolitej Weneckiej do sprawco tego tu miejsca (...)"¹¹⁸ [I was supposed to be given several galleys here, which would take me back to Italy, as I had a letter from the Republic of Venice for the administrator of the location]. In Alexandria, Radziwiłł was accompanied during the paying of tax by a Jew who worked for a Venetian consul.¹¹⁹

Several times throughout Egypt, Radziwiłł benefited from the rights which applied to Venetian merchants. That was possible when he remained in their company. He thus visited the port in Alexandria.¹²⁰

The network of transport facilities developed by Venetians proved useful. Radziwiłł used, e.g. Venetian mail service, which operated within the area of the Mediterranean¹²¹; he noted the traffic of ships, including the one aboard which he left the capital: "Zastaliśmy w Trypolu onę wenecką nawę nasze, którąśmy byli w Cyprze odprawili, z wielą tu była inszych świeżo z Wenecyjej przy płynęła, kędy mi też z Litwy listy pospołu przysłano"¹²² [We found in Tripoli that Venetian ship of ours, which we sent off on Cyprus; it arrived fully loaded fresh from Venice, and it also brought letters for me from Lithuania].

The magnate also used a network of inns, which Venetian merchants had in cities not included in the Republic. For example in Tripoli, at the same time explaining the name: "Na brzeg wyszedzsy, szliśmy pół mile do miasta, i stąpiliśmy do fonteka, karwasery abo weneckiego mieszkania"¹²³ [Having stepped on land, we walked half a mile into the city, and we entered a fontek, a karwasera or a Venetian apartment]. Radziwiłł also used a Venetian inn in Alexandria,¹²⁴ and he recorded the presence of another two which belonged to other European states.¹²⁵ In Tripoli, he was not unknown to Venetian merchants who were staying there: "(...) udaliśmy się do karwasery weneckiej, gdzie nas znajomi przywitawszy wdzięcznie, do siebie przyjęli"¹²⁶ [we went to a Venetian karwasera, where our acquaintances having welcomed us cordially invited us to join them]. During his stay in Cairo, Radziwiłł used the house of Paweł Marianus, a Venetian consul, which was located opposite the consulate.¹²⁷ The consul accompanied the magnate during the latter's explorations of Egypt - he travelled on a barge on "a major canal" with him, and he visited a village called Natarea.¹²⁸ The

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 303.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 253.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 254.

¹²¹ Zinkow, *Wenecja na trasie peregrynacji Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła...*, 145.

¹²² Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja abo Pielgrzymowanie do Ziemi Świętej...*, 164.

¹²³ Ibid., 31.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 254.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 265.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 165.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 193.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 226.

consul was also helpful in confirming the amount of the fee demanded by Egyptians for a deceased barber surgeon of three sequins.¹²⁹ Jerzy Emo, a Venetian, accompanied Radziwiłł and his entourage during a trip to the pyramids and they descended to the underground section.¹³⁰ The consul also sent back to Lithuania, at the request of the magnate, two young men he bought out from Turkish captivity.¹³¹

Radziwiłł also learnt in more detail about the functioning of Venetian administration in foreign lands. He described the story of a Venetian by the name of Antonius, who had to be bailed out from prison by the Venetian consul in Cairo after the former was handed over to the city's governor by Turks "(...) aż go był konsul wenecki, gdyż Antonius był Wenet, wyręczył"¹³² [until the Venetian consul, as Antonius was a Venetian, did that instead]. The importance of the Republic of Venice in the area of the Mediterranean was proven by the wartime incidents which were witnessed by Radziwiłł, being their would-be victim.¹³³ He described the course of the rivalry at sea between Philippous Pasqualinus, a Venetian captain, a leader of seven galleys, and a Turkish fleet led by Okialy, from whom Venetians seized two Maltese galleys with crews and refused to return them.¹³⁴

When departing from Alexandria, Radziwiłł passed a ship heading for Venice. On his return journey he wished to visit the territory of the Republic of Venice: "Czwarta nasza Salicyja francuska niewielka, którą nająłem, i miała mię wysadzić w Krecie, iż stąd chciałem do Europy galerami jechać przez Państwo Weneckie, kędy mogłem sobie nieco wytchnąć, znajomych siłą mając, a do tego, jeśliby morze dla zimy bliskiej jechać nie dopuszczało"¹³⁵ [Our fourth small French Salice, which I had rented and which was supposed to let me off on Crete as from there I wished to travel on galleys to Europe through the Venetian State, where I could rest for a while, having many acquaintances if the sea would allow further travel for the soon coming winter].

Ending his journey, the magnate decided to head to Venice, his second home, for Easter of 1584.¹³⁶ He returned from the pilgrimage via, of course, a maritime route. Yet Radziwiłł reached the city of doges only on Tuesday after Easter. The fact of reaching a well-known place triggered memories in him of the starting point of his journey: "(...) po obiedzie płynąłem do Wenecyjej, a minąwszy Port Mamalocho, w którymem był wsiadał w nawę do Jeruzalem, przystąpiłem do kościoła S[ancta] Mariae della gratia (...)"¹³⁷ [after dinner I went to Venice, and having passed Port Mamalocho, where I had boarded a ship to Jerusalem, I entered the church Sancta Mariae della gratia].

¹²⁹ Ibid., 234.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 245.

¹³¹ Ibid., 271.

¹³² Ibid., 287.

¹³³ Ibid., 288.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 288.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 280.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 351.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 352.

There, too, Radziwiłł encountered the standard procedure of routine sanitary inspection which was used also in other Venetian ports. That was because Venetians were afraid of someone bringing in a plague: "Potym przyjechaliśmy pod Wenecyją, kędy Urząd zwyczajny oglądał fedę, żeśmy zdrowego powietrza (...)"¹³⁸ [Then we went to Venice, where the regular office conducted an inspection, to make sure we were of healthy air]. A positive result enabled the visitor to proceed. A similar inspection was conducted in Zara.¹³⁹ He travelled to the city via gondola. Venetians guarded access to their capital not only for military reasons, but also due to sanitary considerations. At almost every step, the excellent organisation of the Republic of Venice, based on strict administrative discipline, became apparent. A wealthy person with appropriate contacts with Venetians was able to avoid risks by utilising the Republic's state system and trade organisation, and the network of ports and inns.

Venice also offered Radziwiłł haven to rest after his travels: "Potym tą drogą w Wenecyjej mieszkał, iżem i barzo słabym zdrowiem przyjechał, ustawicznie się leczył (...)"¹⁴⁰ [Then after the journey I stayed in Venice, as I arrived in very poor health, I was recuperating constantly]. His therapy did not prevent him from conducting token visits. He had to settle the missions with which he was entrusted, and the letters he received. He was not able to complete all his objectives. He returned two letters to a rector from Zakunthos, which he was not able to deliver.¹⁴¹ Radziwiłł was carrying a letter to Stefan Batory from the Venetian doge. He set off for his return trip, as he himself indicated, on 3 May 1584. He then left Venice heading for Trento and Vienna.

Radziwiłł's text offered an image of Venice as a strong centre of administration, trade and military potential presented through its economic operations radiating throughout the area of the Mediterranean. Venetian merchants, Venetian merchant houses, agents and consuls created a network of contacts enabling movement also for people with appropriate associations – rooted in Venice through financial, trade, representational or social relations.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 352.

¹³⁹ "Po obiedzie, najawszy sobie barkę do Zary miasta weneckiego w Dalmacyjej leżącego, przednie obronnego, po godzinie 21 puściłem się i dojechałem, kędy u portu wenecki praetor Vincentius Morosinus przechadzał się i chciał wiedzieć, jeśliśmy z dobrego powietrza. Pisarz nasz z barki wyszedszy, ukazał mu paszport, który gdy przeczytał, kazał nam z batu na łąd wysieść (...)" (19) [After dinner, having rented a barge to Zara, a Venetian city in Dalmatia, superbly fortified, after 9 in the evening I set off and arrived, when at a Venetian port praetor Vincentius Morosinus was strolling and wanted to know whether we were of fair air. Our scribe, having emerged from the barge, presented a passport after reading which the praetor ordered us to step onto land]. A similar procedure applied to the entry at the port in Candia: "A gdyśmy do portu dla wiatrów nie mogli wjechać, wysiedliśmy na brzeg, kędy nieco, aż by z naszego paszportu obaczono, że z zdrowego miejsca jedziemy, musieliśmy czekać" [And we could not enter the port due to wind, we stepped ashore, where they checked our passport to see that we were of fair air, we had to wait] (Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacyja abo Pielgrzymowanie do Ziemi Świętej...*, 22). Cf. Franczak, *Hierosolymitanorum processio...*, 248.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 353.

¹⁴¹ See Zinkow, *Wenecja na trasie peregrynacji Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła...*, 152.

Only a view of Venice from the outside, as a result of versification of “entries,” which the city guide established by indicating major structures, enabled one to appreciate their significance not only within the metropolis, but also their major function in the functioning of the entire state. The spiritual Venetian community was cemented within the circle of the religious cult of St. Mark surrounding the basilica; the Venetian Arsenal was an arms factory supplying the entire state, also having a monopoly in the construction of galleys which determined the maritime strength of Venice; the Doge’s Palace was a place which symbolised strong republican authority based on efficient administration and discipline; the port and merchant stores symbolised its economic strength, and the many contacts its close cooperation within a network of connections, trust associated with credit ensuring a constant flow of money.

For Radziwiłł, Venice became a window onto the world, an arm which enabled him to safely reach not only the Holy Land, but also Egypt by utilising a network of points Venice operated in the region. The contacts he established and the letters with which he was entrusted enabled him to complete his pilgrimage and explore the region.

Through the translation by Andrzej Wargocki of *Peregrynacja arabska*, the description of the 15th-century German pilgrim Breidenbach’s arrival in Venice, the Holy Land and Egypt has been considered part of Polish literature since the beginning of the 17th century, i.e. in 1610.¹⁴² The arrival of a galley with pilgrims and the customs associated with the reception of the returning ones were thus presented by the reporter:

On 8 January we saw the city of Venice. Yet the moment Venetians saw us, they immediately ordered us to slow down and many strong in barges came against us, as they would usually act when their ship or galley returned in good fortune. In front of St. Nicolas’s port galleys waited, and we, having given quite a lot of money at the gate, travelled on barges with our belongings to an inn, rejoicing we had reached a decent place.¹⁴³

All the accounts (by travellers visiting Italy and pilgrims heading for the Holy Land) had the unifying quality that the Republic of doges was an intermediate stage of their travels. Depending on their destinations, they either focussed on its relationship with the sea or on the land-bound aspect.

Jan Stanisław Bystron indicated that in the 17th century almost no significant figures completed pilgrimages to the Holy Land. The travellers heading towards that destination did not develop any records of their journeys. The researcher assumed that this was the case due to Radziwiłł’s

¹⁴² The work translated by Wargocki was referenced by Biliński (*Viaggiatori Polacchi a Venezia...*, 356–357).

¹⁴³ [Bernhard von Breidenbach], *Peregrynacja arabska albo do grobu ś[więtej] Katarzyny, panny i męczenniczki, którą aniołowie świeci w Arabiej na górze Synaj pogrzebli, zacnych ludzi niektórych rodu niemieckiego, w roku Pańskim 1483. Pielgrzymowanie. Imiona ich są niżej. Ma rzeczy i z strony nabożeństwa, i spraw potocznych zaprawdę dziwne i czytania godne, przekładania ks. Andrzeja Wargockiego*, Krakow, in the print shop of Szymon Kempini, year of our Lord 1610, 112.

authoritative stance and the popularity of his account. Only Melejusz Smytrocki, a Ruthenian, developed an account in Polish of his journey to the Holy Land. In the *Apologia*, he did, however, focus on theological issues, which was why the description of the journey was scant.¹⁴⁴ He arrived at the destination via land thus avoiding Venice altogether. Bystron uncovered a list of pilgrims who in the 17th century reached the Holy Land in a register of visitors held by Franciscans.¹⁴⁵

The accounts by pilgrims heading for the Holy Land in the final decades of the 16th century were replaced in the 17th century by the increasingly more common journals and diaries of pilgrims who travelled through Europe for educational and tourist purposes. For them, Venice was a major urban centre in their travels. They were interested in the historical sites, history itself, and customs. Those included, e.g. Radziwiłł the Orphan's brother Jerzy Radziwiłł, as well as Maciej Rywocki,¹⁴⁶ Jakub Sobieski, Tomasz Zamoyski,¹⁴⁷ and, finally, prince Władysław Waza.¹⁴⁸

Jerzy Radziwiłł spent only one day (3 December) in Venice in 1575. Within that time he managed to visit St. Mark's Church, the Doge's Palace, the Arsenal, and take a cruise on the Grand Canal.¹⁴⁹ His remarks read: "In Mergeria conscendi navem *gundulla* appellatum, quo genere venetiis per urbem vehuntur et navi per mare 7 mill."¹⁵⁰

Maciej Rywocki arrived in Venice from Padua on 29 December 1584. He concluded an initial impression of surprise that it was a city on water, located two miles from shore, and that "w mieście po ulicach okręty chodzą"¹⁵¹ [in the city ships go through the streets]. He admired St. Mark's Square, the marble monuments in St. George and St. Mark's Churches; he boasted of having visited the mint, of having ascended the tower by St. Mark's Church from where he admired to city's panorama; he described the phenomena of low and high tide; he admired the obelisk which fulfilled the role of gallows, one for the commons and one for illicit doges, and he admired the architectural elements made of marble. When describing interpersonal relations, he concluded that the power of doges was only apparent. Rywocki was amazed by the overwhelming order in the sphere of attire. Significantly, that observation existed side by side with a description of structures used for strict enforcement of the law. The traveller remembered the chaos in the sphere of attire which existed in the Commonwealth, a topic often raised by Old Polish moralists (e.g. Rej in *Krótką rozprawą*, and Kochanowski in *Satyr*). Rywocki wrote: "A Venetian noble cannot stroll Venice, which is a law, in black

¹⁴⁴ Jan S. Bystron, *Polacy w Ziemi Świętej, Syrii i Egipcie 1147–1914* (Kraków: Księgarnia Geograficzna Orbis, 1930), 46–48; Franczak, *Hierosolymitanorum processio...*, 243.

¹⁴⁵ Bystron, *Polacy w Ziemi Świętej...*, 42–46.

¹⁴⁶ Maciej Rywocki, *Księgi peregrynackie (1584–1587)*, published by Jan Czubek (Kraków: Nakładem Akademii Umiejętności, 1910), 18–23.

¹⁴⁷ See "Wstęp," in *Podróż królewicza Władysława Wazy do krajów Europy Zachodniej w latach 1624–1625 w świetle ówczesnych relacji*, edited by Adam Przyboś (Kraków, 1977), 8–9.

¹⁴⁸ *Podróż królewicza Władysława Wazy...*, 376–389.

¹⁴⁹ See "Dziennik podróży do Włoch biskupa Jerzego Radziwiłła w 1575 r.," edited by Henryk Barycz, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, issue 49 (1935): 344, 354.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 354.

¹⁵¹ Rywocki, *Księgi peregrynackie...*, 18.

cassock all the way to the ground; on that cassock wrapped with a belt of black velvet, a three-finger wide silver-embellished black magierka [a hat], with a single narrow sleeve which he hangs over himself.”¹⁵²

The account also described the procedure of selecting doges, a yearly ceremony on Ascension Day establishing a covenant between the ruler and the sea, and it offered a short description of the Arsenal, a kind of an arms factory.

Stanisław Reszka, while staying in Italy in 1588–1590, fulfilled diplomatic duties. Naturally, he was not interested in historical sites, only official meetings and behind-the-scenes activities, in general: the course of diplomatic issues with which he was entrusted. Reszka stayed in Venice between 20 and 23 April 1588.¹⁵³

Since pilgrims often stopped in Venice for some time before continuing their travels, the remarks related to their stays in the city were noteworthy. From the Commonwealth to Venice there mainly came magnate and szlachta sons completing their European educational journeys.

Samuel Twardowski had a chance to describe Venice one more time when writing an account of the journey of Prince Władysław Waza between 4 and 18 March 1625. Other accounts documenting the journey offered parallel descriptions of the city: by Jan Hagenaw, Stanisław Pac, Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł.¹⁵⁴ What was the prince supposed to admire? According to Twardowski: the wealth of city, the fact that instead of walls, the sea was the city’s fortifications, the parliament and the “floating palaces,” St. Mark’s Basilica and the library, the statue of the lion on the column, the seat of the senate which he visited during an audience:

dziwną słów ułożonych powagą go przyjmie
i tamże aparatem kosztownym podęjmie
z odzywającymi się po powietrzu gromy
dział burzących, skąd wszystkie poruszają się
[domy
gminu Prometowego i Cyreny płodnej
ku czci jego zrządzone na Kanale Wielkim
i insze krotofile przy dostatku wszelkim
i pomyślnych wygodach, czego miesiąc cały
niemal było. (...)]¹⁵⁵

he shall be accepted with a strange gravity
[of words
and there shall entertain with a rich apparatus
with thundering through the air
destructive cannons, from where all houses
[shall move
to Prometheus’ commune and fertile Cyrene
in celebration of him ordered on the Grand
[Canal
and other celebrations with great wealth
and fortuitous conveniences, of which there
[was
almost a month. (...)]

¹⁵² Ibid., 22.

¹⁵³ See “Stanisłai Resce diarium 1583–1589,” edited by Jan Czubek, *Archiwum do Dziejów Literatury i Oświaty w Polsce*, series I, vol. 15, part 1, Krakow (1915): 201–202. Vide also introduction by Czubek, XIII.

¹⁵⁴ Vide *Podróż królewicza Władysława Wazy...*, 373–389.

¹⁵⁵ Samuel Twardowski, *Władysław IV, król polski i szwedzki*, published by Roman Krzywy (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich Wydawnictwo, Pro Cultura Litteraria, 2012), Biblioteka Pisarzy Staropolskich, vol. 40, 195, lines 1381–1390.

Diarists referenced official meetings with the doge and sons of senators, the magnate's participation in evening theatre performances, concerts, a visit to the Doge's Palace, at the Arsenal and at St. Mark's Square, and the browsing of merchant stalls. They often focussed on the prince's safety, the ability to avoid official receptions, and the fact of reaching an interesting place while *incognito*. Venice appeared in those accounts as a rich city of merchants and artists ready to hold celebrations in lavish feasts, street shows, and balls.

Conclusion

In the Old Polish period, Venice was something more than just a city built on water neighbouring the popular academic centre (among Poles) of Padua. It was also an attractive model system, a starting point for pilgrims heading for the Holy Land and Egypt, a major player in the international arena, an adversary of the Ottoman Empire, and a trade partner, in essence "cudowny konglomerat swojskości i obcości" [a wonderful conglomerate of familiarity and foreignness].

Poles admired Venetian buildings, carnivals, street shows, but also the state's political achievements, which they could not apply to their homeland fearing the limiting of state (szlachta's) civil liberties. Therefore, they saw the systemic analogies, the slogan of liberty was used as a common feature. They also appreciated Venetians' openness to the world, their travels, and trade. That dynamism, resourcefulness, and competence could have been that which Poles learnt at the doge's city and which they transferred in practice onto the Polish reality.

Old Polish texts allow one to consider Venice as a kind of the centre of the Mediterranean Christian world governed by pragmatism. Consideration from the side of the Ottoman Porte, Palestine, or Egypt, where Venetian merchants, trade representatives and consuls could be met and a look at armed galleys enable a better understanding of the phenomenon of the city and its system. Its wealth and celebrations, but also deadly struggles of merchants and soldiers at sea, the meeting of work and celebrated rest, religion with the cult of St. Mark – all that charmed visitors from the North pulling them into a whirlwind of life. Venice was a safe stable port to which pilgrims could return crossing the border of European culture, setting off for the oriental world which was dominated by Islam and which was governed by different principles of treating individuals. Cultural osmosis and a creative idea about one's own existence, the mixing of masses of people from different states and religions made Venice in the eyes of visitors from the distant Commonwealth an interesting place, constituting a safe port and a window onto the world.

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- przełożone. Przez Franciszka Cesariusa. Przydane są od tegoż drogi i gościńce cudzoziemskie, rachując wszędy dalekość ich na mile własne każdego Państwa, przy tym też wiadomość niemieckiej i włoskiej monety. Krakow: Dziedzice Jakuba Siebeneichera, 1614.
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Michał Kuran - University of Lodz, Institute of Polish Philology and Speech-Language Pathology, Department of Old Literature, Editing and Auxiliary Sciences. The author's main focus areas include: celebratory literature, anti-Turkish literature, Old Polish prose. Main publications: *Retoryka, historia i tradycja literacka w twórczości okolicznościowej Samuela Twardowskiego*, Łódź 2008; *Marcin Paszkowski - poeta okolicznościowy i moralista z początku XVII wieku*, Łódź 2012.
E-mail: michal.kuran@uni.lodz.pl

OLGA SZADKOWSKA-MANKOWSKA
University of Warsaw

 0000-0002-4873-9811



A City Full of Life or a City Buried Alive? Vittorio Alfieri's Venice and Venice in the Travel Journals by Polish Artists at the Turn of the 19th Century

SUMMARY

The article raises the topic of the evolving image of Venice from the perspectives of three travel accounts: by Vittorio Alfieri, Fryderyk August Moszyński, and Stanisław Dunin-Borkowski. They were all bound by the figure of the Italian playwright Alfieri. In the article, I propose a new look into the accounts from the travels of Polish intellectual elite: an enlightened journey described in the recollections by Moszyński, and a 19th-century journey depicted in the journals by Borkowski, following Alfieri as the guide. Considering his tragedies in support of national liberation, he perfectly matched the ideas in the minds of Polish artists at the turn of the 19th century. Even though the author may be forgotten today, the reception of his works, depending on the historical period, political situation, and literary streams, evolved interchangeably placing him in the spotlight and ignoring him. In the first half of the 19th century, he was a significant figure, a fact which triggers interesting observations, particularly in the context of the journeys of artists to Venice.

Keywords

Polish-Italian literary relations, travels to Italy, Vittorio Alfieri, reception of Italian literature in Poland

In 1768 Vittorio Alfieri, a young playwright, departed for Venice. At his destination, he experienced particular apathy and powerlessness, a state which would soon be broken in his plays encouraging for national liberation. Soon afterwards, in 1786, August Fryderyk Moszyński set out on a journey and, in his accounts written for Stanisław August Poniatowski, he prophesied the fall of Venetian independence at the same time offering a warning for the Polish nation. In the early-19th century (i.e. in 1815), Stanisław Dunin-Borkowski watched a play by Alfieri in a theatre in Venice and discussed the similarities between Polish and Italian histories. All three artists focussed on Venice, which had particular significance in the minds of Poles who travelled to Italy. In the late-18th century and in the first half of the 19th century, it constituted a symbolic city. The fact that one of the most beautiful major European cities was held by the same oppressor strengthened the Polish-Italian bond and elevated the whole relationship. The “myth of black Italy” is a well-known phenomenon in Polish travel journals.¹ Venice as a metropolis of death and decay, a vampire city only famous for its predecessors, has been a topos often discussed by researchers. However, if one applies the filter of the role of figure – Vittorio Alfieri in this case – who becomes a kind of a porte parole around the Italian city, that enables a new view of the Polish-Italian relations at the turn of the 19th century. That offers insight into the roles of individual recollections in the formation of the history of the reception of Italian literature in Poland.

By the late 1760s, when the young poet from Asti was setting out on a journey through Italy seeking inspiration for his planned grand “national” tragedies, no one in Poland knew about his existence. Nearly 30 years later, just before the turn of the 19th century, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz and Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski were among the first people to report back to Poland about him. In their accounts, they described the poet as a unique figure distinguished not only for his playwriting talent but also his relentless spirit in demanding individual freedom. Alfieri was “a fervent defender of reasonable freedom, his soul resented the bloody madness of the French, as shameful and detrimental for the cause of oppressed humanity,”² and “a noble man, viewing the world from up high yet often swayed by his vivid imagination.”³ That was the beginning of the most vivid reception of the Italian playwright in Poland. It must be said at this point that his presence in Polish cultural space was as significant as it has been forgotten. Even though he seems absent now, works in literary criticism have continued to prove that he is constantly being discovered anew.

¹ Olga Płaszczewska discussed this in more detail mainly in her two comparative works, see Olga Płaszczewska, *Wizja Włoch w polskiej i francuskiej literaturze okresu romantyzmu* (Kraków: TAIWPN Universitas, 2003), and Olga Płaszczewska, *Przestrzenie komparatystyki – italinizm* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2010).

² Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki czasów moich*, Warsaw, vol. 2, ed. Jan Dihm (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1957), 64. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish]

³ Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, *Pamiętniki i memoriały polityczne 1776–1809*, ed. Jerzy Skowronek (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1986), 264.

Alfieri's reception has not yet been discussed in monograph form, though one should mention the major researchers who have contributed to his vivid reception in Poland: Edward Porębowicz, Wiktor Hahn, Piotr Chmielowski, Juliusz Kleiner, Józef Ujejski, Marian Szykowski, and Adolf Nowaczyński.⁴ Alfieri began his career in Polish theatres under the patronage of Wojciech Bogusławski, who himself translated *Saul*, Alfieri's first play, staged at the National Theatre in 1809, and who played the title role. Some of the first people to mention him also included Ludwik Cappelli and Ludwik Osiński, i.e. the directors of Alfieri's plays in Poland, people who introduced Alfieri to Polish theatres, and critics who discussed Alfieri's fame in journals. Playwrights who drew inspiration from the style of Alfieri's tragedies included Alojzy Feliński, Franciszek Wężyk, Antoni Hoffman, and Juliusz Słowacki. All of them played their part in triggering Alfieri's lively reception in Poland. Considering the travel accounts by Poles who travelled to Italy,⁵ articles about stagings in Poland,⁶ the surviving translations of his tragedies,⁷ and critical literary studies, one should consider Alfieri in artistic terms. That would offer the image of a poet eager to create new theatre, shaping his works in such a way to use words in his fight for the freedom of the individual. In following the arguments of Polish critics and writers, Alfieri evolved: from an individualist always moving upstream abandoning existing classicist rules to enrich tragedies with passion and terror, to a national hero on whom consecutive generations have relied.

It would be difficult to state whether the individualist, essentially bored by the forms which were forced upon him, set out on his journey in search of adventure, love, inspiration, or fame. He himself remarked: "throughout 1768, I was completely certain that I would be able to run through the

⁴ Wiktor Hahn, "Przyczynek do genezy Marii Stuart Słowackiego," *Ateneum*, vol. 1, (1984): 71–86; Józef Ujejski, "Wstęp," in *Tragedie Antoniego Hoffmanna* (Warsaw: Związek Artystów Scen Polskich, 1929); *Dzieje literatury powszechnej z ilustracjami*, vol. 4, part 1–2, ed. Edward Porębowicz et al. (Warsaw: Własność, nakład i druk S. Lewentala, [ca 1893–1897]), 440–453; Piotr Chmielowski, *Dzieje krytyki literackiej w Polsce* (Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolff, 1902), 516–517; Adolf Nowaczyński, *Szkice literackie* (Poznań: Ostoja, 1918), 163–176; Marian Szykowski, *Dzieje nowożytnej tragedii polskiej, typ pseudoklasycyzny* (Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1920), 133.

⁵ Alfieri was discussed not only by Niemcewicz or Prince Czartoryski, but also Łucja Rautenstrauchowa, Michał Wiszniewski, and Józef Kremer.

⁶ Reviews of his staged plays were published in the *Gazeta Warszawska*, the *Gazeta Korespondenta Warszawskiego i Zagranicznego*, and in the *Kurier Warszawski* in relation to the staging of every one of Alfieri's plays on the national stage in Warsaw, as well as in the *Tygodnik Wileński* in celebration of the Wojciech Bogusławski benefit in 1816 in Vilnius. Furthermore, articles devoted to Alfieri and his plays could be found in, e.g. *Astrea*, *Dziennik Wileński*, *Kłosy*, and *Pamiętnik Literacki*.

⁷ One of the most comprehensive lists of Alfieri's translated works can be found in *Dramat obcy w Polsce 1765–1965*, ed. Jan Michalik, vol. 1, ed. Stanisław Hałabuda (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2001), 17–18. The list covers ten works ascribed to Alfieri which had been translated into Polish: *Agamemnon*, *Antyгона*, *Filip*, *Mirra*, *Orestes*, *Polinik*, *Rosmunda*, *Saul*, *Wirginia*, and *Zbieg*. However, the list should be complemented and corrected as there are also fragment translations of Alfieri's works published in the press and in studies of the history of literature. *Zbieg* is not a translated work by Alfieri, and the names of the translators should also be corrected in some instances.

world."⁸ Before Alfieri decided to leave the walls of the Academy in Torino, he completed his first journey, i.e. to Genoa. This journey is worth noting considering his first love, and his first encounter with an unknown world and true freedom. When he finished the Academy, he departed for Venice and Rome, and in the following year he visited Naples. What were his journeys like? The Italian playwright was in a constant search for himself, so he could never stay for long. During all his Italian travels, which he described in his unique autobiography *Vita scritta sa esso*,⁹ and to Venice in particular, he was accompanied by the same feelings: melancholy, *mania*,¹⁰ boredom, want, and anxiety. They would have an indirect impact on his later works, yet they would also stimulate him to search further.

The second component of Alfieri's awareness was his political engagement, yet that only appeared during his journey to France, specifically Paris, in 1769. It was an important moment though the earlier experiences, the boredom and the soul's want constituted the foundations of Alfieri's texts.¹¹ Venice – one should state, was never Alfieri's "pearl," – did not carry as much significance for him as Florence or his native Asti. Nonetheless, it left a permanent mark on him. It was a mysterious city, a spectre city, a city which enticed him with its beauty only to be enclosed within the walls of the house he was renting. What did emerge then in his head? It was probably still not the idea of revolution, but certainly a growing anxiety. One should stress his *malinconia*,¹² his fact of being enclosed in a Venetian house, and his loneliness in the crowd:

I was not waiting for anything other than Venice, of which I had heard many wonderful things since I was a child (...) So there I was finally in Venice (...) A foreign crowd, the sheer number of theatres, celebrations and entertainment (...) made me stay until mid-June, though I could not say I was content with that. Still that melancholy, boredom, the pain of existence, they all slowly devoured me, so much so that any novelties were deadly for me. I spent my days in Venice alone, without stepping outside my house, without doing anything other than standing by the window where I sometimes chatted with one lady (...) Observing myself later somewhat better I noticed that in that period [from April to June – O.SzM.] my heart and my mind were emptier and more idle. My intellect worked

⁸ Vittorio Alfieri, *Tragedie e vita di Vittorio Alfieri*, ed. Silvestro Centofanti (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 1842), 610. In this article, fragments of Alfieri's biography were translated from Italian into Polish by the author, and later translated into English.

⁹ The first part of the autobiography was created in 1790, while the second in 1803, a few months prior to his death. It was released posthumously in *Opere postume in 1804*.

¹⁰ In Italian: obsessive thirst, an overwhelming intent, a sudden desire, a hunger.

¹¹ He met Louis XV in person, so he had a chance not only to observe how power functioned, but also to meet the king – who personified the qualities which the playwright would condemn with much ferocity in all his later plays. His aversion, hatred even, towards the king and the court were the basis of his unfavourable disposition towards the French, which Alfieri expressed in his work *Il Misogallo*. Later, by the end of his life, he returned to France, and the sight of the country in revolutionary turmoil shocked him deeply once again. He could not accept the tyranny of the majority which replaced the tyranny of one man.

¹² In Italian: melancholy, sadness, grim fate, despondency.

accordingly – depending on whether the air was more or less bearable, I displayed more imagination and abilities towards winter (...) I was then convinced that I have almost no power to do anything.¹³

Alfieri's Venice was certainly a space for thought, a space which evoked recollections. It was a city full of life in which he seemed (to himself) a person without life. Despite that, he decided to travel further: the stop was almost necessary for him so he could continue his journey in search of inspiration and new ideas. Venice's space in itself did not generate any desire to act – it only inclined him to react. How could those values have been transferred into the Polish reality? What could they have added to the minds of travellers, and how could they have inspired them?

Those questions are best answered using two accounts: one from the 18th century, in which Alfieri's name was never mentioned directly yet the traveller's experiences were similar; the other, from the 19th century, did clearly indicate inspiration through Alfieri. August Fryderyk Moszyński, Pantler of the Crown, an architect, a director of royal constructions, due to numerous financial failures and failed enterprises departed to Italy in 1784. Moszyński did not mention Alfieri, but his reflections on some matters, mainly political but also psychological, corresponded with the observations made by the Italian writer. It should be noted that there is some indication that Moszyński was familiar with the works of the Italian – the architect had a strong connection with King Stanisław August Poniatowski. Their relationship was unique. The king was especially kind to the pantler, and their friendship, which began when they both still young, lasted throughout their lives. Stanisław August cared for Moszyński. He paid his debts. They exchanged correspondence for many years, and he endured Moszyński's bitter memoranda. As indicated by Bożena Zboińska-Daszyńska in the introduction to *Dziennik podróży do Francji i Włoch*, Moszyński wonderfully repaid for the friendship – he wrote a report for the king from his foreign journey and dedicated his dairy to him.¹⁴ Their relationship also had a cultural dimension, certainly not only within the domain of architecture, but also painting and sculpture. One could assume that Stanisław August shared his favourite reading recommendations with Moszyński. And the king's collection was extensive.

He also knew the Italian playwright's works well – that is confirmed by the fact Stanisław August's personal items included the cover and title page of a collected edition of Alfieri's works. A small brochure¹⁵ included in Stanisław August's literary collection was a promotional folder associated with the second Parisian collected edition of *Tragedie di Vittorio Alfieri* (1788–1789). Right at the beginning, there is a note from the edition's author: "Cette

¹³ Alfieri, *Tragedie e vita ...*, 611–612.

¹⁴ Fryderyk August Moszyński, *Dziennik podróży do Francji i Włoch*, trans. Bożena Zboińska-Daszyńska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1970), 25.

¹⁵ *Recueil de littérature. Stanisław August: Carmina, espitolae, orationes, acta inaugurationem, statuæ Joannis Sobieski regis Poloniae anno 1788 concernentia (cum descriptione festi Karuzel dicti) variaque alia – tempore regni Stanislai Augusti*, Biblioteka Czarotoryskich, Manuscript ref. no. 983.

edition est fort belle, et il est impossible d'en faire une plus correcte." The brochure included a list of five volumes which constituted the edition. Stanisław August read and knew the Italian writer. Therefore, Alfieri's plays (and letters on the criticism of the staged plays) had been present in Polish literary space before they were translated into Polish. Interestingly, the edition proves that the introduction of the Italian playwright onto the Polish stage in 1809 by Wojciech Bogusławski was not an accident. The process of absorbing his plays had begun a dozen or so years earlier triggered by the Polish intellectual elite. Moszyński could not have known that brochure but there is no question about August being familiar with Alfieri. As he orbited the king's court, Moszyński could not have omitted that piece of information, even more so considering the fact that his knowledge of Italy and Italian issues was surprisingly extensive.

Moszyński saw in Italy many causes of the evil that happened later, which made his account somewhat prophetic. It is worth noting that Moszyński's visit in Italy should be considered in the context of Polish-Italian relations at the turn of the 19th century.¹⁶ Moszyński, a free thinker, a man of the Enlightenment, saw the downfall of Italy, and the Papal States in particular; he saw the economic crisis; he monitored the agriculture which was neglected – one of his observations was that cereal was not produced to be exported but only to satisfy internal demand. Rome was surrounded by emptiness. Around it there were non-cultivable fields, scarce meadows, and farmers were not interested in producing food as they were not able to sell it freely since everything was hindered by fiscal regulations. Moszyński, which was a kind of a sign of the times, often commented upon the political and economical situation of the country. Those prophecies were gloomy, yet one should admit the traveller possessed a keen sense of observation, a critical approach to the surrounding reality, and he offered accurate social diagnoses. Moszyński's account could be sometimes likened to a dynamic reportage, a personal form yet perfectly illustrative of the revealing cultural stereotypes cultural existing at that time. Those "prophecies" applied to the dangers Italy faced and how Italy and Poland were related to one another.

Moszyński had a particular weakness towards Venice. He devoted the final chapter of his journal to it, leaving his discussion of the republic to the very end and turning it into a summary (or maybe a crowning?) of his Italian recollections. When discussing Venice and Venetians, he was not able to be as cynical and critical in his judgements, a thing he admitted himself:

¹⁶ Allow me to indicate some of the major Polish works which referred to the period I am discussing: Maciej Lorent, *Życie polskie w Rzymie w XVIII wieku* (Rome: Scuola Tipografica Pio X, [ca 1930]); Alojzy Sajkowski, *Włoskie przygody Polaków, wiek XVI–XVIII* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1973); Wiesław Müller, "Pielgrzymi polscy w Rzymie w XVIII wieku," *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, vol. 34, issue 2 (1986): 357–365; Bogdan Rok, "Zagraniczne podróże Polaków w pierwszej połowie XVIII wieku," *Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny „Sobótka,”* issue 1–2 (1992): 171–178; Marian Chachaj, *Związki kulturalne Sieny i Polski do końca XVIII wieku. Staropolscy studenci i podróżnicy w Sienie. Sieńczycy i ich dzieła w Polsce* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1998); Stanisław Burkot, *Polskie podróżopisarstwo romantyczne* (Warsaw: PWN, 1988); Olga Płaszczewska, *Wizja Włoch w polskiej i francuskiej literaturze okresu romantyzmu* (Kraków: Universitas, 2003); Małgorzata Ewa Kowalczyk, *Obraz Włoch w polskim piśmiennictwie geograficznym i podróżniczym XVIII wieku* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2005).

I finally had to travel to Venice, the goal of my desire for the past two years (...) I found Venice almost as it was in 1747. No new buildings, and the old ones just as black as the surrounding gondolas (...) The same reserve regarding the matters of the government, identical policy regarding courts and foreign envoys (...) Few indicate the justness and wisdom of these people more than I do (...) The day will come when one or five powerful monarchies shall swallow and completely divide all which does not accept their systems of governance. Those monarchies shall use their conquests until a time when revolutions, necessary in the general scheme of matters, shall lead to their downfall, just like so many other great powers (...) But forgive me, Lord! Clearly, I am talking about politics. Is it possible that the country's air has already affected the fibres of my mind because here everyone is a politician; yet Venetians do not appreciate foreigners talking politics about them. So, we remain silent.¹⁷

Interestingly enough, that “talking politics” indicated by Moszyński was a common element of Venetian reflections. The traveller was struck by the strength of the bonds of despotism which were present in public space. He indicated how fossilised the system was while exposing the hypocrisy of the people who decided about the most important state issues. There might not be a better symbolic figure for exposing hypocrisy and the dictatorship of the rulers than Alfieri. It is worth remembering that it was Alfieri who indicated the formation of the tyranny of the majority, which replaced the tyranny of a single man.¹⁸ Moszyński also noted shameful examples of the rule of privileged groups:

A few years ago, there was an idea to strongly oppose Masons. There was even a hilarious ceremony of the public burning of the lodge's decorations and outfits held in a square. Since Masons included merited figures, and even the clergy, the severity was condemned, and mostly its application. The outcome was that most friends left three inquisitors the moment their office receded, and they were almost forced to withdraw from public affairs. And yet the decree directed against the maintenance of the

¹⁷ Moszyński, *Dziennik podróży do Francji i Włoch...*, 563–571.

¹⁸ His attitude towards nationality and the sense of responsibility for his country were demonstrated in his words included in the first text of *Il Misogallo*, a work directed against the French occupying Italy: “My name, Vittorio Alfieri; place where I was born: Italy; no land is homeland for me” (see Vittorio Alfieri, *Il Misogallo. Prose e rime* (London, 1806), 40). When considering the words in terms of the poet's patriotic and political engagement, one might note that he mainly presented himself as a universal individual in time and space, an independent and autonomous being. However, the fragment cannot be analysed without considering the entire work, which was, mind you, created under the influence of certain political events and as an outcome of the author's deep concern about national matters. The hatred towards the French was mainly triggered by France's seizing of Italian lands, yet it also had a broader context: Alfieri's hate towards tyranny in general. Works devoted to Vittorio Alfieri's political engagement include, e.g. Bernardo Chiara, *La gloria di Vittorio Alfieri: evocazione e ricordi* (Turin: E. Toffaloni, 1927); Carlo Calcaterra, *Vittorio Alfieri nell'Italia nuova* (Asti: Casa d'Alfieri, 1939); *Vittorio Alfieri: solitudine-potere-liberta'*, acts of the Congress, Berlin, 12th–13th November 2003, edited by Roberto Ubbidente (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006).

lodge remained in force as the Tribunal could not remove that which its predecessor had introduced. I am quoting this case to indicate the kinds of despotic bonds that exist here.¹⁹

Moszyński was aware that changes were necessary, and that without them Venice would become a backward place slowly slipping into decay. He also warned against the impending revolution, which was supposed to lead to a downfall. Finally, he noted that Venetians opposed any novelty (“trends move into Venice with great difficulty”). On the one hand, he called that, quite forgivingly, an attachment to traditions, but, on the other, he understood that such a situation would lead to missing the changes occurring in the international arena, which could prove detrimental for the Republic of Venice. So, he offered the example of Poland – he wanted Venetians to learn from its mistakes. At the same time, it is worth noting how Moszyński was careful not to assess Venice too severely, as he loved the city as a cosmopolitan:

Neither could I see any strive to improve the structure [of a ship – OSzM.], unlike in other countries, because they maintained the principle of not introducing any novelties. If only the wise Republic never abandoned this principle in basic matters, such as politics through which it overcame the efforts of the League in Cambrai, or in trade which might soon be limited to coastal seafaring. Finally, could not the example of Poland teach it that the common view in politics that the weakest state may endure owing to the efforts of stronger ones has some exceptions? But I am reminded that in Venice one should not talk either about politics or about the government; so I become silent as people should respect the principles of the place at which they are, and even the customs (...) It is befitting and prudent to love this homeland.²⁰

This kind of evolution of the image of Venice is surprising in his account: from an unwavering love for the city, through spinning unnerving reflections about the future of the Republic, to a re-grounding in unnecessarily talking politics. The author somewhat censored himself: he wanted to unfold his reflections on the system, and he started developing a diagnosis only to abandon any further discussion considering “the respect for the local laws.” He realised that Venetians did not appreciate being reprimanded, so he joined them in falling into a kind of torpor; once again he tried being only a tourist and abandon any critical evaluations.

Interestingly, Moszyński indicated the air, and the role the Venetian air played in triggering reflections – just as Alfieri did. Alfieri’s discussions focussed on his creative power and creative block, while Moszyński started “talking politics.” In the Polish architect’s account, everything was subject to historical entailment, and Italy was the perfect place to illustrate those transformations: from greatness, through reliving own past power, to the

¹⁹ Moszyński, *Dziennik...*, 569.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 583–584.

future downfall and re-uniting. In his extensive recollections, Moszyński devoted much attention not only to the customs, climate, social changes, and his observations of everyday life in Italy, but mainly to himself and his status in the country: "I no longer possess my former drive to visit palaces, churches, and all the ancient things. I feel a certain excess which makes me want to leave (...) So we get bored."²¹ At such moments, there could be no figure closer to Moszyński than the Italian playwright: similarly slightly tired with travelling, in search of something, and melancholic. That, apart from the political and social issues both artists raised, was a major indicator of the relationship between Moszyński's and Alfieri's reflections. Finally, it would be noteworthy to quote the observations of the Polish traveller about the seasons, a matter which was also discussed by the Italian poet. Moszyński noticed that much depended on the period when one visited Venice: Every city has moments when it looks the best: such moments can rarely be found in summer, especially in Venice. Great heat drives those can leave away from the city (...) The city blossoms by the end of October when the first frost can be felt (...) Currently, no one I know would dare to live in Venice.²²

The final interesting source I would like to use is the account by Stanisław Dunin-Borkowski, a man of letters, the publisher of *Psalterz floriański*, a geologist, and a mineralogist. He travelled to Italy twice, in 1815 and 1818.²³ Borkowski began his journey, as most visitors to Italy, from visiting Venice. He stressed that his account would not be a regular travel journal written for the entertainment of readers as "I doubt that those who only care about entertainment and search for it everywhere could find anything entertaining in this writing. The times are so harsh, books are so expensive, and knowledge so rare that it is time for our works to be solely devoted to learning."²⁴ It would be difficult to consider his journey as a trip consisting of only pleasant elements. Borkowski matched the type of intellectual journey of a man of the late Enlightenment – he listed all the historical sites and wealth that one should mention. Yet some of his observations triggered deeper reflections on the "spectre city," verging on the spirit of Romanticism:

Those monuments of Venetians' former greatness and wealth now stand empty and for passers-by are a terrifying spectacle of now minor yet once rich and ingenious nation. Cereal stores have been established in abandoned Palaces (...) We set off to Venice full of great expectations. Yet none of those could have matched the exceptional spectacle (...) No one can describe the impression that floating towers, buildings and streets have on the senses as this enticing spectre amazes and terrifies with the exceptionality of the place not leaving much to consideration (...) Alas, why! Why these beautiful tokens of national glory could not be maintained in

²¹ Ibid., 436.

²² Ibid., 597–598.

²³ Stanisław Dunin-Borkowski, *Podróż do Włoch w latach 1815 i 1816* (Warsaw: Drukarnia N. Glücksberga, 1820), 31–32.

²⁴ Ibid., II–III.

the posterity of the former genius and bravery, why the industries and the products of national work worthy of immortality could not last forever. It must be a terrible sight for every Venetian to watch these monuments of national greatness lost forever (...) Thus people easily become accustomed to misery and loneliness, and they multiply. Venice is certainly the most interesting city in the world as it is similar to none in any respect (...) A city which can amaze you with its uniqueness for a few days, but you would become bored with it if you stayed longer, as that which is wondrous at first quickly becomes common and people search for sustenance for their minds and hearts, not their eyes!²⁵

For that reason, Borkowski departed in search of food for thought to Venice. After discussing the Doge's Palace, the various churches, and the charming library, as well as the beautiful Arsenal, which since the beginning of Polish trips to Italy constituted a compulsory element of every visit, he proceeded to discussing Venetian theatre. At that point, the most interesting fragment which requires a commentary appeared. It was something more than the previous near perfect fulfilment of the imperative to describe "that which one should see." Borkowski's Venice was a city of former power, where suddenly, though not entirely unexpectedly, the Italian poet by the name of Vittorio Alfieri entered. The author referenced the poet in relation to his reflections on the economic standstill caused by Venice losing its independence. That economic torpor was reflected, according to Borkowski, in the cultural and artistic spheres. As a proof of just how much the financial status impacted the impoverishment of theatre life, the author quoted the number of theatres which used to entertain rich Venetians and the number of those which survived – the latter figure being just one. Operas were also closed as there was not enough funding for paying the casts and staff. Borkowski incidentally revealed that his visit to Venice occurred during a period of great popularity of the stagings of Alfieri's plays:

During my visit, tragedies and comedies were played at the San Benedetto theatre. Alfieri's tragedies were played there; Alfieri is the father of Italian tragedy, which he placed on a high level of perfection. He has combined the strength of Kornel with the taste and charm of Rasyń, and he approximated the tragedy to the Greek models by introducing a chorus. Italian actors emulate their French counterparts (...) Once in the tragedy *Saul*, in the fifth scene between Saul and the Archpriest, Saul moved in such a perfect motion around the priest that he ripped his noble hat off his head. It requires exceptional talent, the talent of *Talma*, to retain the pretences of naturalness in a sudden action and French declamation, and that great actor, if he is not animated by some grand item, becomes a diffuse declamator as all the others. Italians, just like the French, argue that a tragedy is not a showcase of human things (...), but that those are the heroic deeds of gods (...) who (...) smack each other and make a racket until someone

²⁵ Ibid., 3–9, 26–29.

kills them for peace's sake in the fifth act, and since that is the task of the learned, let us let them be with that.

That is a peculiar review of Alfieri's play – using the excuse of *Saul*, Alfieri's lofty play, Borkowski allowed himself to offer an ironic evaluation of the role of tragedy in the lives of Italians, which reminded him that tragedies are “the heroic deeds of gods making a racket until someone kills them for peace's sake in the fifth act.” Yet the entire passage about theatre was provided in a slightly humorous tone, though Borkowski was absolutely serious about the playwright. What is noteworthy in the travel account is the manner of writing about the Italian playwright. He was the “father of Italian tragedy, which he placed on a high level of perfection” and continued to be staged in Venice despite the city's obvious economic troubles and the fact of many theatres having been closed down. He thus stressed the high status of the playwright, as well as the influence of his tragedies, which was considerable in the period prior to the unification of Italy and in the *Risorgimento*, the “pre-Romantic” period.

All those interesting observations, inscribed as marginalia to Borkowski's main reflections, lead to one basic question: what did Borkowski actually see in Venice? A play by the Italian playwright, the patron of the soon-to-come *Risorgimento*? A staging of the tragedy of an unprecedented figure in the history of theatre and in the history of Italy's national liberation, i.e. Alfieri? Or maybe his own thought, his ideas? Surely Borkowski encountered a unique man in a unique city in the north of Italy. That encounter enriched his reception of that exceptional place giving a reflective nature to a visit to Venice “otherwise only pleasing for the eye.” It also encouraged him to consider not only the cause of the fall of the Republic of Venice, but also possible ideas for the city's future. At the same time, Borkowski presented Venetians and Poles somewhat through a mirror reflection, trying to show Poles their own image – Poland and Italy, or actually Poland and Venice, nations uniquely close to each other, joined on one stage of the 19th-century theatre. That was a significant reflection considering not only Alfieri's reception in Poland but also the significance of the power of the thought with which the Italian writer strengthened the Polish nation tired of its enslavement.

The image of Venice in the referenced recollections by Alfieri, Moszyński, and Borkowski oscillated and changed, which connected those journeys, as together they formed a triad: first there is melancholy, a “swallow's anxiety;” then one's visions on the former glory of the city, to finally seeing the fall of the metropolis. That was perfectly clear in the remarks of Alfieri, an 18th-century poet, who painfully experienced Venetian torpor, and later in those of Moszyński, who loved the place with selfless love yet who could not avoid his pessimistic prophetic visions. That same Venice was viewed in the first half of the 19th century by Borkowski – he watched Alfieri's play staged in a theatre in Venice. He watched the play by the Italian writer, who before him watched that same Venice and saw his own apathy in the city full of life. Therefore, the title question about the nature of Venice requires

a threefold answer, along the sinusoid drawn by the emotions included in the three discussed accounts: it was a city which from the outside seemed teeming with life, which amazed visitors and made them fall in love with it, yet in which one could intuitively sense (as in no other city) impending failure and decay. That, in turn, caused the seemingly unexplained weakness and torpor in artists. Yet its power would become reborn when the time would come – that was the case of Alfieri's outstanding talent and that was the hope which Borkowski tried to give his compatriots referring to the Italian poet in Venice.

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Olga Szadkowska-Mańkowska – Ph.D. in humanities (2017), collaborator of the Institute of Classical Philology, a member of the Centre for Manuscripts and Unpublished Works from 1700-1850, Institute of Applied Polish Studies. She has conducted classes in the history of editing Polish literature, and in the history of editing general literature with elements of translation studies (IPS UW). Currently, she conducts classes devoted to the travels to Italy throughout the ages (IFK UW), and classes in the history of Italian literature and culture (UTW SGH). She has published in: *Wiek Oświecenia* ("Panorama stosunków jezuitów z polsko-litewską magnaterią w czasach późno saskich," 2018; "Moralność tyrana i tyranii. Z zagadnień natury władzy na przykładzie twórczości Vittorio Alfieriego," 2018), in the *Życie prywatne Polaków w XIX wieku* series ("Miejsce, w którym historia powszechna zamienia się w historię jednostki. Śladami włoskich peregrynacji Kazimierza Chłędowskiego," 2019), in *Sztuka Edycji* ("Podróż oczami księżnej Izabeli," 2017; "Vittorio Alfieri w kontekście włoskich podróży literackich Polaków ostatnich dwóch stuleci," 2017), and in *Meluzyna* ("Wokół dziewiętnastowiecznej recepcji „Wirginii” Vittoria Alfieriego w przekładzie Aleksandra Chodkiewicza," 2017). In her academic work, she focusses on the history of translation, 18th and 19th-century literature, and Polish-Italian literary relationships. She is mostly fascinated by personal documents by travellers who visited Italy throughout the centuries.

E-mail: o.szadkowska@uw.edu.pl

ANNA KURSKA

Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce



0000-0002-2776-2449



Venice According to Odyniec (and Mickiewicz?) in Romantic Contexts

SUMMARY

This text is a reconstruction of the image of Venice offered in *Listy z podróży* by Antoni Edward Odyniec. Against the background of Romantic traditions (Byron, Chateaubriand, Shelley, and Radcliffe), I present how the author shaped the portrait of Venice suspended between the Romantic vision of the city/monster (Leviathan) and the ballad-based vision of the city/Siren. I indicate not only the fact that the image of Venice was rooted in the sentimental/Romantic stereotype, but I also define to what extent it was formed by the imagined world of Polish nobility, i.e. *szlachta*. Most of all, however, I am interested in the traces present in *Listy z podróży* which enable one to uncover Mickiewicz's influence on how Odyniec shaped the image of Venice.

Keywords

Adam Mickiewicz, Antoni Edward Odyniec, Venice, Romanticism, journey.

Mickiewicz arrived with Odyniec in Venice on 7 October 1829 "at one in the afternoon"; they stayed at the de Luna Inn, from where they moved the very next day to a private apartment at "Ponte dei Dai, Torre Correnta, al. Moro." Their visit lasted until 20 October and it was recorded by Antoni Edward Odyniec in a fragment of *Listy z podróży* that he wrote to Julian Korsak and Ignacy Chodźko. His description raises a major question: to what degree

can one reconstruct Mickiewicz's influence on the image of Venice depicted by the author of *Listy*?

The answer is difficult not only due to a vague depiction of the poet's relationship with the city, but also the vague status of the fragment (similarly to other fragments in the two-volume story) regarding Mickiewicz and Odyniec's visit in Venice. Being aware of the author's tendency to exaggerate and fabricate facts, literary historians doubt his credibility. Nor are they certain when it was written: during his journey or maybe much later, e.g. in the 1860s, when the author started publishing it in the *Kronika Rodzinna* journal (1867–1878). The nature of the text prevents researchers from establishing any borderline, even a hypothetical, between an account rooted in his autobiography and fiction inspired by his readings. Thus, it also raises questions about to what extent the image of the city created by Odyniec was a projection of his personal experience and to what extent it was determined by the pressure of the models already established in culture – in iconography, literature, and in language itself, i.e. in stereotypes which had arisen around the location, in perceptive clichés, and in customary formulations of collection visions.¹ I am interested in that entire mediatory sphere which influenced the presentation of the image of Venice in its Polish 19th-century variant.

The author of *Listy* followed the models of traditional travel writing as practised by, e.g. Klementyna Hoffmanowa née Tańska or Łucja Rautenstaukowa née Giedroń. Their narratives were supposed to be a source of information about the cultures and the social spaces of specific times and places. Their function was highly educational, and they were intended for specific readers who defined the cultural and moral horizons of the texts. Odyniec followed that route. He clearly indicated the aim of his account: "I shall offer you a small guided tour around Venice." His narration referenced his experience of 1829, i.e. a time when the vision of Venice was shaped in literature by texts by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,² Ann Radcliffe,³ Germaine de Staël,⁴ and most significantly Lord Byron.⁵ It seems, however, that – as he was preparing it for print many years after his journey – Odyniec also used other later accounts. It bears some resemblance to the narratives by Chateaubriand⁶ or Łucja Rautenstrauchowa.⁷

¹ Elżbieta Rybicka, "Problematyka urbanistyczna w literaturze polskiej XVIII i XIX wieku (Wybrane zagadnienia)," in *Modernizowanie miasta. Zarys problematyki urbanistycznej w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej* (Kraków: Universitas, 2003), 33–70.

² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit. Zweiter Abteilung Erster Teil*, (Jena: Frommann, 1816–1817), vol. 1, 2. See Goethe, "Italienische Reise," in *Goethes Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe letzter Hand* (Stuttgart and Tübingen: Johann Georg Cotta, 1829) vol. 27, 28.

³ Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1794).

⁴ Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, ou l'Italie*, (Paris: Henri Nicolle, 1807).

⁵ Lord George Gordon Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV*, (London: John Murray, 1818).

⁶ François René de Chateaubriand, "Memories d'Outre – Tombe," *La Presse* (1848–1850).

⁷ Łucja Rautenstrauchowa, *Miasta, góry i doliny*. (Poznań: Nowa Księgarnia, 1844), vol. 3; *W Alpach i za Alpami* (Warsaw: Merzbach, 1850), vol. 3.

The plan of the guided tour in *Listy z podróży* was dictated by Byron's relationship with Venice. That path was, in fact, followed by many travellers, particularly in the first half of the 19th century (Chateaubriand, Krasieński). One could state that the task of finding the traces of "the greats of the epoch" in the city became one of the main attractions at that time. However, to follow it one had to possess extensive knowledge⁸ and not all travellers, like Chateaubriand, were invited to aristocratic manors, where people discussed the poet's lifestyle in Venice.⁹ Nonetheless, the main source of information about Byron's relationship with the city were his memoirs and letters, and his literary works with which Polish travellers were familiar. Already in the statement opening his travel story, Odyniec referred to the initial lines of Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: "I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs;/ A palace and a prison on each hand."¹⁰ It is noteworthy that the author of *The Giaour* indicated Venetian locations not only in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, but also in his historical tragedies *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice* and *The Two Foscari*, in the narrative poem "Beppo," and in "Ode on Venice." Their common presence was both an outcome of Byron's conviction that words can save a place, and of his Romantic interest in history, a quality which both Mickiewicz and Odyniec also shared. Of course, the Venetian traces left by the author of *Don Juan* led travellers not only to the Doge's Palace, the Bridge of Sighs, or to the prison, i.e. locations extremely popular among 19th-century visitors. They also followed him to the island of Lido where he rode a horse and imagined he would be also buried there.¹¹ They journeyed to Malamocco, which John Hobhouse, Byron's friend, referenced in "Historical Notes" to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.¹² It was also included in

⁸ That was indicated by François Renè de Chateaubriand: "I was shown a place where he would swim: a plaque with his name was put in the centre of the Grand Canal (...) The lord's emblem disappeared from the place where it was displayed. Austria extended a veil of silence over everything." "Księga o Wenecji," trans. Paweł Hertz, *Zeszyty Literackie*, issue 3 (1992): 84.

⁹ Chateaubriand referenced stories about Byron which he learnt from ladies Albrizzi and Benzoni, who used to invite the lord to their Venetian houses. *Ibid.*, 80–84.

¹⁰ Lord George Gordon Byron, "Wędrówki Czajdl Harolda," trans. Jan Kasprowicz, in *Wybór dzieł*, selected, foreword, ed. and notes by Juliusz Żuławski, trans. Jan Kasprowicz (Warsaw: PIW, 1986), vol. 1, 568. [English version: Lord George Gordon Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (98). Kindle Edition]

¹¹ "I hope, whoever may survive me, and shall see me put in the foreigners' burying-ground at the Lido, within the fortress by the Adriatic, (...) I trust they won't think of 'pickling, and bringing me home to Clod or Blunderbuss Hall.' I am sure my bones would not rest in an English grave, or my clay mix with the earth of that country. I believe the thought would drive me mad on my deathbed, could I suppose that any of my friends would be base enough to convey my carcass back to your soil. I would not even feed your worms, if I could help it. Byron "List do Johna Murraya, Bolonia 7 czerwca 1819," in *Listy i pamiętniki*, ed. Juliusz Żuławski, trans. Zygmunt Kubiak, Stanisław Kryński, Bronisław Zieliński et al. (Warsaw: PIW, 1960), 216. [English version: *Life of George Byron*, accessed 27.10.2020, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16549/16549-h/16549-h.htm>] Antoni Edward Odyniec revealed that he knew about Byron's desire (*Listy z podróży*, ed. Marian Toporowski, introduction by Maria Dernałowicz vol. 1 (Warsaw: PIW, 1961), 419).

¹² Byron, "List do Johna Murraya, Rzym 15 września 1817," in *Listy i pamiętniki*, 186. The poet revealed that Hobhouse had written footnotes to Canto the Fourth of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. See John Cam Hobhouse, *Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Charold: Containing Desertations on the Ruins of Roma and an Essay on Italian Literature*. (London: John Murray, 1818).

the poet's Venetian space, similarly to Saint Lazarus Island inhabited at that time by Armenian monks who had arrived from Greece already in the early-18th century and who persistently practised their craft of editing. Byron mentioned the fact of learning Armenian, which was probably the reason why Mickiewicz and Odyniec also decided to follow in his footsteps.¹³

Significantly, Polish travellers associated Byronic traces with Napoleon. They travelled to Murazzi, a fortress erected in 1744–1782, which was supposed to protect Venice against the sea. That was a trail which was indicated by Goethe. One could say that it was made more attractive by Napoleon, as it was he who ordered the construction of another dam. References to the grand leader were made in travel narratives mostly in relation to the role he had played in the history of Venice, a fact which Odyniec, unlike e.g. Cha-teaubriand, omitted. Usually, they referenced inglorious deeds. They indicated acts of destroying and looting works of art conducted at Napoleon's consent. Odyniec most probably avoided references to Napoleonic times in his travel narrative because of censorship that was introduced by the partitioning states, yet his silence in this respect could have also been a result of his unwillingness to be critical of Napoleon. The author of *Listy* left the topic of Napoleon to Mickiewicz, and, in following Lord Byron, he referenced the quadriga from St. Mark's Basilica, the horses which were removed by Napoleon's order, although they were returned to Venice already in 1815. That story was already part of a fairly consolidated canon at that time. It is noteworthy that later it received a bitter Polish extension in *Papioty* by Stefan Żeromski.

Odyniec and Mickiewicz's journey followed the obvious route in the 19th century: to St. Mark's Basilica, and to St. Mark's Square, Piazzetta, St. Mark's bell tower, to the Arsenal, Venetian theatres and galleries with the referenced Academy of Fine Arts, and, finally, to churches of which they supposedly visited fifty, though the author of *Listy* only mentioned two by name. Odyniec also went without the poet on a popular trip at that time to Murano, while together they travelled in a gondola "a quarter of a mile off the city" and along the Grand Canal.

"Names" and images of Venice

For Polish travellers, Lord Byron did not only define various trails around the city and its lagoon surroundings. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he referenced the model visions of Venice created by such painters as Paolo Veronese, Giacomo Palma il Giovane, and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, presented at the Doge's Palace.¹⁴ They were the authors of the image of Venice as a woman ruler. They modelled it on Daniele Barbaro's ideological plan, the main

¹³ By reading the letters and journals by the author of *Korsarz*, other travellers had yet another opportunity. For example, to consider the Grand Canal, the city's thoroughfare, as a trail once travelled by Byron, they could also search for the place where he slipped and fell into a canal, or see the famous Rialto Bridge recollecting its window-framed view recorded by him.

¹⁴ Giovanna, Sciré Nepi, Augusto Gentili, Giandomenico Romanelli, Philips Rylands, *Wenecja. Arcydziela malarstwa*, trans. Tamara Łozińska (Warsaw: Arkady, 2014).

objective of which was to praise the trade and military strength of the city on the lagoon – its majesty and grandness. That is why artists mostly focused on Venice's positive features. They praised its justice;¹⁵ it was presented as a warrant of prosperity;¹⁶ as a guardian of happiness, honour, freedom, fame, safety;¹⁷ as a victor;¹⁸ as being showered with riches by pagan gods¹⁹. Over several centuries, painters shaped its image as a powerful woman, sitting on a throne with a lion resting at her feet. She appeared in the role of a monarchess bearing royal attributes: a crown, a sceptre, and an ermine coat. That was the official image which was promoted in the Republic. In literature, the portrait was much more modest, though its main qualities, i.e. majesty and dominance, were retained. Goethe referred to Venice as "ruleress married to the sea,"²⁰ and he added a mythological thread writing about an entity/city which formed on a lagoon "which leaped out of the sea like Pallas from Jupiter's head."²¹

In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron clearly referred to the iconography established in painting. In the narrative poem, it was a ruleress dripping with riches: "In purple she was robed, and of her feast/ Monarchs partook," "and the exhaustless East/ Poured in her lap all gems in sparkling showers."²² It is possible he associated it with Cybele²³ as in that character he saw similarities to the portraits presented in the Doge's Palace. That Anatolian mother goddess was also presented as a ruleress. She was placed on a throne with a lion by her side, "Rising with her tiara of proud towers,"²⁴ as the poet wrote in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Thus, through literature, Byron consolidated the visions of Venice created by painters. But also, by making her "a ruler of the waters and their powers,"²⁵ he modified her image. He referred to

¹⁵ Paolo Veronese, *Venice on a throne honored by Justice and Peace*, 1575–1578, *ibid.*, 329.

¹⁶ Paolo Veronese, *Venice receives the homage of Hercules and Ceres*, 1575–1578, *ibid.*, 330.

¹⁷ Paolo Veronese, *Triumph of Venice*, 1579–1582, *ibid.*, 355.

¹⁸ Jacopo Palma il Giovane, *Venice Crowned by Victory*, 1578–1579 and Nicolò Bambini, *Triumph of Venice*, 1682, *ibid.*, 354, 394.

¹⁹ Paolo Veronese, *Juno Showering Gifts on Venetia*, 1554–1555; Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Neptune Offering Gifts to Venice*, 1750–1760, *ibid.*, 316, 440–441.

²⁰ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Podróż włoska*, trans., notes and afterword by Henryk Krzeczowski (Warsaw: PIW, 1980), 56.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

²² Byron, *Wędrówki Czajdl Harolda*, Canto IV, 568, lines 15–18. [English version: Lord George Gordon Byron. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (98). Kindle Edition]

²³ Juano, Eduardo. Cirlot, "Kybele," in *Słownik symboli*, trans. Ireneusz. Kania (Krakow: Znak, 2000), 217–218.

²⁴ Byron, *Wędrówki Czajdl Harolda*, Canto IV, 568, line 11.

²⁵ In the notes to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron indicated a relationship between the image of Venice/Cybele and the image of Marcus Sabellicus, the author of Venice's history *Historiae rerum venetarum ab urbe condita*, who supported a particular point of view: "whoever views the city from above shall think they are seeing an image of the earth filled with towers, drawn in the depths of the ocean," (*Wędrówki Czajdl Harolda*, note 2, 626). By formulating the following image: "ever since the mouldy Venice with its hairdo of bell towers, a marble forehead and golden wrinkles has been the object of sales and trade as if some parcel with its former goods," ("Księga o Wenecji," trans. Paweł Hertz, *Zeszyty Literackie*, issue 39 (1992): 85), referred to Byron's portrait of Venice in Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. That "hairdo of bell towers" referred to the image of Cybele: "Rising with her tiara of proud towers," (*Wędrówki Czajdl Harolda*, 568, line 11).

it as Cybele not only because in the Roman tradition she was considered a protector of cities, but probably because phonetically the name Cybele resonated well the “la bella,” Venice’s nickname. One could also assume that he chose her because she was celebrated by the Greeks as mother nature. Therefore, he might have associated Venice/Cybele with the archetypal mother.²⁶ Traces of that kind of association can be found in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. Byron wrote about it in a very personal manner: “I fell in love with it when I was still very young,” and he suggested a kind of internalisation: “And Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare’s art, / Had stamped her image in me.”²⁷ But he also matched the aura of a fable: The city of Venice, “as if a fairy abode.”²⁸ That way he breached the official image consolidated in painting in favour of a more personal one, certainly bearing some rooting in Ann Radcliffe’s vision of enchanted city (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*).

Odyniec transformed Byron’s fabled thread into that of a ballad. Cybele, the “lady of the sea depths,” became in his version a siren, an inhabitant of waters in Romantic ballads. The author awkwardly pieced together her “body” from the fragments of the city’s space. He wrote about the unusual relationship of elements, which: “in the centre and on the city’s limbs (...) are as if a siren’s ‘fish underbelly,’ while Piazza di San Marco is her torso and heart, and Piazzetta is her charming delightful little face.”²⁹ By proposing that topography of the city, Odyniec followed an already consolidated cultural trail.³⁰

One could say that with the author of *Don Juan*, a trend began of developing Venice’s artefacts, which became attempts at breaking image-based stereotypes. In Romantic and post-Romantic literature, it was constantly being assigned new names and images – from stereotypical, through pretentious, to surprising ones. Odyniec also indicated the most popular one, i.e. “They compare Venice to the Venera being born of sea waves”;³¹ Chateaubriand called it “the Adriatic’s wife” and “the master of the seas.”³² The search for the appropriate image for Venice was continued in modernist literature,

²⁶ That remained in line with the climate created by folk songs, in which the city was considered a mother. One could also indicate other traces. Venice was presented as Madonna, vide Peter Ackroyd, *Wenecja. Biografia*, trans. Tomasz Bieroń (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2015), 283–284.

²⁷ Byron, *Wędrówki Czajdl Harolda*, Canto IV, 573, lines 158–159.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Canto IV, 573, line 155.

²⁹ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 403.

³⁰ It is unclear how intentional was Odyniec’s use of the patterns consolidated in culture of the comparison of the space of Venice to a living organism. Peter Ackroyd indicated that “By the sixteenth century it was already being described as a human body where «the head is the place where the shores are situated; and that part towards the sea are the arms.» The canals were the veins of the body. The heart lay in the city itself. So wrote Cristoforo Sabbadino in 1549. The English traveller, James Howell, said that no foreign prince had ever «come nere her privy parts.» Yet he did not indicate in which of Venice’s areas he placed them. The author of *Venice* suggested that “they were presumably the ducal palace and the basilica.” (Ackroyd, *Wenecja. Biografia*, 217 [English version: Peter Ackroyd, *Venice. Pure City* (New York: Random House, 2009)]. Odyniec invented for Venice the shape of a siren’s body, the topography of which he transferred onto slightly different spaces of the city than Sabbadino or Howell.

³¹ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 514.

³² François Renè de Chateaubriand, *Pamiętniki z za grobu*, selected, trans. and commentary by Joanna Guze (Warsaw: PIW, 1991), 555.

a fact which was aptly noted by Dariusz Czaja.³³ He indicated the creations by Joseph Brodsky, Ezra Pound, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, and more. Apart from conventional images, i.e. of Venera, the goddess of love and beauty, associated with Venus and Greek Aphrodite (Pound and Oskar Miłosz), he also indicated some less trivial propositions. For example, Fernand Braudel presented Venice as Penelope, Joseph Brodsky saw in Venice “Greta Garbo in a swimming pool,” and Aleksander Wat called it “an old dangerous witch that settled on the sea.”³⁴ One could argue that specification of the image of Venice became an essential motif in both travel narratives and poetry – accounts of experiencing the city. In the 19th century, Odyniec chose a siren. Why did he choose it? I shall return to this question later in the text.

Death in several versions

Odyniec offered an ambiguous presentation of his experience of “the queen of the Adriatic.” On the one hand it charmed him, he was nearly petrified in awe. Yet, on the other, he indicated, like many other travellers, the clearly felt contradicting nature of impressions, a fact he conveyed in a particular image: “Today’s Venice is akin to a senile dethroned monarchess who at first glance would seem a pitiable old lady, but wait until she opens her treasure chests – you will immediately feel what she once was and you shall bow once again before her like when in the glow of her majesty and charm she accepted visitors at her throne.”³⁵

When outlining Venice’s image, he referred to patterns consolidated in travel narratives, and invoked its two faces, both being image-based clichés. One was modelled from the matter of St. Mark’s Square often referred to as the ballroom or parlour of Europe (Napoleon). In literature, it was commonly depicted in a night-time mood: lit up by the moon³⁶ and gas lamps³⁷. The other was formed from the impressions arising from wandering the labyrinth of narrow streets and canals – dark and shocking with their ugliness. Odyniec recorded the outline of the following sight:

In fact, that downfall is visible here everywhere except in St. Mark’s Square, which is full of life of the new style, and in Piazzetta, from where the images are always the same. Everywhere else the grander a square, palace,

³³ Dariusz Czaja, “Wenecja jest kobietą. Rzecz o wyobraźni,” *Konteksty*, issue 3/4 (1995): 149–151.

³⁴ Aleksander Wat, *Korespondencja*, selected, ed., notes and introduction Alina Kowalczykova (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2005), vol. II, 642.

³⁵ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 411. Chateaubriand offered a similar portrait of Venice, vide note 19. One could assume that by using the adjective “senile” in reference to Venice, Odyniec was “zgrzybiała” meaning “mouldy, resembling an old mushroom”].

Ann Radcliffe, *Tajemnice zamku Udopho. Romans strofami poezji przetykany*, trans. Waclaw Niepokólczycki. Illustrations by Roman Cieślewicz (Warsaw: PIW, 1977), vol. 1, 194, invoked an image-based cliché [the word he used in Polish was “zgrzybiała” meaning “mouldy, resembling an old mushroom”].

³⁶ Ann Radcliffe, *Tajemnice zamku Udopho. Romans strofami poezji przetykany*, trans. Waclaw Niepokólczycki. Illustrations by Roman Cieślewicz (Warsaw: PIW, 1977), vol. 1, 194.

³⁷ Lucja Rautenstrauchowa, *W Alpach i za Alpami* (Warsaw: Merzbach, 1850), vol. 3, 218.

or official building, the sadder the sense of emptiness, abandonment or filth. For example, this stretch of palaces along the banks of the Grand Canal, all facing it, with delicious colonnades, galleries, and staircases the last steps of which sink in water, the whole line of palaces, I tell you, resembles a line of skeletons in a morgue; they are just as badly deprived of any pretence of life and "from their huge windows destruction peers" so strongly that their putrid coldness covers even the stench and mould of the canal. During the day, the majority of the windows have their blinds closed or are simply boarded up; in the evening, there is not a single light in either of them and only those on Rialto Bridge reflect the lights illuminating the stores in the black waters of the canal spread along both sides of the bridge. On the grandest of galleries, once probably covered in carpets, from which elegant beauties peered keenly onto the canal, today here and there are underwear drying. In the staircases of Carrara marble, once swept with the togas of doges or long dresses of signiorinas, you can simply see rubbish or decaying weeds which the water has carried. Maybe in a different season when their richer owner currently spending time in villages shall return to the city, maybe this part of the city shall also look more lively and joyfully, but for now no cemetery could offer a grimmer statement about the triviality of the objects of this world.³⁸

In the quoted fragment, destruction and overwhelming emptiness exist side by side with a mental projection of the city's past glory. Similarly to Radcliffe, Byron, and Chateaubriand, the author used contrastive combinations: imagined traces of grandness and actually perceived ruin. The clash between the images was supposed to emphasise the mechanism of metamorphoses, i.e. creation and destruction, which Venice underwent. Odyniec assigned the ruin a clearly Gothic shape: he transformed a "stretch of palaces" into "skeletons in a morgue." He supplemented other mental projections with actual observations. He wrote about rotting weeds, rubbish, and filth.³⁹ He invoked experiences which suggested decay: he referred to the scent of mould and of rotting plants as "putrid coldness." He also utilised realistic descriptions filled with ugliness: he indicated boarded-up windows and underwear drying on lines, which in his perception were supposed to prove the degradation of the city.⁴⁰ For him, those "skeleton palaces" spreading a putrid stench resembled the mortal dimension of the city.

³⁸ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 410–411.

³⁹ On rubbish and filth in Venice vide Goethe, *Podróż włoska*, 82.

⁴⁰ Chateaubriand accurately exposed the ruin spreading through Venice: "When you see a trowel with mortar and gypsum being laid hastily on a damaged marble capital, you are overcome with dread. I'd prefer worm-eaten boards covering Greek and Mauritanian windows and tatters drying on exquisite balconies to the touch of the powerless hand of our century," Chateaubriand, *Pamiętniki z za grobu*, 556.

It seems, however, that the underwear drying on the lines in Odyniec's description had nothing to do with the ruinous degradation of the city. As proof consider 18th-century cityscapes where the "hanging rags" were treated as an element of the peculiar beauty of the city and its character, vide *The Grand Canal, Looking North-East from Palazzo Balbi to the Rialto Bridge* (around 1720) by Antonio Canal commonly known as Canaletto. There is, however, a subtle difference in Chateaubriand's descriptions as he indicated that those "rags" hang on

Odyniec did stop there. He did not relate the ruin he saw to the frailty of human existence or to the generational experience of "being a ruin." He did not treat it as a form conceptualisation of an autobiographical myth.⁴¹ That motif of a spiritual relationship with Venice's ruins was, however, indicated by Byron: "It [Venice - A.K.] has not disappointed me; though its evident decay would, perhaps, have that effect upon others. But I have been familiar with ruins too long to dislike desolation."⁴²

Venice, as indicated in the works by the author of *The Giaour*, became for him an autobiographical space, a space for new roots, if you will, through the breaking away from his former one, i.e. English. One should note that it was Byron who introduced the topic of catastrophe in literature – the image of the death of Venice, the "city on water," which in the future of his vision would be drowned in the Adriatic. As the threat continued to increase, the motif indicated in "Ode on Venice" became extremely popular in art.⁴³ In contrast, Odyniec followed a Gothic path established at that time. He did not yield to the melancholic beauty envisioned by Chateaubriand: "Venice is here, she sat on the sea shore as if a beautiful woman who is going to fade as the day; the evening wind is playing with her fragrant hair; she is dying: the whole charm and all smiles of nature have come to bid her farewell."⁴⁴ In Odyniec's view, Venice was dying like any other city which lost its life's powers. He was not delighted in the process of becoming a ruin/skeleton. He did not associate ageing/ "senility" with beauty but rather with walls crumbling, plaster peeling off, mould spreading, and the omnipresence of rot and filth.

Regarding the past

Odyniec enriched aesthetic admiration for Venice combined with a reflection on its degradation with a highly distanced and critical reflection about its past. He referred to a historian by the name Pierre Daru.⁴⁵ He single-sidedly argued:

(...) w całym Daru, niestety, nie wyczytałem ani jednego wypadku, w którym by się ten symbol kupieckiej Rzeczypospolitej lwiał czy orła

the exquisite balconies of palaces. Odyniec failed to notice that subtle detail, even though he probably drew inspiration from Chateaubriand's description.

⁴¹ Grażyna Królikiewicz, *Terytorium ruin. Ruina jako obraz i temat romantyczny* (Kraków: Universitas, 1993), 104–109.

⁴² Byron, "List do Thomasa Moore'a, Wenecja 17 listopada 1816," in *Listy i pamiętniki*, 166. [English version: <https://lordbyron.org/monograph.php?doc=ThMoore.1830&select=AD1816.34>] In his memoir, journal, and letters one could indicate numerous ruin-related reflections: "I passed an entire forest of dried pines, completely dried up; naked trunks, bark torn off, dead branches; it all happened in one winter – at that sight I thought of myself and my family." Byron, "Dziennik dla Augusty," in *Listy i pamiętniki*, 492.

⁴³ In Polish literature, the motif of death by drowning appeared, e.g. in a novel by Wacław Kubacki entitled *Smutna Wenecja* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1968).

⁴⁴ Chateaubriand, *Pamiętniki zza grobu*, 557.

⁴⁵ Pierre Daru, *Historie de la République de Venise* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1819); a multi-volume opus to which Lord Byron also referred. It was also read by Zygmunt Krasiński.

wspaniałomyślnością odznaczył i na wdzięczność ludzkości zasłużył. Darmo mówić, ale miecz, który jest zarazem i łokciem, nigdy mieczem Temidy nie będzie i prędzej może chyba gwicht jej szali sfalszuje. Toteż bodaj że upadek Wenecji sprawił w świecie raczej wrażenie bankructwa możnej i odwiecznej firmy niż upadek wielkiego narodu i państwa.⁴⁶

[sadly, nowhere in Daru's work have I found a single instance where the symbol of the mercantile Republic had proven its lion's or eagle's generosity deserving people's gratitude. Needless to say, a sword which is also an elbow can never become Themis's sword and all it could do is distort a weight of her scales. That is probably why Venice's downfall was considered by the world as the bankruptcy of an affluent and perennial firm rather than the fall of a grand nation and state.]

It seems that that mercantile character in his perception deprived the city on the lagoon the prestige of a grand nation and state. That is because in the imagined world of Polish szlachta, the fact of being a merchant was not aligned with such values as glory and bravery. One could suspect that his xenophobic attitude prevented him from developing a reflection resembling that of Chateaubriand who had no doubt that Venetian merchants were also knights.⁴⁷ In actuality, as suggested by Ackroyd, "The image of the merchant is central to any understanding of Venice."⁴⁸ Odyniec did not make that effort as he probably could not imagine that someone wealthy could also strive for glory. In his memory, he retained the "merchant/military Republic of Venice" in which "meaningful and resonating words were no profitable goods."⁴⁹ As he visited the Doge's Palace, he was not fascinated by the splendour and grandness of the interiors nor the art displayed there, which hailed the city's history and the victorious wars of its inhabitants. He did not, like Byron in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, admire the battle of Lepanto, nor did he call Venice "Europe's stronghold against the Ottomans."⁵⁰ He did not write about its glory as Wordsworth⁵¹ or Shelley⁵² did.

It seems there were at least a few reasons for Odyniec's different perception of Venice's past. One might assume that he easily succumbed to patterns of thinking and of the visions which shaped reflections on Italian, and Venetian, nationality. He might have adopted it from Madame de Staël,

⁴⁶ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 410.

⁴⁷ Chateaubriand, *Pamiętniki zza grobu*, 556.

⁴⁸ Ackroyd, *Wenecja. Biografia*, 118.

⁴⁹ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 427.

⁵⁰ Byron, *Wędrowki Czajłd Harolda*, Canto IV, 572, line 123.

⁵¹ In "On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic," William Wordsworth wrote: "the worth/ Of Venice did not fall below her birth,/ Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty," in *Angielscy „Poeci jezior” William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey*, selected, trans., introduction and commentary by Stanisław Kryński (Wrocław-Warsaw-Krakow: Ossolineum, 1963), 35.

⁵² Percy Bysshe Shelley also offered a grandiloquent image of Venice: "And the beams of morn lie dead/ On the towers of Venice now,/ Like its glory long ago" ("Lines Written among the Euganean Hills," in *Poezje wybrane*, selected, ed. and introduction Juliusz Żuławski (Warsaw: PIW, 1961), 41).

who depicted Italians in a negative manner when she wrote in *Corinne, ou l'Italie* about their weakness, cowardice, lack of national pride, and ignorance.⁵³ Similarly spirited remarks were offered by Lamartine in *The Last Canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.⁵⁴ Their poor will to fight was also indicated by Napoleon. Yet Odyniec's historical reflections were influenced not only by the stereotype popular in the 19th century. His negative attitude towards Venice the state could have also resulted from religious issues, and its relationships with the papacy in particular. It is a fact that it defended the autonomy of the local church and it often refused to submit to the Holy See. Surely Odyniec, a Catholic, found it difficult to forgive some of its decisions, e.g. the fact of using crusade knights to fight for the Republic's own interests. Most certainly for that reason he did not conceal his attitude towards Venetians' religiosity. When writing about the statues of Neptune and Mars on top of the stairs leading to the Doge's Palace, he argued that Venice "served more at heart those two Pagan patrons than the saint Evangelist."⁵⁵ It was not only his religious conservatism and the narrow-mindedness of his szlachta way of thinking that forced Odyniec into such an unequivocally negative attitude towards Serenissima. He was also offended by wealth so ostentatiously displayed in the Doge's Palace. He did not admire it as Chateaubriand did who wrote: "In the Doge's Palace there are wondrous things hall after hall."⁵⁶ The author of *Memoirs from Beyond the Grave*, an aristocrat accustomed to interior luxury, did not lose his desire to admire beauty based on historical knowledge. He wrote: "The bridge is entrancing from the outside, the façade of the prison is admirable: not even tyranny or tragedy could exist without beauty in Venice."⁵⁷ Odyniec chose a different style: "Suffice to consider the Doge's Palace (...) Surrounded by a wall, wonderful in structural terms yet always resembling that of a monastery or a fortress, with a lion's mouth always opened, as if forever in a roar and hungry, at the entrance, into which denunciations were once tossed."⁵⁸ He thus described the palace's interior:

Then, the earthly glory of Venice shines right next to it in the brightest of colours. Those include large and small on the walls and on the ceiling and in this and in further halls paintings of battles, victories, triumphs and homages which the Republic achieved and received through its servants, enslaving and pillaging without restraint: Greeks, Turks, Saracens, and its righteous compatriots and neighbours. It itself in apotheoses by the greatest masters appears several times as a goddess surrounded by a supernatural glow and as a personification of all Pagan and Christian virtues.

⁵³ Germaine de Staël, *Korymna czyli Włochy*, trans. Łucja Rautenstrauchowa, Karol Witte, ed. by Anna Jakubiszyn-Tatarkiewicz (Wrocław-Warsaw-Krakow: Ossolineum, 1962).

⁵⁴ *Ostatnia pieśń pielgrzymki Childe Charolda z Lamartine'a*, trans. Adam M-ski [Zofia Trzeszczkowska] (Vilnius: Józef Zawadzki, 1883).

⁵⁵ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 428. Because Venice held the relics of St. Mark the Evangelist, it was considered as the capital of European Christianity.

⁵⁶ Chateaubriand, *Pamiętniki zza grobu*, 558.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 560.

⁵⁸ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 427.

Those only remain that which they originally were, that is painted things, though maybe if they actually existed in its life, the city itself would be more than just a painting.⁵⁹

Significantly, Odyniec had no enthusiasm for the beauty or grandness of the art he viewed in the Doge's Palace as he did not respect Venice's features. One can only assume that his aversion mainly resulted from imperial policy, and it, in the perception of the author of *Listy*, deprived the city of its "virtues," as they were, as he wrote, only "painted." It was their absence that caused, in his mind, the eventual failure of the Republic, which in Odyniec's text was only reflected in the black two-headed Austrian eagle, the symbol of contemporary enslavement, placed over a winged lion over the entry gate to the Arsenal. In the reflections of the narrator of *Listy*, there is no compassion for the very recent tragic events in the history of the city-state.

As he wrote about the former queen of the Adriatic, he revisited Gothic motifs. He submitted to 19th-century visions of Venice as a city of dread.⁶⁰ It seems that by introducing a story of the prison into his travel narrative, he also utilised it for forming the Gothic image of the city. He meticulously described its location. He wrote about its space, torture devices, and the methods of murdering convicts. He exposed the brutality of those who yielded power reminding readers that Poland was free of such deeds. He amplified the negative attitude towards the city's history referring to the poetics of terror via a special kind of theatricalisation of the space around the Doge's Palace. In the short story, he offered the image of doge Marino Faliero's severed head rolling down the "stairs of giants." He made references to actual events consolidated by Byron in the historical tragedy *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice*. A projection of the image of a slaughter – a penal spectacle in which the body became the main object of repression was, according to Odyniec's intentions, a kind of disgrace of the city-state, a proof of its barbarity. The author's imagination inscribed the figure of Faliero into the referenced interiors of the Doge's Palace as if branding its entire space with the memory of the events. Thus, the projection became an expression of the narrator's negative attitude towards Venice's past and its politics. The author of *Listy z podróży* did something else, too. He usually refrained from indicating Mickiewicz's reactions. This time was different. He discussed at length how Mickiewicz refused to examine the torture devices as they filled him with disgust, just like the entire prison space. That was the only situation when he exposed the poet's somatic experiences. It seems that Venice's imperial nature, which deprived other nations of their freedom, in combination with brutal acts of tormenting convicts triggered Mickiewicz's disdain, an emotion which was shared by Odyniec: "The Doge's Palace evokes no sympathy, apart from some admiration for its architectural beauty, and it is truly repulsive if one considers its history."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., 429.

⁶⁰ Ackroyd noted that in the 19th century there was a strong trend to promote the myth of Venice as a dark and diabolical city, see *Wenecja. Biografia*, 94.

⁶¹ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 428.

Odyniec remained indifferent to the fable-like vision of Venice offered by Radcliffe, the image of Venice the mother proposed by Byron or the melancholic portrait of dying Venice by Chateaubriand. The artefact he developed was influenced by the cultural pattern of Gothicism. Interestingly enough, however, his use of image-based clichés did not prevent him, it would seem, from capturing an authentic experience – that disdain of the city and its authorities which utilised violence.

A tower view

Disapproval, disdain, and disgust were expressed and proven in the image of Venice developed by Odyniec as viewed from Saint Mark's Clocktower. The author followed well-worn trails. It is clear that the viewing of the cityscape from the top of the tower was particularly popular not only among 19th-century travellers. For example, Madame de Staël noted that Venice had been built on a completely flat surface "on which church towers seem surrounded by water like the masts of motionless ships."⁶² One should also remember the passage that inspired Lord Byron. In the notes to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he referenced the imaginary projection by Marcus Sabellius in *Historia Weneccji*: "Whoever views the city from above shall think that they are viewing the image of the earth filled with towers outlined in the depths of the ocean."⁶³ Odyniec and Mickiewicz surely remembered that image as they both returned to reading Byron as they travelled through Italy. Yet the sight from St. Mark's Clocktower presented by Odyniec had nothing in common with that of Sabellicus:

<p>A na wodzie, u stóp wieży, Gród wenecki plackiem leży Jak żółw czarny, jak kłęb zwity Lewijatan, łupu syty, Co śpiąc, zda się, Śni o czasie, Gdy dźwignąwszy kadłub smoczy, Na galerach, jak na skrzelach, Z Zary Niemcom bryzgał w oczy, Ogniem zionąc w Dardanelach! A dziś – a dziś! Śpij, nieboże! I bez ciebie świat żyć może⁶⁴</p>	<p>And on water, at the tower's feet, The Venetian city lies flat Like a black turtle, bundled like a cloud Leviathan, filled with spoils, While sleeping, it seems, It dreams of a time, When it lifted its dragon's body, On galleys like on gills, Suddenly sprayed Germans in the eyes, With fire spewing in the Dardanelles! And today – oh, today! Sleep, poor [thing! The world can go on without you.</p>
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He was rather inspired by the image offered in Madame de Staël's *Corinne*, who looked towards Dalmatia and Istria, like Odyniec towards Zadar, which were enslaved by Venice. It seems that in the perception of the Polish traveller, the city-state's invasiveness was considered loathsome as

⁶² Staël, *Korynna, czyli Włochy*, 401.

⁶³ Byron was inspired by that sight as he developed the portrait of Venice the Cybele.

⁶⁴ A.E. Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 432–433.

this time he did not refer to Venice as a siren by rather a leviathan – a demonic sea monster, a serpent or a dragon with several heads that “sprayed into the eyes” and “spewed fire.” Therefore, Odyniec referred to the Old Testament and the personifications of devilish powers.⁶⁵ He developed a new ethically questionable image of Venice by using a moralising interpretation. He subordinated the sight from the tower to this moral inclination – its framework, though, was not defined by his perception but his emotional evaluation. That is why the subjectivisation of the description did not result in an eyewitness nature by a generalised vision which assumed the form of an allegory of the city as a monster, a leviathan.⁶⁶

It seems that Mickiewicz shared Odyniec’s disapproval of the historical role of Venice. That is evident not only when one considers the former’s disgust at torture devices and the prison but also the poem “Morlach w Wenecji” which was presumably written between 1827 and 1828. The poet was inspired by a text in a collection published by Prosper Mérimée and he converted it into a poem being certain of its originality and the author’s Serbian provenance.⁶⁷ Thus, he could treat it as an authentic complaint of a Slav⁶⁸ who believed the stories of the rich Venice and sailed to it hoping for turning his wretched fate. Yet the myth of the fable city that shared gold with foreigners was soon shattered. The poet exposed the dramatic situation of foreigners in the Venetian world. He gave voice to a protagonist who offered a sharp depiction of the experience of being uprooted: “I am like a tree replanted in summer,/ The sun shall burn it and the wind shall blow it away,”⁶⁹ and the sense of the insignificance of his existence: “I am but an ant raised in the forest,/ Tossed by the wind in the middle of a pond!”⁷⁰ The Slav’s confession can be treated as an accusation aimed at the state’s policy and its ruthlessness towards those who served it. In that lyrical/

⁶⁵ See Władysław Kopaliński, “Lewiatan,” in *Słownik symboli* (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1990), 196–197.

⁶⁶ The myth of the city/monster/Leviathan was discussed by Czesław Miłosz who mostly referred to Balzac’s prose, see “Legenda miasta-potwora,” in *Prywatne obowiązki* (Olsztyn: Pojezierze, 1990), 189–197.

⁶⁷ Publishers explained that “Morlach w Wenecji” was a translation of an in-authentic song taken from a collection published by Prosper Mérimée entitled *La Guzla on Choix de poesies illyriques, recuillies dans la Dalmatie, la Bosnie, la Croatie et l’Herzegovine* – in English: a selection of Illyrian poetry collected in Dalmatia, Bosnia, Croatia and Herzegovina, (Paris: F.G. Levrault, 1827). It was only in 1935 that Mérimée admitted that the collection was a mystification. See Adam Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wiersze* ed. Waclaw Borowy, Eugeniusz Sawrymowicz (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1955), vol. 1, 642. While visiting Venice in 1829, Mickiewicz could have known about that. It was only during the 22nd lecture of the first lecture on Slavic literature (19 Mar 1841) that he indicated the fact: “The author openly admitted deceit. He stated that he did intend to depart on a journey through Slavic states yet he thought that it would be much easier to provide a description of the journey, sell it to booksellers only to later, using the money thus made, make the journey and find out about the difference between the reality and his imagination,” (Adam Mickiewicz, *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs pierwszy. Półroczcie I*, trans. Leon Płoszewski (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1955), vol. VIII, 297–298).

⁶⁸ Morlach – Italians used the word to denote Adriatic Slavs, mainly Dalmatians, see Adam Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wiersze*, vol. 1, 641.

⁶⁹ Mickiewicz, “Morlach w Wenecji,” in *Dzieła. Wiersze*, vol. 1, 311–312.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

dramatic story, Venice was presented as “a rock-hard ship.”⁷¹ That is an obvious reference to the city’s location on water and the image-based clichés existing in literature. Yet the name assumed a symbolic meaning as a space in which one could not find help or compassion. The only thing that the protagonist experienced was an endless sense of alienation, captivity, being uprooted, and an overwhelming sense of the paralysing frailty of human existence being crushed under the pressure of an indifferent world. The need to translate the quasi-Serbian record uncovered not only the poet’s keen interest in the tragic history of Slavs, but also the indifference of the world to that evil. The poem proves his sensitivity to the fates of others.⁷² In 1829, Mickiewicz had the opportunity to discover for himself the sources of the myth of golden Venice. As he walked the golden stairs of Palazzo Ducale and as he strolled through its halls, he realised the extent of the past wealth of the city, the essence of which was and has been ever since the space inside the Palace. His reaction, revealed by Odyniec, to prison stories proved Mickiewicz’s solidarity with the harmed and the hurting. Therefore, one could assume that the Doge’s Palace remained both in the mind of Mickiewicz and his travel companion a space filled with wealth yet commonly associated with the endless pride of its authorities and the misery of Slavs who served it.⁷³

It is possible that the negative image of Venice emerging from Odyniec’s text was also influenced by the anti-urbanism message deeply rooted in the Polish traditions of landed nobility and the imagined world of the szlachta. It emerged, as it is widely known, from the negative evaluation by Polish 19th-century thinking and literature of cities, which, in contrast to rural areas, were considered as amoral and contemptible. By utilising the allegorical image of a leviathan city, Odyniec perpetuated the anti-urbanism myth. However, his relationship with municipal spaces does not seem obvious. He did undertake some – albeit feeble – demythicising gestures,⁷⁴ modifying the image of Venice in order to temper the image of the monster city which he created himself. That might have been a result of the “contradiction of impressions” which he himself indicated. That view was also surely influenced by the status of the traveller who wandered the city to

⁷¹ The motif of a ship appears in *Corrine*: Venice “is neither a ship because it remains in one place motionless” (401). Odyniec referred to Mickiewicz’s metaphor of Venice writing: “It is a strange city, resembling both a rock fleet and a labyrinth,” (*Listy z podróży*, vol. 2, 171).

⁷² Literary historians have indicated that “Morlach w Wenecji” could also be treated as a projection of the poet’s Russian experience. Juliusz Kleiner thus wrote about Morlach: “it is part-Pole in Moscow or Petersburg, where he does not feel ‘any free thought or free movement’ and where ‘even compatriots assumed the language and new customs,’” see Juliusz Kleiner, *Mickiewicz*, vol. II, part I (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1948), 130.

⁷³ Krystyna Poklewska, the author of a study of Mickiewicz’s translations, highlighted a major issue. She indicated that “Morlach w Wenecji” was included between among the translations of works only by acclaimed authors: Goethe, Shakespeare, Pushkin, and Dante. On that basis, one could argue that Mickiewicz thought highly of the poem proclaiming in it his disapproval of evil, this time of the Venetian world. Krystyna Poklewska, “Mickiewicz i Mérimée. Z dziejów dwóch wierszy Mickiewicza,” in *Obrazki z romantyzmu. Szkice o ludziach, tekstach i podróżach* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016), 12–14.

⁷⁴ See Elżbieta Rybicka, “«Gesty demityzacyjne»,” in *Modernizowanie miasta. Zarys problematyki urbanistycznej w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej*, 71–80.

discover it following his guide's direction. He used conventional knowledge onto which he applied his own experience rooted in "familiarity." Thus, he somewhat tamed the urban space, maybe not conquering but at least slightly disrupting the anti-urbanism decorum. Maybe that was the source of that peculiar mixture of moralising interpretation with a special kind of "naturalisation." That was surely possible because the image of Venice had little in common with that of a typical city. Its inherent lack of traffic and the quiet of the labyrinth of the narrow streets and canals placed it at a fringe. Maybe that was the reason why Odyniec indicated the instances of nature within the urbanised space. It is uncertain whether he noticed the sea-like uneven floor of St. Mark's Basilica but he most certainly noted the various architectural elements which referred to nature; for example, he recorded that the church was filled "with sculptured leaves or flowers."⁷⁵ He might have noticed the capitals of the Doge's Palace with dolphins, crabs and shells; he did notice the crocodile being tamed by St. Theodore. He consciously focussed on the rhetorical power of his text. He chose particular comparisons. The ships he saw "setting their white sails" were as if "swans or geese"; he thus described Saint Mark's Basilica which according to him "was completely like a king lion": "There is truly something of a lion in it. It does not seem to be rising into the air like, e.g. Gothic cathedrals, but the very first moment you glance at it you are astonished by how grandly, how strongly it sits on the ground. Its very face is that of a lion with a thick mane, just watching you, as if with its lion's eyes, that is how much you admire it with respect and admiration as if in fear."⁷⁶ He referred to Venice as a leviathan but also a "black turtle"; he also utilised common image-based stereotypes, e.g. the comparison of the Grand Canal to a serpent: "it twists like a boa in an irregular S";⁷⁷ he stereotypically compared gondolas to coffins,⁷⁸ but also to birds: "like water ravens black in a thick flock glistening with their light beaks,"⁷⁹ or "like swallows all alike," "like a swallow in the air seeming to be rocking without a trace."⁸⁰ Odyniec devoted much attention to the local pigeons. That was nothing original as stories about them were part of the canon of the city's descriptions. It is noteworthy that he did not devote that

⁷⁵ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 408.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 407–408.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁷⁸ In *Venetian Epigrams*, Goethe formulated a long-lasting image of gondolas:

I would liken this gondola unto the soft-rocking cradle.

And the chest on its deck seems a vast coffin to be.

Yes! 'tween the cradle and coffin, we totter and waver for ever

On the mighty canal, careless our lifetime is spent

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Epigramy weneckie. Venezianische Epigramme*, selection and trans. Piotr Wiktor Lorkowski (Krakow: Miniatura, 1999), 15. [English version: Goethe J.W., *The Works of J.W. von Goethe*, Volume 9, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Works_of_J._W._von_Goethe/Volume_9/Venetian_Epigrams]

Madam de Staël adopted that vision from Goethe: "Those black gondolas which glide on the canals are like coffins or cradles, like the last and first of man's abodes," (*Korynna, czyli Włochy*, 401 [English version: Madam de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)]). Eventually, the coffin gondola became the most popular.

⁷⁹ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 409.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 417.

much attention to any of Venice's historical sites as he did to them: "crowded in flocks they take a siesta on roofs, copulas, towers and church crosses or, like swallows back home, under the ceilings of palace galleries they nest and rock freely."⁸¹ He used a pigeon story to develop a kind of a metaphor of Venetian space viewed in a new version: that of a dovecote. His less fortunate attempt at naturalising the city was the description of the fish market located under the Rialto Bridge. Goethe was charmed with what he saw there. Odyniec embarrassed himself because of his lack of knowledge: "Imagine a black ever-moving pile of the most disgusting of tiny creatures: frogs, beetles, snails, spiders, and scorpions."⁸² The Polish traveller was not interested in the special character or the qualities of the place. He focussed on that which was familiar, e.g. pigeons. He proved his lack of openness for the experiences gained while visiting Venice, though, eventually, not a complete lack as, e.g. he twice indicated a Venetian concoction called "theriac."⁸³

All the procedures used for taming urban settings were supposed to lead to a rusticalisation of space, to blurring its foreignness. That is visible in the choice of stories. Odyniec found space for a story of his visit to a public garden⁸⁴ or a visit to Ms Baeder at her hospitable home, as if at a Polish manor. The fact of indicating a conversation with Mickiewicz also seems significant:

(...) poszliśmy jeszcze na Piazzettę i usiadłszy na wschodach pogawędziliśmy z godzinę. Fale pod lekkim wiatrem rozbijały się z szumem u stóp naszych. Adam mówił o głosach natury i utrzymywał, że w nich jest pierwszy kamerton i zasada wszelkiej harmonii, miary i rytmu – tak w muzyce, jak i w poezji. (Monotonny plusk fal jednych po drugich, i to w regularnych przestankach, zdawał się być wzorem aleksandrynów francuskich.) Gdybyśmy mogli i umieli wsłuchać się dobrze w śpiew ptaków, dostrzegliśmy i tam to samo prawo. W śpiewie ptaków podlatujących nad ziemię zaczyna się poezja, głos czworonogów – to proza. Śpiewają właściwie ptaszątka tylko leśne i polne, i to małe, szare, niewinne. Bełkocą tylko duże i czarne, jak cietrzew, głuszcę, indyk itd. Drapieżne tylko kraczą. Nocne tylko huczają. Pstropióre i błotne tylko wrzeszczą, jak czajka, sroka, dudek, paw itd.. Milczą tylko ryby i gady. A czemu to tak? Otóż

⁸¹ Ibid., 407.

⁸² Ibid., 413. Among the creatures indicated by Odyniec only snails and only from the sea family (ormets, whelks) are considered seafood. One could also identify crustaceans (lobsters, Dublin bay prawns, crabs, and shrimp) and molluscs, including clams (e.g. oysters, mussels, scallops, and cockles), and cephalopods (cuttlefish, calamari, and octopi) with a separate subgroup of echinoderms, e.g. sea urchins.

⁸³ Odyniec only indicated that Venetian theriac was made of reptiles (413). In her recent guidebook *Wenecja. Miasto, któremu się powodzi*, (Warsaw: Wielka Litera, 2020), 272–275, Manuela Gretkowska offered some more information. For that people boils vipers with various ingredients. We know that one of those ingredients was opium. Yet the composition of the concoction remains unclear; it was supposed to treat headaches and other ailments; it was sold in pharmacies.

⁸⁴ More on public gardens built by Napoleon's order – see Łucja Rautenstrauchowa, *Miasta, góry i doliny* (Poznań: Nowa Księgarnia, 1844), vol. 3, 106–108.

właśnie w tym zapytaniu leży temat do dalszych medytacji i do analogii z poetami i z ludźmi.⁸⁵

[we also went to Piazzetta and having sat on the staircase we chatted for an hour. The waves under a light breeze smacked with a gentle hum at our feet. Adam talked about the voices of nature arguing that they carry the original tuning fork and the principle of general harmony, measure and rhythm – both in music and in poetry. (The monotonous swash of waves against other waves, and at regular intervals, seemed the role model for French Alexandrines). If we could listen closely to the birds' song, we could find the same principle there as well. Poetry begins in the song of birds flying to the ground – the voices of tetrapods are prose. Only forest and field birds sing – small, grey and innocent. Only large and black ones, like black grouse, woodgrouse, turkeys, etc., mumble. Birds of prey only caw. Nocturnal birds only hoot. Those with colourful feathers and those that move in mud, like peewits, magpies, hoopoes, peacocks, etc., scream. Only fish and reptiles keep quiet. But why is that? Well, that question holds the topic of further meditation and analogies with poets and with people.]

They did not discuss, as one might expect, what naturally could be associated with discovering Venice. It is clear that the auditory experience, the hum of the waves crashing at their feet, had inspired the story which eventually transcended the here and now. It is difficult to state whether the conversation about nature's voices and their harmony was supposed to be a kind of a counterbalance for the experienced disharmony of the city or rather a kind of desire to hear nature speak in the rock-like Venice. Regardless of that, the example clearly indicates how much more Odyniec and Mickiewicz appreciated the voice of nature than the space saturated with art – the "monotonous swash of waves" seemed to remind them of the harmony of the world of sounds.

Forefathers' Eve in Lido

It was Goethe who indicated that in Lido there was a cemetery for Jews and the English.⁸⁶ Possibly that was also the reason why Byron wished to be buried there.⁸⁷ If one should trust Chateaubriand, the place was known to his contemporaries as it was marked by the poet.⁸⁸ When setting off with Mickiewicz for Lido, Odyniec knew about Byron's wish. It is most probably for that reason that he saturated his depiction of the place with ideas outside conventional guidebook information. He wrote: "[Mickiewicz's] conversation in such a place, at such a time of day, and in such a mood and tone almost made such an impression on me as if I had seen Byron's ghost who while paying penance

⁸⁵ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 447.

⁸⁶ Goethe, *Podróż włoska*, 80.

⁸⁷ See note 5.

⁸⁸ "Here is the border pole at the base of which Byron marked the place for his grave," (François René de Chateaubriand, "Rozmyślania na Lido," in "Księga Wenecji," trans. Paweł Hertz, *Zeszyty Literackie*, issue 39 (1992): 87.

there (...) was whispering all that into his ear seeking his substitute in him."⁸⁹ In Lido, the author of *Listy z podróży* assigned Mickiewicz the role of guślarz [the 'wizard' or 'shaman' in *Forefathers' Eve*], who asked: "Can you feel who is here with us?"⁹⁰ And he responded himself while Odyniec⁹¹ tried to reconstruct the poet's musings on Byron and Napoleon:

They both had grand missions in the society poisoned by the 18th century. They both hated evil which they saw around them, and they sensed the goodness towards which they were supposed to lead. They both had the power to do that, each to his own extent – and they both fulfilled their missions because they felt that power, in comparison only to people, it bore conceit in both, and conceit killed love – the only power capable of vanquishing evil. Byron, sensitive and passionate, extended his disdain for evil over all people failing to notice that they also carried virtues. Because of his disdain he concluded that they were not able to improve and even mocking their strive to do so he began insulting the society's moral opinion thinking that he was mocking their hypocrisy. His trip to Missolonghi occurred too late.

Napoleon, rational and cold, did not trust the rationality of others enough to invite them to jointly fulfil his plans. He sought in them mere tools and he wanted to do everything in everyone's stead and, as he probably thought, for everyone. In Elba, he realised that too late; and also, only on his death bed did his spirit match his genius, the inspiration of which he was not able to fulfil. Byron only irritated everything. Napoleon trampled only those evil things which they both felt in humanity and both wished to correct.⁹²

⁸⁹ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 419.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 418.

⁹¹ Of course, there is no clear proof that Mickiewicz's reflections were recorded accurately by Odyniec. In fact, the author of the account made the reservation that he could not fully recreate that which had been said by the poet. The account's schematic nature raises doubt whether Odyniec did not taint Mickiewicz's statement with his own critical view of Byron. One could assume that the author of *Listy z podróży* referred to an essay by William Hazlit of 1824 who keenly attacked the author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* for his individualism and exoticism (William Hazlit, *Eseje wybrane*, trans. Henryk Krzeczkowski (Warsaw: PIW, 1957)). Most certainly Odyniec was also familiar with the later critical evaluations of Byron's works, e.g. those by Edward Dembowski ("Piśmienność powszechna," *Przegląd Naukowy*, issue 10, (1843): 31–32) or Antoni Czajkowski "Pola elizejskie" printed in *Poezje*, (Warsaw: Drukarnia Stanisława Strąbskiego, 1845). It was in his argument that conceit was the dominant feature of Byron's character.

In *Listy z podróży*, Odyniec was critical of the English poet at least twice: one time in the rhymed address opening the story of his visit in Venice: "A przecież – gdyś ty szczerze tak się ludźmi brzydził,/ Żeś ich wciąż jak psów łajał, jak psów nienawidził,/ To skąd ci ta ochota pisać dla nich wiersze?" [Alas, since you were so disgusted by people,/ That you scolded them like dogs, hated them like dogs,/ Then why did you feel the urge to write poems for them?] (402). He also quoted the critical remarks about Byron by a Swiss writer by the name of Charles Victor de Bonstetten, whom he met in Rome (vol. 2, 86–87). It is possible that Mickiewicz was inspired by his arguments when he wrote the foreword to *The Giaour* comparing Voltaire's and Byron's protagonists – see Adam Mickiewicz, "Przemowa tłumacza," in G.G. Byron, *Giaur. Ułamki powieści tureckiej*, trans. Adam Mickiewicz, ed. Stefan Treugutt (Warsaw: PIW, 1986), 32.

⁹² Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 419.

Mickiewicz appreciated their grandeur, yet he was, according to Odyniec, critical; he reprimanded them on their conceit. He was similarly prophetic in stating that the work started by Byron and Napoleon shall be continued by "new exiles" who in "the new spirit of love and humility shall move their work forward."⁹³ Thus, the poet indicated a need for change. In 1829, his works did not herald it yet. In *Forefathers' Eve* Part IV and in *Konrad Wallenrod*, he closely followed Byron's rebellious spirit.⁹⁴ It was only in Part III of *Forefathers' Eve* written in Dresden that he overcame Romantic individualism.⁹⁵ It is possible that the process had already begun in Venice. The fact of coming into contact with the traces of "the giants of the epoch" and the very fact of experiencing the city might have inspired him to spin Romantic reflections on the past, the present and the future. The contrast between the Doge's Palace, the symbol of Venice's former glory, and the ruin of especially the palaces along the Grand Canal and Austrian captivity had to lead to melancholic ascertainties. Everything reminded him of the instances of grandness which collapsed – Venice, dear Byron,⁹⁶ dear Napoleon, and (as

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Though one could find a crack in the creation of Alpha Konrad. It emerged at the moment of making his tragic choice and bidding Aldona farewell by saying "you are the widow of a grand man." And it culminated in an echo of the statement, a painful confession doubting his former conviction about the justness of the decision: "Grandness! grandness once again, my angel! / Grandness for which we groan in misery. / A few more days, may the heart live through the pain. / It's done, there's no sense in regretting the past," (Adam Mickiewicz, *Konrad Wallenrod*, ed. Stefan Chwin (Wrocław-Warsaw-Krakow: Ossolineum, 1991), 40, lines 162-165.

⁹⁵ The process was indicated in his Roman and Dresden lyrical works, and it was accentuated by *Zdania i uwagi*.

⁹⁶ Mickiewicz's known statements both before his visit in Venice and from his later ones do not confirm the acuteness of the judgement on Byron as indicated by Odyniec in *Listy z podróży*. The poet never accused Byron of being conceited. On the contrary, he defended rather than attacked him. Neither did he state anything about his downfall. It seems that Odyniec mostly forced his own interpretation. That is why it difficult to reliably recreate Mickiewicz's opinion of Byron from 1829 – even more so considering the fact that it changed as the English poet's works evolved, and because of Mickiewicz's dynamic attitude, and, possibly, because of the Zeitgeist. Mickiewicz's first significant statement on the matter came from his letter to Malewski: "I only read Byron, I toss a book written in a different spirit aside as I dislike lies," (Adam Mickiewicz, "List do Franciszka Malewskiego z 20 listopada 1822 r.," in Adam Mickiewicz, *Dzieła* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1955), vol. XIV, 192). That "candour" and expression can also be found in Part IV of *Forefathers' Eve* and in *Konrad Wallenrod*. The other statement was associated with his unfinished study entitled *Goethe i Byron* (in Polish). In it, he confirmed his fascination with Byron, whom he considered equal to Goethe – "a giant." Finally, in Mickiewicz's Introduction to the Polish edition of *The Giaour* of 1834, one can find a fragment parallel to his statement from Lido. Most probably because Odyniec paraphrased a fragment of Byron's *The Corsair*, to which Mickiewicz also referred: "The young author [Byron], persecuted by critics, pursued them in return, and by judging readers based on critics he help the entire audience in contempt. After that author's quarrel with writers, a moral rupture with people occurred, the details of which belong to his biography. "Filled with anger, cursing hypocrisy, / Though he knew, he forgot there were people who were better" (*The Corsair*) ("Wstęp do *Giaura*," in Byron, *Giaur*, 31). It is unclear whether in reconstructing Mickiewicz's statement Odyniec used the introduction to *Giaur* or whether already then, in 1829, the poet had that opinion of Byron. Yet that Introduction seems important for another reason. The poet wrote in it: "The common opinion referred to Byron as a Napoleon of poets, and Napoleon was considered France's only poet." Mickiewicz, as noted by Stefan Treugutt, uncovered "the relationship between poetry and practical actions, the works of the poet and of the leader," ("Byron i Napoleon w polskim

if by accident) led to associating the city's biography with the biographies of the "giants," as at the core of their experiences there – in Mickiewicz's approach as reported by Odyniec – lied power and conceit. In any event, in the account by the author of *Listy z podróży*, Venice was associated not with art, which became its superb trademark, but with the geniuses of the epoch, i.e. Byron and Napoleon.

micie romantycznym," trans. Maria Bożenna Fedewicz, in *Geniusz wydziedziczony. Studia romantyczne i napoleońskie* (Warsaw: IBL PAN, 1993), 116. One could, of course, wonder whether in 1829 Mickiewicz was able to make such a comparison. Clearly it was popular, even more so considering the fact that Byron himself was fascinated with Napoleon and jokingly compared himself to the French leader; moreover, he indicated that comparison in *Don Juan*. Odyniec's account also includes a comparison of poetry and actions. Mickiewicz referred to that not only in the introduction to the Polish edition of *The Giaour*, but also in his Paris lectures. It seems that Venetian space could have inspired him to produce such reflections as it reminded him of both the English poet and the French leader, the latter of whom decided about the city's fate in 1797, and also later when he "sold" it to Austrians. Sadly, though, he largely caused its destruction, though he did author a few projects. It was his decision to build, e.g. public gardens and the second water barrier. When strolling through Venice, Mickiewicz came into contact with tangible traces of the fickle nature of fate: the former grandeur and the present Austrian captivity. In that context he surely wondered about his own future. The journey surely inspired him to think enabling him to confront his visions with reality. One could assume that Mickiewicz in Venice was not yet ready to take over Byron's role of a poet crossing the border between words and actions, and between works and life. That somewhat justifies the referenced opinion that Byron's "journey to Musolonghi came too late." It was as late as during his Paris lectures that Mickiewicz recognised the significance of the decision by the author of *Manfred*: "Lord Byron began an epoch of new poetry; he was the first who helped people feel the whole gravity of poetry; people saw that one should live as one wrote, and that a desire or words are not enough; people saw the rich poet raised in an aristocratic country abandon the parliament and his homeland to serve the Greek cause. That deeply felt need to poeticise one's life, and thus to bring an ideal closer to reality was Byron's entire poetic achievement. In fact, all Slavic poets have followed that path (...) Lord Byron, on his part, was a product of Napoleon. It is quite obvious for me that the flame that fuelled the fire of the English poet came from Napoleon's spirit. (...) Napoleon inspired Byron," (Adam Mickiewicz, "Wykład III z 20 grudnia 1842, Kurs trzeci 1842-1843," in *Literatura Słowańska. Kurs trzeci i czwarty*, trans. Leon Płoszewski (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1955), vol. XI, 32-35). It is worth noting that Mickiewicz in his Paris lectures (lecture on 20 December 1842, XI, 32-34) strengthened the relationship between poetry and practical actions – between art and politics. Napoleon became Byron's spiritual guide, and history was assigned the power of shaping poetry. Also in his lectures Mickiewicz indicated that "in the case of Byron and Napoleon their common feature was their moral power, which changes people and is able to shape life itself," (Treugutt, "Byron i Napoleon w polskim micie romantycznym," in *Geniusz wydziedziczony. Studia romantyczne i napoleońskie*, 116. Clearly, Mickiewicz's attitude towards Byron and his works underwent various transformations since the 1820s. It seems that its evolution confirmed Odyniec's account only to some extent as it would be difficult to specify the exact time and nature of the changes. That was proven, e.g. in a fragment of Mickiewicz's letter to Bohdan Zaleski: "You said it well and righteously that we need clasp towards love and humility. If dead Byron was among us, he would have surely strengthened us with humility," (Adam Mickiewicz, "List do Bohdana Zaleskiego z 23 czerwca 1841," in *Dziela*, vol. XV, 400). The first fragment of the letter is aligned with the thought expressed by Mickiewicz in *Listy z podróży* indicating the fact of choosing a new path – that of "love and humility." Yet what seems significant, while disregarding the time when the reflection was written, is that the quoted argument was a response to a review of *Beniowski*, in which Zaleski accused Slowacki of "anger and conceit." In this context one could easily imagine Zaleski's opinion on *Don Juan*. At that time, though, both for Mickiewicz and Zaleski, Byron was an author who vanquished extreme Romantic individualism and gave his life in defence of Greece's freedom. Nothing else mattered in their assessment at that time. Byron's image was shaped by his legend. More on Mickiewicz and Byron – see Grażyna Halkiewicz-Sojak, "Mickiewiczowski Byron," in *Byron w twórczości Norwida* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 1994), 22-34.

Odyniec forged the reconstruction of Mickiewicz's musings on the "tians" intended to offer a universal conclusion about the need to fight against evil somewhat following reflections on the destructions of grand civilisations. Landscape and mood were the essential elements of the creation: "We set off so late on purpose so that we could view the seat of funeral/poetic memorabilia in moonlight."⁹⁷ They sailed alone to Lido, they sat in an empty place, they listened to the quiet interrupted by the sounds of the bells of Venetians churches for the Angelus and by the hum of sea waves. That whole space they could observe saturated with silence brought Byron to their minds ("We were on a hill over a plain on which Lord Byron often caped"⁹⁸). Yet the statement by Mickiewicz which Odyniec quoted reached deeper. His musings about Byron and Napoleon,⁹⁹ though to some extent

⁹⁷ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 418.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Mickiewicz was fascinated with Napoleon. He considered him an ingenious leader who was able to transform the world. He credited him with awakening national awareness in Slavs (lecture on 29 April 1842, 282). Most of all, his existence assured the poet that an ingenious individual with moral strength could shape a new historical reality. He was also critical - he accused Napoleon of diverting from his mission and his crowning as emperor was proof of his moral downfall: "Napoleon guessed the hidden expectations of his time: he upheld them, and he cleared the path for their fulfilment but he failed to fulfil them himself. He fell. He was too late to discover the secrets of spiritual temptations, an excellent commentary to which he expressed during his imprisonment in Saint Helena" (lecture on 28 May 1844, 505). That evaluation did not, however, belittle the historical significance which Mickiewicz assigned to Napoleon, including in the vision of the future he was designing. He called him a "man of the globe, the most complete of men" (lecture on 19 March 1844, 449), who started the rebuilding of Europe. Mickiewicz argued that Napoleon's unfinished mission should be continued to produce a historical turn. That was why the poet expected the emergence of a new genius who, through his energy (light and strength), would continue the unfinished project. In Mickiewicz's perception, Napoleon became a man akin to Christ. It was through the "pain of his experiences" in Saint Helena Island that he gained his new power: "Napoleon's earth-bound existence ceased. As a leader of a political party, as the head of a dynasty, Napoleon has no existence anymore. Yet who would dare to negate the permanent existence and influence of his spirit? Religious people, warriors, and statesmen use his wisdom, carefully studying his writings and deeds. Is such a study not a true prayer? It is the duty of inspired artists to rise to the land where that grand spirit resides, bring him about and make it visible to us." The poet thus spoke during his Paris lecture on 30 January 1844, i.e. 15 years after the attempt to outline Napoleon's portrait in Lido. At that time, if one were to trust Odyniec, he indicated Napoleon's extreme individualism. Later, in his Paris lectures and in the *Trybuna Ludów* journal, Mickiewicz shaped Napoleon's biography using his early Republic period and the period associated with his internment in Saint Helena. That mode of depiction was also applied somewhat in the Lido remarks, in which the final years of Napoleon's life were considered as a kind of propitiation: "only on his death bed, the spirit in him stood equal to the genius the inspiration of which he did not manage to fulfil," (*Listy z podróży*, 419). One should add that in Mickiewicz's remarks as reconstructed by Odyniec the fact of references to Elba raises doubts. The poet indicated several times, though only later in his Paris lectures, not Elba, as in the account by Odyniec, but Saint Helena. Quite certainly also because that was where Emanuel Las Cases wrote *Mémoires de Sainte Hélène*, a work written as directed by Napoleon. It was on its basis that Mickiewicz shaped the new image of the genius of his age - of a prisoner of the Holy Alliance and a spokesman of captive nations. One thing remained unchanged: both in the indicated account from Lido, and in his later remarks in his Paris lectures and in the *Trybuna Ludów*, the poet argued that the unfinished project by Napoleon the genius awaited a successor. See Maria Janion, Maria Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia* (Warsaw, 1978), 212-250; Treugutt, "Napoleon - mit i utopia," in *Geniusz wydziedziczony. Studia romantyczne i napoleońskie*, 7-34.

applicable to the place where they were uttered, were directed towards the future. In Odyńiec's framing, Lido became a place of musings on the world.¹⁰⁰ He ostentatiously forced a Romantic aura on the scene: two wanderers standing near a tree embracing each other staring at the night-time landscape with the moon resembled a painting by Caspar David Friedrich entitled *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (1819). Mickiewicz's musings were surely triggered by his Romantic longing for a materialisation of his dreams for a change, and the sight of the sea in the spirit of the paintings by Friedrich (*Moonrise over the Sea*, 1822; *Seashore in Moonlight*, 1835) inspired the poet with a "sense of endlessness" as he wondered who would adopt the ideals of "the giants" and "whether people will one day finish them before the world ends, not only the One who himself is that ghost and gave the world a model of himself."¹⁰¹

City of "mysteries and lovers' rendezvous"

That was the name that Odyńiec gave Venice referring to the most resilient cultural cliché which has been one of the components of its image, i.e. the city of love. Most probably it was strengthened by the goddesses portrayed by Venetian painters: Venera, Venus, and Aphrodite. Literature consolidated that myth at the turn of the 19th century particularly strongly. It was perpetuated by many authors. For example, Ann Radcliffe in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* offered two extreme visions of Venice: a city of a love inspired by music; and a city of debauchery, passion, and gambling. In *Corinne*, Madame de Staël gave the queen of the Adriatic a melancholic atmosphere full of dark premonitions of the characters and she combined it with the expressions of their experiences culminating in a thunder storm which became a reflection of the unbridled power of their emotions. Byron also wrote about love, particularly in his letters. He did not bury the image of licentious Venice with extreme moral freedom, which he openly utilised. Yet the image of a love-filled sensual city which he consolidated had, just like in the case of Radcliffe's works, extreme faces. One of those was associated with a time of his promiscuity and Venetian lovers who fascinated him with their "wildness" and "tiger's" temperament. He thus wrote to Thomas Moore (Venice, 19 September 1818):

I wish you good night, with a Venetian benediction (...) "May you be blessed, and the earth which you will make" - is it not pretty? You would think it still prettier if you had heard it, as I did two hours ago, from the lips of a Venetian girl, with large black eyes, a face like Faustina's, and the figure of a Juno - tall and energetic as a Pythoness, with eyes flashing, and her dark hair streaming in the moonlight - one of those women who may be

¹⁰⁰ Lido became the location for Romantic musings - see Chateaubriand, "Rozmyślania na Lido," in "Księga o Wenecji," selected and trans. Paweł Hertz, *Zeszyty Literackie*, issue 39 (1992): 86-88; Z. Krasieński, "List do ojca z 28 września 1833," in *Listy do różnych adresatów*, collected, ed. and introduction Zbigniew Sudolski (Warsaw, 1991), vol. 1, 34.

¹⁰¹ Odyńiec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 419.

made any thing. I am sure if I put a poniard into the hand of this one, she would plunge it where I told her – and into *me*, if I offended her. I like this kind of animal, and am sure that I should have preferred Medea to any woman that ever breathed.¹⁰²

Byron's promiscuity, with his inclination for energetic and vivacious sensual lovers, had its end when at countess Benzoni's parlour he met Teresa Guiccioli, his final love. In his letters to her he succumbed to the sentimental/Romantic atmosphere of such confessions:

Dearest (...) For the past few years I have tried to systematically avoid any passion as the tyranny of love has brought too much pain on me. Never to indulge in adoration, never to revel (...) I was supposed to never love anyone again or expect being loved. You have shattered all my resolutions. Now I belong to you whole, what I will become it all depends on You – maybe a happy man in Your love, but forever restless. You should not have awoken my heart anew because (at least in my country) my love has always been despair for those whom I loved, and myself. Yet those reflections come too late. You were mine, and how ever it all unfolds, I am Yours and I shall remain like that forever.¹⁰³

Clearly, then, Byron consolidated – particularly in his personal documents, letters and memoirs – the myth of Venice as a city of love reminding that no one kisses like a Venetian.

Under the pressure of a whole host of cultural patterns, Odyniec included a story in his account which he treated like an equivalent of a love story inseparably connected with Venice. It included a mysterious female protagonist known as signora Rachela and a male protagonist named Adam Mickiewicz. They met during their journey from Milan to Venice. It is unclear who she actually was but thanks to Odyniec her description is known:

młoda, kształtna, wysoka z pałającymi czarnymi oczyma, z czarnym mediolańskim welonikiem na głowie, a przy tym wcale przystojna i z twarzą pełną życia i wyrazu, zdaje się uosabiać w sobie typ mediolanek i włoszek. Dotąd, kto ona jest, z pewnością nie wiemy, ale ze wszystkiego się zdaje, że musi być aktorką, bo zna dobrze dramatyczną literaturę włoską i ogólną, i o teatrze z wielką znajomością rzeczy rozmawia, a przy tym ma widocznie wyższe wykształcenie, mówi płynnie po francusku, chociaż z włoskim akcentem, a tak w tonie, jak w wyrażeniach nieco na teatralną deklamacją i sentymentalność zakrawa. Imię nawet ma poetyczne: Rachela.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Byron, "List do Tomasa Moore'a, Wenecja 19 września 1818," in *Listy i pamiątniki*, 200. [English version: <https://www.lordbyron.org/monograph.php?doc=ThMoore.1830&select=AD1818.21>]

¹⁰³ Byron, "List do hrabiny Guiccioli, Wenecja 25 kwietnia 1819," in *ibid.*, 210. [English version translated from Polish]

¹⁰⁴ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 373.

[young, shapely, tall with glowing black eyes, with a small black Milanese veil on her head, and yet quite handsome and with a face full of life and expression, she seems to embody the typical Milanese or Italian woman. We still don't know who she is but based on everything we do know it seems that she must be an actress as she knows Italian and general dramatic literature well, and she talks with great knowledge about theatre, and clearly has university education, she speaks fluent French though with an Italian accent, and both in terms of her tone and expression with a slight tint of theatrical recitation and sentimentality. Even her name – Rachela – is poetic.]

She remained the story's mysterious character:

Ale czy ona sama, jak wnoszę, a raczej się domyślam, jest istotnie kapłanką Melpomeny? – o tym z pewnością powiedzieć nie umiem, bo jak arabska gościnność, tak europejska grzeczność nie pozwalają pytać nikogo: „Ktoś jest?”, tym bardziej kiedy już samo „jak jest” aż nadto do przyjemności towarzystwa wystarcza i jak podróż, tak i pobyt nasz w Wenecji dla obu nas wielce umiła.¹⁰⁵

[But is she herself, as I infer or suspect rather, truly Melpomena's priestess? – that I surely cannot state because just as Arabian hospitality so does European politeness prevent me from asking anybody: “Who are you?” even more so when the very “how is it” suffices completely for the pleasure of the company, and makes both our journey and stay in Venice pleasant for us both.]

It is unclear what Mickiewicz thought about her, yet Odyniec's account indicates how the poet behaved. The poet was drawn to talk with the mysterious signora. He was polite – he offered his hand as she was disembarking a carriage, and he carried her travel basket. We also know that she inclined him favourably: “Adam would surely normally be anxious by now if it had not been for the calming influence of signora Rachela.”¹⁰⁶ In Venice, just like other Polish travellers, she moved from a hotel to a private house and resided near their quarters. Odyniec offered the following account: “Adam also exercised extremely in the company of signora Rachela,”¹⁰⁷ and used the opportunity to complain: “politeness, which demands him to take care of her, draws Adam away from me.”¹⁰⁸ Rachela participated in the trips they organised. Together they celebrated vine harvest in Lido. They ventured to Malamocco and Murazi. From a gondola, they admired Venice. Finally, they visited theatres together. They bought seats a booth for her. From his account, readers know that Odyniec parted with Adam at dusk: “at that time he sets off into the world following his

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 416.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 399.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 412.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 412.

own path and we don't meet like we used to in an agreed café in front of the theatre or after returning home at night."¹⁰⁹ During that time, as one might presume, Mickiewicz met with signora Rachela. Because of that, he spent much money, which was the reason of his quarrel with Odyniec. The author of *Listy* suggested that between the poet and the mysterious lady there formed some kind of a bond: "Clearly, parting for Adam is not easy as he still has not returned."¹¹⁰ In her attire, Rachela – "wrapped in black mantilla and covered with a black veil"¹¹¹ – also manifested the melodramatic atmosphere of their parting. According to Odyniec's recollection published by Kazimierz Wójcicki, one can also learn that Venice "impacted Adam more than Milan ever did."¹¹² Yet he did not confirm that opinion in *Listy z podróży*. In the account of their visit in Venice, he discussed Mickiewicz's impressions extremely rarely.

Therefore, the Venetian thread in Mickiewicz's biography remains veiled in mystery. That is mainly because, except for Odyniec's testimony, there are no other sources to which one could refer. Mickiewicz did not write a single letter from Venice. When he wrote Franciszek Malewski already from Rome (30 November), he only confessed that "Between Milan and Venice I was constantly ill and suffered a toothache."¹¹³ Due to the lack of documents, most of the poet's biographers did not discuss that topic.¹¹⁴ Piotr Chmielewski, who started already in the 19th century an extensive biographical narrative about the poet, wrote:

Mickiewicz większą część wieczorów spędził ze swoją nową znajomą, panną Rachelą; a drobne jego wydatki „zaczęły tracić coraz bardziej swój jednostkowy charakter tak, że Odyniec, który był kasjerem Adama, ośmielił się w końcu zwrócić na to jego uwagę. Adam zrzucił go kilku suchemi słowami z urzędu kasjera i pieniądze swoje wziął do siebie.”¹¹⁵

[Mickiewicz spent most of his evenings with his new acquaintance, Ms Rachela; and his petty expenses "started losing their infrequent nature so much so that Odyniec, who was Adam's cashier, eventually dared to indicate that to him. In a few bitter words, Adam relieved him of his duties as cashier and took the money himself."]

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 415.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 447.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 451.

¹¹² Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki, *Wspomnienie o życiu Adama Mickiewicza* (Warsaw: Mierzbach, 1858), XLVIII.

¹¹³ Adam Mickiewicz, "List do Franciszka Malewskiego, [Rzym] 30 listopada [1829]," in *Listy. Część I*, ed. Stanisław Pigoń (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1955), vol. XIV, 506.

¹¹⁴ It is symptomatic that *Kronika życia i twórczości Adama Mickiewicza* about the year 1829 has never been developed.

¹¹⁵ Piotr Chmielewski, *Adam Mickiewicz. Zarys biograficzno-literacki*, 2nd edition, amended with two portraits of the poet (Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolff, 1898), vol. II, 45. Odyniec stated: "I lugged that gold in my pocket and having paid for our joint travel expenses I gave its owner only enough for petty expenses. But those expenses in Venice began to lose their petty character, so as a loyal guard of the treasure I finally dared to make a remark about that" (*Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 509).

Józef Kallenbach did not discuss Mickiewicz's visit in Venice,¹¹⁶ nor did Juliusz Kleiner,¹¹⁷ Mieczysław Jastrun,¹¹⁸ Jacek Łukasiewicz,¹¹⁹ Tomasz Łubieński¹²⁰ or Bohdan Urbankowski.¹²¹ Roman Koropecyjk proved bolder than Polish literary historians and in a daring biography – as denoted by its publishers – entitled *Adam Mickiewicz. Życie romantyka*, he thus described the issue:

Do Wenecji Odyniec i Mickiewicz przyjechali 7 października z listami polecającymi od pani Szymanowskiej i od księżnej Wołkońskiej do jednego z miejscowych muzyków. Zostali w mieście dwa tygodnie, obejrzeni wszystkie atrakcje polecane przez *Guide de voyageur* Odyńca i jednocześnie starali się zobaczyć Wenecję *Childe Harolda*. Być może dzięki temu Wenecja wydała się Mickiewiczowi o wiele bardziej czarodziejska, niż była naprawdę – a może to dzięki znajomości z niejaką Rachelą („[musiała] być aktorką”), z którą dzielił karetę (i najprawdopodobniej także łóżko) w drodze do Wenecji, a następnie również zwiedzał miasto. Nic więc dziwnego, że Wenecja, perła Adriatyku, „więcej niż Mediolan działała na Adama.”¹²²

[Odyniec and Mickiewicz arrived in Venice on 7 October with letters of reference from Mrs Szymanowska and from duchess Wołkońska addressed to a local musician. They stayed for two weeks. They visited all the attractions recommended by Odyniec's *Guide de voyageur* and they also tried to see the Venice from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. It is possible that because of that Venice seemed to Mickiewicz much more magical than it actually was – or maybe that was because of his acquaintance with one Rachel (‘‘she must have been an actress’’), with whom he shared the carriage (and most probably also his bed) while travelling to Venice, and later he also explored the city with her. No wonder, then, that Venice, the jewel of the Adriatic, ‘‘impacted Adam more than Milan ever did.’’]

One could wonder to what extent Odyniec used that considerably fragmented story basically consisting of shreds of information and unconfirmed conjectures to boost the appeal of his travel narrative. It seems that the fact of locking the author in cultural stereotypes somewhat demanded the story to be a mystery if not a love story – all the more so considering his difficult position. He was not only the author and narrator of *Listy z podróży*,

¹¹⁶ Józef Kallenbach, *Adam Mickiewicz*, 4th edition, extended embellished with 19 illustrations (Lviv–Warsaw–Krakow: Ossolineum, 1926).

¹¹⁷ Juliusz Kleiner, *Mickiewicz*, vol. 1, vol. 2, part 1 and 2. (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1948).

¹¹⁸ Mieczysław Jastrun, *Mickiewicz*, 3rd edition, vol. 1, 2 (Krakow: PIW, 1950).

¹¹⁹ Jacek Łukasiewicz, *Mickiewicz* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996).

¹²⁰ Tomasz Łubieński, *M jak Mickiewicz* (Warsaw: Świat Książki, 1998).

¹²¹ Bohdan Urbankowski, *Adam Mickiewicz. Tajemnice wiary, miłości i śmierci* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 1999).

¹²² R. Koropecyjk, *Adam Mickiewicz. Życie romantyka*, trans. M. Glasenapp (Warsaw: Grupa Wydawnicza Foksal, 2013), 167. Odyniec did not mention that they used a letter of reference written by Zeneida Wołkońska. The musician's name was Perucchini.

but also its character. However, a fact which seems obvious, Odyniec's account mainly drew readers' attention not because it described his story, but because it described the fortunes of Mickiewicz.

Siren

The assignment of new names to Venice in various accounts (from travel narratives to tragedies) was usually an expression of the need to mark one's personal point of view.¹²³ Though some unexpected events occurred there. In a letter to John Murray, Byron referenced Lady Morgan, the author of *Italy*,¹²⁴ who called Venice an "oceanic Rome." He himself used that term in *The Two Foscari*, a tragedy he wrote many months prior to reading her book.¹²⁵

How did Odyniec invent such extreme "names" for the city on the lagoon? It seems that he used them for various purposes. He used the leviathan in a rhymed passage which was the culmination of the narrative on the Republic's imperial past. He gave it an allegorical meaning. He assigned a completely different, though not quite clear, function to the siren. Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* might have been an indirect inspiration. It was Radcliffe who introduced the sea nymph into Venetian space and who described the landscape concealed underneath the water's surface. And most of all, she introduced a new point of view. Not the one from above, from a tower, which was so popular in travel accounts, but from below, from the seabed. One could argue that she expanded the city's scope by peering into the void, which in ballads is inhabited by water nymphs and mermaids, which also appeared in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. By using that ballad trail, Odyniec referred directly to "Świtezianka" and, less overtly, to "Świtez," by introducing (not for the first time) some familiar Polish motifs into Italian space. It seems that Mickiewicz's fantastic world and language helped Odyniec express his vivid experiences of the place: Piazzetta with its openness to the coastline and the skyscape. Odyniec recorded such experiences in his writings extremely rarely. In this case, he tried to frame them using the words by the author of ballads:

I tak cię lechce, i tak cię znęca,
Tak ci się serce rozplywa,
Jak gdy tajemnie rękę młodzieńca
Ściśnie kochanka wstydliva.¹²⁶

Each stroke so enticing, each wave tempting so,
Heart pounding with warmth and delight,
The feeling a stolen touch would bestow
Of lover's coy hand in the night.

¹²³ Odyniec also used well-known naming clichés: "Oh, this Venice! It is a sphinx, it is an amphibian of cities, it is a rock mirage of the sea, it is a fantastic mask or a masquerade of the earth, it is worse than a Cretan labyrinth" (*Listy z podróży*, 403).

¹²⁴ Lady Morgan, *L'Italy* (Paris: Pierre Dufart, 1821). Lady Morgan was actually a nom de plume. She changed her maiden surname after getting married: from Sydney Owenson to her husband's surname Morgan and she started writing as Lady Morgan.

¹²⁵ Byron, "List do Johna Murraya z 23 sierpnia 1821 r.," in *Listy i pamiętniki*, 298–299.

¹²⁶ A. Mickiewicz, "Świtezianka," in idem, *Wiersze*, edited by W. Borowy, E. Sawrymowicz, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1955), 118. [English version: <http://www.wordactive.pl/switezianka.html>] Odyniec introduced minor changes to the stanza.

In his account, that “seductress” was not Świtezianka or Lake Świtez, but the Venetian cityscape. To capture its charm, Odyniec used an extremely familiar paraphrase of a fragment of “Świtez,”¹²⁷ replacing poetry with prose:

Bo wyobraźcie tylko sobie – niebo przeczyste, gwiazdziste, lazurowe, z księżycem rozpromienionym w pełni, a oświecającym pod sobą drugie także niebo na ziemi, tylko, że jakby żywe, ruchome, dyszące, a dyszące taką świeżością, a brzmiące wzdłuż wybrzeża takim szumem czy szmerem, że nie bierzcie za przesadę, gdy powiem, że jest to oddech albo śpiew syreny, który gwałtem w głąb ku niej pociąga.¹²⁸

[And so, just imagine – clear star-studded blue sky, with the moon in full shine, shining onto another such heaven on earth, but as if alive, moving, panting, and panting with such freshness, and sounding along the shore with such hum or murmur that you should not consider it exaggerated when I say that it is a breath or the song of a siren that violently draws deep towards her.]

That passage was supposed to substantiate the enchantment and elevation which he called an ecstasy. That is actually one of the few fragments in his narrative which proved his admiration. He confessed: “at night the charm of a siren is even stronger. Yesterday I experienced that myself.” Understandably he had to transform the Lady of Świtez, associated with a specific topography, into such a being which could be introduced into any space. Yet he did not choose the sea nymph from Radcliffe’s novel but a siren. But one should not associate it with Greek traditions. In legends, sirens used sweet songs to lure travellers to devour them. They symbolised the temptations lurking for travellers to interfere in their spiritual evolution by bewitching them, keeping them on magical islands, or leading

¹²⁷ The lines of “Świtez” which might have inspired Odyniec to present his impressions from the Piazzetta:

Jeżeli nocną przybliżysz się dołą I zwrócisz ku wodom lice,	If at night you near midnight And face the water,
Gwiazdy nad tobą i gwiazdy pod tobą, I dwa obaczysz księżycy	Stars above and stars below, You will see two moons
Niepewny, czyli szklanna spod twojej stopy Pod niebo idzie równina,	Uncertain, a glass one under your feet A plain stretches to the sky,
Czyli też niebo swoje szklanne stropy Aż do nóg twoich ugina:	So the sky also bends its glass ceiling All the way to your feet:
Gdy oko brzegów przeciwnych nie sięga, Dna nie odróżnia od szczytu,	Until the eye reaches opposite shores, Cannot tell the bed from the top,
Zdajesz się wisieć w środku niebokręga, W jakiejś otchłani błękitu.	You seem to be hanging in the middle of the sky, In some blue void.

Adam Mickiewicz, “Świtez,” in *Dzieła. Wiersze*, vol. 1, 108. [English version translated from Polish]

¹²⁸ Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 404.

them to untimely death.¹²⁹ For Odynieć, Venice the siren did not possess that power.

Was there, then, some other reason for introducing her into the world of Serenissima? One could indicate a well-known issue. In "Petersburg" Mickiewicz wrote: "Wenecka stolica,/ Co w pół na ziemi, a do pasa w wodzie/ Pływa jak piękna syrena-dziewica,/ Uderza cara"¹³⁰ [Venetian capital,/ Half on land, half in water/ She swims like a beautiful virgin siren,/ Strikes the czar]. The poet placed it in strong opposition to Petersburg: "A Wenecją stawili bogowie;/ Ale kto widział Petersburg, ten powie:/ Że budowały go chyba Szatany"¹³¹ [And Venice was built by gods;/ But whoever saw Petersburg would say:/ That Devils must have built it]. The author used the comparison a few years later but it is possible that he gave Venice the form of a siren in Odynieć's *Listy z podróży*. One might also find it puzzling that in juxtaposing it with Petersburg, he added esteem to the queen of the Adriatic assigning to it the qualities of divinity and virginity. He applied a similar type of comparison in "Pomnik Piotra Wielkiego," in which he elevated Marcus Aurelius above Peter the Great. Does that, however, mean that Mickiewicz, the author of "Morlach w Wenecji," did not share Odynieć's critical opinion of the city's imperial policy? Or maybe the image of Venice the siren/virgin was determined simply by the poetic strategy which he applied in "Petersburg" and "Ustęp"?

One could also inquire whether the fact of referring to Serenissima as a siren was somehow related to Poland as Odynieć himself mentioned Warsaw's symbol in *Listy z podróży*. The bond with his homeland was created through the direct reference to "Świtezianka" and the fairly obscure reference to "Świtez," in the latter of which Mickiewicz depicted a vision of a sunken city and introduced the topic of freedom, enslavement and "death which saves from shame." In addition, the "podpas rybi" [fish underbelly] invoked by Odynieć associated with Stanisław Trembecki's celebratory ode "Na dzień rocznicy elekcji Najjaśniejszego Stanisława Augusta Trzeciego, króla polskiego, to jest siódmy września" (1802), in which the author mused on the reasons for Poland's demise, creates a faint barely perceptible sense of association between the Venetian siren and Poland (Warsaw).¹³² It is worth noting that the motif was popular in national poetry of the 1840s¹³³ and

¹²⁹ See Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *Słownik symboli*, 398.

¹³⁰ Adam Mickiewicz, "Petersburg," in *Utwory dramatyczne*, vol. 3 (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1955), 277, lines 36–40.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 277, lines 47–49.

¹³² One could find in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Canto IV, 572, line 116–117) a motif which connects his Canto IV with "Świtez." Byron stated "Even in Destruction's depth, her foreign foes,/ From whom submission wrings an infamous repose." The poet wrote that about Venice. The female protagonists in Mickiewicz's "Świtez" faced a similar problem.

¹³³ Paweł Hertz, the author of the anthology *Zbiór poetów polskich XIX wieku*, indicated in the notes to the book that the motif of Venice often appeared in post-November Uprising poetry as a cypher for Warsaw or conquered Poland in general. The cypher was used to avoid censorship. Such poems included "Noc w Wenecji" by Edmund Chojecki, and "Odpowiedź Wenecjanina. Na wiersz Edmunda Chojeckiego," a polemic with the former by Karol Baliński (*Zbiór poetów polskich XIX wieku*, arranged and ed. Paweł Hertz, book 2 (Warsaw: PIW, 1961), 89, 816–818; Edward Dembowski, "Śmierć żeglarza pod Wenecją"; Mieczysław Pawlikowski,

Odyniec was particularly susceptible to cultural clichés. It seems, however, that he could not have referred to them directly as he maintained that he wrote *Listy* during their travels, i.e. in 1829, nor did he align the tropes that he used with any clearly defined principle. It is possible that he abandoned his original intention to build a parallel between Warsaw and Serenissima as his vision of an imperial, cruel, mercantile and pagan Venice would have eventually prevented him from drawing a link between the city on the lagoon and Poland (Warsaw).¹³⁴ It remains unclear to what extent that was a result of Odyniec's xenophobia (or even his Catholicism) and to what that view was influenced by Mickiewicz, a defender of southern Slavs, who viewed Venice through the prism of his very recent Russian experiences. In this context, it is difficult to unequivocally indicate the reason why the author of *Listy z podróży* chose the form of a siren for "the queen of the Adriatic." The wavering unstable nature of Odyniec's judgements¹³⁵ and Mickiewicz's experiences, which were rarely expressed overtly, prevent one from offering a satisfactory answer.

* * *

It appears that one can only with some certainty separate in Odyniec's account that which might have been inspired by Mickiewicz from that which can be assigned to the author of *Listy z podróży*. Those mainly include guide-book-like details regarding the sites they visited, and digressions which departed from the topic of Venice, e.g. remarks related to Mickiewicz's past and his relationship with Maryla Wereszczakówna and Warzyniec Putkamer, as well as remarks with a clearly educational character, and attempts at offering a lecture on art. One could also indicate a few biographical "snippets." Thanks to Odyniec, readers could learn that Mickiewicz read newspapers at Caffè Florian, that he visited the musical evenings at Percchini's, and that he frequented Venetian theatres. Odyniec provided various details, e.g. a description of the poet's Crimean coat.¹³⁶ He also indicated his travel companion's politeness towards their hosts, and he recalled a prank he pulled on Adam of drawing a moustache on his face as the poet was asleep. That is one of the ways in which Mickiewicz is present in *Listy z podróży*.

In his narration, Odyniec usually utilised first person singular, though sometimes he switched to plural, e.g.: "we twitched as if at a cannon's

"Pamiętnik pieśniarza" (*Zbiór poetów polskich XIX wieku*, arranged and ed. Paweł Hertz, book 3 (Warsaw, 1962), 67–69, 471–473).

¹³⁴ Mikołaj Sokołowski suggested that Odyniec saw glimpses of the fate of Poland in the fall of Venice. I do not see any basis for posing such a thesis though similar comparisons were common in Polish poetry, particularly in the 1840s. See M. Sokołowski, *Wenecja, Atlas Polskiego Romantyzmu*, NPLP IBL; <http://nplp.pl/arttykul/wenecja/> (accessed on 21.07.2020).

¹³⁵ When writing about Venice the siren, he depicted the Doge's Palace as a "cemetery statue of the former grandeur and glory of the Republic of Venice." Yet when he reflected on its mercantile nature, he had some doubts – he compared Venice's downfall to the "bankruptcy of a wealthy and eternal firm." Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 1, 405–406.

¹³⁶ "It had a Spanish cut, it was reddish, with a violet velvet liner, it has strings and tassels at the neck," *ibid.*, 421.

boom,"¹³⁷ when they were startled by the roar of the wings of pigeons setting off at the sound of the clock. At another location, he wrote: "We were occupied and astonished particularly by Venice itself"¹³⁸; "we had visited all the galleries and we had been to at least fifty churches."¹³⁹ Therefore, he indicated the shared nature of their experiences. He further specified the relationship between Mickiewicz and him. He emphasised the former's remarks: "in his face I saw he was serious," "and you could tell he felt the urge to speak his mind," "he continued – what? And how?, I shall never forget it."¹⁴⁰ It is worth noting that the travellers' first visit to Lido was filled with the poet's musings. Another such space of Mickiewicz's distinct presence in the story was the Doge's Palace. A visit in it was a pretext to reflect on the history of the Republic. Interestingly, Odyniec constructed the story about it in opposition to Byron's and Chateaubriand's views, two men of letters who were fascinated with Venice's history. Odyniec did not share their enthusiasm. For him, the city on lagoons was not, like it was Krasin'ski, "a golden urn of the past." It seems that his rejection of the views of renowned artists was amplified by Mickiewicz's critical attitude. It is fairly possible that the poet overlaid his Russian experiences onto the Venetian space seeing between them some historical analogies. That mode of thinking was confirmed in his "Morlach w Wenecji," a poem which was also an indictment of the imperial city state. Odyniec's conviction was also aligned with the poet's behaviour in the Doge's Palace, where the latter manifested his disgust for the barbarity of Venetian authorities. That was when the author of *Listy* wrote about their joint refusal to view torture devices: "We did not possess that curiosity, and when our guide wanted to force us to view them, Adam turned away in disgust."¹⁴¹ Saint Mark's Clocktower was another place where Odyniec manifested his experience-based bond with Mickiewicz. They both watched Venice from above. Odyniec referenced Zara (Zadar), the capital of Dalmatia. That, in turn, was a direct reference to "Morlach w Wenecji." It defined Mickiewicz's field of influence in the travel account. The influence may have reached deeper. Viewing the city from above, it was as if the travellers jointly became the authors of the allegorical image. One might even suspect that it was the poet who suggested to Odyniec to refer to the "queen of Adriatic waves" as Leviathan. It is widely known that that evil creature was included in the circle of visions of the author of *Forefathers' Eve* Part III and, though in a different meaning, also in *Pan Tadeusz*.¹⁴² It is possible that the situation was different. Possibly Mickiewicz did not encourage

¹³⁷ Ibid., 406.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 448–449.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 442.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 418.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 431.

¹⁴² "Your name? 'Lucrece, Leviathan,'" Adam Mickiewicz, *Forefathers' Eve* part III, scene III, 175, line 106; "The ancient Lithuanians knew as well, (...) That the zodiacal Dragon, winding thick (...) It's fish, not snake; Leviathan it's called," Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz*, ed. Stanisław Pigoń (Wrocław-Warsaw-Krakow: Ossolineum, 1967), book VIII, 380, lines 87–97. [English version: Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz. The Last Foray in Lithuania*, trans. Bill Johnston (New York: Archipelago Books, 2018)]

Odyniec to thus shape his image of Venice, but it was rather Odyniec who read that from Mickiewicz's texts.

It seems that Odyniec felt the strongest bond with Mickiewicz on the stairs of Piazzetta as they listened to swashing waves and talked about the harmony of sounds. At that time, in that act of being together, the line between them got blurry. It was also from Piazzetta that Odyniec admired the nightscape. In that instance, the poet also played a role. In order to capture the special nature of the experience, the author of *Listy* used Mickiewicz's words to reflect the uniqueness of his impressions. He was a visitor from a rustic state and that which moved him the most profoundly was the sight of the island with moonlight in the background, the water surface reflecting the sky, and the sunset. One can presume that Mickiewicz observed Venetian nature with similar keenness. It moderated the dark image of the city where even Saint Mark's Basilica haunted Odyniec with its lion's appearance.

Therefore, it is clear that the depiction of Venice in *Listy z podróży* was influenced by Mickiewicz and it was he who directed readers' attention in a direction different from that indicated by, e.g. Chateaubriand, i.e. not towards admiration of beauty but mainly towards history and the future. That is also probably why their story includes no indication of the poet's admiration or aesthetic inclinations. It rather indicates his aversion to the imperial politics of the Republic of Venice, but also a dream about poetry which would change the world and about a genius (a new Napoleon) who would transform the reality. That was the fabric of which that image of Venice was made. Odyniec did try to complete the story by reflecting on love and beauty in art, but with no major success.

It seems that one cannot unequivocally define the borderline between Odyniec's and Mickiewicz's perceptions of Venice. That is mainly because the author of the account failed to indicate his point of view anywhere in it, as if there was no difference between him and the poet in their impressions evoked by the city. Quite the contrary, he allowed readers to consider their inferences as being identical. Thus, Odyniec's Venice simultaneously was and was not Mickiewicz's Venice.

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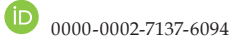
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Anna Kurska – Ph.D. hab., professor emeritus of Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce. She focusses on the issues of the Romantic essay, 19th-century travel writing, and Romantic inspirations in popular culture. She is the author of: *Fragment romantyczny* (1988), *Kartoteka Tadeusza Różewicza* (1991), *Polska romantyków* (1993), *Zamek romantyczny w kilku odstępach* (2010).
E-mail: annakurska@op.pl

MARIA BERKAN-JABŁOŃSKA
University of Lodz



On Several Polish Poems From 1829–1870 with Venice in the Background

SUMMARY

The subject of the article is a review of images of Venice recorded in Polish poetry between the years 1829–1870. The paper deliberately stops in the 1870s in the selection of the literary material to be analysed, focusing on the Romantic and post-Romantic tradition. Due to the different artistic value of the works, the author adopted the formula of a historical and literary “catalogue” ordered chronologically and partly problematized according to the functions which Venetian scenery or culture perform in them. Attention is drawn to the fact that Venetian motifs present in the poetry of Polish artists tend to be related to particular phenomena and topics, such as Byronism, Gothicism, political and national camouflage, love and existential masks, conflict between people and power. The authors referred to in the paper include, among others, Adam Mickiewicz, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Zygmunt Krasiński, Edward Dembowski, Edmund Chojecki, Karol Baliński, Mieczysław Gwałbert Pawlikowski, Teofil Lenartowicz, Feliks Wicherski, Teofil Nowosielski, Aleksander Michaux and Wiktor Gomulicki.

Keywords

Venice, Polish and Italian affinities, 19th century poetry, Bridge of Sighs, political camouflage

Over the centuries, Polish-Venetian relations have been reflected in various literary forms. The Nobles' Republic was modelled on the structure of the Venetian government, seeing it as the foundation of civil order and a guarantee of security, in particular for the upper classes. Even some eighteenth-century accounts of journeys to Venice contain numerous expressions of admiration for *La Serenissima's* well-functioning system of power, worthy of imitation in the country's increasingly dysfunctional reality.¹ Writing about "Wyjątek mojej podróży do Włoch" [An Excerpt to My Trip to Italy] by Henryk Rzewuski (1846), Iwona Węgrzyn referred to the name of Gasparo Contarini, whose work titled *De magistratibus et Republica Venetorum* was immensely popular among Old Polish political writers.² In turn, "Wenecja" [Venice], a well-known poem by Krzysztof Warszewicki (1572), proved that an analysis of the political system of the Republic of Venice in the context of its wars with Turkey was a starting point for a programme of similar activities conducted in Poland. In the nineteenth century, Venice became a surprising centre of the first political emigration of Poles in the wake of the Kościuszko Uprising and the Third Partition. Grzegorz Kaczyński reminds us that "it was only at the turn of 1795 and 1796 that 150 Polish immigrants passed through Venice."³ Although, on the one hand, the Republic of Venice did not condemn the partitions, maintaining a far-reaching neutrality, and on the other, many Poles strengthened Bonaparte's army occupying the "pearl of the Adriatic," the mutual relations in the nineteenth century still remained, in principle, quite friendly, which does not mean that they were uncritical. According to researchers,

Polish immigrants (...) met with solidarity and support through an analogous political and social situation (similar sources and nature of social inequality as well as the same invader, Austria⁴), due to convergent po-

¹ Cf. e.g.: Stanisław Kot, *Venezia vista dai Polacchi nel corso dei secoli* (Venezia: Montuoro, 1947); Diana Kozinińska-Donderi, *I viaggi dei Polacchi in Italia attraverso i secoli* (Moncalieri: Cirvi, 2006); *La porta d'Italia. Diari e viaggiatori polacchi in Friuli-Venezia Giulia dal XVI al XIX secolo*, eds. Lucia Burello, Andrzej Litwornia (Udine: Forum Edizioni, 2000).

² Iwona Węgrzyn, *W świecie powieści Henryka Rzewuskiego* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2012), 340–341. Cf. also: Bronisław Biliński, "Viaggiatori polacchi a Venezia nei secoli XVII–XIX," in *Venezia e la Polonia nei secoli XVII–XIX*, ed. Luigi Cini (Venezia–Rome: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1965), 341–417; Danuta Quirini-Popławska, *Mit czy rzeczywistość późnośredniowiecznej Wenecji?: urbs populosissima, opulentissima, liberalissima* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1997); Krzysztof Pomian, *Wenecja w kulturze europejskiej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2000); Mieczysław Brahmaer, *Powinowactwa polsko-włoskie* (Warsaw: PWN, 1980). [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish.]

³ Grzegorz J. Kaczyński, "Geneza i obraz polskiej emigracji we Włoszech," in *Polacy we Włoszech. Historia, współczesność, zmiany*, eds. Karolina Golemo, Bartosz Kaczorowski, Małgorzata Stefanowicz (Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2014), 41–69. Accessed November 28, 2020. www.academia.edu/14897219/Polacy_we_Wloszech_Historia_wspolczesnosc_zmiany_Poles_in_Italy_History_Contemporaneity_Changes_; Cf. also: Jan Pachonński, "Emigracja polska w Wenecji w latach 1794–1797. Wenecja i jej znaczenie dla emigracji polskiej," *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, no. 4 (1968): 869–893.

⁴ The Austrians took over Venice from the French in the wake of the peace in Campo Formio on 17 October 1797, and it again briefly passed under Napoleon's rule eight years later (1805). After the defeat of Bonaparte in 1814, Austria ruled Venice until the formation of the

litical goals (the struggle for independence and national unity) as well as historical and cultural closeness between the two countries. (...) The social bond, formed on the basis of revolutionary beliefs of independence, turned out to be stronger than local patriotism.⁵

Thus, it was due to tradition, history and politics as well as the Romantic, post-Byronic fashion that the Venetian theme would return in Polish literature, music, and art in various forms of artistic, journalistic and documentary or scientific expression. This article is aimed at analysing only poetic works, limited mainly to the inter-insurrectional period since it seems necessary to deal separately with the image of the city developed by Polish lyricism of the last three decades of the nineteenth century, influenced by strong Parnassian, symbolic or – more broadly – modernist movements. This applies, among others, to the “Venetian” poems by Maria Konopnicka, Wiktor Gomulicki, Antoni Lange, Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, Władysław Karoli, Kazimierz Gliński or Helena Rogozińska that are not mentioned here yet they are indeed extremely interesting. The reading of the earlier lyrics, in turn, arises out of an objection with regard to Olga Płaszczewska’s rather minor remark made in an otherwise excellently and competently written monograph titled *Wizja Włoch w polskiej i francuskiej literaturze okresu romantyzmu (1800–1850)* [A Vision of Italy in Polish and French Literature of the Romantic Period (1800–1850)] in which she argues that “The poetic paths of the Polish Romantics actually bypassed Venice.”⁶ I thought it was worthwhile to take a closer look at this phenomenon.

Byron is the key

Of course, it was George Byron that had the greatest influence on the poetic representation of Venice in the first decades of the 19th century. His legend in Poland was co-created by the Romantics through, among others, their translation attempts: Adam Mickiewicz rendered fragments of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, *The Giaour* and poems such as *Darkness* or *The Dream*⁷; Antoni Edward Odyniec translated *The Corsair*, *The Bride of Abydos* and many

United Kingdom of Italy in 1866, with a short break for the uprising in 1848. Cf. e.g. John Julius Norwich, *Historia Wenecji* (Warsaw: W.A.B. 2015); Peter Ackroyd, *Wenecja. Biografia* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2015).

⁵ Kaczyński, “Geneza i obraz polskiej emigracji we Włoszech,” 5.

⁶ Olga Płaszczewska, *Wizja Włoch w polskiej i francuskiej literaturze okresu romantyzmu (1800–1850)* (Kraków: Universitas, 2003), 297.

⁷ It was not only the generation of Romantics that was interested in Byron; the first translations were accomplished by Brunon Kiciński and Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, but young poets were the closest to Byron’s diction and poetic expression, and thus the power of impact, in terms of language and style. Hence, the choice of names proposed here. Zygmunt Dokurno wrote that “For Mickiewicz, the famous English Romantic was not only a great poet, but also an exponent of up-to-date progressive ideas: ‘Only Byron do I read, I throw away a book written in a different spirit for I do not like lies’ – as he confesses in his letter to Malewski.” Cf. Zygmunt Dokurno, “O mickiewiczowskich przekładach z Byrona,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 47 (1956): 317–348; also Wanda Krajewska, “Polskie przekłady powieści poetyckich Byrona w okresie romantyzmu,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 71/1 (1980): 153–174.

other poems; Ignacy Szydlowski and Wanda Malecka rendered *Parisina*; Julian Korsak translated *Lara, A Tale*; and Antoni Czajkowski – *Beppo*; not taking into account some minor translations, for instance, by Aleksander Chodzko, Stefan Garczyński or August Bielowski. As the goal this time is to expose Venetian themes taken from Byron or inspired by his writings, it is worth recalling that for the English artist Venice is a place of extreme contrasts which now, however, mostly belong to the dim and distant past.

I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs,
 A palace and a prison on each hand:
 I saw from out the wave her structures rise
 As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand:
 A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
 Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
 O'er the far times, when many a subject land
 Looked to the wingéd Lion's marble piles,
 Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles!⁸

The contemporary Venice of the poet creates less and squanders more of what she has gained over the centuries. The city still retains its grandeur, but it is keeps fading, leaning, aging. The elements of beauty, wealth and masquerade have faded, although a certain deceptive spell has been preserved, coming not so much from the tangible heritage as from the imagination of the artists who grew out of the magic of the “maritime empire.”

In Venice Tasso's echoes are no more,
 And silent rows the songless gondolier;
 Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
 And music meets not always now the ear:
 Those days are gone – but Beauty still is here.
 States fall, arts fade – but Nature doth not die,
 Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear,
 The pleasant place of all festivity,
 The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy!

But unto us she hath a spell beyond
 Her name in story, and her long array
 Of mighty shadows, whose dim forms despond
 Above the dogeless city's vanish'd sway;
 Ours is a trophy which will not decay
 With the Rialto; Shylock and the Moor,
 And Pierre, cannot be swept or worn away –
 The keystones of the arch! though all were o'er,
 For us repeopl'd were the solitary shore.⁹

⁸ George Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV, accessed October 8, 2020, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5131/5131-h/5131-h.htm#link2H_4_0006.

⁹ Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

However, the most important flaw in the Venice of his day is the enslavement that extends from the Ponte dei Sospiri prison to everything:

Her thirteen hundred years of freedom done,
Sinks, like a sea-weed, into whence she rose!
Better be whelm'd beneath the waves, and shun,
Even in destruction's depth, her foreign foes,
From whom submission wrings an infamous repose.¹⁰

As a result, Byron sees "a desolate cloud o'er Venice' lovely walls."¹¹

A somewhat more amusing, not to say – more frivolous – image of Venice was left by Byron in his poem titled *Beppo, A Venetian Story*, a comedy of manners written in 1818, in which a slightly provocative and slightly exotic story comes to the fore, dealing with "wonders," "of berets, scarves / the last days of the carnival in Italy and balls in Venice"¹² – in any case, quite far from the moral principles publicly approved of in the Polish reality. Perhaps that is why the translator, Antoni Czajkowski, preceded the publication of the first excerpts from his translation of *Beppo* with a rhymed preface, where he explained that although the Lord's life was full of various scandals, the blame lies with unfavourable circumstances and his rather immoral and not very prudent companions of life. In the final verse, he encouraged his blue-eyed readers ("Polish girls") to perceive the author as a fugitive despised by his compatriots, who turned to the Greek and Italian worlds, drawing artistic inspiration from them. Referring to Byron's ambiguous fame in Venice, he suggested:

Tak na wygnaniu skończył dni żywota	In that way he ended his days in exile
Wy naszej ziemi szlachetne dziewczyny	May you, the noble girls of our land,
Przebaczcie jemu jak Bóg wszystkie winy –	Forgive him, like God, all his faults –
Wszak się litować stara ojców cnota,	As it is our fathers' old virtue to take pity,
Bo gdyby on był Lachem nie Anglikiem	For if he were a Pole and not an Englishman
Przy was by nigdy nie został grzesznikiem. ¹³	He'd never have become a sinner by your side.

Which of these Byronic perspectives inspired Polish poets to a greater extent?

Let us start with Mickiewicz's "Morlach w Wenecji. Z serbskiego" [Morlach in Venice. Translated from Serbian], referred to by Krystyna Poklewska as "elegiac sorrow" and considered to be an excellent "miniature dramatic scene."¹⁴ Of course, as the researcher argues, Mickiewicz's work was not a translation of

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Antoni Czajkowski, *Niektóre poezje* (Warsaw: Druk. Banku Polskiego, 1841), 193. Czajkowski published a translation of the entire poem in the following edition of his lyrics. (Antoni Czajkowski, *Poezje*, Warsaw: W Drukarni Stanisława Strąbskiego, 1845). The revised text will refer to "Italian women and Venetian balls" (Czajkowski, *Poezje*, 186).

¹³ Czajkowski, *Niektóre poezje*, 196.

¹⁴ Krystyna Poklewska, "Mickiewicz i Mérimée. Z dziejów dwóch wierszy Mickiewicza," in *Obrazki romantyczne. Studia o ludziach, tekstach i podróżach* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016), 12.

the original Serbian folk poetry – which the Polish author was not aware of until 1835 – but a paraphrase of a text prepared by a French writer, Prosper Mérimée. In his letter to Sergiusz Sobolewski, Mérimée admitted that the volume tilted *La Guzla: ou choix de poésies illyriques, recueillies dans la Dalmatie, la Bosnie, la Croatie et l'Herzégovine* was simply a product of his imagination, a literary mystification.¹⁵ In any case, it should be admitted that the poem which was finally written by Mickiewicz is a creative variant of the original, transforming the prose story into a small poetic masterpiece, proclaiming – through the story of a young Slav – a Byronic apotheosis of freedom and manifesting the disagreement with the destruction of human sensitivity.

Gdym ostatniego cekina postradał
I gdy mię chytra zdradziła niewiasta,
Chodziłem smutny, a Włoch mi powiadał:
„Dymitry! pójdźmy do morskiego miasta
Piękne dziewczęta znajdziem w jego
[murach
I grosza więcej niż kamieni w górach.

When I finally lost the last sequin
And a cunning woman betrayed me,
I was in despair, and an Italian told me:
“Dmitry! Let’s go to the sea city
We’ll find pretty girls within its walls
And more pennies than stones in
[highlands.

Żołnierze w złocie i w jedwabiu chodzą
I dobrze piją i dobrze się bawią:
Nakarmią ciebie, napoją, nagrodzą
I bogatego do domu wyprawią.
Wtenczas twa kurtka srebrnym haftem
[błyśnie,
Na srebrnym sznurku twój kindżał
[zawiśnie¹⁶.

Soldiers are clad in gold and silk
And they drink merrily and they frolic:
They’ll feed you, give you a drink, reward
[you
And they will send you home rich.
Your jacket will shine with silver
[embroidery,
Your poniard will hang on a silver string.”

The hope of wealth and a happy life is shattered and the highlander from Dalmatia is left with a sense of a resounding failure, both when it comes to the expected improvement of his fate and relations with people. In exchange for honesty, he is confronted by the mockery of women, hostility of men, and a newly discovered experience of loneliness and alienation. Mickiewicz accumulated an array of pejorative phrases, suggesting betrayal, death and suffering:

Tu czuję w chlebie powszednim truciznę,
(..)
Przykuty zdycham, jak pies na łańcuchu.
(..)
Jestem jak drzewo przesadzone w lecie,
Słońce je spali, a wicher rozmiecie.

I feel the poison in my daily bread here,
(..)
I die chained like a dog on a chain.
(..)
I am like a tree replanted in the summer,
The sun will burn it, the wind will blow
[it away.

¹⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹⁶ Adam Mickiewicz, “Morlach w Wenecji. Z serbskiego,” in Adam Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, vol. 1 (Petersburg: author’s edition, 1829). The quotation comes from: *Poezje*, vol. 1: *Poezje rozmaite 1817–1854* (Lviv: Gubrynowicz i Syn, 1929), 340.

(..)
 Jestem jak mrówka, wychowana w lesie,
 Gdy ją na środek stawu wiatr zaniesie.¹⁷

(...)
 I am like an ant, raised in the forest,
 When the wind takes it to the middle of
 [the pond.

These three short comparisons, which illustrate the state of the subject's feelings, at the same time form components of the "black" legend of Venice: of Venice preying on weakness; gaining momentum thanks to the aroused greed of the inhabitants; and, finally, supported by denunciation and the secretive power of the Council of Ten and the Council of Three. Most importantly, however, of Venice disqualifying the individual. In a study on the history of this island city, popular in the 1850s, such assumptions were mentioned among the unwritten principles of the local authorities: "One cannot rule the state without harming anyone. (...) It is a small thing to harm the individual when the general public benefits from it."¹⁸ In Mickiewicz's paraphrase of Merimée, officially free *La Serenissima* paradoxically takes away Dmitry's inner freedom and joy of life, locking him in merchant and military aspirations and well-calculated lusts.

Love as a value against the world that is enslaved, stifled by political and financial goals takes a leading role in the lyrical image of Venice that Zygmunt Krasiński portrayed after his stay there with Joanna Bobrowa in August and September 1835. In the famous barcarolle poem "Do... [incipit: Czy pomnisz jeszcze na dożów kanale]," the poet recalled exceptional encounters with his lover, doomed to failure from the very start, which is suggested by the "mourning" of the gondola, but which gave him a fleeting sense of happiness. The relationship between the subject and his beloved brings to mind the circumstances of a costume ball, during which a love game is in progress, consisting of a clever network of glances, fake gestures or worn masks...

Czy pomnisz jeszcze na dożów kanale
 Gondolę moją w weneckiej żalobie?
 Czy pomnisz, jakim ja wiosłowałem tobie,
 Patrząc na ciebie, patrzącą na fale?

Do you still recall a gondola of mine
 in Venetian mourning on the Doge's canal?
 Do you recall as I was rowing for you,
 Looking at you, looking at the waves?

Pod „Mostem Westchnień” i moje
 [westchnienia
 Słyszane były. Krew moja płynęła
 Blisko krwią ofiar zlanego więzienia,
 Lecz jak krew ofiar, w glazy nie
 [wsiąknęła;

Under the "Bridge of Sighs" my sighs
 Were also heard. My blood was flowing
 Close to the blood of prison victims,
 But like their blood, it did not seep into
 [stones;

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The reference is made to the work by Léon Galibert, *Histoire de la République de Venise* (Paris: Furne, 1855). As cited in: Kazimierz Zalewski, "Introduction to *Marco Foscarini, dramat w 5 aktach (10 obrazach)*," *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 59 (1877): 102. Likewise, Zalewski's play is an interesting example of the presence of the Venetian motif in 19th-century drama, and as such requires separate analysis.

Wróciła nazad i szaleł mi płonie,
 W sercu głęboko, na nieszczęście moje,
 Bo ty daleka, a ja w innej stronie
 I dla nas szczęścia wyczerpięte zdroje!¹⁹

It returned and I burn in a frenzy,
 Deep down my heart, to my dismay,
 For you are afar, and I am away
 And springs of bliss for us are no more!

Antoni Edward Odyniec perceived Venice in a similar fashion, referring to it years later as “the city of secrets, intrigues, ambushes and rendezvous, gloomy and indeed delightful.”²⁰ In the case of the poem by Krasieński, it is interesting to see the use of such a special sign of Venice’s political captivity as Ponte dei Sospiri to describe the experience of love. The blood spilled literally by the sullen city rulers and the blood of emotional agitation remain at the same level of intensity and have equal weight. The difference is only in the effects: there can be no doubt that for the subject suffering from love, they are less favourable for they never end. This motif will be analysed later in the article.

Surprisingly, a similar use of Venetian scenery to show emotional drama in the Polish poetry of the time can be found in the youthful collection by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski from 1838, featuring “Paolo. Powieść wenecka” [Paolo. A Venetian Novel], which probably dates back to before 1835.²¹ “Paolo” rises from a purely literary legend of the Italian city since it was not until 1858 that the writer made his first trip to the Adriatic lagoons. Formally and stylistically diversified (including narrative and dialogue parts, gondolier songs, etc.), the text essentially follows the pattern of a poetic novel. Also, the topic seems to be extremely Byronic as it involves a love triangle (or a quadrangle, taking into account the main character’s husband, who was merely mentioned on the margin) and a crime of passion. A quiet and calm Venice suspended in the reflection of water, the description of which opens Kraszewski’s youthful work, is only seemingly contrasted with the dramatic events of the poem:

Czy widziałeś Wenecją o słońca zachodzie,
 Kiedy zorzą wieczorną malowane łodzie
 Morze na łonie swoim powoli kołysze,
 A śpiewy gondolierów przerywają ciszę?

Have you ever seen Venice at sunset,
 When boats, painted with evening twilight,
 Are slowly rocked on the bosom of the sea,
 And songs of gondoliers interrupt the
 [silence?

Czyś widział dwie Wenecje o słońca
 [zachodzie?
 Jedną na wysep tronie i tuż drugą
 [w wodzie?
 Czyś widział wędrowniku, z obcej płynąc
 [ziemi

Have you ever seen two Venices at sunset?
 One on the island throne, the other one in
 [the water?
 Have you seen, wanderer, sailing from
 [foreign land

¹⁹ Zygmunt Krasieński, *Pisma*. The Jubilee edition, vol. 6 (Kraków: G. Gebethner i spółka, 1912), 27–28.

²⁰ Antoni Edward Odyniec, *Listy z podróży* (Warsaw: PIW, 1961), 403.

²¹ Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, *Poezje*, vol. 1 (Vilnius: S. Blumowicz, 1838), 42–72. Reprint: Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, *Poezje*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: S. Orgelbrand, 1843), 93–126. All the quotations below come from the Warsaw edition.

Jak, to wód miasto w pośród morza pływa,	As the city of waters swims surrounded
I na niebo się patrząc wierzchołkami	[by the sea,
[swemi,	And, looking at the sky with its pinnacles,
Stopy swe w wodzie obmywa? ²²	Washes its feet in the sea?

The contrast is only apparent as already in this short lyrical picture the suggested duality of the landscape (real and reflected) corresponds to the hidden, tempting power of influence of the inhabitants, especially the inhabitants of Venice. Like Byron in *Beppo*, Kraszewski continues to ask:

Czy widziałeś wędrowcze, lica	Have you seen, wanderer, faces of
[Wenecjanek?	[Venetian girls?
I czarny włos ich warkoczny,	And the black hair of their plaits,
I czarne ogniste oczy,	And black fiery eyes,
I pierś z pod przezroczystych patrzającą	And breasts shining through transparent
[tkanek?...	[tissues?...

He also immediately warns the reader:

Lepiej cudów nie widzieć i nie znać bolesti.	It is better to see no miracles and know
Szczęśliwy, kto nie wiedząc jak świat jest	[no pain.
[szeroki,	He is lucky who misknows how wide the
Nie widział tylko jeden, jeden jego kątek,	[world is,
Rodzinne pola mierzył powolnymi krokami,	He has not seen just one, one corner of it,
Żył bez wspomnień i żalu – umarł bez	He measured the family fields with slow
[pamiątek. ²³	[steps,
	Lived with no memories or regret – died
	[with no mementos.

The first scenes of the novel are already telling since they portray a beautiful young Italian woman, Paćjenca, and Paolo, who is in love with her, begging God to make their emotional dreams come true. Both prayers are primarily human, i.e. focused on the desires to be satisfied here and now. It is easy to recognise the repetition of Byronic patterns in the psychological and bodily construction of Kraszewski's characters, giving priority to lusts and feelings rather than morality and reason. There are also visible traces of knowledge of frenetic literature in "Paolo," including some similarities to *Agaj-han*, a novel by Zygmunt Krasiński.²⁴ None of Kraszewski's characters embodies the classic good and innocence. Paćjenca – unhappy to be married to a rich but old Venetian patrician – is depicted as a typical woman of the South, temperamental and selfish, who is aware of her own sin and the inevitability of God's punishment for the broken vows, but who is not ready to withdraw from her relationship with young Francesco even for a moment.

²² Kraszewski, *Poezje*, 94.

²³ Kraszewski, *Poezje*.

²⁴ I have not found any confirmation that Kraszewski was familiar with that work by Krasiński published in Wrocław in 1834 and, in any case, it is more about similar sources of literary inspiration than a literal reference.

There is both the intransigence that characterises the most famous couple of Dante's *Hell* and the proverbial Venetian foresight, which, in spite of despair, makes the woman wear a mask in front of other people. Francesco represents, in turn, the type of Italian *gigolo* who, with good-natured thoughtlessness, continues the affair with Paćjenca, but will not refuse to go out with another rich lady if he expects some benefit for himself.²⁵ Of course, the strangest character for the reader is Paolo. His fascination with Paćjenca, despite his childhood age, has nothing to do with the platonic adoration of a lad; there is the cruel desire of a mature man in it.

Pożera ją przy świetle wieczora bladawem.	He devours her in the pale evening light.
Wzrok jego chciwy, białe przelata ramiona,	His greedy gaze flickers over her white
Piersi jej, kibić – i przy stopach kona.	[shoulders,
Któż to? – To chłopiec mały – jeszcze w	Her breasts and waist – only to die at her
[jego łonie	[feet.
Dziecinne serce spokojnie bić musi.	Who is it? – He is a little boy – still in his
O! nie! – Patrz, oko jak w tych piersiach	[chest
[tonie,	A heart of a child must calmly beat.
Jakie westchnienia w własnej piersi dusi.	Oh, no! – Look, his eye is sinking in the
O! nie – słońce ten kwiatek rozwinęło	[breasts,
[wcześniej,	What sighs he is thwarting in his chest.
Choć młody dumać musiał i kochać choć	Oh, no! – the sun opened this flower too
[we śnie.	[soon,
Gdy świat go ślepy dziecięciem nazywa,	He must have dreamt and loved if only in
On w łonie męskie serce i duszę ukrywa. ²⁶	[dreams.
	When the blind world calls him a little child,
	He is hiding a man's heart and soul in his
	[chest.

Paolo's imagination goes beyond the principles of biology, he is a child of nihilism, a child with no moral boundaries, a contradiction of innocence. Moreover, envy of Paćjenca's lover and his "withered hopes" make the boy commit a brutal murder which was preceded by a cunning plot.

Płyn trupie z wodą – czekają na ciebie,	Swim, corpse, with the water – there await
Potwory morskie z paszczyki głodnemi.	[you
Płyn, cóż cię jeszcze wiąże do tej ziemi?	Sea monsters with their hungry mouths.
Morze w swym łonie chłodnym cię	Swim, what else binds you to this land?
[pogrzebie,	The sea will bury you in its cool bosom,
Tam prześpisz sobie, aż do dnia sądnego! ²⁷	You will sleep there till judgment day!

²⁵ The relationship of Paćjenca, her lover and her husband evokes associations with the authentic love affair of Byron with the young Contessa Guiccioli, practically by the side of her aging spouse. Cf. Antoni Lange, *Lord Byron, jego żywot i dzieła*, (Warsaw: M. Arct, 1904), 50–52 [under the pseudonym of Antoni Wrzesień].

²⁶ Kraszewski, *Poezje*, 95.

²⁷ Kraszewski, *Poezje*, 111.

“The Venetian trifle” by Kraszewski benefits from the ambivalent construction of the figure of Paolo. His dark, erotic desires, which are not subject to any restraints of the external world, certainly point to the epigonic variant of Gothicism. At the same time, however, the writer retains a certain psychological truth in the portrayal of the character. When Paolo, having killed Francesco, returns to Paćjenca and boasts of his crime, and when, above all, he offers himself to her in place of her murdered beloved, he seems to be extremely naive and infantile rather than demonic. It is clear that he has not grown to understand what love is; his attitude is primarily indicative of his mental and emotional immaturity.

Po nocy bez snu, którą spędził z tobą,
 Wodne go do snu kołyszą łożyska.
 Usnął na falach i wieczorną dobą
 Przybyć zapomniał, lecz mnie tu
 [przysyła.²⁸
 (...)
 Ja go zastąpię -
 (...)
 Jego daleko morza niosą fale,
 Niech i z pamięci twej będzie daleki.
 Trudnoż zapomnieć? Dla nas świat,
 [o miła!²⁹

After a sleepless night he spent with you,
 He is rocked to sleep by water beds.
 He fell asleep on the waves and forgot
 To come in the evening, but he sent me
 [here.
 (...)
 I will replace him -
 (...)
 He is carried far away by the waves,
 May he be far from your memory as well.
 Is he hard to forget? The world is for us,
 [my dear!

In the end, Paćjenca – struck by the tragedy – throws herself into the waters of the canal, followed by Paolo. The end of this story – also in view of other early works by Kraszewski – is very telling. Gondoliers, sailing near Paćjenca’s palace the following morning, find in the water the two corpses of the girl and the boy, stripped of everything, and they brutally push them in the direction of the sea. The last song of the gondolier reinforces the vision of Venice from the first fragment of the poetic novel, and the reader can no longer have any illusions: the idyllic character of the place is only fiction, a mask, a result of human efforts to conceal the dark truth.

Płyn o łodzi, płyn z wiatrami,
 Troski, burze, łza i fala,
 Niechaj pozostanie z dala,
 Z dala na zawsze za nami!³⁰

Sail the boat, sail with the winds,
 Worries, storms, tears and waves
 Let them stay away,
 Forever away behind us!!

Did Kraszewski see the risk of enslaving a human being with the sensuality in Venetian culture, especially in the moral freedom linked with it due to Byron? Could he acquire the conviction of Venetian hypocrisy and

²⁸ Kraszewski, *Poezje*, 117.

²⁹ Kraszewski, *Poezje*, 118.

³⁰ Kraszewski, *Poezje*, 126

promiscuity from reading *Beppo*, which is full of irony? One thing is certain: the presented lovers' affections do not move the reader with the fatal force of Romantic attraction, but rather frighten with a kind of amorality and complacency whose causes are mostly social and cultural, with the responsibility falling indirectly on the Venetian upbringing. A good illustration of this is the following description of a Sunday morning:

<p>Dzień był, morze jaśniało, a zewsząd lud [mnogi, Płynął, szedł, leciał pod kościołów progi. Brzmiały dzwony niedzielne, panie [i panowie Tydzień świata służywszy, w dniu jednym [godzinę Szli spędzić z Bogiem na krótkiej [rozmowie, I serc światem skalanych, przynieść mu [daninę. Kto tydzień we krwi ludzkiej broczył, Kto tydzień łzami karmił się cudzemi, Czoło bezwstydnę gnąc do samej ziemi, Marmur kościoła, łzą pokuty moczył. I ledwie wyszedł za święcone progi, W dawnego życia puszczał się nałogi; (...) Na kanałach, w odkrytych gondolach lud [mnogi, Płynął pod marmurowe dożów gmachu [progi Przeszłej mocy Wenetów pomnik okazały. A z dala cudzoziemskie okręta płynące Działowym hukiem witały, Panią morza Wenecją i pana dnia [- słońce!³¹</p>	<p>It was day, the sea was bright, and crowds [of people Kept swimming, walking, flying to church [doors. Sunday bells chimed, and women and men, Having served the world for a week, went [to spend One hour that day on a short conversation [with God, Bringing him tribute with hearts fouled [with the world. Those who imbrued their hands in human [blood, Those who fed on others' tears in the week, Bent their impudent foreheads down to the [ground, Moistened the church marble with a tear of [atonement. And hardly had they left the consecrated [door, When they fell back into the habits of their [old life; (...) On the canals, in open gondolas crowds of [people Kept swimming to doges' marble palace [doors, The monument of the former power of the [Veneti. And foreign vessels sailing from afar Welcomed with the cannon roar Venice, sea queen, and the lord of the day - [the sun!</p>
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Hence, it seems that Kraszewski's youthful text is, on the one hand, inspired by Byron's writing but, on the other, its message is anti-Byronic; it is possible to sense a warning against exotic customs and excessively strong passions, which are not constrained even by religion.

³¹ Kraszewski, *Poezje*, 112-113.

“Like on a coffin bosom”

The words of this subtitle are taken from Act III of *Maria Stuart* by Juliusz Słowacki and, obviously, confirm the influence of Byron’s imagination on Polish poets. This passage was quoted by Olga Płaszczewska, pointing to the conventionalised landscape of death, which Romantics built from Venetian details.³² Common elements connecting the ‘queen of waters’ with death include: black gondolas, the night and the moon, lights reflected in the water, singing coming from afar. They are accompanied by a gloomy, melancholy mood. Indeed, all these components can be found in Słowacki:

And smiled – I hear the song of Tasso echoing,
As – so it seems – I’m borne on the canal
By a gondola festooned with black crepe,
As if in a long coffin... As I pass.
The windows of the palaces shine bright –

Casting columns of light upon the waves,
House after house, my gondola speeds on,
Borne by the current, and above me, high,
Aloft, the golden moon sheds her sad light.³³

Krasiński also notices death in Venice, but he is far more willing to address this topic in his correspondence or prose rather than in poetry. In addition, he associates the motifs of death with historiosophical diagnoses more often than other artists. The poetic prose written in French titled “W Wenecji”³⁴ [In Venice] opens with an idyllic picture of a gondola trip at dusk, with light wind, when the subject can dream among the rays of the setting sun. It turns out, however, that his imagination directs him towards the cruel past, each “wave coming slowly towards the Lido seemed like a bloody shroud that was unfolding (...) only to reveal the bodies and bones of the dismal and terrible people who used to live in these places and nourished tyranny in their hearts with a dagger in their hands and the words of freedom on their lips. Their tyranny had its beautiful moments though, and the chains of oppression shone with the glow of victory.”³⁵ In a way typical of him, Krasiński moves from the landscape perceived here and now, confirming the existence of sensual, eternal beauty, to the space

³² Olga Płaszczewska, *Wizja Włoch w polskiej i francuskiej literaturze okresu romantyzmu (1800–1850)*, 239.

³³ Juliusz Słowacki, *Maria Stuart*, act III, scene VII, in Juliusz Słowacki, *Four Plays: Mary Stuart, Kordian, Balladyna, Horsztyński*, trans. Charles Kraszewski (London: Glagoslav Publications, 2018), 56. More realistic travelling accounts from Venice of the day show, however, how schematic this image was. Michał Wiszniewski wrote of gondoliers: “[...] they rarely sing, they rather shout the songs of Tasso; their evening singing is wild and unpleasant.” Cf. Michał Wiszniewski, *Podróż do Włoch, Sycylii i Malty*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: S. Orgelbrand, 1848), 194.

³⁴ Zygmunt Krasiński, “À Venice,” in Zygmunt Krasiński, *Pisma (Utworky francuskie 1830–1847)*, vol. 6 (Lviv: Księgarnia Polska B. Połonieckiego, 1904), 307.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 307.

of supra-individual memory and community experience of history, so as to obsessively aestheticise and revive it. He declares quite in earnest:

Even crimes take great shape when the years passed and the murderer's dagger throws terrible but grand flashes through the darkness of time. The fallen greatness, whatever its supports and foundations were, always remains gripping for posterity; having forgotten about torture and the Bridge of Sighs, I was only thinking of the Bucentaur and the Lion of St Mark.³⁶

The intensity of this process of imagination is clearly growing. Until a certain point, scenes of glory of the former Kingdom balance out with visions of its crime, yet gradually they become overshadowed by images of a growing bloody catastrophe which turns the former world of human ambitions and talents into Dante's hell. The poet recalls the palaces and squares of Venice, imagines the places that are delightful and frightening, looks at the Ponte dei Sospiri, and repeats: "there is no hope here. (...) drops of blood were trickling from everywhere and you could hear thousands of sighs, which for so many centuries had not been able to get out of here."³⁷

This youthful catastrophism of Krasieński seems rather total and anarchistic since it does not accept any sense on the path to nothingness that it recognises, no moral consolation or conditional exceptions to the work of destruction: "neither fame and virtue nor crime can stop the extermination for a moment."³⁸ Therefore, it is necessary, as the daydreaming narrator concludes, to believe that what is left of man's spiritual struggle with the fate, both in the individual and collective dimension, is less powerful than the "physical order of things." Why is this happening, what decides about the death of the spirit of the nation, the moment of the final defeat of the "Queen of the Adriatic?" Finally, the poet – in some desperate gesture – grants Venice the right to a future; he does so not in the name of human achievements, but in the name of the divine element of goodness manifested in nature which can save the degraded humanity:

Venice will be there. I read it in the blue of the sky, which rises above its domes, and in the gentle glow of the stars reflected in its waters. I can hear it in the murmur of the waves, in the gusts of the wind, and I can feel it in the breath of the breeze that brings with it the scent of the flower.³⁹

The poetry of the period in question often combines the motif of death with several symbols of Venice's literary existence,⁴⁰ among which an im-

³⁶ Ibid., 308.

³⁷ Ibid., 311–312.

³⁸ Ibid., 313.

³⁹ Ibid., 318–319.

⁴⁰ In the introduction to her book titled *Wenecja mityczna*, Aleksandra Achtelek notes that the cultural stereotype of the city is built around a limited set of metaphors, and all reconstruction attempts are in some way done by making references to them. She refers to them, after Marcin Czerwiński (Marcin Czerwiński, *Profile kultury*, Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna,

portant place is occupied by the black gondola. It had already appeared in works by Słowacki and Krasiński, but it was brought to the fore in a poem by Floryan (Stanisław Marek Rzętkowski) titled "Żałobna gondola" [A Funeral Gondola], published in the weekly magazine titled *Wędrowiec* in 1866.⁴¹ Despite some stylistic and linguistic clichés, the poem depicts a completely different way of constructing the landscape of death, disparate from that which is typically Romantic, Byronic and strongly metaphorised. It autonomises the space of Venice, frees its image from allusions and historical or national associations, opens up to the impressionality of the description, proposing an existential code of reading. The body of a young and beautiful woman covered with a shroud rests in the eponymous gondola. The silhouette of the deceased girl, taken to the island of San Michele, makes one think of Ophelia from the famous Pre-Raphaelite work by John Everett Millais. Floryan puts emphasis on the movement of the gondola: the reader can easily imagine the sharpened bow of the boat gliding "on a lustrous Venetian wave." The vastness of the lagoon's waters, the wind, the glow of the night sky, splashing drops of water – all of nature that refuses to succumb to death – seems to surround the girl's body on this last journey, to bring her back to life for another moment:

Na umarłej poruszona łonie
Szemrze z wiatrem śnieżnej bieli szata,
Nad jej głową z powiewami wzłata
Włos – jak wstęga ponad ciche tonie...

The snow white robe murmurs with the wind
Moved on the bosom of the deceased,
Her hair flies with the gusts over her head,
– like a ribbon over quiet depths...

Jej powieki kryją ocz płomienie,
Ust karminy, to milczenie samo...
Ach!... już z nich nie wzleci modłów pienie
I miłosne ścichło już: *io t'amo!*...⁴²

Her eyelids hide the flames of her eyes,
The carmine of her lips is silence itself...
Alas! no prayers will be uttered by them
And no more will they say *io t'amo!*...

The poet reconstructs the point of view of a mourner not reconciled with the loss, waiting for a miracle and losing hope with every second of this sea journey.

Po lustrzanej mknie gondola fali,
Porze głębię na dwie strony świata...
Pieśń żałoby z łona jej ulata
Coraz ciszej... coraz wyżej... dalej...

The gondola slides on a lustrous wave,
Dividing water depths into two parts of
[the world...
A song of mourning flies from its bosom
Quieter and quieter... higher and higher...
[further...

1980), as "analysis profiles." One such profile can be a gondola, another – a labyrinth, the Bridge of Sighs or *Il Bucintoro*. Cf. Aleksandra Achtełik, *Wenecja mityczna w literaturze polskiej XIX i XX wieku* (Katowice: Gnome, 2002), 11.

⁴¹ Floryan [Stanisław Marek Rzętkowski], "Żałobna gondola," *Wędrowiec*, no. 165 (1866): 129.

⁴² Floryan, "Żałobna gondola," 129.

A znad brzegu, co się w górę wzbija,
Z niemą groźbą lśniącą wód przestrzeni,
Dzwon wieczorny, wtrząc smętnej pieśni,
Cichym jękiem brzmi: *Ave Maria*.⁴³

And from above the shore, which rises up,
With the silent threat of shining water,
The evening bell, echoing the doleful song,
Quietly moans: *Ave Maria*.

A maze of streets and canals, which so often surprises Poles in Venice, at first gives way to the open space, allowing the boat to move quickly.⁴⁴ Later, however, the poet describes the gondola as “dividing water depths.” The bow wave which is formed creates an impression of drawing a dividing line on the water; it is a very special line since it is not only on the surface. It refers to “two parts of the world,” which the reader may interpret as a metaphor for heaven and hell; death and life after death. The seemingly realistic route through the lagoon to the place of burial changes into a spiritual journey towards eternity. The movement towards it is definite, final, inevitable.

While the symbol of the gondola serves to express the individual experience of death, the subject of the death of the city – which was gaining popularity in the Polish literature of the 19th century – is presented somewhat differently. Feliks Wicherski, an author associated with the literary circles of St. Petersburg, wrote a sonnet “Wenecja” [Venice], which was published in the volume of verse titled *Poezje* [Poems] in 1844. In the first five verses, the poet describes the pleasure of swimming “in the crystal waters of Adriatic.” He compares this state to an act of physical love: “The breast of the gondola lovingly touches the water front.”⁴⁵ The observed space of the lagoon surrounding the city awakens in the subject an aesthetic joy, an exaltation caused by the moonlight and the beauty of the setting sun, which seems to “light up” the towers and crosses visible from afar. Visual impressions are complemented by sensory sensations: aromas and hot air intermingle to create a charming reality. The first delight, however, is soon undermined by a series of questions posed by Wicherski, who clearly imitates Mickiewicz’s diction from the Crimean Sonnets (particularly “Pielgrzym” [The Pilgrim]).

Lecz czemuż ta czarowna milczy okolica?
Gdzie jej szumna, bogata i groźna stolica,
Dająca rozkosz, złoto i rozkazy światu?⁴⁶

But why is this charming place silent?
Where is its noisy, wealthy and fierce capital,
Giving pleasure, gold and orders to the
[world?

The reflective parts of Wicherski’s sonnet concern the transformation of the powerful city into a “faded aurora,” which has lost all the attributes of its former glory and splendour.

⁴³ Floryan, “Żalobna gondola,” 129.

⁴⁴ Maria Konopnicka will set off for Venice much later, in the eighties. In her view, a gondola trip will mean opening to the sea, to an enormous space which is ultimately free.

⁴⁵ Feliks Wicherski, *Poezje* (Petersburg: E.Ostapowicz, 1844). As cited in: *Zbiór poetów polskich w wieku XIX*, vol. 2, ed. Paweł Hertz (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1961), 938.

⁴⁶ *Zbiór poetów polskich w wieku XIX*, 938.

Tysiąc lat twego życia potargą Parka,
Gdzie twe floty, potęgą, i senat, i doża?⁴⁷

A thousand years of your life were ruined
[by Parka,
Where are your fleets, your power, your
[senate, your doge?

The initial impression of the idyll, experienced in the twilight on the lagoon, does not last long. The subject turns to the city again since nature itself seems to be insufficient; as if it was orphaned, devoid of the support of the once “noisy, wealthy and fierce” capital, deprived of power. The silence of the dying, forgotten Venice has only a partially political dimension: what matters, above all, is its cultural and historical aspect.

Wszystko znikło – pieśń milczy Tassa
[i Petrarka,
I ty milczysz, królowo niegdyś wysp
[i morza!⁴⁸

All perished – silent are songs of Tasso
[and Petrarch,
And you are silent, once the queen of isles
[and the sea!

A different poetic concept was represented by Antoni Czajkowski, a poet loosely associated with the Warsaw bohemia, a participant of meetings in Cech Głupców [the Guild of Fools]. His poem titled “Ostatni ślub Doży, 1797” [The Doge’s Last Marriage, 1797] opens with an image of the boisterous, bustling city, filled with the joy of crowds of people who once again came to watch Venice’s marriage of the sea (the famous *sposalizio del mare*), a tradition initiated at the beginning of the 12th century. It is worth reminding that the festival, which takes place on Ascension Sunday every year, combined religious and state elements from the very start.⁴⁹ After Sebastiano Ziani had received the ring from Pope Alexander III, the alliance of the Republic with the element surrounding it was renewed in an exceptionally ceremonial manner. The Doge sailed aboard *Il Bucintoro* to the sea, at the height of the passageway between the Lido and the town of Litorale del Cavallino, and he threw a golden ring into the water “as a sign of true and eternal reign.”⁵⁰

The Venice from Czajkowski’s work is compared to a majestically decorated ship whose mast is the campanile of St. Mark (“(...) and beneath there was music from / sparkling golden purpled waves / With the sun above them (...)”⁵¹), thus Bucentaur becomes a ship on a ship. The space gains smoothness, fills with a wealth of shine, color, smell and sound. Venice and its inhabitants create a harmonious, sensual, serene world of people and nature. In addition, Czajkowski exposes the femininity of Venice, which is depicted as the Doge’s beloved illuminated by the rays of the sun:

⁴⁷ *Zbiór poetów polskich w wieku XIX*, 938–939.

⁴⁸ *Zbiór poetów polskich w wieku XIX*, 938–939.

⁴⁹ It was a reminder of the 1177 truce between Pope Alexander III, Frederick Barbarossa and the Republic of Venice, which ended the conquest of Dalmatia – a proof of recognition of the exceptional rank of Venice on the Adriatic Sea.

⁵⁰ Danuta Quirini-Popławska, “Geneza i rozwój ‘pływającego miasta-państwa’ Wenecji,” in *Oblicza wody w kulturze*, eds. Łukasz Burkiewicz, Paweł Duchliński, Jacek Kucharski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Ignatianum, 2014), 66–68.

⁵¹ Antoni Czajkowski, *Niektóre poezje* (Warsaw: Druk. Banku Polskiego, 1841), 106.

To znowu jak piękna huryska na
[Wschodzie
Kapała swe wdzięki wśród morskich
[przezroczy,
I leżąc na wyspach uroczą i hożą
Spojrzała lubieżnie (...)⁵²

And again like the beautiful Houri in the
[East
She bathed herself in transparent sea
[waters,
And lying on the isles – pretty and brisk –
She took a lewd glance (...)

Erotism and music represent the components which link “scattered isles” of the lagoon, and the ceremony acquires the character of an amorous complementation of political agreements and important, precious interests. The strangeness of Doge is conspicuous against the background of this triumphant celebration. The date in the title points to Ludovico Manin, who held the office since 1789.⁵³ Admittedly, he externally confirms the *splendour* of the city (the poem enumerates the ducal insignia which co-creates the majesty of the figure, such as the coat, purple, the Doge’s crown), but he remains distanced from the general euphoria of the crowd. It is a completely separate figure. The publisher’s note includes information about the protagonist of the poem – in fact, with reference to historical sources – that this is “a walking mummy.” Indeed, this is how Czajkowski creates this character. The Doge is “grey-haired,” has “stone cheeks,” “a pale face,” “thin hair,” “dimmed, open, goggling eyes,” and his trembling body makes him “stagger with the ring.”⁵⁴ “The Doge is dead” – this phrase crowns the fourth stanza of the poem. The whole scene of the Venetian marriage of the sea becomes a parody of nuptials due to the Doge’s behaviour. The Doge already knows that the Venetian reality will soon comprise only memories, the glorious memory of past triumphs, without any hope of an autonomous and independent existence for the nation. The main protagonist of “Ostatni ślub Doży” is a tragic and very romantic figure, taking on himself the consciousness of the defeat, but also humanly unable to bear it. The Doge is looking for an escape in the bygone world of his private experiences and feelings. He can control this sphere of life whereas what is happening here and now affects him only seemingly.

(...) – tak on żywot cały
Już skończył – zapisał. Dziś ślub – morze
[- dzwony,

(...)- thus his entire life came to an end
– he wrote it down. Today the nuptials –
[sea – bells,

⁵² Czajkowski, *Niektóre poezje*.

⁵³ The eponymous “last Doge” took office in 1789. In the face of Napoleon’s invasion of Italy, he did not want to shed any blood of the Venetians. First, he attempted to be neutral, then he rejected the ultimatum of general Junot in April 1797, negotiating in secret with the Austrians. When the French took Venice on 25 April, there was no chance of winning. The Doge abdicated on 12 May. The official surrender contract, for which he was reproached by his compatriots, was signed on 16 May. Despite proposals from the French, he no longer wanted to hold any office; he gave back the insignia of power of the Doge, including the famous *corno ducale*, of which Czajkowski wrote, and moved to Palazzo Dolfin Manin. He died in 1802. Zygmunt Krasieński often thought about him, although probably differently (linking him to the wrong policy of the Venetian aristocracy) when he was preparing *Nie-Boska Komedia*. Cf. Zygmunt Krasieński, *Listy do Delfiny Potockiej*, ed. Zbigniew Sudolski (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975), 550.

⁵⁴ Czajkowski, *Niektóre poezje*, 107–108.

Otrząsły kurz z książki, lecz duch jej nie
[czyta.
On myślą nie patrzy, nie mówi, nie pyta,
Lecz stoi nad morzem wybladły, schylony,
Z wzniesioną prawicą, suchymi oczyma,
I pierścień trzyma.⁵⁵

Shook dust off the book, but the spirit
[reads it no more.
He does not look with the thought, nor
[speak, nor ask,
But he stands by the sea, pale and bent,
With his right arm raised and dry eyes
Holding the ring.

Czajkowski attempts to describe the moment of the inevitable confrontation of the illusions which the Venetians have about their future with the great catastrophe already sensed by the Doge (or known to him from unofficial sources). Venice still persists in the frenetic, almost carnival merriment, whose panache is so spectacular that it appears unrealistic, but it is the beginning of the irreversible end of the Adriatic Republic. The hustle and bustle, laughter, giggles, the beauty of the Venetians, the finest costumes, flags, bouquets of roses, garlands – this abundance, which the poet depicts, covers the approaching emptiness, conceals the unrelenting nothingness. And the historical ring is not even thrown, it falls “from the Doge’s hands into the golden foam.”⁵⁶ The world created by human ambitions and desires collides with the judgments of History and the Destiny. The recurrent images of the lion shaking its mane acquire an ironic meaning. “The eternal spirit of Venice” evoked in the last stanza of the poem knows the truth about the fate of the participants of this symbolic marriage, which for centuries “curbed the oceans.”⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the present is bitter, defined – similarly as in *Pan Tadeusz* [Master Thaddeus] by Adam Mickiewicz, albeit without his half smile – through the epithet “last”: the last marriage, the last triumph, the last Doge. The final line seems to be the most puzzling: “And the last Doge in your Doges’ crowd, / That does not understand the marriage.”⁵⁸ What does this mean? In what sense does he not understand the marriage? It seems, after all, that he is the one who knows how little value is attached to the act of marrying the sea; he is not politically blind and does not believe in the sense of the ritual in the face of the fall of the Republic, which will take place only a month from then, and in the face of its own powerlessness. Or perhaps he is unable to comprehend the ludic determination of his own people, who, seemingly uninformed, sense the misfortune but, in accordance with *La Serenissima’s* tradition, puts on a mask and entertain themselves like there is no tomorrow?

Overall, it is difficult to resist the impression that the fact that Czajkowski reached for an episode from the Venetian history of the late 18th century was directly connected with the evaluation of the partitions (perhaps including the 1830 uprising) and the attitude of the society at that time. Was “Ostatni ślub Doży” supposed to be the poet’s voice in the discussion on the unpredictability of the verdicts of history or, on the contrary, on the maturity or political naivety of Poles? The ending of the poem leaves some room for

⁵⁵ Czajkowski, *Niektóre poezje*, 109.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

interpretation. This does not change the fact that this extended narrative text makes quite successful use of Polish-Venetian parallels, creating a pictorial equivalent to the, in fact, patriotic subject matter. Hence, it belongs to a group of works which are worth devoting a separate sequence of considerations.

Why does Poland become Venice and vice versa?

Maria Janion used to ask a question *Why is revolution a woman?*⁵⁹ which was transformed by Dariusz Czaja for the phenomenon of Venice, treating another theory as the *point de départ*: why is it perceived as a woman in European culture? What conditions this perspective of thinking and what consequences does it entail?⁶⁰ On the basis of reading poems from the 1840s and 1850s, a set of similar dilemmas should be extended to include the question written in the above mentioned mid-title. It also seems necessary to define the nature of poetic political camouflage devices.

The poem of the “red castellan’s son,” Edward Dembowski, titled “Śmierć żeglarza pod Wenecją” [A Sailor’s Death near Venice]⁶¹ was published in *Przegląd Naukowy* in 1843. This hendecasyllable, consisting of three fragments of differing lengths treating some unspecified boat disaster off the Venetian coast, was quickly and warmly welcomed by readers, which its literal content was rather unlikely to justify. It is difficult to consider the poem as particularly original: the national Romantic poetry willingly explored – following Mickiewicz – the theme of sailing as a symbol of wandering through life or a storm in the meaning of the drama of national liberation struggles; Dembowski hardly adds anything new to this. A broken rudder, billows, foamy waves, a fiery thunderstorm and black clouds from the first part are a set of typical components of the metaphorical landscape which was normally created to express either a threat to the national cause or a crisis of faith in its sense. Furthermore, the creation of the collective subject, defining itself within a specific generational and worldview community which begins to doubt the old ideals (“Oppressed – and weak we are swimming in the storm”⁶²) belongs to the then repeated clichés of patriotic poetry. Without any doubt, in this case it is possible to talk about the crypto-political content of Dembowski’s work.

In the second part of the poem, the mood of discouragement and disablement of spirit changes: melancholy gives way to energy, hope, a call for action and the desire to control temporary weakness. The description turns into an appeal.

⁵⁹ Maria Janion, “Bogini Wolności (Dlaczego rewolucja jest kobietą?),” in Maria Janion, *Kobiety i duch imności* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 1996), 5–49.

⁶⁰ Dariusz Czaja, *Wenecja jest kobietą. Rzecz o wyobraźni*, accessed 28 June, 2020, http://cyfrowaetnografia.pl/Content/2780/Strony%20od%20PSL_XLIX_nr3-4-22_Czaja.pdf.

⁶¹ Edward Dembowski, “Śmierć żeglarza pod Wenecją,” *Przegląd Naukowy*, no. 5 (1843): 169–171. As cited in: *Zbiór poetów polskich w wieku XIX*, vol. 3, edited by Paweł Hertz, (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1962) 67–69. Reprint also in: *Pieśni poległych*, illustrated, ed. Kazimierz Tułacz-Wiśniewski (Warsaw: Wojskowy Instytut Naukowo-Wydawniczy, 1933), 119–120.

⁶² *Zbiór poetów polskich w wieku XIX*, vol. 3, 67.

Czyż już nie wiemy, jaka moc gondoli,
Co i wśród burzy sunie się powoli,
A i bez wiatrów – może rączo płynąć?⁶³

Don't we already know the power of the
[gondola,
Which moves slowly even amongst storms,
And can sail swiftly – even without winds?

However, the third fragment, maintained in the form of a story about the dramatic battle which the sailors fight during a storm at sea, is the most elaborate. When finally the beloved city – the island of art and freedom – could be seen from a distance, the ship sinks, and with it the bulk of the sailors. Only the subject seems to have a chance to be saved.

Hej, patrzcie! Widzę szczyty naszych
[wieży!
To ku nim łódka nasza raźniej bieży!
To Marka wieża! Piazzeta, Dogana!
I Canal Grande!...
Ha, łódka strzaskana!
Grom w nią uderza! Skała dno wybija.
Na próżno na nas patrzy Wenecyja,
Na próżno całą piękność w morzu dwoi,
Nie ma nadziei – łódź już w wody łonie!⁶⁴

Hey, look! I see the tops of our towers!
That's where our boat's briskly heading!
That's St. Mark's Campanile! Piazzeta,
[Dogana!
And Canal Grande!...
Alas, the boat's shattered!
It's hit by a thunder! A rock smashes the
[bottom.
Venice looks at us to no purpose,
It doubles its whole beauty in the sea in
[vain,
There's no hope – the boat sinks in the
[water!

The number of exclamations and the elliptical syntax reflect the protagonist's extreme tension; they also express violent feelings in the face of a dire peril. At some point, however, a false tone begins to pervade this dramatic account, which is expressively portrayed by Dembowski. The sailor who tries to save his life, losing his strength in the whirls of the lagoon, deliberates whether his death will be in vain or whether it will become a lesson to others. What is this lesson supposed to be like? Certainly full of bitterness:

Bo świat innym dla mnie, niż się zrazu
[zdawał,
Bo zmroził me nadzieje! (...)
To straszny przykład i cierpka nauka!
I komuż ją zostawię? Już mnie chłoną
[fale.⁶⁵

Since the world is different for me than it
[seemed,
Since it has frozen my hopes! (...)
This is a terrible example and bitter
[knowledge!
Who will I leave it to? I am already sucked
[by waves.

As it can be seen, Venice *in se* is not to be found, except for a few names which are to identify the place, which would allow to encode the national content and satisfy the censorship. The Venetian theme, unlike in

⁶³ Ibid., 67–68.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 68.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 69.

Kraśiński or Czajkowski (*toutes proportions gardées*), was exploited in a purely instrumental way. However, this poem by Dembowski, penetrated by doubt in the sense of patriotic sacrifices, must have arisen surprise among Polish readers and provoked them to take a stand, particularly due to the fact that the author himself was an eternal conspirator, an emissary and a plotter. In this way, Venice became a background for further disputes over the "Polish case."

In 1845 *Biblioteka Warszawska* printed a fragment of a work by Edmund Chojecki titled "Noc w Wenecji"⁶⁶ [A Night in Venice], which was published in its entirety a year later, in a separate volume titled *Gęśła* [A Gusle]. "Noc w Wenecji" is a two-part poem: in the introductory part it takes the shape of a reflexive confession addressed to an anonymous gondolier by another Venetian; the second part is a recollection of the subject's unhappy love for a beautiful but married Roman woman who turns out to have poisoned her stepdaughter. The romance and gothic convention used in the poem only strengthens the protagonist's negative judgment about the world created by human will. From the perspective of this article the most important is the beginning, both due to the Venetian references which are of interest here and its reception. The frame of the story is a gondola trip through the waters of the Canal Grande and the lagoon. The lyrical subject engages in a quasi-conversation with the gondolier and encourages him to boldly abandon the city, where he himself finds only crumbs of the bygone past of the "queen of the seas." What remains from the rich history of the Republic, in which family ambitions played such an important role, are some tangible mementoes in the form of ruins.

Czytaj nazwiska - z tych sławnych ludzi
Ta jedna wielkość dziś pozostała!⁶⁷

Read the names - what is left today
of these famous people is only this grandeur!

This is a field for the "antiquarians" devoid of any vital forces. Unlike Dembowski, Chojecki makes the image of Venice more concrete. He sees that the city demonstrates the old glory here and there, like a retro costume, but in reality, beneath the surface, it is fallen, "infested," experiencing defeat and "the death of the spirit." The vision of humiliated *Serenissima* brings to mind images of enslaved Warsaw after the insurrection:

Gród, bohatera staje się trumną,
Z której popioły wicher rozmiata.
Snać wielkość wyszła gdzieś na tulaćtwo,
Ostatki, przemoc w okowach trzyma,
A władcy miasta - to jak robactwo
Zagryzające trupa olbrzyma!⁶⁸

The city of the hero becomes a coffin,
From which ashes are swept away by the
[wind].
The apparent grandeur turned into exile,
Violence is kept at bay,
And the city rulers are like vermin
Biting the corpse of a giant!

⁶⁶ Edmund Chojecki, "Noc w Wenecji," in Edmund Chojecki, *Gęśła* (Lipsk: Księgarnia Zagraniczna, 1846), 1-26. Reprint: *Zbiór poetów polskich XIX wieku*, vol. 3, 89-91.

⁶⁷ Chojecki, *Gęśła*, 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

If Chojecki's poem is interpreted using the code of "camouflaged" or "encrypted" reading, both the Venetians and the Poles experience the disintegration of the old world, which seemed glorious and heroic. Their current reality is marked by humiliation and suffering. What are the Venetians left with in this situation? What can Poles do in such vile times? Chojecki's advice sounds rather awkward as the author seems to say: today Venice can only be inhabited by despairing, unhappy people; whoever has a happy soul must flee from here.

Jeśli śmierć ducha wstręt w tobie nieci,
Wtedy Wenecję mijaj z daleka.⁶⁹

If you abhor the death of the spirit,
Then keep away from Venice.

The inner freedom of the human being could be saved by the beauty of the world, the beauty preserved outside history and politics, signaled here by the fogs, barcarolles and guitar sounds, the nighttime transparent sky, confirmed in art and love; yet Chojecki does not leave many illusions as to the prospects for achieving this in practice. The story of mysterious youthful love, which the subject of the poem reveals to his companion, undermines the sense of dreams, questions the hope of happiness in life.

What was something that Karol Baliński disliked about this vision of Poland-Venice, over which the "angel of perdition flies"⁷⁰ and that triggered his immediate reply? As the lyrical subject of the poem titled "Odpowiedź Wenecjaninowi" [A Reply to the Venetian] cries:

Oczyznę moją trupem nazwałeś!
A ja ci mówię: bluźnisz młodzianie!
Nie dziw! salonów okiem patrzałeś!⁷¹

You called my country a corpse!
And I tell you: you blaspheme, young man!
No wonder! you looked with the elite's eye!

Baliński's accusations were possible precisely because he used the lyricism of the role and the Italian costume, which is clear to his compatriots. The crypto-political code of the poem was substantiated by the biography of the poet, who was the author of the famous poem titled "Farys," a radical activist of post-insurrection patriotic organisations, an exile, repeatedly detained by the tsarist authorities, a vagabond by necessity. "He loved mother Poland above all, he worked for her and greatly suffered for her, he gave her every thought and every effort, all his soul, almost every breath," as Felicja Boberska wrote in 1882.⁷² It may be assumed that Baliński was not really concerned with the attitude of Chojecki himself – a man of the world, an orientalist, someone with a high social position – but his writing required some reaction as it was a voice of a representative of a group, a voice which was increasingly common. "Odpowiedź Wenecjaninowi" is extremely emotional, harsh and full of condemnation for – according to Baliński – one-sided aristocratic judgments and loyalty in relations with the oppressor. As

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁷¹ Karol Baliński, "Odpowiedź Wenecjaninowi," in Karol Baliński, *Pisma* (Poznań: W księgarni Jana Konstantego Żupańskiego, 1849), 57–60. The poem is dated 1845.

⁷² Felicja Boberska, *Karol Baliński*. Lecture (print from *Reforma*), (Krakow: Reformy, 1882), 5.

the subject of the poem warns, the yoke can be a snaffle of enslavement and manipulation, which is why despair and doubt are so devastating. It works for the benefit of the enemy. Baliński acts from the position of someone who adheres to two basic principles in life: action and faith, and demands that others also put them into practice at all cost. Not adopting a similar attitude meant for him to be “a parody of a human being” (“Do braci lekarzy” [To Fellow Doctors]) or suffer from the disease of “blindness.” Following the poetics of the evangelical blessings, the poet strengthened the importance of courage and he belittled fear. The Venice from Baliński’s poem is still snoring, is still gathering strength, but in a moment, it will turn into a “new giant” raised on the moans of the wronged.

Czyż nie słyszycie jak fala grzmiąca
O most uderza wygięty łukiem?
Jakiś jęk z fali miesza się hukiem...
Ten jęk... to echo westchnień tysięcy!

(..)

I olbrzym zadrży całym ogromem -
I wieko trumny złamie jak drzazgę!
A rozjuszony przeszłym swym sromem
Te szczątki jeszcze zdruzgoce w miazgę!⁷³

Can't you hear as a thundering wave
Hits the bridge with its curved arch?
Moaning from the wave mingles with the
[bang...

This moaning... it is an echo of a thousand
[sighs!

(..)

And the giant will tremble with all his
[magnitude -

And will break the lid of the coffin like
[a splinter!

And enthralled by his past disgrace

He will shatter these remains into the pulp!

The poem is a dynamic expressive vision of the future – the foreseeable future which is dormant in the Venetians-Poles like in a volcano. According to Baliński, this means, however, that it is necessary to reverse the social power system. The elite must give way to a fishing boat. This is where future liberators of Venice meet; this is where the “song of life” is sung. It is not a coincidence that one of the stanzas evokes “the spirit of the Carbonari,” being an allusion to the Italian “charcoal makers” attacking the Habsburg diktat practically from the beginning of the 19th century and supporting the worker and peasant rebel as part of the process of Italian unification.

Patrzcie! Sycylia już dzwon gotuje
Wezwać na nieszpór Italii syny!...⁷⁴

Look! Sicily is getting the bell ready
To call Italy's sons to vespers!....

⁷³ Baliński, *Pisma*, 58.

⁷⁴ Baliński, *Pisma*, 60. It could have been an allusion to Attilio and Emilio Bandiera, two brothers from Venice, who attempted to spark an uprising in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, or perhaps a reference to the *La Giovine Italia* movement aiming at the establishment of united and republican Italy, whose members included Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi. Certainly, similar turmoil already swept through Venice, where there was a short-lived rebellion against the Austrians and the proclamation of the republic by Daniele Manin in 1848.

These are not the only examples of the “Venetian” code used in the poetry of the period in question. Several years after the poetic disputes of Dembowski, Chojecki and Baliński, a similar “Venetian costume” was used by Mieczysław Gwalbert Pawlikowski in *Pamiętnik pieśniarza* [A Diary of a Singer].⁷⁵ The motto of the song was taken from a sonnet written by a fellow author, Kornel Ujejski: “Feel forever, keep silent forever! Oh, insane judgment.”⁷⁶ The author has used a popular literary device, namely a story within a story: between the pages of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* the narrator finds a poem written in octaves, dating back to the reign of John II Casimir and giving an account of love experiences of an Italian lute player at the court of one of the magnates from Podolia.

<p>Treść bardzo prosta, lecz pełna boleści, Łez i cierpienia. O życia osnowa Często ma pozór dosyć prostej treści Boleść niezmierną w wnętrzu swoim [chowa!]⁷⁷</p>	<p>The content is very simple, but full of pain, Tears and suffering. The story of life Often appears to be very simple but It hides immeasurable sorrow inside!</p>
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Essentially, the plot is uncomplicated, although its structure may be achronological. A young singer and musician from Venice finds a happy place to live in Poland. He enjoys the recognition of people around him, the growing fame of the artist, the kindness of the host and his daughter. Above all, however, he enjoys staying in a “free” country that respects freedom and values the love of the homeland. The former Poland is presented in the poem as a land close to the traditions of the Hellenic Republic. Even the unrequited love for Jadwiga, the starost’s daughter, does not spoil this idyll. Things change after the appearance of a rival, Michał, a poor but up-pish nobleman (this thread includes clear references to *Pan Tadeusz* by Mickiewicz), and an unexpected attack of some Tartars on the starost’s house. Michał, who, like the Venetian singer, had no chance of having a relationship with the rich lady, demonstrates energy and bravery in the fight with the enemy, saving the life of the entire family of the magnate. As a reward, he receives permission to marry the starost’s daughter, and the Italian is asked to compose and perform a song titled “Engagement amidst Shambles.” This dramatic and humiliating experience puts an end to the singer’s stay in Poland. He returns to Venice, where, however, he cannot find the expected relief, still analysing his “unhealed scars.”⁷⁸

The way in which the protagonist portrays his beloved is interesting: in his imagination, the golden-haired Pole is reflected against the background of Venetian landscapes:

⁷⁵ Firstly, the text was published in *Nowiny* 1856, no. 8–11 (signed with the initials W. J.), and then it appeared as a separate publication in Lviv in 1856. Reprint of the fragment in *Zbiór poetów polskich XIX wieku*, ed. Paweł Hertz, vol. 3, 471–473.

⁷⁶ Kornel Ujejski, V. “Noc zimowa” (from the cycle of sonnets from the period 1839–1840), in Kornel Ujejski, *Kwiaty bez woni. Poezje*, (Lviv: K. Jabłoński, 1848), 9.

⁷⁷ Mieczysław Pawlikowski, *Pamiętnik pieśniarza* (Lviv: H. W. Kallenbach, 1856), 3.

⁷⁸ Pawlikowski, *Pamiętnik pieśniarza*, 20.

Edvige moja! w wieczornym lazurze,
 W promyków nieraz księżycowych
 [drganii,
 W morskiego świtu porannej purpurze,
 W migocie gwiazdek, w piorunów
 [błyskaniu,
 W fal zwierciadleniu, w mglejącej się
 [chmurze,
 W kształtach półsennych, w ponocnym
 [dumaniu
 Ja ciebie widzę! (...) ⁷⁹

Oh, My Edvige! Sometimes in the evening
 [lazure,
 In the rays of the vibrating moon,
 In the morning crimson of a sea dawn,
 In the twinkling of stars, in the lightning
 [of flashes,
 In the reflection of waves, in a foggy cloud,
 In half-sleepy shapes, in the afternoon
 [brooding
 I can see you! (...)

It could seem that Pawlikowski's work simply presents a romantic love story, with a recollection of a great emotional catastrophe, which affects the future fate of the protagonist. Nevertheless, this is only the first, the most superficial level of reading. Another level is marked by the initial description of Venice. Although it is still referred to as "the queen of waves," "a lily of the Adriatic Sea" and its son – the Doge – is "the betrothed of the wave," what predominates in everyday existence are "fetters," "enemy violence," enslavement and fratricidal combat. Even though the 17th century reality of Venice was far from being idyllic and there were some abuses of power against political opponents, a similar description in the literal meaning would be simply false. On the contrary, it does work as a metaphorical record of the situation of increasingly tormented and oppressed Poland, which still remembered the drama of 1846 and where patriotic tensions continued to increase as the anti-Polish activities of the invaders were further exacerbated.

Sroższa niewola, kiedy brat ciemieży
 Własnego brata, niż gdy wrogów siła
 Spoddani w boju polyskiem oręży:
 Tam przemoc wroga – ale tu się wpiła
 Zdrada Kaima w serce żądłem węży,
 I ssie krew serca i pierś twą owiła
 Żmii pierścieniem! – O moja ojczyzno!
 Wyrwij ją z serca! Niechaj się rozbryzną
 Czerepy czaszki pod siłą twej stopy,
 Wyrwij ją z serca, choć z serca kawałem!
 (...)
 Przed światem z trwogi nie zbladło ci lico,
 A własnych synów masz być
 [niewolnicą?... ⁸⁰

Slavery is more severe when a brother
 [oppresses
 His own brother than when enemies galore
 Defeat him with shining weapons in a battle:
 There the foe's violence but here Cain's
 [betrayal
 Pierced the heart with a serpent sting,
 And sucks the heart's blood and it twines
 With a viper ring! – Oh my homeland!
 Snatch it from your heart! Let skulls
 Splatter under the force of your foot.
 Snatch it from the heart, even with the
 [heart's piece!
 (...)
 You never grew pale from fear before the
 [world,
 And are you going to be a slave of your
 [own sons?

⁷⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 6.

The poem makes clear references to the lesson of Słowacki and Ujejski, which additionally confirms this hidden patriotic context of the “Venetian” story. The pictures of the Bridge of Sighs and the nearby prisons full of suffering people also refer to analogous pictures from the Warsaw Citadel, where one of the corridors was dubbed the Bridge of Groans by prisoners.⁸¹ The city full of spies, denunciation, behind-the-scenes villainy, unjustified accusations, a lack of freedom of speech – this defines Venice and Warsaw to an equal degree. “They oppress us so much, we surrender so much,”⁸² the singer speaks accusingly to his compatriots. In his lament, he also draws attention to the only strength that guarantees human dignity, namely freedom found by the protagonist in the Poland of the 17th century, which should be interpreted as a hidden confession of longing for its absence in the period between the insurrections:

Wolności! Szczęścia rodzona Siostrzyco,
Narodów świata promieniu słoneczny,
Kraje gdzie twoje promienie nie świecą,
W duchu podobne Saharze bezrzecznej,
Tyś matką siły, dumy równiennicą,
Dziejów ludzkości tyś kres ostateczny,
Nagrodą świętych w krainie wesela,
Blaskiem, co Boga od ludzi oddziela!...⁸³

Oh, freedom! The Sister of happiness,
The Sunshine of world nations,
The countries where your rays do not shine,
Are similar in the spirit to riverless Sahara,
You are the mother of strength, a peer of
[pride,
The ultimate end of the history of mankind,
The prize of saints in the land of joy,
The glow that separates God from people!...

Through the “mask” of Venice, Pawlikowski speaks about the situation of the Poland of his time, just before the January Uprising and shortly after the Galician slaughter, and he also juxtaposes it in a nostalgic memory with the idealised – as the country was free – past of the Nobles’ Republic. Nevertheless the author, unlike Dembowski or Baliński, does not use a simple Venice-Poland substitute (or possibly Venice-Warsaw), and retains both these spaces as important places for the experience of his protagonist, making it possible to distinguish one more aspect of the work. Indeed the poem – not excluding its foregrounded meanings – also raises questions about the consequences of the cultural confrontation. This was noticed by Cyprian Kamil Norwid, who, on the one hand, accused Pawlikowski’s text of being excessively straightforward and “reasonable” but, on the other, appreciated portraying the Venetian as a man of art who does not find the freedom he needs in his own homeland, while in the independent Sarmatian Poland he is faced with a lack of understanding for a song expressing something more than the conventional content.⁸⁴ The struggle between two suitors for the hand of the starost’s daughter ends in the victory of the one who is capable of doing, not merely of singing. For Norwid, this was

⁸¹ Cf. Baliński, *Pisma*, 58.

⁸² Pawlikowski, *Pamiętnik pieśniarza*, 8.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁴ Stanisław Pigoń, “Dwie recenzje literackie C. Norwida,” *Ruch Literacki*, no. 5 (1926): 139–142.

a confirmation of the difference between Italian and Polish culture. Pawlikowski puts a complaint in the mouth of his protagonist, who keeps singing “though his breasts broke”:

<p>W Polsce, gdzie każdy wolny i szczęśliwy, Gdzie i wieśniacy swobodni w swych [chatach, W Polsce nie czują poezji prawdziwej; Li czasem szlachcic już w podeszłych [latach, Kleci rytm zimny, twardy, niepieściwy, W pół w rzymskiej todze, a w pół [w polskich szatach, Kiedy śpiewałem, zimno tłum poklaskał, A śmiał się głośno gdym lutnię [roztrzaskał!...⁸⁵</p>	<p>In Poland, where everyone is free and [happy, Where villagers are free in their huts, In Poland they do not feel real poetry; Only sometimes an aged nobleman, Concocts a cold, hard, untender rhythm. Half in Roman toga, and half in Polish [robes, When I sang, the crowd applauded coldly, And laughed loudly as I smashed the lute!...</p>
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In Pawlikowski's view, being a Venetian is also a diagnosis of the status of a poet or, more broadly, an artist whose destiny is always to be alone. That condition is, indeed, extremely ambivalent, since it does not provide any real consolation.

<p>Tyś mi balsamem, gdy zblednie nadzieja, Tyś męką wieczną, sępem Promoteja!⁸⁶</p>	<p>You are a balm for me when hope fades, You eternal torment, the vulture of [Prometheus!</p>
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Three years later, certainly before the Austro-Italian War of 1859, another “Venetian” text was written, namely “Pieśń starego gondoliera” [The Song of an Old Gondolier] by Teofil Nowosielski.⁸⁷ The poem has a very simple and symmetrical construction. The alternate arrangement of eight and seven-syllable lines and regular alternate rhymes allow the poem to reflect the rhythm of the folk song. Similarly, as far as the content is concerned, each stanza consists of antithetical couplets. The first distich always praises Venice's former glory, while the second one explores the phenomena that depict the current degradation of the city.

<p>Niegdyś z lekkiej twej gondoli Lud twój nucił zwycięstw pieśń, Dziś, Wenecjo, w twej niedoli Wieje z ciemnych więzień pleśń.</p>	<p>Once from your light gondola Your folk hummed the victory song, Today, Venice, in your distress Mould blows from pitch dark prisons.</p>
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⁸⁵ Pawlikowski, *Pamiętnik pieśniarza*, 34.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9. In this context, if one sees here a hidden question about the status of the poet in “miserable times,” then even more emphasis should be placed on the links between Pawlikowski's poem and Ujejski's work, including his poem titled “Syn bólu.”

⁸⁷ Teofil Nowosielski, “Pieśń starego gondoliera,” in Teofil Nowosielski, *Grzeszki Parnasowe. Garstka poezji lirycznych i humorystycznych* (Warsaw: Księgarnia Gebethnera i Wolffa, 1877), 41–42. Reprint in *Zbiór poetów polskich XIX wieku*, vol. 2, ed. Hertz (Warsaw: PIW, 1961), 656–657.

O, Wenecjo, w dawne laty
 Sławną byłąś z godłem lwa,
 Dziś w okowach lew skrzydlaty
 Gniewem pała, pomstą drga.⁸⁸

Oh, Venice, you were famous once
 With the emblem of lion,
 Now the winged lion in fetters
 Seethes with anger and revenge.

In the first two and the last two stanzas the gondolier's confessions are part of the nocturnal, atmospheric, though not very original landscape which description defends itself with the simplicity of the language, some childlike purity or naivety.⁸⁹ In any case, the associations with the eponymous song of the gondolier, which is tender and heart-gripping, are reflected by the image of the moon, which rises above the lagoon as its loyal guardian, at the same time remaining a witness to the historical and political changes bringing lethargy to *La Serenissima*.

Księżyc tylko tam, wysoko,
 Przegląda się w starca łzie,
 Widzi boleść, ach! Głęboką -
 Widzi gród w letargu śnie.⁹⁰

The moon over there, high,
 It is reflected in an old man's tear,
 It sees pain, ah! Deep pain -
 It sees the city in the stupor of sleep.

The unpretentiousness of Nowosielski's poem makes it easy to read from a very private, personal perspective, or possibly to situate its message within a universal reflection on the passing away of worldly fame and power. The author's footnote locating the work in the context of the war for the reunification of Italy indicates, however, that it is also necessary to consider an additional, "conspiratorial" code of reading, and that the Venetian stajage is used to express the difficult and painful feelings that the condition of the poet's homeland continues to evoke. It is worth drawing attention to one more aspect of the poem: the old gondolier in the penultimate stanza is called a Venetos rather than a Venetian. This is not a coincidence since hypotheses about the Slavic origin of Venice were popular in the first half of the nineteenth century. They were considered with approval by Adam Mickiewicz, for instance, in the third course of *Literatura słowiańska* [Slavic Literature].⁹¹

"These walls are alive": on the pain of longing for Venice

Finally, considerations about Polish, poetic Venice must also include *Album włoskie* [Italian Albums] by Teofil Lenartowicz.⁹² It is true that reminiscences connected with Florence, Rome and the South of Italy dominate there, but also the "Queen of the Adriatic" found a modest place for herself. It seems that especially one of the poems deserves to be cited here.

⁸⁸ *Zbiór poetów*, 656.

⁸⁹ May this be due to the fact that Nowosielski was used to a young audience, to whom he devoted the majority of his works?

⁹⁰ *Zbiór poetów*, 657.

⁹¹ Cf. Mikołaj Sokołowski, "Wenecja", in *Atlas Polskiego Romantyzmu*, NPLP IBL, accessed July 1, 2020, <http://nplp.pl/artukul/wenecja/>.

⁹² Teofil Lenartowicz, *Album włoskie* (Lviv: F.H. Richter, 1870).

“Dwaj niewidomi” [Two Blind People] is a poem whose plot is set in Florence. The lyrical situation is constructed in such a way as to highlight the contrast between the material beauty and richness of the Christian tradition, symbolically concretised in the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, and the “poor people,” whom the reader watches together with the poet in the church arcades. One of the blind is a boy, “sightless from birth, poor thing.”⁹³ He represents unconscious beauty (“two pretty eyes came out from underneath his forehead”⁹⁴), treated by others with undeserved disrespect. The other blind person is an old man, a vagrant, an expatriate who, after all, remembers the sights of his youth and therefore probably suffers more than the boy from a longing for Venice, his “little homeland.”

Może mu piękna Wenecja w oku,
Może mu w oczach lotne gondole.⁹⁵

Maybe there is beautiful Venice in his eye,
Maybe there are swift gondolas in his eyes.

With his characteristic affection towards simple people, Lenartowicz allows the painful images of the lost world to resound in the confession of the blind man. In his very painterly vision, the old man slightly resembles Rembrandt from his extraordinary, late self-portrait. Physically run-down, he livens up with the emotions that fill him. Recalled in the eyes of the imagination of the blind man cuddled to the marbles of the Florentine cathedral, Venice is no longer the crypto-political code that has been mentioned several times here, but it certainly provides a pretext for naming the feelings of the expatriate. Dreams of the blind man, which stem from a deep longing for the landscape close to his heart, are reminiscent of the experience of a character who will appear in Polish literature a decade later, namely Józef Skawiński reading *Pan Tadeusz* in the lighthouse in Aspinwall.

Gdybyż to ujrzeć Marka kolumnę,
Raz tylko jeszcze przepłynąć Lido,
Potem niech dzwonią, niech po mnie
[przyjdą,
Niech nad mym czołem zabiją trumnę.
Tylko niech ujrzę na wód topieli
Płótno okrętu, co się tam bieli,
Tylko pieśń ludu niech mnie otoczy,
A łódź po morza przeleci niebie;
Wenecjo moja! Oddaj mnie oczy,
Ja tu nie widzę nic oprócz ciebie;
Oczami duszy widzę Cię jasno,
Te jedne widzą, te drugie gasną.⁹⁶

If only I could see St. Mark's Column,
Sail back to the Lido this one more time,
Later let them call, let them come for me,
Let them nail the coffin over my brow.
Let me see in the abyss of water
The canvas of the ship, which is there white,
Let the song of the people surround me,
And let the boat fly over the sea's sky;
Oh, my Venice! Return my eyes to me,
I do not see anything here but you;
I see you clearly with the eyes of my soul,
These eyes can see, those are fading away.

⁹³ Lenartowicz, *Album włoskie*, 94.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

It should be noted that these Polish-Venetian fantasies from the poem "Dwaj niewidomi" accurately reflect the most distinctive details of the city on the island (both material and immaterial), as well as describe with great accuracy the state of helplessness or emotional apathy of many simple Polish emigrants forced to endure misery and utter desolation in a foreign country. Undoubtedly, this is due to the aesthetic and ethical sensitivity, which gained Lenartowicz many readers.

"The land of zephyrs" or "a wounded snake"?

Finally, reference will be made to three short texts showing different yet complementary visions of Venice which inspired the poetry of the subsequent decades of the nineteenth century. The first of them is a rather short song written by Juliusz Strutyński, an ambiguous figure of Polish literature since, despite his Polish roots, he was strongly associated with the tsarist authorities.⁹⁷ He was on a secret mission in Venice as an officer for special operations under governor-general Bobikov in the early 1840s.⁹⁸ One effect of that stay was the four-stanza barcarolle titled "O! cara e bella! W cześć Sylwii" [O! cara e bella! In Sylwia's honour], printed in 1846 by Romuald Podbereski in Petersburg-based *Rocznik Literacki*. The poem became so popular that Wiktor Każyński decided to compose music for it. There is a refrain in this simple, regular poem composed of six-syllable lines, imitating the 6/8 rhythm, composed of four elements developing in different variants on the same topic, namely the trip of a gondola on the lagoon at night:

W maleńkiej gondoli,
Co lot ma sokoli,
O! cara e bella!⁹⁹

In a small gondola,
Which flies like a falcon
O! cara e bella

The poem is cheerful in mood and devoid of any political or historical allusions. It emphasises the connection with the surrounding nature typical of Venice. Its aim is to express a sense of paradisiacal jauntiness which unites the travellers in love, amorous detachment from everyday matters, on the way to "the land of zephyrs."

Na modrej przestrzeni
Wysp wieniec bogaty
Srebrnymi lśni kwiaty,

In the deep blue space
A rich wreath of islands
Shines with silver flowers,

⁹⁷ He was even distinguished for struggling in the war of 1830. He was loosely associated with the Petersburg coterie, including Michał Grabowski, he also sometimes collaborated with Aleksander Przeździecki. He took part in several uncompleted projects of launching periodicals, such as *Przeglądnik Literatury Rosyjskiej i Polskiej* or *Słowianin*. Cf. Andrzej Biernacki, Henryk Glebocki, *Strutyński Juliusz*, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 44; accessed June 28, 2020, <https://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/juliusz-ksawery-lukasz-strutyński#disqus>.

⁹⁸ Juliusz Strutyński, *Poezje Berlicza Sasa i wspomnienia jego*, posthumous edition (Kraków: A. Strutyńska, 1878), 9–10 (here the poem is dated for 1842 and information about the musical composition). Reprint in *Zbiór poetów polskich XIX wieku*, vol. 2, ed. Paweł Hertz, 512–513.

⁹⁹ *Zbiór poetów polskich XIX wieku*, vol. 2, 512.

Laurem się zieleni.
Przy blasku tła fali,
Rubinów, opali
Płyńmy tam w gondoli,
Co ma lot sokoli
(...) ¹⁰⁰

Turns green with a laurel.
Against the glow of waves,
Of rubies and opals
Let's go there by gondola,
Which flies like a falcon
(...)

A certain similarity can be found in the mood of a Venetian folk song (*Coi pensieri malinconici*),¹⁰¹ which was paraphrased by Aleksander Michaux and published in *Kłosy* in 1869.¹⁰² Miron shortened the Italian prototype, slightly modifying its rhythm but preserving the climate. A simple appeal to a young girl to abandon her worries and succumb to the joy of seeing the sea and her beloved corresponds to the optimistic image of the people of the South, capable of forgetting themselves and yielding to temporary happiness.

W mieście ciemnym, marmurowym,
Sercu smutno wciąż,
Więc po morzu szmaragdowym
Z pieśnią szczęścia dąż!

In the dark, marble city,
The heart is still sad,
Thus sail on the emerald sea
With a song of happiness!

Już z błękitu, złote oczy
Cherubinów ślą,
Swoich spojrzeń blask uroczy
Na twarzączkę twą!¹⁰³

From the blue, Cherubs'
Golden eyes are sending
Their charming gaze
On your face!

The last poem selected for the purposes of this article is also atmospheric. Its author, Wiktor Gomulicki, was connected with the subject matter discussed above due to his later poetry created after his participation in the literary congress in 1888, namely *Obrazki weneckie*¹⁰⁴ [Venetian Pictures] and the series titled *Z pieśni weneckich* [From Venetian Songs],¹⁰⁵ but already in the sixties he dedicated a poem titled "Z krainy dźwięków (Fragment)" [From the Land of Sounds] to the extraordinary city on the island:

... Rwący jak nurt potoku, jak morze
[zdradziecki,
Syn ciemności, a w szaty strojny
[promieniste,

... Rapid like a stream, treacherous like a sea,
The son of darkness, clad in beaming attire,

¹⁰⁰ *Zbiór poetów*, 513.

¹⁰¹ In his travel account, Wiszniewski quoted the seven-stanza version of the song after George Sand (Michał Wiszniewski, *Podróż do Włoch...*, 94–95).

¹⁰² Miron [Aleksander Michaux], "Pieśni ludowe weneckie I.–II.," *Kłosy*, no. 222 (1869): 194; *Kłosy*, no. 223 (1869): 210. Other poems on Venice by Miron were published in the volume titled *Poezje* from 1884.

¹⁰³ Miron [Aleksander Michaux], "Pieśni ludowe weneckie I.," 194.

¹⁰⁴ Wiktor Gomulicki, *Obrazki weneckie* (Warsaw: Druk. Artystyczna Saturnina Sikorskiego, 1896).

¹⁰⁵ Wiktor Gomulicki, *Nowe pieśni* (Petersburg: Wydawnictwo księgarńi K. Grendyszyńskiego, 1896).

Tam, kędy laury kwitną i niebo lśni czyste, Niby wąż się rozwija... karnawał [wenecki. ¹⁰⁶	Where laurels bloom and the sky shines [clear, It slithers like a snake... the Venetian [carnival.
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This text is disconcerting. It brings strong evaluative descriptions of the city's space, suggesting that it is ruled by dark forces. The impression of the danger is reinforced by the irregularity of the Polish alexandrine with which the text opens. In addition, the poet often uses ellipsis and pauses; the rhythm seems crippled and obscure at times. In addition, Gomulicki refers to various sensual impressions and emotions. He uses a whole palette of colours, scents, sounds, lights, flashes that seem to overlap, creating a dynamic, fluid, flickering, synesthetic description of the Venetian carnival.

W gondolach siedzą <i>divy</i> o śniadych [jagodach I wabią czarnym okiem... a przed lwą [pomnikiem Lud się kupi, wre głucho i barwistą falą Liże pałacu dożów fronton marmurowy. Pod niebem krwawą luną obłoki się palą, Gasząc gwiazdy... Na tłum wrzące [ogniem głowy Spada wonny deszcz kwiatów; [- śmiechem uragany Rwą się w górę; - na wodzie drżą po- [chodni blaski... ¹⁰⁷	Divas with swarthy cheeks sit in the [gondolas And lure with their dark eyes... before the [lion statue A crowd swarms, hums dully and, in [a colourful wave Licks the marble pediment of the doge's [palace. Clouds burn in a bloody glow under the [sky, Extinguishing the stars... The fragrant [rain of flowers Falls on heads boiling with fire; - reviled [with laughter They rush up; - glows of torches shiver on [the water...
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The impressionistic vision of Venice undoubtedly foreshadows Parnassian and symbolic tendencies in Gomulicki's further poetic work.¹⁰⁸ It seems, however, that it is not only aesthetic impressions that the poet seeks. His vision is not devoid of moral judgment. What is particularly surprising is the image of Venetian crowds: frenzied, bustling, not controlling their euphoria ("Shouts escape from the crowd, like from a hive / And they turn into a roaring thunder..."¹⁰⁹). Some of the phrases used by Gomulicki are ambiguous. Since the crowd "hums dully," and at the same time "licks" the pediment of the palace, its intentions are not clear. The carnival is reminiscent of the revolution, underlying conspiracy, an intrigue which is about to break out of the "red city" which he wrote about later in the 1890s. Does it contain any camouflaged fear of the untamed

¹⁰⁶ Wiktor Gomulicki, "Z krainy dźwięków (Fragment)," *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 46 (1868): 231.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹⁰⁸ Wiktor Gomulicki, *Nowe pieśni*.

¹⁰⁹ Wiktor Gomulicki, "Z krainy dźwięków (Fragment)."

power of the anonymous mob (such an interpretation could partly justify the motto from the novel titled *Maria* by Malczewski)?

At some point, the form of the poem changes – and together with the shift from the Polish alexandrine to simple regular layout of four-line stanzas (7,7,7,7,3) – the beguiling and poisonous images of Dionysian ecstasy and “half-naked debauchery” come to the forefront. The madness of the carnival is expressed by the song in which there is both pathos represented by the figure of an ascending eagle and wickedness in the form a creeping snake. The dynamic vision ends abruptly, as if the poet was trying to warn that what so engages the masses, excites them and drives them crazy can be as risky as snake venom or lead to sinking “into a dark abyss of the worlds.” It is difficult to say what dominates in Gomulicki’s poem: the fascination of an observer of an extraordinary show or the fear of a moralist terrified of crossing borders and empowering human egoism. However, it should certainly be noted that Gomulicki’s work introduces an important change in the poetic representation of Venice. It is no longer a cipher, a costume for the national cause, protecting against the possessive censorship, no longer the Byronic Southern passion deeply rooted in literature, no longer the past – but it is Venice *here and now*, its social and political present, that turned out to be sufficiently universal and interesting for the Polish artist.

I do not think that a satisfactory and convincing summary can be made here. This article was given – intentionally and consciously – the form of a specific catalogue complementing the image of Venice in Polish culture. It so happens that the attention of 19th-century researchers was focused mainly on prose, essay and reportage. The drama whose subject matter would concentrate on Venice was explored very rarely, or hardly at all. As far as poetry is concerned, the subject of analysis was more often from the turn of the 19th and 20th century than the first half of the century. It is true that the poems of Maria Konopnicka or Antoni Lange are artistically more interesting than those presented in this sketch. However, in order to see the occurrence of a motif in culture, it is necessary to build, in the first place, an image of the whole.

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Maria Berkan-Jabłońska – Ph.D., Professor of the University of Lodz, the Department of Literature and Traditions of Romanticism. Her research focuses on 19th-century literature, especially the tradition of female writing, Polish Biedermeier, Romantic biography, and the widely-understood popular literature of the 19th century (e.g. detective stories). She is the author of: *Wizje sztuki w twórczości Zbigniewa Herberta* (Łódź 2008), *Arystokratka i biedermeier. Rzecz o Gabrieli z Günterów Puzyninie (1815–1869)* (Łódź 2015), *Weredyckzi, sawantki, marzycielki, damy... W kręgu kobiecego romantyzmu. Studia i szkice z kultury literackiej kobiet okresu międzypowstaniowego* (Łódź 2019); she was the co-editor of *Mickiewicz wielu pokoleń twórców, badaczy i czytelników* (Łódź 2008), *Przygody romantycznego "ja". Idee – strategie twórcze – rezonanse* (Poznań 2012), "Nie-do-czytane. Polski dramat romantyczny," *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica*, no. 1(27) 2015, "Kryminał w XIX wieku, XIX wiek w kryminale," *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica*, no. 4(50) 2018.

E-mail: maria.berkan@uni.lodz.pl

ANNA SIERADZAN
University of Warsaw

 0000-0001-7615-2447


Member since 2019
JM14483

Contemporary Icarus: Gustav von Aschenbach's Journey towards the Sun

SUMMARY

The point of departure for the reflections contained in this article is the motif of the sun in Tomasz Mann's *Death in Venice*. Analysing the presence of the sun in the work turns out to be fruitful for distinguishing and connecting several symbolic planes, on which the issues of *Death in Venice* and the drama of the main character are depicted: the relationship between contemporary times and antiquity, the cultural North-South axis, the destructive power of beauty as well as the individual fate of the artist marked by decadence. The figure of the sun seems to provide material for the interpretation of the figure of Gustav von Aschenbach as an incarnation of contemporary Icarus and allows the reader to see the path which the protagonist of *Death in Venice* follows in a new light.

Keywords

Venice, Mann, sun, mythology, love, decadence, novella

Death in Venice by Thomas Mann belongs among the masterpieces of European literature and as such has been the subject of a considerable number of analyses, studies and interpretations. The work itself encourages such actions: it contains many symbols, metaphors and allusions, which sometimes allow researchers to obtain coherent findings and sometimes make them arrive at contradictory conclusions. Moreover, due to these voices, which

enrich the discourse on the reception of the work, the discussion around the novella written in 1911 remains vivid to this day, and the reading of the work may still bring interesting reflections.

Many symbolic contexts appearing in *Death in Venice* were subject to in-depth analysis both in the foreign critical and artistic reception as well as in the reflections of eminent Polish humanists who explored such aspects of the work as the universal myth of Venice in the European culture, the symbolism of water, and the motif of death as explored by Dariusz Czaja.¹ Paweł Pieniążek's text on the moral fall of the protagonist draws attention, in turn, to transgression and rebellion of the lonely individual. It is also impossible not to mention the erudite sketch titled "Muzyka wenecka" [Venetian Music]² by Ewa Bieńkowska, who looked at the cult of form, the sinful obsession with perfection and getting to know the reality in its entirety as manifested by Mann's protagonist.³ Evidence of artistic inspirations and traces of the reception of the author of *Tonio Kröger* may be also found in Witold Gombrowicz's *Trans-Atlantyk* and novels by Philip Roth or essay writing by Wojciech Karpiński, which certainly does not close the catalogue of artists and critics still entering into dialogue with *Death in Venice* and its author.

The aim of this work is also to draw attention to the importance of another motif appearing in the work, namely the presence of the sun, an aspect which so far has not found a place in the literary reflections. The symbol of the sun is present in the story in several ways: it appears not only as the weather craved by tourists, but it also gives grounds for a number of mythological associations that allow the reader to look at the main character from a different perspective.

"Yes, this was Venice, this the fair frailty that fawned and that betrayed, half fairy-tale, half snare"⁴: this is what the narrator says about the city, which is the rightful – if not the leading – character of Mann's story. This thought could be the starting point for a reflection on Gustav von Aschenbach's journey to Venice as gravitating towards the pulsating sensual centre of the world, a spiritual and intellectual journey, which will cost the protagonist his life.

Spiritual topography

The main protagonist of *Death in Venice* is Gustav von Aschenbach, an acclaimed writer over 50 years-old who was ennobled in honor of his artistic achievement and whose name can be found in school textbooks. He is said to owe his fame to hard work, self-discipline and severity – qualities which

¹ Dariusz Czaja, "Wenecja i śmierć. Konteksty symboliczne," *Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty*, no. 3–4 (1992): 58–65.

² Ewa Bieńkowska, "Muzyka wenecka," in Ewa Bieńkowska, *W poszukiwaniu królestwa człowieka. Utopia sztuki od Kanta do Tomasza Manna* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1981).

³ A review of interpretive strategies or keys according to which researchers have analysed Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* can be found in the habilitation dissertation by Marcin Wołk. Cf. Marcin Wołk *Głosy labiryntu. Od „Śmierci w Wenecji” do „Monizy Clavier”* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika 2009), 34–54.

⁴ Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*, trans. Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter, in *Short Novels by the Masters*, ed. Charles Neider (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001), 482.

he inherited from his ancestors. However, its origin was marked by duality: there was both Germanic and Slavic blood in his veins. "The union of dry, conscientious officialdom and ardent, obscure impulse, produced an artist and this particular artist."⁵

At one point, however, the horizon of this stable and predictable life, whose rhythm was determined by hours of arduous work, was crossed by the need for travel, previously unknown to Aschenbach, which is why he eventually boarded a ship sailing to Venice. This change of scene – from rainy Munich, where the writer settled down, to the sunny pearl of the Adriatic, as the Italian city he decided to go is referred to – is also a symbolic journey. It seems to echo the Romantic discussion about the clash of two visions of culture identified by the literature of Northern Europe and the Mediterranean civilisation. For Thomas Mann, who travelled to Italy many times, the North-South opposition "could have appeared to be a problem of irreconcilable bipolarity, simultaneously essential principles of development, two forms of knowledge about life."⁶ The drama – or at least the internal conflict – of the main protagonist of *Death in Venice* is constructed from the tension between these two values.

Aschenbach's sudden departure was an escape from these two orders – Germanic and Slavic ones – towards Mediterranean culture. "This yearning for new and distant scenes, this craving for freedom, release, forgetfulness – they were, he admitted to himself, an impulse towards flight,"⁷ as the narrator comments on the character's undertakings. The Slavic element, characterised in the novella as more sensual, closer to nature than culture, only made Aschenbach gravitate even more to the culture of the South. The division of Europe into Germanic and Latin worlds is symbolically highlighted by the presence of the sun. Needless to say, cultural records tend to generate images of the cloudy, gloomy North and the sunny, lazy South.

This is also the case with this writer's journey, whose purpose was by no means accidental. As Ewa Bieńkowska points out:

two cities play a special role in this writing, acting as cities of individuality, distinctive and endowed with their own soul (...) these two cities are Lübeck and Venice, which mark the axis crossing Europe at two ends. It is therefore not only history but also geography – in the spiritual and symbolic sense.⁸

The southern direction was extremely popular among the European intelligentsia. From the middle of the 18th century, Italy "was – especially for Germans – a holy country, a place of pilgrimage, where one did not so much go to obtain one's education as to touch the holy springs, to immerse oneself in the primordial – that is, pure and perfect – matter of civilisation."⁹

⁵ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 443.

⁶ Ewa Bieńkowska, *W poszukiwaniu królestwa człowieka. Utopia sztuki od Kanta do Tomasza Manna* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1981), 282.

⁷ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 442.

⁸ Bieńkowska, *W poszukiwaniu królestwa człowieka...*, 281.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 282.

A journey to Venice is both an experience which is intellectual and aesthetic. Not only does this refer to the unique architecture of the city, but also to the sensual experience of the play of light and water. As Peter Ackroyd argues:

The light of Venice is as important as its space and form. The light on the water casts illumination upwards and outwards. The sunlight plays upon the walls and ceilings, with an incessant rippling effect. (...) But the characteristic of Venice is a pale soft light, like a drifting haze, powdered, part wave and part cloud. It is a pearly iridescent light wreathed in mist. It is drawn from the horizon and the sea as much as from the sun. It lends everything unity.¹⁰

This Venetian marriage of sun and water is also reflected in the rich symbolism of the city. One of the symbols is a lion, which “combines a twofold power, fire and water, so that it belongs – like many other symbolic animals, such as a horse and an ox – not only to the sun, but also to the earthly waters and their reproductive power.”¹¹ This animal, therefore, fits between the two elements, the sun and water, so important for Venice and essential for Mann’s novella. In the city of St. Mark, lions appear on the buildings in the form of numerous gargoyles; there is also a multitude of lion sculptures and bas-reliefs, for instance on the Doge’s Palace. Walking through Venice, Aschenbach notes houses with “little lion balconies.”¹² However, the sculpture on the entrance gate to the city is the most famous: the Venetian lion has wings and keeps one paw on an open book, the Gospel of St. Mark, who is the patron saint of Venice. Just like the Mycenaean lions that guarded the gates to the city “hold a column of the sun and symbolise divine care,”¹³ the symbol of Venice was supposed to “protect the city from the enemy (hence, the statues of lions in the Venetian Arsenal) or epidemics as well as protect the city if necessary.”¹⁴ As Henryk Sienkiewicz noted after visiting the Doge’s Palace: “The face of this Republic emerges from the darkness of history, marble, proud, mighty, with lion’s wrinkles on its forehead, or as if wrathful, angry, bloodied, soulless and without a star – an idea above its head.”¹⁵ The marble lion face of Venice, once a symbol of invincible power, has become the embodiment of past greatness inextricably linked to the idea of the sun.

In *Death in Venice*, however, the Italian city is not eternally bathed in sunshine. Admittedly, the story is set in Venice in the summer, but the architecture of the city makes the buildings floating on the water absorb

¹⁰ Peter Ackroyd, *Venice: Pure City*, (New York: Random House, 2009), 146, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://kingauthor.net/books/Peter%20Ackroyd/Venice/Venice%20-%20Peter%20Ackroyd.pdf>.

¹¹ Dorothea Forstner, *Świat symboliki chrześcijańskiej* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1990), 276 as cited in Aleksandra Achtelik, *Wenecja mityczna w literaturze polskiej XIX i XX wieku* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Gnome, 2002), 141.

¹² Mann, *Death in Venice*, 495.

¹³ Achtelik, *Wenecja mityczna...*, 140.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Henryk Sienkiewicz, *Dziela*, vol. XLIV (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1950), 185, as cited in Aleksandra Achtelik, *Wenecja mityczna...*, 141.

moisture and retain the sun's rays, which is why Aschenbach strolls through the damp, musty streets that are marked by deadly odours. Only the vast sandy beaches of Lido Island are sunny, and this is where Aschenbach could achieve full happiness, observing teenage Tadzio. The sun present in the novella is also a sign of a certain sensuality, intoxication accompanying the contemplation of beauty. The sun and the beauty, intertwined with each other, have a great impact on Aschenbach: the sun intensifies the ecstatic experience and strengthens the homoerotic fascination with the boy.

Falling in love for the first time in years and the rush of inspiration after experiencing writer's block – all this makes Gustav not only feel younger, but also start to pay more attention to his appearance. The inner transformation is marked by a shift from austerity and sexual constraint to corporeality and sensual pleasure.

Has it not been written that the sun beguiles our attention from things of the intellect to fix it on things of the sense? The sun, they say, dazzles; so bewitching reason and memory that the soul for very pleasure forgets its actual state, to cling with doting on the loveliest of all the objects she shines on. Yes, and then it is only through the medium of some corporeal being that it can raise itself again to contemplation of higher things.¹⁶

The narrator makes clear allusions to Plato's dialogues. It is due to, among other things, the influence of nature that Aschenbach's thoughts are directed towards images drawn from ancient culture.

And the sea, so bright with glancing sunbeams, wove in his mind a spell and summoned up a lovely picture: there was the ancient plane-tree outside the walls of Athens, a hallowed, shady spot, fragrant with willow-blossom and adorned with images and votive offerings in honour of the nymphs and Achelous.¹⁷

Sensory impressions – the noise of the sea and the glow of the sun – appeared to be a direct connection with the world of ancient Latin culture. It was not only about the aesthetic aspect, but also the ethical one, since beauty was connected with morality in the ancient world: what was beautiful was valued positively. Beauty was a sign of the presence of the gods, an expression of their approval – it belonged, at the same time, to the sphere of the sacred.

Goodness and beauty or sin and death?

Tadzio – the incarnation of divine order – is the highest beauty in *Death in Venice*. For the writer, contact with the boy is an encounter with finished perfection: he is struck by his beauty. In order to describe Tadzio's beauty, Aschenbach's imagination draws on pictures of ancient sculptures.

¹⁶ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 473.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Aschenbach noticed with astonishment the lad's perfect beauty. His face recalled the noblest moment of Greek sculpture – pale, with a sweet reserve, with clustering honey-coloured ringlets, the brow and nose descending in one line, the winning mouth the expression of pure and godlike serenity.¹⁸

The above description is very suggestive: Tadzio looks like a Greek statue in the eyes of Aschenbach. However, the portrait of the boy drawn in this way also brings to mind other associations, namely that with the lion, the symbol of Venice, suspended between the elements of the sun and water, and perhaps even with the sun itself. "His facial tint was ivory-white against the golden darkness of his clustering locks," as the description continues. He had a fine head of golden hair which was never cut by the barber, "dusky clustering ringlets standing out in soft plenteousness over temples and ears."¹⁹

A certain analogy between the boy and the sun highlights how important Tadzio was to Aschenbach: he quickly became the focal point of his existence during his stay in Venice. It is to the Pole who the writer adjusts his days, and it is to his activities that he tries to fit in when arranging the schedule of his day. "He went, indeed, early to bed, for at nine o'clock, with the departure of Tadzio from the scene, the day was over for him."²⁰

Contemplating the boy's beauty, watching him play on the beach tends to be combined with the mention of the scorching sun: it is usually in such circumstances that the characters meet. However, the narrator does not fail to mention that the sun deceives Aschenbach's senses and the heat on the beach only intensifies his fascination with Tadzio, taking him even further into the sphere of the sacred: "Thus the lad's foreign birth raised his speech to music; a wanton sun showered splendour on him, and the noble distances of the sea formed the background which set off his figure."²¹ As if only the sun was the ideal environment for this "phenomenon," if not a catalyst for all Aschenbach's imaginations related to the world of ancient culture.

Years after publishing *Death in Venice*, Thomas Mann admitted in a private letter that he portrayed Tadzio in the shape of Hermes Psychopomp, Guide of the Dead. The author of *Buddenbrooks* was particularly fond of a sculpture by Lyssipos, a copy of which he saw in a museum in Berlin. It shows Hermes resting with one leg forward.²² This was also the position which Tadzio assumed when Aschenbach saw him for the first time: "The observer saw him in half profile, with one foot in its black patent leather advanced, one elbow resting on the arm of his basket-chair, the cheek nestled into the closed hand in a pose of easy grace, quite unlike the stiff subservient mien which was evidently habitual to his sisters."²³

¹⁸ Ibid., 457.

¹⁹ Ibid., 458.

²⁰ Ibid., 476.

²¹ Ibid., 472.

²² Doris Alexander, *Creating Literature out of Life. The Making of Four Masterpieces* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University, 1996), 19.

²³ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 458.

In addition to being the emissary of the gods, Hermes was a conductor of the souls of the dead to Hades.²⁴ Tadzio acted as such a guide for Aschenbach in his journey into the afterlife. In the last moments of his life, seeing a boy on the beach, he calls him a psychagogue, which in Greek denotes "leading souls."²⁵

The identification of the boy with this god makes Tadzio the simultaneous embodiment of beauty, art and death. He is a danger that comes with the contemplation of beauty. Such a view marks art with a certain ambiguity: it has the potential both to create and to destroy. It is able to "build" the soul, fill it with joy and elevate it. At the same time, however, it has a destructive element capable of bringing the soul down to the other world.

Traditionally, Hermes was also responsible for sending dreams and, in this respect, he was an intermediary of Zeus.²⁶ Indeed, during his stay in Venice, Aschenbach is haunted by dreams filled with mythological content. These dreams are in a way the consequence of the change to his state of mind: they accompany the inner transformation of the writer; they are a sign of the exuberant life of his soul. For the reader, they are a visible sign of his fall, another step towards an insane, destructive infatuation.

Hermes was the patron saint of travellers as the one who easily moved on all trade routes (he also looked after trade and merchants).²⁷ After all, by order of the gods, he was their Messenger: he was skilful at fulfilling their wishes, moving energetically, with golden wings at his feet helping him.²⁸ Thus, from the beginning of *Death in Venice*, Hermes was also the patron of Aschenbach: his star guided him from the moment the writer felt the call of the journey, when he felt an unknown urge to change his place of residence. Previously, as the narrator informs, he despised journeys that he considered distracting from the gist of things. After all, his whole being was striving for fame: Aschenbach knew his destiny, namely success ensured by his excellent writing. A trip did not fit into the regime of his everyday life. Yet, all of a sudden, everything changes, and the willingness to travel is accompanied by the appearance of Hermes on stage.

The Apollonian element

It is impossible not to mention the other patrons from the Greek imaginary, Apollo and Dionysus who seem to pervade *Death in Venice*. The struggle of these two elements turned out to be an extremely fertile and capacious sign in culture and philosophy, also with reference to Thomas Mann's novella. Paweł Pieniążek points out that in Venice, Gustav Aschenbach is in the possession of those very gods who fight for his

²⁴ Zdzisław Piszczek, *Mała encyklopedia kultury antycznej* (Warsaw: PWN, 1983), 314.

²⁵ *Encyklopedia Gutenberga*, accessed April 27, 2020, <http://www.gutenberg.czyz.org/word,63594>.

²⁶ Piszczek, *Mała encyklopedia kultury antycznej*, 314.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Albert Zipper, *Mitologia Greków i Rzymian* (Złotów: Wydawnictwo Księgarni Wilhelma Zukerkandla, 1896), 106.

soul. Ultimately, Dionysus triumphs and he takes over the character's consciousness.²⁹ Indeed, in the end, what prevails are the Dionysian pleasures, such as a fondness for corporeal values. The victory of Dionysus in this battle for the soul of the Aschenbach is manifested by his last dream, being a cruel, disconcerting vision of a march posed as a Bachus-like procession, in which naked women carried torches, daggers and snakes in their hands, and hairy, horned men walked surrounded by goats (another symbol of Dionysus). The dream was accompanied by orgiastic elation, and the characters appearing in this vision behaved lewdly: "They laughed, they howled, they thrust their pointed staves into each other's flesh and licked the blood as it ran down,"³⁰ they sacrificed animals to the gods. In the background, there was a clear flute sound. This dream brought Aschenbach ambiguous pleasure: "And in his very soul he tasted the bestial degradation of his fall."³¹ In the dream, "the dreamer was in them and of them, the stranger god was his own."³² Which god would Tadzio belong to if he was the recipient of this allusion?

The battle for the protagonist's soul can also be perceived in a different way. Perhaps the final blow that brought the protagonist down fell from another ambivalent side, namely from Apollo. He became a synonym for beauty for us today, although the ancients had far more mixed feelings about him. "He had power over all human life. He was the god of spring, the god of sea travel (*Delfinios*), he looked after agriculture and cattle, he took care of health, healed, but also sent the plague."³³ He was depicted with a bow and an armful of arrows, which he received from Hephaestus: it was believed that any sudden death was caused by Apollo. "If someone died a painless death, especially in old age, it was said that Apollo's gentle arrow sent a death on them."³⁴ He was also believed to have sent a plague to the Greek camp with his arrows³⁵ and to have been responsible for the spread of the epidemic,³⁶ sometimes with the use of his arrows. Thus, he was a punishing god "striking far off,"³⁷ and destructive powers were attributed to him: this meaning was read from his name associated with the

²⁹ Paweł Pieniążek, *Akademia dekadencji*, in Edward Białek, Grzegorz Kowal, *Arcydziela literatury niemieckojęzycznej*, vol. 2 (Wrocław: ATUT, 2011).

³⁰ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 492.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Piszczek, *Mała encyklopedia kultury antycznej*, 61.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁵ In the writings of Pausanias, there is a mention of the story of sending a plague upon the city of Argos. This was punishment for killing Apollo's son whom he begot with the daughter of Coroebus, the King of Argos. The child was torn apart by the monarch's sheepdogs. As punishment, Apollo sent Poena [i.e. Punishment] upon the city. Poena was believed to have been snatching children from their mothers until Coroebus much to the joy of Argives. Yet after this murder, another misfortune fell on the city. The bubonic plague. And it persisted." Pausanias, *Wędrówka po Helladzie. Księgi I–X*, the computer edition (2003), 137, accessed April 30, 2020, <http://biblioteka.kijowski.pl/antyk%20grecki/%20pauzanasz%20-%20w%20E4%99dr%E3%B3wka%20po%20helladzie%20ks.1-10.pdf>.

³⁶ William Smith, *A dictionary of the Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (Boston: Little, 1887), 230.

³⁷ Miszczek, *Mała encyklopedia...*, 79.

Greek word denoting "to destroy."³⁸ Another hypothesis about the origins of the name Apollo is that it means the one who protects against evil and punishes those who are at fault.³⁹ The administration of justice was to be the primary, original occupation of the Olympic god. Human and animal life also depended on him. "That is why during a plague (...) solemn prayers were sent to Apollo."⁴⁰ In this light, the Venice which Aschenbach visited becomes the arena of Apollo's actions. The city was struck by a plague, and the traveller met a sudden death which may have been caused, as the ancients believed, by the Greek god. But what is most remarkable, Apollo used to be associated with Helios and Sol, the god of the sun, or with the sun itself, traces of which can be found in ancient legends.⁴¹

What was the fault of the protagonist of *Death in Venice*? All in all, Aschenbach did not take any action, so it was not for his actions that he could be punished. The domain of immoral "deeds" was the writer's imagination: his conscience is burdened both by his erotic fascination with the underage boy and by his excessive trust with sensual sensations, for which, paradoxically, only his fantasy was responsible. These feelings are connected both to solar mythology and to the meaning of the sun in the thought of ancient poets and philosophers.

The sun, as it was previously suggested, is a symbol of sensual experience, carnal pleasure. And this is what *Death in Venice* is also about: in a similar way as *The Immoralist* by André Gide (1902), it deals with the issue of the awakening of homosexuality. As Michel Foucault argued, the topic of homosexuality did not appear until the 20th century, and indeed it was explored by, for instance, Sigmund Freud, at the beginning of the 20th century. His *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* from 1905 were to influence the final shape of Mann's work.⁴² From a psychoanalytic point of view, Aschenbach's sexuality was dormant, bound by the strict bourgeois morality. In addition, the voyeuristic ways of adoring the boy points to a certain defect, to the incompleteness of this sphere of life. The appearance of the tiger in the old artist's visions announces a period of transformation – the beginning of the process of sexual self-awareness. Apollonian-Dionysian dualism, drawn from Nietzsche's writings, would be an allusion to this transformation of the traveller's identity. These theories are supported by the solar mythology, used in the works of Carl Gustav Jung, who was a student of Freud. In his opinion, the vital force, or libido, manifests itself in the form of the sun.⁴³ Under its influence, the dormant sexuality of an aging writer would come to light.

³⁸ Smith, *A dictionary...*, 230.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Piszczek, *Mała encyklopedia...*, 80.

⁴¹ Smith, *A dictionary...*, 231.

⁴² Louise Willis, *The Representation of Instinctive Homosexuality and Immoral Narcissism in Gide's The Immoralist (1902) and Mann's Death in Venice (1912)*, CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture (2017), 3, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2960>.

⁴³ Monika Jaworska-Witkowska, "Nienasylenie i 'niewygasła żywotność' archetypu wielkiej matki. Misterium 'rodzącego łona' jako symbol uniwersalizmu tworzenia," *Rocznik Naukowy Kujawsko-Pomorskiej Szkoły Wyższej w Bydgoszczy. Transdyscyplinarne Studia o Kulturze (i) Edukacji*, no. 7-8, 95.

Thanks to the throes of passion, the writer feels an urgent need to create. The boy's beauty and harmony in the shape of his silhouette provoke Aschenbach to write. The teenager's body was a model of style for him: he wanted the form of his work to be a perfect representation of the appearance of the adored child. The artist aimed that "he would snatch up this beauty into the realms of the mind, as once the eagle bore the Trojan shepherd aloft."⁴⁴ This is yet another allusion to mythology: the Trojan shepherd was Ganymede, who attracted the attention of the gods with his extraordinary beauty. Zeus, in the form of an eagle, was to go down to Earth and abduct the Prince, thus ensuring him immortality.⁴⁵ This is the kind of immortality that Aschenbach wanted: using his pen, he wished to capture the wonderful looks of Tadzio, to transform physical beauty into spiritual beauty, to refine what is sensual by shifting it to the sphere of ideas. The writer seems to be triumphing: thanks to this divine inspiration, a sample of excellent writing is created, "that page and a half of choicest prose, so chaste, so lofty, so poignant with feeling, which would shortly be the wonder and admiration of the multitude."⁴⁶

Contemporary Icarus

The fate of Aschenbach was cruel: he was killed in Venice by cholera brought from India. He died because of his own inattention, having eaten some infected strawberries. But on a symbolic plane, Mann seems to suggest another cause of death. Aschenbach appears to have been walking towards a fall from the beginning: the construction of the work with death in the title acquaints the reader with the ending from the very beginning, immediately suggesting an unfavourable course of events.

It may be destiny: everything takes place according to the plan, and the traveller surrenders to the action of the gods. He succumbs to the visions of the jungle and tigers and sets off on a journey, falls in love with a boy who is apparently a personification of the gods and ends his life in almost orgiastic ecstasy. It is the fate that the artist meets for choosing his profession, for deciding to worship beauty above all. In Germany, Aschenbach succeeded in resisting the destructive effects of aesthetic charm, imposing on himself the strict framework of a passionless everyday life. The journey to Venice ruins this apparent harmony: the gods and beauty demand praise. The rules of Protestant self-restraint cease to apply on Lido Island, and the hot sun awakens passions.

It is difficult to resist the impression that Aschenbach is constantly walking towards the sun. His aspirations are Tadzio, love, beauty, art – all this comprises the picture of the sun in the story. There is still one more element pertaining to the symbol of the sun – death. This fatal power personified by Thanatos, a companion of Eros in Freud's psychoanalytical theory, has an impact on the protagonist from the very beginning.

⁴⁴ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 474.

⁴⁵ Zipper, *Mitologia Greków i Rzymian*, 48.

⁴⁶ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 475.

An in-depth analysis of the presence of the sun in Mann's work makes it possible to notice also the fragments that refer to the scorching power of the sun or, directly, to burning. This is not only about the myth of Semele, who was, as the narrator says, "consumed by love."⁴⁷ The sand is burning and the sunrise that Aschenbach saw in his dream resembles a fire: "from horizon to zenith went great quivering thrusts like golden lances, the gleam became a glare; without a sound, with godlike violence, glow and glare and rolling flames streamed upwards, and with flying hoof-beats the steeds of the sun-god mounted the sky."⁴⁸ This is a description of Aschenbach's work in which Sebastian is one of the protagonists.⁴⁹

Within that world of Aschenbach's creation were exhibited many phases of this theme: there was the aristocratic self-command that is eaten out within and for as long as it can conceals its biologic decline from the eyes of the world; the sere and ugly outside, hiding the embers of smouldering fire – and having power to fan them to so pure a flame as to challenge the supremacy in the domain of beauty itself; the pallid languors of the flesh, contrasted with the fiery ardours of the spirit within, which can fling a whole proud people down at the foot of the Cross, at the feet of its own sheer self-abnegation.⁵⁰

Fire also denotes emotional suffering: youth, being a reflection of divine beauty, "sets us afire with pain and longing."⁵¹

It is also worth paying attention to frequent mentions about ascending which results in the case of Aschenbach from personal aspirations. "Aschenbach's whole soul, from the very beginning, was bent on fame,"⁵² "This was he who had put knowledge underfoot to climb so high; who had outgrown the ironic pose and adjusted himself to the burdens and obligations of fame."⁵³ Flying and floating move the reader's attention towards mythology and ancient philosophy. Zeus abducts Ganymede to Olympus, and the soul, as Socrates argued in Plato's dialogues, has wings and it ascends to the sky so as to be closer to the gods. Above all, a soul in love is winged, a soul seeking the beloved in whom it finds a divine beauty. "The divine is beauty, wisdom, goodness and the like; and by these the wing of the soul is nourished, and grows apace,"⁵⁴ as the philosopher says. It is worth quoting once again the passage describing the fatal power of the sun:

⁴⁷ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 474.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 477.

⁴⁹ St. Sebastian, who died a martyr's death, was also the patron saint of those suffering from infectious diseases. Eva Brann, *The Venetian Phaedrus*, St. John's College Digital Archives, accessed April 28, 2020, <http://digitalarchives.sjc.edu/items/show/1234>, 3.

⁵⁰ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 466.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 473.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 443.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 495.

⁵⁴ Plato, *The Phaedrus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Project Gutenberg EBook of Phaedrus, last modified January 15, 2013, accessed October 25, 2020, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1636/1636-h/1636-h.htm>.

The sun, they say, dazzles; so bewitching reason and memory that the soul for very pleasure forgets its actual state, to cling with dotting on the loveliest of all the objects she shines on. Yes, and then it is only through the medium of some corporeal being that it can raise itself again to contemplation of higher things.⁵⁵

In one of the last scenes of *Death in Venice*, the traveller followed the Polish family to St. Mark's Square. Tadzio was then to look back and see if Aschenbach was following him. "Lured by those eyes,"⁵⁶ the writer experienced this situation so intensely that "His head burned, his body was wet with clammy sweat, he was plagued by intolerable thirst."⁵⁷ Strong emotions manifested themselves in a morbid reaction of the body, vividly reminiscent of the effects of excessive sunshine or sunstroke. Aschenbach was so close to the source of the glow, both in the physical sense, since it seemed to him that the "love affair" with the boy burgeoned, and in the symbolic one when – led by Eros – he experienced an excellent creative period and he was learning the divine nature of art, when he finally got burnt in its flame. The fate of the character is embedded in his name as *asch* in German means "ash."

The traveller is reminiscent of Icarus, the mythical aviator who, together with his father, wanted to reach the sky. But he got too close to the sun: the wax on the wing joints melted and the daredevil fell. "And here is Aschenbach, our Icarus, flying too high, melting and crashing down on a beach"⁵⁸ – as Michael Cunningham wrote about the protagonist of *Death in Venice*. The fall of Aschenbach appears to be ambiguous: it means not only the protagonist's death but also his moral degeneration as a person and as a writer. The figure of Icarus allows the reader to perceive the protagonist of Mann's work as a tragic figure and see further elements of ancient tragedy in the individual stages of his journey.

The sun as a key

Death in Venice is composed of references and reminiscences which force the reader to make intellectual journeys through European tradition.⁵⁹ One of the references is the autobiographical aspect, since Mann endowed his hero with many of his own qualities. The author of *The Magic Mountain* skilfully blurs the line between real events and literary fiction. Another one is a peculiar "spiritual" topography: the places where Aschenbach lives imprint their mark on him, influence his feelings and modify his fundamentally Protestant attitude. For instance, the Byzantine chapel from the beginning of the story becomes the catalyst of all events, and tiredness of rainy Munich makes the protagonist look for new impressions.

⁵⁵ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 473.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 494.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 495.

⁵⁸ Michael Cunningham, *Introduction*, in T. Mann, *Death in Venice*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (New York: Harper Collins, 2015), XVI.

⁵⁹ Brann, *The Venetian Phaedrus*, 2.

The places which the writer visits are never just what they are, and they never represent only themselves. Venice is not Venice at all: in Aschenbach's imagination, it is transformed from the Italian city into the seat of Greek culture with a strong influence of the East (as indicated by the sightings of Dionysian animals, namely tigers, or indirectly by the traces in the story of the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who drew inspiration from this cultural circle). As a result, Venice resembles more an amalgam of southern decadence and eastern lechery, which is an excellent counterpoint to the austere North. Since *Death in Venice* is constructed in such a way that the majority of the elements appearing in the finale of the novella is hinted at already in the beginning, the appearance of a Byzantine chapel suggests that for Aschenbach this pearl of the Adriatic is, in fact, the European Byzantium.

The story is set as if on two planes: real events and activities of the character are intertwined with events that are suggested by his imagination. Likewise, there are two time planes: the Venice of the early twentieth century meets with antiquity; and the present day with the mythical world. How can these elements create a harmonious whole? The key may be the figure of the sun, which carries an extremely rich meaning in the cultural message. It is due to this symbol that such different elements, such different time planes can co-exist.

The presence of the sun in *Death in Venice* is prevalent. In some cases, it is mentioned directly; on other occasions, it is more of a cultural reference. The symbolism of the sun is diversified, which is related to the dual perception of its essence. Sometimes the analogy of the sun and goodness comes to the fore, and sometimes the sun is seen as a threat – it can burn or confuse the senses.

In many writings, including in the work in question, Venice turns out to be a city of the sun, which is reflected in the symbolic sphere: the city of St. Mark is guarded by lions, animals associated precisely with the sun. As "half fairy-tale, half snare," Venice attracts tourists like the sun, which, according to the ancients, is sought by all souls hungry for beauty.

In Thomas Mann's novella, the character of Tadzio is sometimes identified with the sun on a number of levels. Its properties and symbolic meaning in solar mythology are transferred to the boy. This analogy can be seen in the external appearance and the way Tadzio moves. Moreover, the boy is sometimes Apollo, who is associated with Helios and Sol, the gods of the sun, and he also represents positive features attributed to this star, such as brightness, perfection, goodness and beauty. Tadzio also represents the pernicious powers of the sun: destructive sensuality, and the retreat from intellectual to bodily values. Finally, he is responsible – as Hermes – for taking Aschenbach to the other side, to the underground where the writer's soul will rest in peace in the eternally sunny Elysium.

The figure of the sun also allows for seeing the main character of *Death in Venice* in different light. His soul, lured by the beauty of the sun which is manifested by Tadzio, "is coming to an orgiastic end,"⁶⁰ as Mann used to say.

⁶⁰ Aleksander Rogalski, *Tomasz Mann. Dzieje rozwoju osobowości twórczej* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1975), 80.

Aschenbach's death may be a metaphor of the fate which befell the mythical Icarus. The aging writer came too close to the sun, or to what it symbolises. The fascination with Tadzio turns out to have fatal consequences, which ancient thinkers warned against. The original fault, however, was that he was an artist: he had a strong need to strive for this aesthetic perfection, and, in search of creative fulfillment, he agreed to a morally questionable pact. Art has a destructive force, which is illustrated by the deadly march of Aschenbach, this modern Icarus, towards the sun.

Death in Venice by Thomas Mann is an extraordinary mosaic composed of many motifs, symbols and quotations, referring to the achievements of European culture. Depending on how the reader arranges these elements – which will be given priority and which will move to the background – a different picture of the whole will be obtained. In the opinion of the author of this article, the lens through which it is worth looking at this story is the presence of the sun, which was not been studied before. It is precisely the sun that is the catalyst for many associations with the ancient world: the sun makes it possible to link modernity with antiquity, and Venice, the city of carnival but also “half fairy-tale, half snare”⁶¹ becomes set in a mythological context. This key element of the solar mythology is an essential part of the symbolic tissue of the work, producing new interesting senses and allowing this elaborate mosaic to be opalescent with the new shine.

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⁶¹ Mann, *Death in Venice*, 482.


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Anna Sieradzan – a graduate of Polish Philology at the Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw and Journalism and Media Studies at the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies at the University of Warsaw, where she is doing her doctoral studies. She co-operated with Polskie Radio Program II from 2014 to 2019. In her research work she deals with, among other things, radio broadcasting from the genre-related perspective as well as links between radio and literature.

E-mail: anna.sieradzan@uw.edu.pl

KRYSZYNA PIETRYCH
University of Łódź

 0000-0001-9796-185X



Iwazskiewicz's Venice

SUMMARY

The article offers an overview of Iwazskiewicz's Venice works, starting with his early poems from his first visit in the city on a lagoon, and all the way to a work in his final poetry collection. This overview helps one realise that the writer's autobiography is the key to all of them. Both poems and prose works followed the writer's rhythm of existence. The presented images not so much extract the features of the city but rather refer to the author's age, mood, and mental disposition. Another major factor that shaped the image of Venice in Iwazskiewicz's works were the conventional topoi consolidated in culture which build the artistic means of symbolising actual spaces. Iwazskiewicz's text, which developed for nearly sixty years is a praise of art understood, per modernist principles, in an absolutist manner.

Keywords

Venice, Iwazskiewicz, aesthetics, poetry, modernism

In March 1956, Jarosław Iwazskiewicz recorded in his journal: "Each time you come to Venice you get a completely different impression."¹ When he was writing those words, he already had visited the city several times, a few more still to come. Do the images from Iwazskiewicz's consecutive visits to the St. Mark's Square included in his works reflect the diversity of experiences? Are they

¹ Jarosław Iwazskiewicz, *Dzienniki 1956–1963*, ed. and notes by Agnieszka and Robert Papięskis, Radosław Romaniuk, introduction by Andrzej Gronczewski, vol. II (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2010), 46. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish]

just as varied and dynamic as the feelings and experiences of a traveller wandering through Venice's back streets? Are the descriptions of Venice, the recollections from consecutive journeys, and the imagined returns to places he once had visited sufficiently unstable and diverse that they form a kaleidoscopically shimmering image subject to the rhythms of the ever-changing times of the day and seasons? Or maybe they tried to construct a variable in terms of details yet persistent in its essence image of the city on a lagoon?

Let us start from the beginning. The same journal entry of 26 March 1956 reads: "I was first here with Hania in April 1924, two months after Marysia was born. The weather was beautiful then and lilac cascades of wisterias were hanging from the walls."² Somewhat more details regarding his visit can be found in an account from his first Italian trip he published in the *Wiadomości Literackie* journal, during which the Iwaszkiewiczzes visited not only Venice, but also Rome and Florence:

If anyone asks me what I liked in Italy the most, I respond that mainly the little dog of the station chief in Conegliano, and then a cat in the Fine Arts Academy in Venice, making a racket throughout the huge building without the slightest respect for Titian or Tintoretto, and particularly for an old English woman whom he kept interrupting trying to catch flies on an armchair over her head. Of course, this answer does not mean that I did not like Italy – it only symbolically means that that which is most striking there, which triggers the imagination the most, is the exuberant and loud life as if devoid of any consideration that something is a mummy, a corpse basically, a beautiful corpse yet devoid of life. That exact triumph of the strongest of lives, not looking behind, is what is the most beautiful there.³

That praise of everyday life happening at the surface, over the "beautiful corpse," seems emblematic for the Iwaszkiewiczzes' accounts of their first visit in Venice. The series of poetic miniatures entitled *Bilety tramwajowe*, a poetic description of the Italian trip, which he dedicated to his wife, Iwaszkiewicz included four works referring directly to his Venetian experiences:

Wenecja	Venice
Pytałem wczoraj, jakie	I asked yesterday, what
Najpiękniejsze są kolory.	Are the most beautiful colours.
Rzekł portier w Luna-Parku:	The porter in the amusement park said:
Żółty, biały, różowy.	Yellow, white, and pink.

² Ibid.

³ Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, "Dwa tygodnie wycieczki po Włoszech," *Wiadomości Literackie*, no. 24 (1924): 2; further on, Iwaszkiewicz was critical of an art exhibition held at that time in Venice; he began with the telling words: "Sadly, that pungent life, pulsating so strongly, has not achieved a worthy expression in art. Nowhere can one feel that more intensely than during the 16th «international» art exhibition in Venice, which is basically an exhibition of Italian painting, and more specifically: an exhibition of the fall of Italian painting."

Noc

W Wenecji ciepło nocy
 Płucze w nocy owoce
 I pełne cukrzanej miazgi
 Strzepuje jak figi – gwiazdy.

Night

In Venice, the warmth of the night
 Rinses fruit at night
 And full of sugary pulp
 Shakes down stars like figs.

Glicynie w Wenecji

Liliowa szarfa na różowym domu,
 To śpiewaczka, co śpiewa swój szlagier,
 Tu w nocy gondolą po kryjomu
 Przyjeżdża Herr Schmidt mit seinem
 [Schwager.

Wisterias in Venice

A lilac band on a pink house,
 It is singer singing her hit song,
 Here at night in secret in a gondola
 Comes Herr Schmidt mit seinem
 [Schwager.

Herr Schmidt mit seinem Schwager

Nie chcieliśmy się przyznać,
 Ale nas najbardziej zajął w mieście obcym.
 Nazwaliśmy tak najciekawszego
 [mężczyznę,
 Który podróżował z najpiękniejszym
 [chłopcem.⁴

Herr Schmidt mit seinem Schwager

We did not want to admit,
 But he drew us the most in the foreign city.
 We thus called the most interesting of men,
 Who travelled with the most beautiful of
 [boys.

One should note a few issues here. First of all, what is most visible in those miniatures, resonating with the echoes of aestheticising Parnasism known from *Oktostychy*, is the sensuality of the experiences of the poetic persona reflected in the synthetic combinations and transformations of colours, images, tastes, and smells. They include poetically transported impressions from a journey through Italy discursively recorded in Anna Iwaszkiewicz's diary: "For the past few days we have been living in a kind of a fairy tale, starting with Venice, which seemed to us as if from a dream, some white and pink fantasy miraculously harmonised with the blue skies and the sea, until the wonderful evening in Rome, to that golden sunset behind distant hills."⁵ The record of the a sensory experience turned in *Biletu tramwajowe* into that "white and pink fantasy" – clear, bright, smelling of wisterias, and enveloped with the warmth of the night. Secondly, it was less about recording the unique individual experience and more about searching for beauty as if trademarked by Oscar Wilde. The relationships between words, sounds, and images more to the forefront, basically obscuring rather than opening a view of the real Venice. In the art vs. life antinomy, art always wins. Even though a few real details can be saved, beauty remains

⁴ Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Wiersze zebrane* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1968), 205–206.

⁵ Anna Iwaszkiewiczowa, *Dzienniki i wspomnienia*, submitted for print by Maria Iwaszkiewiczowa, ed. Paweł Kądziała (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2000), 80.

the highest form of perfection. Thus, the aesthetic convention which influenced Iwaszkiewicz in the works from his youth shaped the poetic image in a greater degree than the surrounding reality.

Anna Iwaszkiewiczowa, conscious of the pressure exerted by the images of famous places consolidated in culture, which destroy the separateness of individual consideration, wrote:

Even though you have known St. Mark's Square, Piazzetta and all of the old buildings in general since you were a child, you do see them differently still, and most of all you absolutely cannot imagine that wonderful colour pallet of Venice or even the exceptional grey and pink tones of the interior of St. Peter's church.

In general, I have concluded that the fact popularising all works of art in postcards results in abasing it all. When you look at them you need to forget what they looked like in their reproduced forms and learn to look anew. (...) I, too, when looking at Venice and Rome, had to erase in me all my previous visions of them.⁶

Even if during their Italian trip they both "were learning to view things anew," it would be futile to search for traces of fresh experiences not obscured by culture in Iwaszkiewicz's initial Venetian poems. The author of *Dionizje* viewed the city the way a poet, according to him, should: in a gondola, an older man with a young boy strongly resembles the protagonist of *Death in Venice*, and the observed reality was enveloped in a yellow, white and pink glow as if in some cheap reproduction. Thus, Venice was lost underneath a thick layer of stereotypes and clichés. It is noteworthy that in *Hilary, syn buchaltera* (1923), one of his first novels, Iwaszkiewicz made his protagonist think about art exactly the same way:

Art. (At that time in a forest, somewhere in a forest filled with the smell of resin, he was reading *Dorian Gray*, a book about which our entire generation was crazy). Art! That meant marble and roses, wine and alabaster, asters in white vases, vases in lilac pinks, Venetian lanterns...

- and Venetian coppices, laughter, that sleigh ride, that only true sleigh ride in the world, the one from *Popioły*?⁷

Although "Jarosław," his wife wrote, "liked Venice the most,"⁸ his first visit to the city on the lagoon did not change his earlier cliché vision of it, consolidated earlier in *Hilary*. Those visions made it either a space of Venetian lanterns, lilac wisterias, and pink and golden glow, or they referred to images consolidated in literature (Mann, Żeromski, Byron⁹). The cultural vision of Venice was more vivid than the direct experience of it. As Oscar Wilde, whom Iwaszkiewicz considered a master at that time, put it:

⁶ Ibid., 80–81.

⁷ Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Hilary, syn buchaltera* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1975), 10.

⁸ Iwaszkiewiczowa, *Dzienniki i wspomnienia*, 80–81.

⁹ Vide *ibid.*: "We keep recalling Byron, who lived there for such a long time," (81).

The sense of form (...) is the basis of both creative and critical achievements. A true artist cannot reach form through emotion, but rather through a form to thoughts and passion.¹⁰ (...) He draws inspiration from form and only from it, as a true artist should.¹¹

Bilety tramwajowe does not strive to imitate external reality as "truth as understood by the followers of aestheticism was only and exclusively a reflection of how artists perceived the world being created in a work. Wilde considered artists as the creators of beauty, and through the models they created he perceived the world. When describing the world in a beautiful and decorative form, an artist performs an aestheticisation of trivial reality."¹² In line with those stipulations, Iwaszkiewicz's works were dominated by aestheticism, overt artificiality, a strive to emphasise form, though, mind you, it would be difficult to consider the series which consists of the recollections from his first Italian trip as successful in artistic terms. The Venice inscribed in *Bilety tramwajowe* fluctuates between a refined decorative trinket (*preciosité*) and a banal landscape painting (surely contrary to what the artist intended). The special nature of the city on the lagoon is reduced in it to decorative beauty, yet instead of an exceptional painting the outcome is often a cliché picture. As if the process of aestheticisation inevitably led to repeating cultural stereotypes, both at the level of the language, and image-based representations.

In the 1930s, Iwaszkiewicz visited Venice several times. As Romaniuk indicated: "The outcome of the writer's last visit to Italy in April 1938, when he saw Venice as the backdrop for the triumphant march of fascism, was that in his eyes the city of St. Mark was no longer the cradle of modern European civilisation, but rather its coffin."¹³ He provided a literary transposition of those experiences from his final pre-WWII trips in the poems which he wrote in the attic of the house in Stawiska, which formed the series entitled *Wenecja* dated 24 October 1939.¹⁴ Out of a total of six, three poems directly reference the reality of the "dark greenish city," evoking the image of evanescence, loss, and death. "It [Venice] is," as Iwaszkiewicz's biographer interpreted, "a spectre city, the capital of « pale poets », empty now. Yet in the undefined near future, at some stage of the construction of the perfect society of slaves, it may become a refuge for poets exiled from

¹⁰ Oskar Wilde, *Eseje. Opowiadania. Bajki. Poematy prozą*, ed. Juliusz Żuławski, trans. Ewa Berberyusz (Warsaw: PIW, 1957), 89.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹² Aleksandra Giełdoń-Paszek, *Obywatel Parnasu. Sztuki piękne w życiu i twórczości Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2014), 28.

¹³ Radosław Romaniuk, *Inne życie. Biografia Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Iskry, 2017), 17. At this point, it is worth mentioning that in 1939, before the Second World War, Iwaszkiewicz started writing, and later burnt, a novel "about the tearing down of Rome, the conclusion of which was the settling of Venice as a new culture form, as something which would start a new stage of humanity" (Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Podróże do Włoch* (Warsaw: PIW, 1977), 34).

¹⁴ This date was inscribed underneath his final text: 24 X 1939. (vide Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Sprawy osobiste i inne wiersze rozproszone*, selected and ed. Piotr Mitzner (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2010), 56).

politeia. Therefore, the city becomes reborn in wartime poems as a myth, a refuge in the terrible world."¹⁵

Even if one could offer an optimistic conclusion upon reading those works in their initial shape from 1939,¹⁶ the whole series, altered and extended, and excessively deprived of a master title which would add coherence to the whole, published in *Ciemne ścieżki*, could hardly be viewed in any positive light, which could spark any faith in the existence of a safe haven. Therefore, not to shatter the chronology, at this point one should remember the poetic image of Venice consolidated in the first weeks of the war to confront it at the right moment with the later version from 1957.

Venice also appeared in his two short stories from 1940–1941. Neither – i.e. in *Koronki weneckie I* and *Koronki weneckie II*, similarly to the already mentioned *Wenecja* series – is a simple description of his recent visit in Italy, but rather of the transformations of memory which occurred during the grim times of Nazi occupation. One could assume that the act of recollecting and its mechanisms would place a major role, in line with Iwaszkiewicz's deepest need at that time: "The current moment, both external and internal, is suitable – in my opinion – for starting writing a memoir."¹⁷ Let us examine those short stories.

Even the beginning of *Koronki I*, through its use of the imperfective aspect of verbs, suggests a multiplicity of the phenomena being referred to, thus creating a space of recurring phenomena, typical for recollections:

In Venice, March can be chilly. Wind from Dalmatia brings violent clouds, and you get downpours. Yet that bad weather does not last long, already the next day you get a pearl dawn, saturated with a drizzling glow, dispersed pink light, which exists only in Venice, and the houses, and cottages, hotels and palaces, and towers big and small become a dispersed bunch of pinkish bones, of whitewashed graves.¹⁸

When compared to the poems included in *Bilety tramwajowe*, a distinct change in the perception of the city on the lagoon occurred: the pink and golden glow which enveloping the visible reality exposes its hidden morbid face. The light pearl-like Venice darkens before our very eyes. Of course, one could treat that as a trace of the author's wartime experiences laid in a palimpsest on the Italian images stored in his memory, which continued to assume an ever darker tone: "Rain instead of sunlight burning on the grey and white of Venetian architecture is truly a huge sadness."¹⁹ The sadness of the lonely narrator was all the greater considering that his only other companion in the hotel "was an elderly very thin English woman, with traces of

¹⁵ Romaniuk, *Inne życie*, 17.

¹⁶ In this form, the series was published based on manuscripts as late as in 2010, and it remained unknown before that; vide Iwaszkiewicz, *Sprawy osobiste...*, 51–56.

¹⁷ Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Książka moich wspomnień*, manuscript, introduction dated: 6 I 1941. As quoted in: Romaniuk, *Inne życie*, 37.

¹⁸ Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Nowele włoskie* (Warsaw: Muza SA, 1994), 127.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

tuberculosis on her tired face. I assume it was the last trip in her life.”²⁰ That presumption turned into an anticipation of tragic news – a message arrived informing him of the death of Staś, his friend, a young, very promising poet. That event revealed the frailty, transience, and a kind of “insignificance” of human life when compared to grand works of art (e.g. Titian’s *Assumption* in the Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari basilica). And even those do not last for ever:

Assunta burned in front of me for a moment longer. I observed that superb old and everlasting work of art. When too shall it fall to ash? I felt exactly as the river of time passed by my fingers. The coolness of the water shrank by nerves in my hand. I tried to contain myself.²¹

The intense experience of the inevitability of passing, the movement of everything towards ruin was in that case inexplicably linked to the aquatic dimension of space – the water of the canals metaphorically, yet also in an overwhelmingly sensory manner, constituted a trail which one follows towards death. In *Koronki I*, Venice became a space of loneliness, passing, and death. In the rain and cold, the lonely narrator could not find his way back to the hotel. He tried to reach St. Mark’s Square. He met a boy who, as if a spectre, had a smile like Staś once did. That wandering would conclude not at a specific location but a despair-filled thought: “Staś did not achieve anything. Everything was left unfinished. He could have written for many more years. But even that is insignificant. How many others have passed, even among my beloved ones.”²²

The dark symbolism of Venice, initiated by the first story as if in a musical introduction, was expanded upon by Iwaszkiewicz in *Koronki weneckie II*. It offers a sense of loneliness, even more nostalgic and obstinate references to the past and the death of someone with whom the narrator was once close... This time the writer/narrator, living in a small room overlooking Santa Maria della Salute, tried in Venice to overcome his crisis and give a meaningful shape to the female protagonist of the “romance” he was writing. Although the plans proved impossible to fulfil, the writer’s block was not able to immediately extinguish the joy of the stay in the city:

The loneliness was a somewhat happy one as it was surrounded by a merry, colourful, kind and loud crowd moving slowly through Saint Mark’s Square and through the narrow streets, which hang around the square as if a spider’s web. (...) – and suddenly I saw I was being surrounded by a holiday or some unknown celebrations. Huge red, green, and white banners billowed on long poles in front of a church, and a cold Dalmatian wind rolled them up and unravelled them, from time to time expanding them like sails. Saint Mark’s Square was filled with a dense crowd rocking

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 131.

²² Ibid., 132.

in a dance-like movement to the music played by a military orchestra standing on a clear iron structure in the centre of the square.²³

The narrator got a feeling of “melting into the anonymous mass,”²⁴ of losing his separateness, and at that moment he met Oswald Sosnowski, a friend from long ago, who was permanently living in Venice. That chance meeting changed everything, triggered his memory: a return to past events suppressed almost completely in his mind. A return to the past began for good at the apartment of his friend, to which the narrator was invited. The space he ended up in remained in a sharp contrast to the colourful Saint Mark’s Square:

Huge rooms, extremely high, filled solely with huge dimmed mirrors, resembling windows overlooking nothingness, were cold. (...) In the coldness of that damp room cooled by the breezes of cold wind, among dead, damaged, and dusty furniture, a few everyday items offended with their vulgarity. (...) In the dining room, there were woven chairs, a few sports photographs were hung on the walls, including a large portrait of a French navy officer, some still-life by a second-class eastern painter – and all that seemed bright and redundant in that dead museum.²⁵

There, among various photographs, the narrator found by accident a picture of a young girl, whom he met many years back in Ukraine: “the face which looked back at me (...) from a distance of thirty years triggered in me some very distant memories, which I have suppressed deep into my subconscious as they are unexplainable.”²⁶ That later became the direct trigger of his recollecting the time he spent as a tutor in Szapijowo, where Zosia, the girl from the photograph, was the teacher. Slowly from his subconscious, images began to emerge of what had seemed long gone and lost for ever. In particular: his evening talks with Zosia in the parlour, a ball in the palace which was also attended by Oswald Sosnowski and professor Żalwat, who came for the very event, a lovers’ quadrangle, as if from Dostoevsky’s novels, in which they became entangled and which in time became increasingly melodramatic. Therefore, for the protagonist/narrator, the actual topography of Venice began to change more and more into a spectral space of recollections, which had occurred thirty years prior, first in the Szapijowo palace, then in Kiev and Warsaw before the Second World War, and finally in Venice, yet the one from Oswald’s story, when Zosia committed suicide drowning in the waters of a canal. The return of the past constituted the narrator’s realisation of his own complicated attitude towards Zosia and her feelings (“she came to seek revenge on me for not understanding and disregarding her feelings”²⁷). As a result, the narrator began to understand that

²³ Ibid., 137.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 138–139.

²⁶ Ibid., 138.

²⁷ Ibid., 165.

I came to Venice not to complete my novel. That was only a pretext: the search for solitude, the immersion in thought in the pink Venetian rain about the irreversible past, that sudden recollection of the distant days of my youth, which I much disliked and which I have never recalled before, or at least I have never thought about them with tender emotion. No, no, my return to Venice was only a return to Zosia, an attempt to recall the most distant of years and to atone for my past offences. Perhaps my conscience pestered me for so long so that I would finally return to Venice, like Twardowski returned to Rome. Here, I had to pay for my past ignorance by rejecting the character which I intended in my novel.²⁸

Therefore, the writer's block experienced by the narrator at the beginning of the story concealed something much deeper – a sense of guilt and rejected responsibility for suppressed events and feelings. With its labyrinthine space meandering into the past, Venice opened other dimensions of forgotten events for the narrator, which he had avoided to confront. That particular initiation would not enable him to create, but it did bring him a major observation: "Sometimes events kill the reality of art with their brutal reality. The world is too intrusive, and it rips the fabric of our thoughts like delicate, much too delicate lace. Life seems too terrifying to become a model for art."²⁹

The final sentence seems to refer directly to the time when both short stories were created, which in turn could constitute a mask for wartime experiences. It is worth noting that Venice in the early 1940s was for Iwaszkiewicz, as it had to be, a space stored in his memory and not one which he experienced directly. From his visits in the 1930s, which preceded the writing of both stories, he retained in his memory an image of a cold and dark city:

In 1932, when I was travelling for Rome and I only stepped onto the pre-water platform (the old Santa Lucia station was still there) it was pitch black and cold, and the water in the canal was black as ink. And later, as we were driving with Borman and Władek, in March 1937, what a terrible storm caught us when we were going by a gondola with two rowers (not a motorboat) to "Albergo Luna."³⁰

The cool, rainy Venice with dark water in the canals in *Koronki weneckie I* and *II* was, on the one hand, an image with a distinctly autobiographical character,³¹ and, on the other, a costume for the occupation period in Poland, and, on yet another, the literary fulfilment of the strongly consolidated

²⁸ Ibid., 164.

²⁹ Ibid., 162.

³⁰ Iwaszkiewicz, *Podróże do Włoch...*, 19.

³¹ Vide Romaniuk, *Inne życie*. Romaniuk indicated an evident autobiographical key: "In *Koronki weneckie I*, the writer returned to his experiences of two farewells, i.e. the deaths of his two artist friends: Jerzy Liebert and Karol Szymanowski. (...) The circumstances of the last meeting with Stanisław [the short story's protagonist] recreate the author's farewell with Karol Szymanowski, similarly to the motif of a message received in Italy about the death of his friend" (46). In *Koronki II*, then, "there appears the literary figure of Zofia, which refers back to the biography of Zofia Kurkiewiczówna, the author's friend during his stay in Byszewy and his studies in Kiev. She, associated with Józef Świerczyński, another man with whom Iwaszkiewicz was close, lived with her husband in Postawy near Vilnius," (44–45).

metaphorical meanings in culture typically assigned to the city on the lagoon. It was those dimensions that overlapped in a kind of a palimpsest. A few symbolic tropes applied in wartime short stories and used by Iwaszkiewicz in his later works drew unbreakable associations between Venice's space and the act of wandering in a labyrinth, with darkness, spectres, and death.

However, before I proceed to other descriptions of black Venice, allow me to quote, in order to lighten these dark tones, a passage about Iwaszkiewicz's visit with his wife in September 1949:

Then, maybe the only time in my life, Venice was so golden, warm, there were not that many people there, and it was just as it was in our life at that time, very warm and calm. Afterwards, there once again came the cold and clouds. And it was that fair weather day in Venice that was as if a farewell to our former life.³²

It is now time to return to the six Venice poems included in *Ciemne ścieżki*, which form a poetic mini-cycle. They have little in common with the Parnassising *Bilety tramwajowe*, maybe apart from wisterias appearing here and there, which, however, when they bloomed earlier they had resembled lilac girdles, and later they hung dead like grey ropes. That change emblematically and suggestively reflected the general transformation which occurred within over a quarter of a century. The poetic journey unfolded similarly to those in wartime texts – through the power of imagination. Yet it began differently than in the poems written in 1939: from an autumn native landscape (pines, extensive fields) saturated with overwhelming sadness (“a chasm of time,” “sky (...) full of despair”) the focus immediately moves to black Venice

Lecz tylko zamknij oczy: usłyszysz szmer [wiosel	But only try to close your eyes: hear the [whisper of the oars
I przemówią do ciebie miast umarłych [głosem	And you will hear instead of the voices of [the dead
Różowy marmur i czarna gondola. ³³	Pink marble and black gondola.

Further, the story unfolds in line with the initial sequence offering overlapping and mutually amplifying suggestive images of decay and death:

W tym mieści czarnozielonkawym, Pełnym różowych kościotrupów (..)	In this black and greenish city, Full of pink skeletons (..)
W podwodziu błyszczą martwy kamień (..)	A dead stone glistens in the undercarriage (..)
A przywiązane do obramień Czarne trumnice klaszcząc tańczą...	And the tied to the frames Black coffins dance clapping...

³² Iwaszkiewicz, *Podróże do Włoch...*, 20.

³³ Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Poezje*, selected and notes by Bohdan Zadura (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1989), 211.

Na zgniłej wodzie złote smugi (...)	Golden streaks on rotten water (...)
Zielona woda oczy zjadła, Zielona woda duszę wyje.	Green water ate the eyes, Green water howls the soul.
Aż po wiersz zamykający cykl:	Until the poem which concludes the series:
A dziś w zamarłych wód laguny Wypływa pusta, czarna łódź. I nikt nie widzi czarnej łuny, I nikt nie woła: zbudź się, zbudź!	And today into lagoons of dead waters An empty black boat sets off. And no one can see the black glow, And no one cries: wake up, wake up!
(...)	(...)
Wśród dzwonów, które kościół grzebią, Tak obojętne, choć podniebne, Nie widzę nic – i nawet ciebie, Miasto umarłe niepotrzebnie. ³⁴	Among tolling bells, which bury the church, So indifferent, though sky-high, I cannot see anything – not even you, A city which died needlessly.

In his consistent, almost obsessive use of a multitude of props and images, Iwaszkiewicz created the space of Venice as a space of death. In one of the stanzas, he additionally deepened, and expanded considerably, the process referencing the figures of several artists who had previously visited the city and who had special connections to it – through conventional topoi, which they used and co-created.

Tu na malachit tych rozwalin Spadali zewsząd bladolicy Poeci, władcy białych krain, Z pękami w ustach tajemnicy.	Here on the malachite of the rubble Fell from everywhere pale Poets, rulers of white lands, With clusters of mysteries in their mouths.
Tutaj Krasieński nieprzytomny Joannę stroił w amaranty, I tu na piersi swej ogromnej Utulał jego żal Konstanty.	Here the unconscious Krasieński Turned Joanna into cannons, And here on his huge breast Konstanty consoled his grief.
Tu Wagner ujrzał śmierć jak Kundry Z płomieniem purpurowych ust, I zagapiony, ale mądry Siedział w kawiarni czarny Proust.	Here Wagner saw death like Kundry With a flame of purple lips, And absent-minded, yet wise Black Proust was sitting in a café.
I z kraju, który gdzieś się ukrył Za gór na wschodzie siny stok, Zielonooki, z krwi i z cukru, Przyjeżdżał Aleksander Blok ³⁵ .	And from a country which hid somewhere Behind mountains in the east a grey slope, Green-eyed, of flesh and bone and sugar, Alexander Blok would come.

³⁴ Ibid., 211–213.

³⁵ Ibid., 211.

And so, Zygmunt Krasiński not so much appears as the author of works which fulfilled the topos of romantic Venice,³⁶ but rather as a passionate lover, who in the spring of 1834 travelled together with his lover, the then famous beauty Joanna Bobrowa and her husband Teodor Bór-Piotrowicki, to Venice and Florence. In that frame, as if in works by Byron or Shelley, Venice became Aphrodite's city, the location of a fiery romance and, consequently, a scandal.³⁷ For Proust,³⁸ just as for the protagonist of *In Search of Lost Time*, Venice was a city of dreams; the French writer visited it twice, whereas Marcel visited it in the novel only after Albertine's tragic accident – therefore, the direct reason for the journey was the experience of the death of the love of his life. That was also where “Wagner saw death,”³⁹ as argued by Iwaszkiewicz for whom music was the most important of all arts. Venice greatly fascinated the author of *Lohengrin*. Significantly, as indicated by Ewa Bieńkowska,

This is what Venice suggested to Wagner, what impression it made on his imagination. The sun-soaked palaces of the South fall into the shadow of

³⁶ As noted by Janusz Ruzzkowski: “Almost everything that Krasiński wrote about Venice was an endless comparison between the city and the history of Poland. (...) The main events in the city's history in the 18th and 19th centuries, i.e. the fall of the Republic, the Napoleonic short period, and Austrian occupation evoked associations with the history of Poland, even if the similarities were somewhat superficial.”

[Janusz Ruzzkowski, “Wenecka Apokalipsa. O Niedokończonym poemacie Zygmunta Krasińskiego”, *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 3 (1990): 55.]

NB, letters from Krasiński to Konstanty Gaszyński from 1932 are full of dilemmas regarding his absence from the November Uprising; vide Zygmunt Krasiński, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego*, ed. and introduction by Zbigniew Sudolski (Warsaw: PIW, 1991), 34–58.

³⁷ Yet in time, the love proved an ill-fated one: the author of *Nie-Boska Komedja*, submitting to his father's suggestions, ended his relationship with Bobrowa, whose marriage later fell apart. This is what Krasiński wrote about their relationship in a letter to Henry Reeve, his friend, on 25 August 1934: “And so, since that moment, and if I'm correct it was Easter, right after the pope's blessing, I had lived a life filled with reality and dreams, a life of the body and the soul, a life eventually human, not free from serious dangers or amusing trifles, sometimes irradiated by a sudden flash of poetry, sometimes saddened by an irritable situation, from time to time rising to tragedy and falling into ridicule; a life in which awe was intertwined with mockery, weakness with ups, trifles such as fashion, a ribbon, or a gossip, with serious elevated things like love's seduction and intoxication, remorse of a noble woman when she sacrificed herself, hate for that who was her husband, countless worries about surprises and revenge, countless hopes for happiness, failed a hundred times, shattered just once; finally despair, the common dance of such a drama in which, as Balzac would say: “all laws divide and all nature's allures combine two elevated souls.” But those events, dear Henryk, unfolded in Florence, in Venice, in spring, on wonderful evenings, when everything smelled of love (...) When I left Italy, everything became covered by clouds, both the sky and the surrounding nature. Munich, Kissinger, Frankfurt – those were days of passionate emotion, moments of heavenly delights; yet the circumstances were becoming increasingly unpleasant. The husband became vigilant, jealous, restless. We finally broke up: I stayed in Wiesbaden, she continued her trip. Sometimes I leave for two three days and I see her there.

[Letter of 25 August 1834, Wiesbaden, in: Zygmunt Krasiński, *Listy do Henryka Reeve*, trans. Aleksandra Olędzka-Frybesowa, ed., introduction, chronicle and notes by Paweł Hertz (Warsaw: PIW, 1980), vol. II, 157–158.]

³⁸ It is noteworthy that the novel *In Search of Lost Time* constituted a major point of reference for Iwaszkiewicz and a focus of polemic, while Proust's concept of time had its critical reflection in one of his best known short stories, i.e. *Panny z Wilka*.

³⁹ Iwaszkiewicz, *Poezje*, 212.

the night – they stop being of colour, radiant clarity of plastic form, and they become some ghastly beauty carved out of the matter of darkness and the faint light of the Moon. They become filled with the wail of an old song recalled by the waiting Tristan. That is Wagner's Venetian alchemy: day transforms into night, shapes transform into sounds, and that which is alive changes into death.⁴⁰

One could say that he transformed quite literally – on 13 February 1883 Wagner died of a heart attack in the Vendramin-Calergi palace by the Grand Canal. The vision of the death in Venice of the grand composer surely had a major influence on Iwaszkiewicz, who was a great admirer of the former's works. That does not, however, explain why in the poem he did not reference the play *Tristan and Isolde*, the score for which was written in Venice, and which constituted a reinterpretation of the famous Celtic legend about the tragic and unfulfilled love, which would perfectly match the myth of Venice, the city of love. He did, though, reference *Parsifal*, or more specifically, the character of Kundry, the female protagonist. The explanation is associated with the second figure that appeared in the Venetian series, i.e. Salome – in this case, a mosaic in the baptistery in Saint Mark's Basilica and in a poem by Alexander Blok.⁴¹ Both figures personified dark sensuality, eroticism, and cruelty. The poet further amplified the Russian tone:

⁴⁰ Ewa Bienkowska, *W poszukiwaniu królestwa człowieka. Utopia sztuki od Kanta do Tomasza Manna* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1981), 285.

In the essay *Wagner i Wenecja* Dariusz Czaja wrote: "Wagner not so much invented but rather discovered that deadly nature of the city, a property which not much later became the axis of the decadent image of Venice at the turn of the century. It took a man from the North to extract that dark side of Venice, to show emphatically that that aura of sensory beauty is being eaten from the inside by destruction and slow decay." [<http://mwm.nfm.wroclaw.pl/articles/132-wagner-i-wenecja>]

⁴¹ The Russian poet was for Iwaszkiewicz a major author, which is clear from his study "Blok" included in the *Petersburg* collection, in which the author of *Brzezina* saw the influence of the neighbourhood where the poet lived on his works: "The apartment is located on the fourth floor, it has a balcony overlooking a canal referred to as «Priażka», meaning the Cleaning Lady. (...) Behind the canal, there is an empty quay, with makeshift piers, full of abandoned ships – the quay seems to be an abandoned shipyard. One can suppose that from the balcony of Blok's apartment, from the fourth floor, you could see the sea." (Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, "Petersburg," in *Podróże*, (Warsaw, 1981), vol. 2, 246). This fragment reflects a water analogy between Petersburg (also known as the Venice of the North) and Venice.

Alexander Blok was the author of three poems entitled Venice; the second one, presumably in its original form, constituted Iwaszkiewicz' direct inspiration. I quote it in Józef Łobodowski's translation [English version: https://medium.com/@Cindy_M67/venice-aleksandr-blok-1880-1921-c5c5f024e3ba]

Z laguny mrocznej wieje chłodem.
Gondola, jak milczący grób.
Zbolały w taką noc i młody –
leżą u lwa groźnego stóp.

A cold wind off the lagoon.
The silent coffins of the gondolas.
And I, on this night – young and ill –
[Am lying] stretched out beside the lion's column.

Z wieży giganty przebudzone
ślą głos północy ponad gród.
Marek wzorzystych ścian ikonę
utopił w głębi srebrnych wód.

On the tower, with iron song,
Giants beat out the midnight hour.
Mark has drowned its lacework portals
In the moonlit lagoon.

W cieniu pałaców, mroku domów,
pod blaskiem księżycowych fal
przechodzi kryjąc się Salome,
mą krwawą głowę niosąc w dal.⁴²

In the shadow of the palace arcade,
In the moon's faint light,
Stealthily Salome passes by
With my bloody head.

Therefore, death no longer reached John the Baptist but the poet, a fact which marked the space of the city with bloody crime and cruelty. Black Venice became more and more black.

All of the cultural tropes used by Iwaszkiewicz had at least three functions. First of all, they indicate that the author of *Ciemne ścieżki* intentionally drew inspiration from symbolic meanings assigned to Venice deposited in art (the city of passionate and tragic love, dark eroticism, crime, and death), and thus the particular inability to see it anew, "with a clear eye"; his own sight became an inevitable reflection and repetition of already consolidated images. Secondly, Venetian poems saturated with images of death perfectly fit the dark tones of *Ciemne ścieżki*, a collection which still resonated with the echoes of the war, which additionally explains the presence in it of poems written in October 1939. Thirdly, Iwaszkiewicz consistently, with considerable determination, reactivated the myth of Venice as a space of decay and death, which unfolded, as accurately noted by Dariusz Czaja, "around a few clearly noticeable significant motifs and topics. (...) What is significant is its persistence and constant returning in European imagination. At least since the late-18th century, the motif has emerged emphatically through various vivid forms, and in various symbolic arrangements."⁴³

The space of the water city, which triggered symbolic meanings fluctuating around passing, decay, and death returned in *Opowiadanie z kotem* (1964), and, even more significantly, the array of signs connoting the Thanatological meanings was expanded, while the semantics of the text was obtrusively shaped by the myth of black Venice.

Already at the beginning of the short story, just as it had been the case in earlier works, a space opens there which is painfully cold, adverse, and

W cieniu pałaców, mroku domów,
pod blaskiem księżycowych fal
przechodzi kryjąc się Salome,
mą krwawą głowę niosąc w dal.

In the shadow of the palace arcade,
In the moon's faint light,
Stealthily Salome passes by
With my bloody head.

I wszystko śpi – świat sen ogarnął.
tylko widziadła lekki krok,
tylko ma głowa z misy czarnej
z tęsknotą patrzy w nocny mrok.

All is asleep – palaces, canals, people,
Only the gliding footsteps of the phantom,
Only the head on the blank platter
Gazes with anguish into the surrounding gloom.

[Aleksander Błok, *Wiersze włoskie*, trans. Kazimierz Andrzej Jaworski and Józef Łobodowski (Lublin: Biblioteka Kameny, 1935), 10. Online <http://dlibra.umcs.lublin.pl/dlibra/plain-content?id=1466>]

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Czaja, *Wenecja i śmierć. Konteksty symboliczne*, 59, http://www.cyfrowaetnografia.pl/Content/2209/Strony%20od%20PSL_XLVI_nr3-4-12_Czaja.pdf

rainy, "with dampness permeating to the bone."⁴⁴ The sensation becomes amplified further: "Saint Mark's Basilica became even more unreal behind a web of clear rain."⁴⁵ Reality dissolves and one enters an oneiric/spectral world, in which everything assumes qualities only partly real: the meeting with Carmen,⁴⁶ which initiated a night-time gondola trip in search of a cat, the gondolier, the emerging figures which resembled phantoms (a nun, Angelo, a man in a cage), a cat's corpse floating in the ink-black canal, and a labyrinthine path leading nowhere. In that space, there were no clear lines between the land and the sea ("The narrow street suddenly ran into a small square, from in darkness you could only see the surface of a growing lake. Or maybe that was water?"⁴⁷), but also between houses, objects, and figures poorly visible at night, lit only by candlelight. Everything seems to create a dark and menacing whole, as if in a nightmare or a horror film.

Several elements assume exceptionally significant meaning. First of all, it is the water capturing the whole surrounding area. "Quiet water, morose water, dormant water, unpenetrated water," as Bachelard argued, "those are the lessons offered by matter leading thoughts towards death. (...) it is a lesson about death in stillness, about death in depths, about death which is next to us, by us, in us."⁴⁸ The Thanatological meaning assigned to the water element in the discussion by the French philosopher was fulfilled almost literally by "Opowiadanie z kotem"; one could treat fragments of *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie* as a commentary to Iwaszkiewicz' text. Even more so, the symbolism of other elements of the presented world is also associated with death: the gondola, morbidly black in its aesthetics, carries the bane of Charon,⁴⁹ while the gondolier fulfils the role of a farer to the land of the dead protecting the secret.

Thus, water becomes the material surface for death: "All it takes is a gust of evening wind for the silent water to murmur once again... All it takes is the moonlight, so gentle and pale, for the spectre to flow over the waves, only just touching it with its feet."⁵⁰ The spectral nature is the ontological status of the characters which appear in the short story: the narrator's female friend ("It was so dark. I couldn't see Carmen's face, as if it wasn't there"⁵¹), whose hand was devoid of any bones - ("It's only an empty sleeve"⁵²); there is also the mysterious gondolier Vlado dressed all in black, "re-

⁴⁴ Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, "Opowiadanie z kotem," in *O psach, kotach i diablach* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1968), 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁶ The autobiographical key for the short story was suggested by Iwaszkiewicz in his study *Wenecja*. Vide *Podróże do Włoch*, 32-34.

⁴⁷ Iwaszkiewicz *Opowiadanie z kotem*, 29.

⁴⁸ Gaston Bachelard, *Wyobrażenia poetycka. Wybór pism*, selected by Henryk Chudak, trans. Henryk Chudak, Anna Tatarkiewicz, foreword by Jan Błoński (Warsaw: PIW, 1975), 145-146 (the quoted fragment was translated into Polish by Anna Tatarkiewicz and from Polish translated into English).

⁴⁹ Bachelard continued: "all the mysterious ships, so common in mythical stories, have something in common with the death ship," (*ibid.*, 149).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁵¹ Iwaszkiewicz, *Opowiadanie z kotem*, 31.

⁵² *Ibid.*

sembling (...) some character from Michelangelo's works."⁵³ And all of them participated in a spectral trip, a labyrinthine meandering at night through the canals, which seem never-ending and most probably leading to the world beyond.

Spectral nature as the status of a presented world is a quality of Venice perceived as a "dead substitute for a real living city."⁵⁴ As Chaja argued when discussing a 1903 essay by Georg Simmel: "life in this city is unreal, and people wander it like spectres."⁵⁵ For the German theoretician of culture, Venice had, however, in the early-20th century not so much the elusive nature of a phantom, but rather that of a mask concealing emptiness and simulating true life. "The whole of Venice is on the side of lifelessness and death. Short and simple: it is a corpse."⁵⁶ However, throughout the century it underwent a significant metamorphosis changing its way of being, as per Agamben's diagnosis: "Venice is no longer a corpse as it still functions somehow, naturally, transitioned to a stage which occurs after death and the body's decay. A spectre corresponds to that stage."⁵⁷

Can the spectral Venice from Iwaszkiewicz's short story have anything in common with the arguments of the Italian philosopher produced fifty years later? It would seem that such an assumption is anachronistic. But is it?

The author himself did not value his text highly. He wrote in his journal: "I've recently read *Opowiadanie z kotem* to my family – a week on and full of reminiscences from other authors,"⁵⁸ so he was drawn to stereotypical clichés. Indeed, Venice vanishes in the story under a multitude of intertextual associations becoming a kind of a simulacrum consisting of a multitude of overlapping cultural representations. Instead of a living city, readers receive its seeming image. For Iwaszkiewicz, the semantics of a text as the outcome of events occurring within the story line, ambiguously appearing images, and looped nonlinear composition could not have been satisfactory – it must have appeared to him unclear, and barely original, derivative even. Yet from today's perspective, *Opowiadanie z kotem*, considerably exposing its anti-mimetic nature and revealing its simulational potential, seems a kind of anticipation of the diagnoses by postmodern thinkers. Maybe literature, even outside a writer's consciousness, is able to grasp a phenomenon which will only have received discursive descriptions long afterwards? Maybe the spectral nature revealed in the structure of the short story, based on the model of a journey as a wandering inside a labyrinth, constitutes an identification of the special character of Venice as having no tangible substance? Hence, presumably, the sense while reading it

⁵³ Ibid., 34. One should note Iwaszkiewicz's strong inspiration drawn from Mann's novella, particularly in terms of the development of the character of the mysterious farer and in the description of the gondola ride.

⁵⁴ Dariusz Czaja, "Wenecja jako widmo," in *Inne przestrzenie, inne miejsca: mapy i terytoria*, ed. Dariusz Czaja (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2013), 134.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 127.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Giorgio Agamben, "O zaletach i niedogodnościach życia wśród widm," in *Nagość*, trans. Krzysztof Żaboklicki (Warsaw: W.A.B., 2010), 4.

⁵⁸ Iwaszkiewicz, *Dzienniki 1964–1980*, 63.

of its strange elusiveness and transience, as if neither the story, nor the characters, nor the meanings could be systematised or stabilised, as if it would not be subject to specification only dissolving in every reading as if a fog. Thus, the meta-plan would be an equivalent of Venice the spectre, and its spectral identity would be reflected in the deepest dimensions of the text. Is it possible that Iwaszkiewicz was not aware of how omnipresent the city, made of signs and resembling dreams,⁵⁹ “which simulates real life,”⁶⁰ thus became in *Opowiadanie z kotem*?

Further Venice-themed texts by Iwaszkiewicz can be found in *Śpiewnik włoski* (1978). Those include “Wielkanoc w Wenecji” and “Smutna Wenecja.” Both poems offer records of fleeting moments in St. Mark’s square, combining visual and sound experiences. In the former, the sound of bells tolling at midnight, through synaesthesia, transform into pigeons flying around. In the latter, as if in a kaleidoscope, a colourful mosaic is formed by several small images: brick walls, blooming wisterias by a wall, a smile of girl met in the street, and a barking dog. The tones in both are definitely light, sometimes colourful and resonating, which might trigger an association with his 1924 poems. Yet the conclusions of both are strangely:

Pytam się: co to? Powiadają: to ptaki. wyleciały w nocy z tonącej arki ⁶¹ (“Wielkanoc w Wenecji”)	I ask: what is it? They tell me: those are birds. they flew out at night from a sinking ark (“Wielkanoc w Wenecji”)
(..) i psa blondyna co szczekał [zażarcie na świat i na mnie na deszcz i gondolę	(..) and the blond’s dog which barked [ferociously at the world at me at the rain and a gondola
I już był gotów skoczyć do kanału ⁶² (“Smutna Wenecja”)	And it was ready to jump into the canal (“Smutna Wenecja”)

The impressionist images in the poems included in *Śpiewnik* become evidently darker though they do not assume a colour saturated to such an extent as in the *Wenecja* series in the *Ciemne ścieżki* collection.

“Oda na zagładę Wenecji,” published in the *Muzyka wieczorem* collection (1980), already after the author’s death, constituted the final chapter of Iwaszkiewicz’ “Venetian text.” The poet utilised a classic genre (the ode)

⁵⁹ Vide Agamben, “O zaletach i niedogodnościach życia wśród widm,” 48–49.

⁶⁰ Czaja, *Wenecja jako widmo*, 128.

⁶¹ Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Śpiewnik włoski. Wiersze* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1978), 12.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 13.

to draw in the form of a vision, which is subject to formal genological constraints, in a restrained yet suggestive manner a catastrophic image of the city falling into an abyss.⁶³ That vision begins with an apostrophe to a lute symbolising the inseparability of music and poetry:

Oda na zagładę Wenecji

A Thing of Beauty is a Joy for ever

John Keats

Ty, pogrążona gigantyczna lutni,
w której zamilkły gwarne gargaryzmy,
śpią razem z tobą aniołowie smutni
i gęste gąszcze przekleństw i charyzmów,
nadzieje zgasłe, zalane ogniska,
gnieźdzą się gniazda podwodnych
[kryształów,
niepomne głębie zimna czy gorąca,
struga materii z krwią zmieszanej błyska,
sięgając w wirów gałęzisty parów,
fala podskórna struny śmierci trąca.⁶⁴

You, buried gigantic lute,
in which the loud gurgles went quiet,
together with you there sleep sad angels
and thick thickets of curses and charismas,
faded hopes, extinguished bonfires,
nest of underwater crystals nestles,
unbelievable depths of cold or heat,
a stream of matter flashes mixed with
[blood,
reaching into the trench of branched whirls,
an epidermal wave strikes the strings of
[death.

Now the “gigantic lute” plays only for mice within a space marked by decay (“You underwater strings resonate for mice”), covered with black sediment, in which sea waters carry shoals of dead fish. In the depths, there is quiet and death. As Aleksander Reimann aptly noted:

A musical instrument remains silent, dead, and dormant. So, if Iwaszkiewicz reached for art as a symbol of unwavering beauty, that would be only to indicate its powerlessness. (...) The buried soundless lute becomes a harbinger of death as an image of decay, a world half flooded, unreal, a world of resonating sleepy fogs and dark voices.⁶⁵

Venice in *Oda* is a city which is “half flooded” and “half erected” – half alive and half dead – which after centuries of its power and fame experienced an annihilation that occurred before readers own eyes. In this context, it is extremely interesting to consider the change of the position which the speaker occupies in the text: initially fulfilling the role an external observer of the ongoing process to gradually, in the course of the annihilation, become ever so strongly associated with the dying city. “When faced with the grandness of Venice,” Janusz Drzewucki argued, “which on the one hand

⁶³ Vide Stanisław Stabro, *Klasycy i nie tylko... Studia o poezji XX wieku* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2012), 44.

⁶⁴ Iwaszkiewicz, *Poezje*, 453.

⁶⁵ Aleksandra Reimann, “Podstuchać muzyczny motyw.” *O cyklu muzyczno-poetyckim na przykładzie Muzyki wieczorem Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza*, 222. [3333-Tekst%20artykułu-6333-1-10-20151007%20(7).pdf]

was mysterious but, on the other, quite open, the poet faced himself, his own human grandness and futility.⁶⁶ The old poet, nearing the end of his life, found an analogy between his own fate and the fate of Venice sliding into oblivion. Yet that was not the essence of his finding. In Oda "the author outlined the axiological vision of crossing the final frontier and yet a return to the Greek kalokagathos."⁶⁷ Eventually, beauty vanquishes both the passage of time and death:

I wtedy wszyscy, co dla prawdy żyli,
słoneczną chmurą wzniosą się nad wodą
mówiąc: dla szczęścia my się urodzili
i w krąg wplątali wieczystej urody,
bo co jest piękne, to już trwa na wieki,
słońcem karmione rosną ludzkie lata
i mądra dźwięczy praw wieczystych
[lekcja,
którą zachwytem wzniesione powieki
odkryją niby ciemne światła świata
i powstającą Nieczystą Wenecję.⁶⁸

And then everyone who lived for the truth,
shall rise in a sunny cloud over the water
saying: we were born for happiness
and entangled in a circle of eternal beauty,
because what is beautiful it already lasts
[for ages,
human years grow fed by the sun
and the wise lesson of eternal laws
[resonates,
which shall be discovered by eyes filled
[with awe
as if the dark lights of the world
and the emerging Foul Venice.

Oda's motto, i.e. John Keats' "A Thing of Beauty is a Joy for ever," which Iwaszkiewicz translated as "bo co jest piękne to już trwa na wieki" [because that which is beautiful already lasts for ages] reflects an unwavering belief in the power of art. Those words, uttered twice – resonating even more strongly included both at the beginning and the end of the text – become a kind of Iwaszkiewicz credo, who believed in unwavering beauty, which was embodied by Venice, for centuries the symbol of man-made greatness, wonder, and perfection. The sacralisation and elevation of Venice were a gesture intended to save beauty, but not necessarily lifting the laws of passing which applied to its material form. Beauty did not fulfil a decorative function in this case, as in his youthful works, but it acquired a metaphysical dimension being the highest value in the world.⁶⁹

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⁶⁶ Janusz Drzewucki, "Poeta w Wenecji," in *Smak słowa. Szkice o poezji* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1999), 19.

⁶⁷ Reimann, "Podstuchać muzyczny motyw," 223.

⁶⁸ Iwaszkiewicz, *Poezja*, 454–455.

⁶⁹ Cf. Drzewucki, "Poeta w Wenecji."

In this context it is worth quoting the apt remarks by Jerzy Kwiatkowski: "(...) Orthodox Young Poland did not treat the «art for art's sake» slogan seriously: it used as a pretence for its idealistic and expressionistic assumptions. Iwaszkiewicz did not step outside the slogan – indeed. Young Polish aestheticism could be referred to as metaphysical. Young Iwaszkiewicz's aestheticism was, simply, aestheticism." (Jerzy Kwiatkowski, *Poezja Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza na tle dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1975), 37). Therefore, one might conclude that Oda do Wenecji existed metaphysical, and, therefore, Young Polish aestheticism.

"I have visited Venice so many times," Iwaszkiewicz wrote, "yet I have never had any deeper significant feeling about it, I have never felt in it anything other than admiration, or rather surprise even that something like that could exist (...)"⁷⁰ It seems that the author of *Muzyka wieczorem* did not fully appreciate the role of the city in his internal biography, that he even did not sense the multitude of meanings he assigned to it in his works. His journal entry of 31 December 1968 seems telling in this respect:

In this final day of the year I don't know why I'm thinking about our first visit to Venice. As we travelled, in the mountains you could here those bells which even now I can hear in my ears, and then through Mestre we arrived at the Santa Lucia station. There was no sea ferry then, you went straight from the exit to the canal. And you would start the always utterly stupid embarrassing scene of descending with your luggage to a gondola. In Venice you always get the impression that you are but an extra in an operetta. There were no vacancies at Alberi Luna and they gave us a tiny office room, a large bed under a muslin mosquito net.⁷¹

Iwaszkiewicz concluded this recollection with the following reflection: "And it's so strange to end such a year (...) there comes this trivial vision of the first visit in Venice, which was actually our first visit in the West. But a visit to a dead city, in a finished culture."⁷²

Therefore, Venice returned to him unexpectedly in a recollection of his 1924 trip. Was it truly so trivial since the impression it made on him was so strong that he used it to design a poetic novel under the title *Wenecja*,⁷³ and later, after over forty years, he returned with a diagnosis of the crisis of European culture?⁷⁴ Maybe Venice, as argued by Fernand Braudel, is in the eyes of the observer:

We imagine it [Venice – K.P.] too much before we arrive there to be able to notice what it really is like. (...) charm, illusions, a trap, distorted mirrors, that is what want it to be. (...) Each one of us has their own way of loving Venice, different than that reserved our loved ones, and we become

⁷⁰ Iwaszkiewicz, *Podróże do Włoch*, 32.

⁷¹ Iwaszkiewicz, *Dzienniki 1964–1980*, 199–200.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Vide Iwaszkiewicz, *Podróż do Włoch*, 22–24.

⁷⁴ That diagnosis links Iwaszkiewicz' thinking to Byron's *Ode on Venice* (1818) through the motif of grief over Venice's breakdown and decay. As it begins:

Oh Venice! Venice! when thy marble walls
Are level with the waters, there shall be
A cry of nations o'er thy sunken halls,
A loud lament along the sweeping sea!

between the ode by Iwaszkiewicz and the one by Byron there is a clear intertextual relationship: the 20th-century poet raised and expanded upon but also fundamentally modified the diagnosis of the author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* about Venice's future.

immersed in it differently, finding what we want: life's joy, decline of death, respite, alibi, strangeness, or simplicity (...) ⁷⁵

The above overview of Iwaszkiewicz's Venice-themed works proves that the key to them is an autobiographical one. Both poems and prose works followed the writer's rhythm of existence, starting from clear and light works from the interwar period, through dark WWII short stories and the dark works from the 1960s and 70s, all the way to *Oda*, in which Venice became the figure of the old poet heading towards death. The "lightness" and "darkness" of those texts not so much extract the qualities of the city but rather binds itself with the age, mood, and mental disposition of the author. Therefore, the basic device in this case is psychizacja krajobrazu [mentalization of a landscape]. Another major factor which shapes the image of Venice are the conventional topoi consolidated in culture which build the artistic means of the symbolisation of the water city, though the sphere of personal experience would always have a leading role. ⁷⁶ The city's symbols are the cultural masks and costumes concealing the author's "self."

Iwaszkiewicz's Venetian text, which he developed for nearly sixty years, has a telling bracket: youthful Parnassising poems and late classicising *Oda*, though speaking through such different aesthetics they proclaim a grand praise of art, understood, per the principles of modernism, in an absolutist manner. The researcher of Iwaszkiewicz's aesthetic view aptly frames it:

The writer's life was an endless longing for beauty (...) Beauty seemed the highest value in life (...) Even though in *Dzienniki* there appears the thought about the ephemeral nature of art, it is also accompanied by a conviction that it is the only reality. Art is a sign of the highest human rise (...) By expressing himself through art the writer expressed his individual existential experience as well as a universal message hidden in the system of culture signs. All in all, (...) doubt is not borne by beauty but by aestheticism. Art (...) is eternal and good. ⁷⁷

Maybe it would difficult to use Iwaszkiewicz's books as a guide to Venice, ⁷⁸ yet they certainly reveal something which is hidden, according to the old poet, the deepest – the essentially understood core of the city: beauty which lasts despite the passage of time and bringing the only possible consolation at the threshold of nothingness.

⁷⁵ Fernand Braudel, "Venise," in Fernand Braudel, Georges Duby, *La Méditerranée. Les Hommes et l'héritage* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), 157-158; as quoted in Czaja, *Wenecja i śmierć*, 58.

⁷⁶ Vide Aleksander Madyda, "Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz jako pisarz autobiografizujący (na przykładzie opowiadań: «Koronki weneckie I», «Koronki weneckie II», «Dzień sierpniowy», «Tatarak», «Opowiadanie z psem»)," *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 66, no. 1 (1981): 37-60.

⁷⁷ Aleksandra Giełdoń-Paszek, *Obywatel Parnasu*, 400-401.

⁷⁸ The study "Wenecja" in the *Podróże do Włoch* collection (1977) is a significant exception, which brings a description of Iwaszkiewicz's wandering through the squares and recesses of the city on a lagoon. It constitutes a special guidebook: by using it, one can follow the writer's steps and discover his favourite places, historical sites, and paintings. It is also worth noting that the study utilised his journal entries from March 1956 – cf. *Dzienniki 1956-1963*, 46-61.


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Krystyna Pietrych – literary scholar; chief of the Department of the Literature and Traditions of Romanticism, University of Lodz. Author of a monograph on Aleksander Wat's poetry, *O "Wierszach śródziemnomorskich" Aleksandra Wata* (Warsaw, 1996), and the editor of his writings, *Dziennik bez samogłosek* (Warsaw, 2001). She later published "*Co poezji po bólu?*" *Empatyczne przestrzenie* (Łódź 2009). Her main research focus is 20th-century Polish poetry; she has written studies about the poetry of Leśmian, Tuwim, Baczyński, Wat, Szymborska, Herbert, Białoszewski, Barańczak, Iwaszkiewicz, Różewicz, Miłosz, Krynicki, and Sommer. She has recently published a book entitled *O czym (nie) mówią poeci?* (Łódź 2019). She is the editor-in-chief of the *Czytanie Literatury. Łódzkie Studia Literaturoznawcze* annual. She is the head of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Studies in Humanities, University of Lodz. E-mail: pietrych@op.pl

MAGDALENA KURAN
University of Lodz

 0000-0001-6815-0011


Member since 2019
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“Literally, there were only a few steps between the cold and warmth, and between darkness and light.” The Image of the City in *Smutna Wenecja* by Waław Kubacki

SUMMARY

The article discusses the image of the city presented in the novel *Smutna Wenecja* by Waław Kubacki, an outstanding literary historian, and how the writer’s interests and experiences influenced the topic and the character of the work (he utilised his journals). The city depicted by Kubacki seems to possess a dichotomous nature. The Venetian garden of the arts and the mecca of academics was contrasted with the Venice of poor and foul recesses. The author contrasted the Venice of tourists’ “unbridled excess” with the reality of the life of Venice’s proletariat. The article indicates the linguistic and compositional means which the writer used to reflect that duality, beauty, and ugliness. The article also indicates the dominant features of the novel, i.e. intellectualism and sensoriness.

Keywords

20th century novel, city in literature, Waław Kubacki, Venice

In 1967, Waław Kubacki’s *Smutna Wenecja* was released. Its author was a professor at the Jagiellonian University and an outstanding literary historian specialising in Romantic literature. He wrote seminal studies of the

output of Adam Mickiewicz¹, first and foremost, but also those of Feliks Bernatowicz², Władysław Syrokomla, and Juliusz Słowacki³. He also wrote about the literature of the Enlightenment⁴ and 20th-century literature (e.g. about Stanisław Brzozowski, Stanisław Przybyszewski, and Witkacy). He was also interested in world literature (e.g. in the works by Alexander Pushkin, Knut Hamsun, Marcel Proust, and Voltaire)⁵. The extensive scope of his interests was not limited to only strictly academic works. Kubacki was also a literary and theatre critic,⁶ and a leader of the Polish Writers' Union. In parallel to his activities as a literary historian and critic, creative work as a writer, playwright, and poet unfolded there. Only a year after the release of his first academic work, he published a work of literature, i.e. a play entitled *Krzyk jarzębiny* (1948),⁷ where the protagonist was Ludwik Spitznagel, a Romantic poet and Orientalist. In fact, Kubacki's entire literary output was strongly inspired by his academic interests. Prior to the release of *Smutna Wenecja* in 1967, he had already published five plays⁸ and a collection of literary miniatures.⁹ Since the release of *Smutna Wenecja*, Kubacki focused on his literary career as – apart from a study of *Sonetny krymskie*¹⁰ – he published one play (*Tragedia Achillesa. (W swobodnej formie antycznej)*¹¹), three novels (*Koncert na orkiestrę*,¹² *Sen nocy letniej*,¹³ *Temat z wariacjami*¹⁴), a collection

¹ Waclaw Kubacki, *Pierwiosniki polskiego romantyzmu* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo M. Kot, 1949); Waclaw Kubacki, *Tyrteizm Adama Mickiewicza* (Warsaw: [s.n.], 1949); Waclaw Kubacki, *Palmira i Babilon* (Wroclaw: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1951); Waclaw Kubacki, *Arcydramat Mickiewicza: studia nad III częścią „Dziadów”* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo M. Kot, 1951); Waclaw Kubacki, *Żeglarz i pielgrzym* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1954); Waclaw Kubacki, *Adam Mickiewicz: człowiek i dzieło* (Krakow: PWN, 1966). Kubacki was also a member of the editorial board of the National Edition of Adam Mickiewicz' *Dzieła*.

² Waclaw Kubacki, *Twórczość Feliksa Bernatowicza* (Wroclaw: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1964).

³ Waclaw Kubacki, *Poezja i proza. Studia historycznoliterackie 1934–1964* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1966).

⁴ Waclaw Kubacki, *„Monachomachia” przed sądem potomności* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1951).

⁵ Waclaw Kubacki, *Krytyk i twórca* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Władysława Bąka, 1948); Waclaw Kubacki, *Lata terminowania. Szkice literackie 1932–1962* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1963).

⁶ Waclaw Kubacki, *Na scenie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1962).

⁷ Waclaw Kubacki, *Krzyk jarzębiny: opowieść dramatyczna w trzech aktach* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1949).

⁸ Waclaw Kubacki, “Historia biblijna,” *Twórczość*, issue 12, (1949): 84–99; Waclaw Kubacki, “Paw i dziewczyna. Balet w 1. akcie,” *Zeszyty Wrocławskie*, issue 3–4, (1949): 50–51 (an outline of libretto; Tadeusz Szeliński's ballet staged by the Opera in Wrocław in 1949); Waclaw Kubacki, *Jakobińskie gniazdo. Sztuka z insurekcji warszawskiej w 6 obrazach* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1955); Waclaw Kubacki, *Rzymska wiosna. Sztuka w 3 aktach* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1955); Waclaw Kubacki, “Amiel (Fantazja biblijna w 4 aktach),” *Dialog*, issue 4, (1957): 5–31.

⁹ Waclaw Kubacki, *Kartki na wietrze* (Bydgoszcz: Arkona, 1950); next edition, extended Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1969.

¹⁰ Waclaw Kubacki, *Z Mickiewiczem na Krymie* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1977).

¹¹ Waclaw Kubacki, “Tragedia Achillesa. (W swobodnej formie antycznej),” *Dialog*, issue 5, (1970): 7–29. All of Kubacki's plays were published in: Waclaw Kubacki, *Tragedia Achillesa oraz inne próby dramatyczne* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1972).

¹² Waclaw Kubacki, *Koncert na orkiestrę* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1970).

¹³ Waclaw Kubacki, *Sen nocy letniej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1974).

¹⁴ Waclaw Kubacki, *Temat z wariacjami* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1982).

of travel sketches (*Malwy na Kaukazie*¹⁵), a collection of poems (*Człowiek i świat*¹⁶), and three volumes of journals covering the period 1944–1968.¹⁷

Among all his works of literature, the greatest success, measured with the number of editions and translations, was achieved by *Smutna Wenecja*. Its second edition was released only a year later, i.e. in 1968, and the third in 1971. It was his only novel which was reprinted and it was translated into seven languages: Bulgarian, Lithuanian, German, Russian, Romanian, Slovak, and Hungarian.¹⁸ Kubacki's literary works were so strongly associated with the author's experiences and cultural interests that some critics treated Tadeusz, the protagonist, almost as the author's alter ego. It is difficult to avoid such associations as there are so many parallels between the protagonist and the author, which apply to their professional, intellectual, and biographical profiles.

Tadeusz was an assistant professor at the University of Warsaw on an academic trip to Italy. In Venice's St. Mark's Library, he studied source materials for a book he was preparing on the history of the empire of the Langobards (Kubacki wrote his doctorate about the Middle Ages). It was not his first trip; he had completed a similar one on the eve of the Second World War (similarly to Kubacki). After the calamities of the war, in the new political situation, a visit in Venice was also a chance to reflect on the civilisation, persistence, the extinctions which happened in humankind's history, and on the place and role of culture in that sinusoid of catastrophes (and on the lifting of oneself from them).

Considering Kubacki's biography and the records in his journals, those parallels between the protagonist and the author become striking. Also, the "rhythm" and the nature of the records in the journals are quite analogous with the language and the content of the novel. The protagonist's love affair in Venice is a new fictional plot, but even in that case one cannot state anything for certain, apart from the fact that the journal does not mention anything like that. Yet it seems that the love story could be of secondary importance for the main topic of the novel.¹⁹ It is banal, unconvincing, and considerably less engaging than the "Venetian" observations and reflections of the narrator or the protagonist.

In the novel, Venice became a symbolic city, a trademark city where the history, structure, architecture, and works of art inspire one to reflections in philosophy of history, theosophy, anthropology, and culture. Yet it also presented another face: that of a regular city, one of many, with its dirty and musty recesses, proletariat's poverty, and the sounds, smells and tastes of

¹⁵ Waław Kubacki, *Malwy na Kaukazie* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1969).

¹⁶ Waław Kubacki, *Człowiek i świat* (Warsaw: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1988).

¹⁷ Waław Kubacki, *Dziennik (1944–1958)* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1971); Waław Kubacki, *Dziennik 1959–1965* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1974); Waław Kubacki, *Dziennik (1966–1968)* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1990).

¹⁸ More on the editions, vide A. Szalagan, "Kubacki Waław," in *Współcześni polscy pisarze i badacze literatury. Słownik bibliograficzny*, vol. 4, edited by a team led by J. Czachowska and A. Szalagan (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1996), 427 (§ 22). Only one more work, i.e. *Koncert na orkiestrę*, was translated (into Czech; 1972).

¹⁹ In a review of *Smutna Wenecja*, Janusz Rohoziński even argued that "the very narrative pattern gives the impression that the writer considered it as secondary." See: Janusz Rohoziński, "Waław Kubacki," *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, issue 30, (1968): 5.

local everydayness. That encounter, or rather the encounter of those two worlds, is that which is most enchanting and intriguing in the novel.

Nineteen years prior to the release of the novel, Kubacki's notes in *Dziennik*, which he recorded in Venice on 1 May 1948, featured the first indications of his concept of a work associated with the city. In March of that year, Kubacki departed for Italy to deliver lectures. Since the University of Poznan offered him an unpaid leave, he received a subsidy from the Ministry of Culture and Art to support his family. Equipped by the state with a tailor-made evening suit and "a small allowance to purchase three shirts, pyjamas, and black shoes,"²⁰ on 29 March he departed for Italy. His first, and the longest, stop was Rome (31 March–25 April), where he returned twice during the journey (17–22 May; 8 June). Next, he visited Milan (29 April), Venice (1–4 May), Padua (4–5 May), Florence (6–7 May), Cagliari (10–12 May), Bologna (5 May), Rome (17–22 May), Capri (29–30 May), Naples (31 May), Catania (3 June), Messina (4 June), and Taormina (5–7 June).

Due to an election campaign in Italy during which it was prohibited to hold any lectures, almost the entire first month of Kubacki's journey was a period filled with library surveys, trips, and academic meetings and social gatherings. The first lecture was held in Milan on 28 April and it applied to Mickiewicz's associations with Italy. On 1 May, Kubacki arrived in Venice. In his journal, he compared his recollections of his pre-war visit in the city with the current situation:

I stood in the evening in front of the station on the Grand Canal. On the opposite side, there was the Germania della Gara Hotel. I stayed in it in late June 1939, as I was returning to Poland from Paris via Marseilles, Nice, Milan, Venice, and Vienna. Currently unavailable for me, though it progressed considerably in its life's career. During the war I feared for the fate of this beloved city. It survived unscratched from the calamity. It has become even more colourful, lively and richer. Yet it is doomed for hopeless fortune in sea loam. Suddenly, the windows in my former hotel room lit up. Their light was reflected by the dark water of the canal. They seemed like swords thrust into the heart of Our Lady of Sorrows. The lagoon's waters pierced with the swords of pain – a harbinger of suffering and extermination.

– I have to write a novel about the city some time.

That concept/image is the core of a novel I do not know yet.²¹

That concept-image which was supposed to constitute the core of the planned work did actually include several plots which Kubacki later used in his novel: the pre-war vs. post-war Venice, metaphors capitalising on religious concepts for describing clearly non-religious phenomena, and, finally, the recurring reflections of the kind of history of philosophy on extinctions of civilisations.

²⁰ Kubacki, *Dziennik (1944–1958)*, 122. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish]

²¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

Kubacki's pre-WWII visit in Italy was for him one of the stops in his European travels (Switzerland, Italy, France, Germany), which he completed after acquiring his doctorate degree at the Jagiellonian University based on his dissertation *Mediaeval Franciscan legends* (NB, the Middle Ages is a major topic in the novel). He travelled as a correspondent and a collaborator of the *Wiadomości Literackie* journal. His post-WWII journal includes one more recollection of his pre-WWII visit in Venice. It was triggered by an encounter with Fr. Bernardino Rizzi. He came to Kubacki's Venice lecture at Istituto Universitario di Economia e Commercio. Rizzi was a composer and a conductor. Before the Second World War, he lived in Poland, where he created and managed the Krakow-based Cecilian Choir. Kubacki recalled having written a libretto to the oratorio *Chrystus i Samarytanka* for him at that time. It was his first, as he called it, "dramatic attempt."²² He recorded in detail that after the lecture, a dinner was held at the Quadri restaurant in St. Mark's Square, during which omelette norvégienne with ice-cream was served. I quoted those two pieces of information from the journal, one musical and one food-related intentionally. Music and food constitute two major topics in *Smutna Wenecja*.

Yet he abandoned the 1948 idea for a novel, or it marinated long. The next remark about the fact of working on it appeared nine years later. The 11 July 1957 entry, from another visit in Venice, includes the following piece of information: "I decided to return to my idea from 1948. I shall write a novel about Venice. I already have the title: *Smutna Wenecja*."²³ And, indeed, his work on it began. Two days later he wrote:

Every day, sketches for the novel. The material is expanding as I write. I'm working from dawn till dusk. (...) I am taking notes on the canals, by the tables of cheap inns, on the steps of churches and palaces. I develop more extensive sections on the lawn opposite Albergo Santa Chiara, if I can find a bench that is not occupied.²⁴

That visit in Italy was particularly fruitful for the novel. A two-day visit in Ravenna recorded in the journal was later reflected in the novel – the protagonist's visit in the city constitutes a considerable section²⁵. *Dziennik* also indicates the inspiration for the rather exotically sounding name of the protagonist's lover. On 22 August, he recorded: "Tadeusz and Zanze – those are the names that I gave today to the characters of my novel."²⁶ He wrote that he first encountered the name Zanze in the prison memoir of Silvio Pellico, an Italian Romantic writer.²⁷ He was reminded of that as he was having a meal in a small Venetian restaurant *Zanze's*. Apparently, the name belonged to

²² Ibid., 129–130.

²³ Ibid., 382.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Wacław Kubacki, *Smutna Wenecja* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1967), 83–112.

²⁶ Kubacki, *Dziennik (1944–1958)*, 389.

²⁷ Silvio Pellico (1789–1854), a writer, poet, and a playwright. In Poland, he was known as the author of *Le mie prigioni*. Those were his notes on his time spent in prison, where he was sent for participating in a secret revolutionary society of the Carbonari, which played a major role in the process of the unification of Italy. The work was translated into Polish as early as in

the owner's wife, and when inquired by Kubacki about its origin, the owner explained that it was a Venetian diminutive of Angela. Kubacki did mention that Bernardino Rizzi tried to convince him that it was rather a diminutive from Giovanna. He did not settle the dispute; he only stated concisely: "The heroin is called Zanze and that's it"²⁸.

Less than a month after returning to Italy, on 20 September 1957, he wrote that he unpacked a "pack of notes" from his Italian trip, read, organised, and supplemented them. He must have already been writing it because he added: "Most importantly, I cannot get distracted from my work when university classes start. There is nothing worse than derailing your pen which had already gained momentum."²⁹ Apparently, work was not progressing as quickly as he assumed it would. The following remarks about working on it can only be found five years later, when once again during an Italian trip, to Orvieto this time, he wrote: "I stopped for a day. The only goal: the cathedral and Luca Signorelli. Yet what proved more productive for my writing were the surrounding landscapes, and the steep and winding narrow streets (...) I wrote a few pages which I shall include in *Smutna Wenecja*."³⁰

That remark is extremely significant for the discussion of the structure of the novel. Its reviewers have offered various approaches (though rarely comprehensively motivated) to describing it. Julian Przyboś referred to it as an "essay about culture and history."³¹ The essayistic nature of the work was also emphasised by Włodzimierz Maciąg.³² Janusz Rohoziński saw the inspiration for the proposed type of narration in Romantic narrative poems.³³ Finally, Stanisław Zieliński considered it a "fictionalised lecture."³⁴ An essay, a digressive narrative poem, or a fictionalised lecture – each of those suggestions could be justified. It shares its literary/academic nature with the essay as well as its digressive course full of loose associations; also its reflective nature, a certain degree of freedom in combining various plots, and its fictional nature, which if ever included in an essay, plays a secondary role.³⁵ The motif of the protagonist's journey combined with a story of an affair, plus a rudimentary and episodic fictional structure are elements which approximate it to a narrative poem. Finally, the fact of defining *Smutna Wenecja* as a fictionalised lecture emphasises the intellectual nature of the novel, in which the fortunes of the characters are secondary to the primary intention of the narrator who is "erudite/aesthete and an inhabitant of an ivory tower."³⁶

1837 (Silvio Pellico, *Moje więzienia. Pamiętniki z przypisami Piotra Maroncellego*, trans. F. Tustanowski, vol. 1–2, Vilnius: Nakład wydawcy, Drukarnia B. Neumana, 1837).

²⁸ Kubacki, *Dziennik (1944–1958)*, 390.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Kubacki, *Dziennik 1959–1965*, 269.

³¹ As quoted in Marcin Czerwiński, "Kubackiego obrachunki klerkowskie," *Nowe Książki*, issue 15, (1968): 1032.

³² Włodzimierz Maciąg, "Eseistyka i powieść," *Twórczość*, issue 11, (1967): 110–113.

³³ Rohoziński, *Wacław Kubacki*, 5.

³⁴ Stanisław Zieliński, "Miłość z dobrym apetytem," in: *Wycieczki balonem. No 4* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), 144.

³⁵ Krzysztof Dybciak, "Inwazja eseju," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, issue 4, (1977): 118.

³⁶ Czerwiński, *Kubackiego obrachunki klerkowskie*, 1032.

A small remark in Kubacki's *Dziennik*: "I wrote a few pages which I shall include in *Smutna Wenecja*" was a confirmation of that which can be seen in the novel's structure, i.e. complete freedom of including digressions, which function somewhat in tandem with the story line. When reading it, one does have the impression that the author devising the fortunes of the characters was looking for chances and locations for including those conventional "a few pages," i.e. a side plot or a loosely related association, to the narrative. The eventual proportions trigger a question about the predominant nature of the novel. It seems that, just like in a digressive narrative poem, digressions are of primary importance while the story is secondary. A good example of such an inclusion is the story of the protagonist's visit in Ravenna. As I have mentioned, Kubacki wrote in his *Dziennik* that he escaped from Venice to spend a few days in Ravenna. He was enchanted by the city. He wrote: "I walk around as if intoxicated. I cannot believe my eyes that anything like this could have been created in the 5th, 6th and 7th century AD."³⁷ In the novel, the reason behind the protagonist's departure from Venice to Ravenna seems to have a *deus ex machina* character: "A few days later he gets a call from Zanze. She did everything in her power to convince Tadeusz to leave Venice for some time. She promised she would explain everything in a letter."³⁸ Tadeusz, obligingly, did as she asked - he departed for Ravenna. Their relationship did not make his submitting to his lover's persuasion very convincing. Yet the protagonist's "forced" visit to Ravenna offered Kubacki a chance to develop a 28-page-long section in which he expressed his fascination with the city (the locations and historical sites which he had described in his *Dziennik* can also be found in the novel). Yet the subject of the discussion is, in this case, Venice itself and its somewhat split image emerging from Kubacki's novel.

The Venice of squares and churches - the Venice of recesses

The Venice depicted by Kubacki has two different yet complementary faces. The first one is a garden of culture, a paradise city for a humanist, an erudite person, a lover of art, and bibliophile. The city's history, architecture, historical sites, and works of art become an endless source of inspiration triggering intellectual reflections on various issues. As an example, please consider the recurring motif of the deluge. It first appeared when Tadeusz viewed St. Mark's Column. He confronted his reflections from his pre-WWII visit and the concerns he had had then associated with the impending war with the time after the world catastrophe. The comparisons were facilitated by notes Tadeusz made in his journal, which the author once again included in the main story.

The mosaics at St. Mark's Basilica presenting the biblical deluge were mainly a starting point for an erudite discussion of the way in which the notion of "water" was presented in various languages. That was triggered by the shape of the mosaic waves, "the wavy lines." Therefore, the author

³⁷ Kubacki, *Dziennik (1944-1958)*, 383.

³⁸ Kubacki, *Smutna Wenecja*, 83.

offered his readers a mini-lecture on shared human experience expressed in sign and sound-based reflections of the phenomenon first in pictographic writing systems (Egyptian, Sinaian, and Sinaian-Semite), and later in Hebrew, in Indo-European languages, Sanskrit, classical languages (Greek and Latin), and modern languages. To that, he added the similarity to Henri Matisse's maritime cut-outs, which he included with the artist's commentary in French. Yet that section also includes a reflection based on the philosophy of history. The biblical deluge offered the protagonist a sense of a "new deluge." His study of the history of Langobards, which he pursued before the war, was a starting point "against the barbarity that is knocking of the door of our era"³⁹. He visited Post-WWII Venice to complete his work; having emerged from the war unscathed helped him realise that the calamities of war reached deeper, and it was not only limited to causing material ruin. Noah became the metonymy of the survivors. Yet the fact of surviving did not solely entail happiness and joy; it mainly meant bitterness and the harsh realisation of its price:

Other people, and animals, reptiles, birds, and butterflies died so that Noah could live. His ship ripped through shoals of children's corpses. It rubbed on the bellies of recently handsome women (...) It cut the bosoms and arms of once comely daughters of Cain. The hair of charming drowned women stuck as some ghastly seaweed to the resin-covered sides of the ship.⁴⁰

In that massacre of the innocents, Tadeusz saw himself as a chance survivor, who without any apparent reason, by pure blind luck managed to avoid a similar fate. "The staleness of the God's chosen one,"⁴¹ as that was how Noah in the mosaic seemed to him, evoked in him not so much admiration as irritation. He watched him "from the perspective of one of those who were condemned to drown but who survived by accident."⁴² That declaration resembles the declaration by another survivor, from Różewicz' poem: "Mam dwadzieścia cztery lata / Ocalałem / prowadzony na rzeź"⁴³ [I am twenty-four / I survived / having been led to a massacre]. The survivor's perspective shall remain changed for ever. The poet continued:

Szukałem nauczyciela i mistrza
niech przywróci mi wzrok słuch i mowę
niech jeszcze raz nazwie rzeczy i pojęcia
niech oddzieli światło od ciemności.⁴⁴

I was looking for a teacher and a master
who could restore by sight hearing and
[speech
who could once again name things and
[notions
who could separate light from darkness.

³⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Tadeusz Różewicz, *Niepokój. Wiersze z lat 1945–1946* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1980), 15.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 15–16.

Kubacki's protagonist seems disillusioned. He regained his sight, hearing, and speech, thus he could see, hear and name that which he previously only sensed would happen:

Survivor by accident, a representative of humankind stood by the lagoon and watched as the bows of gondolas rhythmically rose and fell, glistening in the sun with their metal fittings. (...) At that moment, Tadeusz heard with his internal ear a string break in him in a short muffled crack, a string which he had many years before tried to tune here to the rocking boats, a tune suggested to his youthful imagination by poets and travellers. The bows of Venetian gondolas absolutely did not resemble either the violin or the lute. They were a combination of a sawtooth and a saw. Some oriental cleaver. A styled Norse axe. A transformed kind of a halberd. A gondola is just a tamed through the centuries descendant of old pirate barges, which iron-clad bows butted, jabbed, cut, slashed, dug, tore, and ripped.⁴⁵

This fragment also includes typical features of the novel – music-based metaphors, and an inclination for accumulating certain words and related structures. Just as in the above quotation in which violin/gondolas and lute/gondolas transform in Tadeusz's imagination into a multitude of tools for fighting and violence, and their struggles with the resistance of water also take on a military guise as they butt, cut, slash, dig, tear and rip preventing the protagonist from "tuning" his imagination to the pre-war tone, i.e. pre-disaster associations.

Biblical tradition and metaphors clash in the novel with their pre-Christian, non-Christian and anti-Christian counterparts. That was the case when the protagonist searched for a spiritual alter ego, which he could not find in Noah. The latter keeps re-emerging as a survivor figure, yet always in a way in which one can see at least some distance towards the biblical patriarch. When the protagonist visited his friend and historian living in Italy to thank him for his help in acquiring a visa, he noticed with some surprise that the world in which his friend operated seemed to be an enclave which emerged from the disaster of the Second World War unscathed. That persistence, so surprising for the protagonist, was triggered by his recollection of his pre-war visit:

The professor made a gesture which Christ used to calm the sea in some old Italian painting. Then he rang. A pretty girl with copper hair entered. Her eyes were oblong and glistened moistly. A white apron on a black dress and skittish caul on her head. She brought a platter full of peaches. She set up a beautiful Sienna wine set on the table. From a pitcher with a small white and green ornament, golden wine was dripping into cups with white and green patterns.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Kubacki, *Smutna Wenecja*, 24.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

The recollection of the meeting from the past and the transition to the current day were, for Tadeusz, a kind of a *dejà vu*. Two pages further feature the following record of the post-war visit:

The professor raised his hand with his hieratic gesture, with which he seemed to be calming tempestuousness of the sea. And then he rang. A pretty girl with copper hair stood in the door. She had, like the one from before the war, oblong eyes with a moist glisten. White apron on a black dress and skittish caul on her head. Tadeusz' heart leapt. Peaches! That same beautiful Sienna with white and green patterns!⁴⁷

The protagonist absorbed that sight with a kind of irritation. That persistence of customs, social relations, and objects made him realise that in the world from which he came such material space-time reduplications were not possible: "Oh, hell – Tadeusz cursed in his mind. " – No one resettled them here by force! No one threw them out of their apartments! Nothing they had got broken! Nothing has been stolen from them!"⁴⁸

The biblical analogy returned once again. First, a child's recollection from a religious education class, from which he remembered that Noah's ark landed on Mt. Ararat in Armenia. That was later verified with his experiences as a history and culture researcher, who learnt of apocryphal stories about various other locations at which the biblical ship was supposed to have its numerous stops. For Tadeusz, the Italian professor's house became one such mythical place, erected on a symbolic hill. It seemed as if the ark had reached it, leaving some of the crew "with their belongings, habits, high spirits, porcelain, and Maiolica, indifference to the fate of the world, and aprons and cauls for female servants."⁴⁹ Those were some kinds of endosporic dormant forms, which returned to life after the war.

So, it was not Noah who became the figure of the protagonist's fate; he was more strongly related to Odysseus. Noah secured his family and belongings and saved them. The parabolic image of Tadeusz's fate was not the biblical deluge but the Cyclops's cave and his escape from it. Odysseus escaped tied to a ram's belly: "The ram exited «heavy in wool and me, which I had considered thoroughly.»" The only things Homer's protagonist saved were his life and his "conscious mind."⁵⁰ Everything else perished in the depths of war. Yet there are other faces of both Noah and Odysseus. They became the figures for the entire surviving population. Both, having paid homage to their gods, returned to their old paths:

From the ark there emerged a bunch of people who would soon fill the Earth with all kinds of misdeeds. Odysseus, having just narrowly escaped

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 42–43.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 44.

death, already started looking around from whom he could steal a ship, cattle or a herd. Disasters did not improve humanity.⁵¹

Venice – viewed as “the second homeland of the humanist/scholar,”⁵² with its architecture and historical sites – became an endless source of reflections on philosophy, ethics, philosophy of history, philology, and musicology. In it, biblical and Greco-Roman traditions are intertwined, yet there are also traces of another, less emphasised tradition, i.e. the “barbarian” one. They provoke the protagonist to use in them almost an academic discourse, e.g. in the fragment:

Unlike in Ovid’s works, folk tales more often feature a longing for liberation from a lower form of evolution, the motif of lifting a spell, and a premonition about new shapes. It would be interesting to study in detail the differences in terms of the concept of regressive disaster and evolutionary transformation and their motivations in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and in folk tales (crime, weakness, breaking promises, and sinful curiosity).

Probably the only example of a dual evolution – at the same time and in parallel from and to human – is the famous section in Song 25 of Dante’s *Inferno*: a dialectic combination of a reptileman and a manreptile. Organic regression and evolution. A strange genetic and poetic counterpoint.⁵³

Yet the Venice which Tadeusz explored had another face. He discovered it partly because of curiosity, partly because of his unexpected love for a Venetian woman, and partly, and how trivial it was, because of his rather low financial status as a researcher from Eastern Europe. What emerged was a record of the city and locations “not visited by tourists”⁵⁴; readers learn its secrets, smells, flaws, and shortcomings, which in their ugliness were fascinating, and, through Kubacki’s descriptions, actually beautiful. What formed were images vividly captured:

One time, he waited for Zanze in a recess by the stairs which descended to water in increasingly greener steps. The final step was a mixture of water and stairs. A dark green unison of water and marble. Harmony and solace. Nearby, there was a boat painted bright blue. Its overturned spectre drew the observer’s attention. The piercing blue of the dingy, shifted a tad down within the colour scale, modulated its reflection to a very soft navy blue.⁵⁵

Kubacki’s care for colours and his ability to subtly refer to them was exceptional. His Venice radiated with colour. Everything had some colour and each one had to be named, whether that applied to the colour of basilica mosaics, the tones of Venice’s canal water, the hue of snail shells and fish

⁵¹ Ibid., 44–45.

⁵² Czerwiński, *Kubackiego obrachunki klerkowskie*, 1032.

⁵³ Kubacki, *Smutna Wenecja*, 51.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 62.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

scales, the colours of women's dresses, or the shades of Venice's sky. Kubacki's extremely sensual descriptions were synaesthetic. Sounds, tastes, colours, smells, and textures mixed constantly. Colours and sounds overlapped each other the most often, forming exceptionally vibrant and almost poetic synaesthetic passages.

The Venice of recesses was a space of its inhabitants, where colourful underwear dries on lines, where children play, where at the corner of del Cristo and calle dell'Oca "two elderly women dressed in black and buttoned up deliberate from the windows of opposite houses (...) the morning quarrel of a young married couple on the second floor and the lunch plans of the tenants on the first floor."⁵⁶ The space is dominated by the smell of "mud, reed, and willow thicket,"⁵⁷ and of dampness, mould, and mustiness.

The Venice of "unbridled excess."⁵⁸ The Venice of the proletariat

What is extremely interesting is the contrast between two Venetian realities: the world of visitors (mostly tourists) and that of the locals. Those realities are somewhat parallel. Tadeusz entered both; in his experience they overlapped and complemented each other. The former was both attractive for its noise and diversity and repulsive for those same reasons. In the description of St. Mark's Square, a biblical metaphor proved invaluable once more: "The Piazza somewhat resembles Noah's opened ark, from which all creates, a pair of every species, emerged. But also somewhat the Tower of Babel. All races, languages and attires flew through it."⁵⁹

In that "Piazza's mess," as he called it, the author saw a surprising analogue between the stylistic and cultural homogeneity of the local street architecture with its "ancient steeds, Byzantanism, Mauretanness, and Gothic Christianity. All those places were filled with a similar multitude of forms."⁶⁰ Tadeusz, usually tolerant for the "movement and noise"⁶¹ caused by the visitors, sometimes expressed his vexation, irritation, or even a sense of superiority:

Islands of tables and chairs, weaved with colour nylon. Around them, motley blobs of international folk gathered. Those who emerged alive when the deluge water receded pounced crazily at the "carcass" left by fate. They travel visiting museums and churches. They learn about Renaissance painters and architects. They indulge in music. They are ready to think God-knows-what about their soulfulness. And in reality, they are simply gnawing a bone they dug up! Each one diligently looking for their own bone! Pro-deluge creatures! Crowmen!⁶²

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 201.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 57.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 58.

⁶² Ibid.

The image of the raven appeared once more, and in a rather ambiguous manner. What Kubacki wrote about it might suggest that its source was not only the biblical tradition. That offers only such a passage: "At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent forth a raven. It went to and from until the waters were dried up from the earth."⁶³ However, the story of a deluge also existed in other cultures (Sumerian and Akkadian), to which, in fact, the Old Testament story was related (a raven appeared only in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*).⁶⁴ The motif of a raven which instead of returning to the Ark focussed on devouring human remains or some carcass it found, comes from the Talmud/Midrash writings.⁶⁵ However, unlike in the version in which the raven's behaviour is summarised with the conclusion, "To send an impure being⁶⁶ is like sending a fool, and to send a poor being is like sending a trusty messenger,"⁶⁷ Tadeusz's evaluation of the scavenger is contrary: "From the perspective of one of those who were doomed to drown and yet survived, the raven seemed far more honest than the biblical patriarch. It simply, without any redundant fuss of some spirituality, it dined *à la fourchette* on the buffet left to it by the kind arm of Providence of various meats."⁶⁸

That exegesis of the biblical symbol did the bird justice, which was only following its instinct fulfilling, in all honesty, the will of its Creator, who gave it that instinct. Is that not ironic? And does such a reading apply to scavenger tourists? As at other locations throughout Kubacki's novel, in this case not only threads but also specific words and phrases are repeated, such as the word "soulfulness." By dint of such links, the threads engage in a kind of a dialogue.

The worlds of the Venetians and visitors rarely interact. If they do, that happens within a service-provider and service-recipient paradigm, where the latter is always in an advantageous position. It is a world of porters, servants, boys, hotel service-people, gondoliers, and waiters juxtaposed against "aged ladies," "old crones" with multitudes of packages, "cases, travel boxes, and bulging bags,"⁶⁹ and young women accompanied by fat gentlemen with cigars in their mouths.⁷⁰ Kubacki painted the world of tourists with somewhat caricature colours.

The descriptions of Venetians were much subtler. Every urban social structure includes people of various material, cultural, and professional statuses. Kubacki was interested predominantly in the Venetian proletariat. The following sentence concisely summarised their life: "The tale of merry

⁶³ Genesis 8: 6-7; English version: Bibles, Crossway. The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (with Cross-References). Good News Publishers. Kindle Edition.

⁶⁴ Antoni Marczewski, "Interpretacje motywu kruka z opowiadania o potopie," *Verbum Vitae*, issue 32, (2017): 57-58.

⁶⁵ Andrzej Szyjewski, *Symbolika kruka. Między mitem a rzeczywistością* (Kraków: Nomos, 1991), 72-74.

⁶⁶ The raven belonged to a group of birds which were considered impure in the Hebrew tradition. Vide Leviticus 11: 13-19.

⁶⁷ Marczewski, *Interpretacje motywu kruka...*, 60.

⁶⁸ Kubacki, *Smutna Wenecja*, 23.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

islands has drowned in soap foam, basement vapours, and stinky recesses."⁷¹ The exaltations of an aesthete triggered by encounters with highly tasteful Venetian art clash with the sense caused by Venetian mediocrity, which is shoddy and superficially religious. Just as in the case of the apartment in which Tadeusz, receiving a minor university allowance, was forced to rent a room:

Tadeusz's little room was the hosts' bedroom. Most of it was occupied by a wide iron bed. On its end, there was a greyish lake painted. Two white bulging swans were swimming on its surface towards one another. More or less at the place where the couple's heads were supposed to rest, the swans were extending their necks and touched with the red beaks. It seemed like the caresses of two carrots. (...) The walls with filled with paintings of Sacred Hearts, Immaculate Conceptions, and a whole gallery of popes.

So, there are places and things where Venetian everydayness did not differ much from pontifical Venice. Those were all the forms of animate and inanimate nature, which the protagonist experienced at municipal fish, vegetable, and fruit markets. He saw works of art in all that which he saw there, and he described them in the applicable manner. To use Zanze's mistrustful question for Tadeusz: "Fish market as an artistic adventure?" Yes, that was a regular visit to the market. The shapes, colours and textures were inspiring:

Nearby, on a broad board, an extraordinary fish was drawing its final breaths. Half of its body was a violet iris; the other was a yellow water lily or a water chrysanthemum. Its delicate fins were spread like a flower's petals. In its underwater dance, it would mix both its colours into the greenness flow of the waves. It would become part of the element. It was dying in reality to live pantheistically. The net extracted the fish from the green wave.⁷²

Kubacki's Venice was dominated by one more sensory experience: taste. In following Tadeusz, one could recreate a map of Venetian restaurants, trattorias, bars, and inns. One could discover quite ordinary regional tastes, all the "spaghetti or cannelloni (...), green lasagne or tagliatelle with spinach juice (...), fettuccine done the Roman style."⁷³ A meal could become an almost mystical experience, a contemplation, like when Tadeusz was served a platter of steaming cozzas: "Holding the snail down with a spoon, Tadeusz slid his fork into the break between the shells and turned it gently. The tiny hinges cracked. The opened cozza looked like a beautifully polished folding steel mirror (...) The tightly closed shells included some additional salty almond-smelling water, which Tadeusz drank lifting the shell in his fingers to his lips."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid., 147.

⁷² Ibid., 53.

⁷³ Ibid., 160–161.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 25.

The novel is filled with references to cuisine. Almost every day and almost every place was marked by tastes. The author did not refrain from mentioning them even if the protagonist was only having a pizza Margherita or when he ate canned sardines with oranges. It did not matter whether it was a meal or a feast – it always seemed to him worth describing. Those descriptions had various intensities; sometimes they were more intellectual, and more often than not, sensory. The novel's language is a constant balancing between "a vitalist and intellectualised atmosphere."⁷⁵

Another exceptional example of a clash between visitors to Venice and Venetian locals can be found in the description of culinary experiences. The first such experience occurred at the Four Fountains trattoria in St. Fusca Square, while the second happened in a nameless fish market between shacks, tents, booths, and butcher's stalls.

The former began with the maître d'hotel who gave Tadeusz a list of dishes bound in raspberry Saffian. The chef and two waiters formed a cortège. The serving of dishes became a complex almost religious ritual, which anxious guests watched in devout tension. The maître d'hotel introduced the chef:

surrounded by (...) a pair of boy acolytes. One of them removed the cover from a basin. Everyone waited until the steam lifts. Then the other altar boy offered the grand sacrificer a flat spatula and a strangely shaped ladle. At that moment, the maître d'hotel considerably moved aside. The altar boys donned devout facial expressions. The archpriest extracted from the enamelled basin one branzino after another. The attentive lower deacons of the culinary effectuation offered their plates holding them through white serviettes as if chalices of some peculiar service.⁷⁶

Further on there is an extensive detailed description of the professional filleting of fish which ended with a signal given by the chef, at which point "the entire staff withdrew in a liturgical procession."⁷⁷ The language of a religious service used by the narrator turned the rather common and sensory activity of consuming a meal into an experience bordering on mystical.

At the other extreme, there is a description of a "folk ceremony of boiling and eating a squid."⁷⁸ Thus, there is a point of intersection, the ceremony: high in the former case, low in the latter. It was recounted in a fairly abbreviated form:

A bunch of ragamuffins silently surrounded the table, a stump with butcher's tools, and a black pot, which was lazily licked by flames which seemed pale in daylight.

A thin weather-beaten man in an oilcloth apron raised the huge cover of the pot and stuck a huge fork into the bursting steam, which seemed like Neptune's trident borrowed from some ancient repository. Over the

⁷⁵ Rohoziński, *Wacław Kubacki*, 5.

⁷⁶ Kubacki, *Smutna Wenecja*, 32.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

rising block of steam there appeared in all its glory the Sepiida stuck on the trident. The man in the oilcloth apron gave some triumphant cry and shook the trident. The cuttlefish's arms danced in the air. A new cry emerged from the throat of the thin weather-beaten man. The people who surrounded the pot parted quickly. The Sepiida slid from the fork and smacked heavily on the table splashing murky juice all around. The crowd of ragamuffins merrily surrounded the steaming body again. The thin man in the oilcloth apron poured some salt from a paper bag and quickly cut the cuttlefish's arms with a broad knife dividing the octopus into numerous slices, some thin and others thick.⁷⁹

Both ceremonies drew their descriptions from two different cultural sources – an elitist liturgy/feast vs. an egalitarian folk public custom. The former described using the language of a religious pompous ritual; the latter using that of a lively somewhat barbarian rite. The studied restrained ritual stood in contrast to the vivid folk event. The descriptions of both include the novel's trademark variational repetitions. In these two cases, those applied to entire scenes and their components. Both had their masters of ceremony, a "sacrifice," and the audience.

The Venice depicted by Kubacki was a dual city. In that perception the author matched the manner of its depiction established in literary traditions. That clash seems to be what carries its power to fascinate. It is usually the contrast between the high and the low fulfilled in various spaces. Thus, the novel depicts the Venice of architectural masterpieces and the dimness of tenement houses with their damp vestibules and gloomy alcoves. There are mosaics, sculptures, paintings by "Titian Tintoretto, Veroneso, Giorgion, the Bellinis, the Canaletti, Tiepol,"⁸⁰ and the swans adorning the bed of the Venetian couple and the holy images hanging all over the walls of their apartment. There is the Venice of showroom shops from the main street, and that of fish markets, fruit and vegetable stands, and butcher's stalls; the Venice of lavish restaurants, and that of small trattorias; the Venice of foreign women in colourful trendy dresses, and the city of old black-dressed women spending their time sitting in front of houses. The Venice of organ music, arias, and concerts resonating from churches and squares, and the Venice of the overwhelming gibberish of markets, "the clatter of hammers and the rattle of carts,"⁸¹ and "the reverberating clacking of wooden shoes on stone slabs."⁸² Both cities were equally worth writing about and equally "Venetian."

In Kubacki's novel, Venice seems a character more important than Tadeusz or Zanze. The writer considered the city from different sides and from each it seemed to him intriguing and inspiring. In the novel, the language of intellectual discourse clashes with that of lively sensory descriptions. Yet it is not the case that the intellectual language is assigned to the "high" Venice while the language focussed on sensory experiences is assigned to the "low"

⁷⁹ Ibid., 144–145.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁸¹ Ibid., 130.

⁸² Ibid., 144.

Venice.⁸³ They sometimes overlap. For example, when seemingly common items become aesthetic as well as intellectual inspirations. That is the case in the description of the fish viewed at the market, in whose colours and arrangements of scales Tadeusz saw similarity to the structure of an artistic mosaic:

That loose skittish arrangement of light spots. And its image is always divided into tiny independent lines, spots, and marks. Nothing finished. Classic divisionism! The fish is something in between a mosaic and a work by an impressionist. And one more thing. Both the fish and a mosaic are a complete colour scale. Their modulation is naturally strong and bold by necessity. One could even talk about colourful diatone. Finally, in both cases, everything depends on the light: the colours of the fish and the colour arrangements of mosaics.⁸⁴

I have already indicated that musical threads recur throughout the novel. The author described his musical experiences or used musical metaphors. Thus, a soprano aria from Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine* admired at the della Salute church became a pretext for an almost poetic description of longing for the lover⁸⁵, and gondolas rocked in a syncopated rhythm.⁸⁶ In the structure and the composition of the novel, one might find stylistic devices resembling the movement of waves. It often includes particular (intentional and meaningful) repetitions of passages within relatively short fragments. Certain scenes and images, though much more spread apart, also recur, yet they were constructed in such a way that they immediately signal those which occurred before. They engage in an obvious dialogue with one another. Those doubles – leitmotifs, if you will – resemble waves repeatedly crashing on the shore.

The common accumulation of words is another trademark stylistic feature of the novel. When discussing it, Maciąg argued that through it the author expressed "the value of words, the value of the act of naming."⁸⁷ According to him, in those thesaurus-like series the narrator was making his statement, whom he defined as a linguistic "sensorist and creationist."⁸⁸ Those dictionary sequences include several dozen items each. Kubacki thus described jewellers' displays in Venetian streets:

Tadeusz (...) being pushed, jostled, and shaken when faced with the shiny displays wandered polarised by the values, over-saturated, honoured, and overwhelmingly multiplied by crystals, silvers, platters, enamels, precious stones, jewels, mothers-of-pearl, Venetian mirrors, Persian embellishments and Mauritanian incrustations, pressed and gold-leafed

⁸³ In that focus on sensory experiences as well as in the ability to "specifically mirror the whole specificity and the particular atmosphere of Italian reality, nature, and life," Rohoziński saw inspiration drawn from Iwaszkiewicz. See also: Rohoziński, *Wacław Kubacki*, 5.

⁸⁴ Kubacki, *Smutna Wenecja*, 109.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁷ Maciąg, *Eseistyka i powieść*, 112.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

leather, fantastically cut perfume bottles, beads, ear clips, rings, brooches, pendants, chainlets, bracelets, lace, silk, the fluff of flowery carpets, and the shine of rare Siberian and Canadian furs.⁸⁹

The many accumulations reflect the sensory intensity with which the protagonist experienced Venetian reality with its peculiar excess of all goods offered by the city to a receptive visitor open to such experiences. The more receptive because of the place where he had come from: a country of greyness and trumpery. Usually the protagonist was charmed by the excess, yet there were times when (like in the quoted fragment) he was overwhelmed. The highest accumulation can be found when Tadeusz viewed a painting in the basilica of a biblical scene of multiplying fish and bread. Christ seemed to him as an “inspired creationist”⁹⁰ whose miraculous multiplication could not have, according to the protagonist, produced simply more bread but it also had to bring a multitude of all other baked goods:

Prażucha, barley flatbread, Jewish matzah, Armenian lavash, Georgian khachapuri, Turkish tsoureki, sailor’s hardtacks, Italian pizza (...) butter scones and marmalade-stuffed scones, solanka rolls, kaiser rolls, pretzels, bagels, boobliks, Parisian croissants and brioches, sticks, pastries, dumplings, fritters, coulubiaks (...) waffles, wafer biscuits, macaroons, marzipan, balamutka rolls, nougats, and makagigi. And many, many more other ideas for baked goods, with an excess bake of twelve baskets of fragments and crumbs.⁹¹

That is just a small fragment of an over-one-page-long enumeration of around 140 kinds of baked goods. That abundance of enumerations, listings, and catalogues resembles the phenomenon present in art since the beginning, which Umberto Eco discussed in *The Infinity of Lists*: “The fear of being unable to say everything seizes us not only when we are faced with an infinity of names but also with an infinity of things. The history of literature is full of obsessive collections of objects.”⁹²

Kubacki’s *Smutna Wenecja* is such an “obsessive collection of things,” which are the source of endless inspiration and stimulation, and delights, both intellectual and sensory. Symptomatic words are included at the end of the novel when a friend accuses Tadeusz of “grazing” too long in Venice. That is the perception of Venice described by Kubacki. It is a place for “grazing” – for the intellect, the spirit, and the senses.

There is also the issue of the title. It seems banal and unpretentious without being obvious. That was proven by its German version: *Abschied von Venedig* (*Farewell to Venice*), which must have been approved by the

⁸⁹ Kubacki, *Smutna Wenecja*, 56.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 91–92.

⁹² Umberto Eco, *Szaleństwo katalogowania* (Poznań: Rebis 2009), 67. [English version: Eco Umberto, *The Infinity of Lists* (Random House Incorporated, 2009)]

writer.⁹³ Why did he describe Venice as being sad? Mind you, it offered the protagonist many inspiring aesthetic, intellectual, and sensory experiences. Sadness did accompany the parting of the lovers. The protagonist's Venetian love affair ended abruptly. It was severed unceremoniously, against the intentions of the couple, by politics and various schemes. For Tadeusz, it offered yet another trigger of cultural associations and reflections (bidding him farewell Zanze, standing alone in the rain on a pier, seemed to him like a scene from a Venetian mosaic). Yet the essence of the novel cannot be simply reduced to the love story. Therefore, Venice seems sad mainly as a metaphor of Western civilisation, bringing the writer to bitter reflections. In this case, the "sadness" seems approximate to the poetic term of "smętek" [unhappiness]. Venice could also be defined as melancholic, nostalgic, and pensive — that was the image of the "city on water" drawn by Kubacki.

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⁹³ Waław Kubacki, *Abschied von Venedig*, trans. Caesar Rymarowicz (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1971). Other translations of the novel reflect its original title (e.g. Russian *Grustnaja Venecija*, Romanian *Tristia Venetie*, or Lithuanian *Liudnoji Venecija*).

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Magdalena Kuran – University of Lodz, Department of Language Teaching and Polish Literature. Academic focus: Old Polish preachers, religious motifs in Old Polish literature, rhetoric. Major publications: *Retoryka jako narzędzie perswazji w postylografii polskiej XVI wieku (na przykładzie „Postylli katolickiej” Jakuba Wujka)*, Łódź 2007.

E-mail: magdalena.kuran@uni.lodz.pl

IWONA GRODŹ
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

 0000-0003-0151-6909



Venice in Films

Wenecja by Jan Jakub Kolski (2010)

*Do we choose the places of our illuminations
or are we chosen by the places?*

Dariusz Czaja

SUMMARY

The topic of the article is the image of Venice in *Wenecja*, a Polish feature film directed by Jan Jakub Kolski from 2010. The imaginary image of this city was inspired by "Sezon w Wenecji" (from the volume titled *Jedźmy, wracajmy...*, Krakow 1993 or *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania*, Warsaw 2000), a literary text by Włodzimierz Odojewski (1930–2016).

The article undertakes to analyse the image of Venice in the film by the author of *Historia kina w Popielawach* as a testimony of understanding its role in a particular historical space and time, of both the plot of the film and the projected reception.

Keywords

city and film, Venice, Jan Jakub Kolski

Some say that "the city is the natural environment of the film medium."¹ Urbanised space has for years been associated with speed, dynamics, movement as well as technological and industrial development. And that is all film art is about.² As Teresa Rutkowska wrote in *Kwartalnik Filmowy* devoted entirely to the topic of the "presence" of big cities in films, "As an art ontologically linked to technology and civilisation situating the human being in the centre, the film has annexed the city along with all the mythologies created by literature since the 19th century. It has also enriched and developed such mythologies."³ This is evidenced by films in which cities, such as Warsaw,⁴ Berlin,⁵ St. Petersburg⁶ or Paris⁷ have become the subject of cinematographic peregrinations. Sometimes it even seems that the mythology of such cities as New York,⁸ Los Angeles⁹ or Atlantic City¹⁰ was created for the purposes of the film. The myth of the city, however, was often "over-shadowed" by some infernal or catastrophic visions. The city was seen less often as an "urbanised paradise." However, it is undeniable that the city has inspired many researchers. That is why it is worth looking again at this topos, this time on a concrete example: the city of Venice and a less obvious film,¹¹ namely *Wenecja* directed by Jan Jakub Kolski (2010), a Polish produc-

¹ Teresa Rutkowska, "Od Redakcji," *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no. 28 (1999) (*Miasto w filmie*): 4.

² Cf. Peter Martyn, "'Miejskość' a urbanistyka: mit kontra rzeczywistość? Kilka uwag dotyczących terminologii, przeszłości i tożsamości, prób planowania oraz kwestii dalszych losów miasta," *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no. 28 (1999): 6–25.

³ Rutkowska, *Od Redakcji*, 4.

⁴ Cf. Ewa Mazierska, "Miasto, jak każde - Warszawa w *Girl guide* i *Kilerze* Juliusza Machulskiego," *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no. 28 (1999): 189–202.

⁵ Cf. Anna Wasieczko, "O scenografii w *Metropolis* Fritza Langa," *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no. 28 (1999): 54–76. Cf. a monographic book about the film city of Berlin written by Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, *Berlin: filmowy obraz miasta* (Krakow: Rabid, 2007).

⁶ Cf. Jurij Cywjan, "W sprawie pochodzenia niektórych motywów Petersburga Andrieja Bielego," *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no. 28 (1999): 26–34.

⁷ Agnieszka Taborska, "Paryż, czyli w pogoni za tajemnicą. Filmowe fantazje surrealistów," *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no. 28 (1999): 77–93.

⁸ Cf. Patricia Kruth, "Kolor Nowego Jorku - miejsca i przestrzenie w filmach Martina Scorsese i Woody'ego Allena," *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no. 28 (1999): 117–128.

⁹ Cf. Maria Helena Costa, "Czarne kino Los Angeles," *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no. 28 (1999): 93–107.

¹⁰ Cf. Konrad Klejsa, "Przypadki utraconych tożsamości. O *Atlantic City* Louisa Malle'a," *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no. 28 (1999): 129–147.

¹¹ The most frequently indicated foreign films (but evaluated very differently by critics), whose plot is set in Venice, include (selection): *Death in Venice* (1971), directed by Luchino Visconti; *Summertime* (1955), directed by David Lean; *Don't Look Now* (1973), directed by Nicolas Roeg; *A Little Romance* (1979), directed by George Roy Hill; *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), an adventure film directed by Steven Spielberg; *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996), a musical directed by Woody Allen; *The Wings of the Dove* (1997), directed by Iain Softley; *Dangerous Beauty* (1998), directed by Marshall Herskovitz; *The Italian Job* (2003), directed by Felix Gary Gray; *Casanova* (2005, cf. also its earlier versions) directed by Lasse Hallström; *Casino Royal* (2006), a James Bond film directed by Martin Campbell; *Shark in Venice* (2008), directed by Danny Lerner; *Eine Liebe in Venedig* (2009), directed by Klaus Wirbitzky; *The Tourist* (2010), a blockbuster directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck and many others.

Cf. Also e.g. articles (selection) on films whose plot is set in Venice: "Zobaczyć Wenecję i...," *Kino*, September 1997, 50; "Płyn, barko moja...," *Video Club*, no. 7–8 (1996): 18–19.

tion on the topic of Venice.¹² For this purpose, it is necessary to take a “lonely peregrination” through the “tamed” space and find a different key to this unusual “city on the water,”¹³ which is at the same time a reflection-mirror of the sky-cosmos; a city of the elements and the senses; a city of fiction and narcissism, but also of inspiration.

In Polish cinematography, Venice as a film city is primarily a city of artists and art. In the second place it also becomes:

a) “a place-name,”¹⁴ which establishes it in the first place, making it a city of hope and imagination as in the film *Wenecja* (2010) by Jan Jakub Kolski;¹⁵

b) “a place of journey” and the choice between theatre (secular “game”) and theology (religious “game”), which Wojciech Has described in an insightful way in his last film titled *The Tribulations of Balthazar Kober* [Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera] (1988);¹⁶

c) “a place of love and death,” which was most clearly recalled in Polish cinematography by Lech Majewski in *Ogród rozkoszy ziemskich* [The Garden of Earthly Delights] (2002).¹⁷

¹² An interesting example of a forgotten film about Venice is a French-Italian feature film titled *Rouge Venise* directed by Etienne Perier in 1988, in which Wojciech Pszoniak, a Polish actor, performed as Vivaldi. The story is set in the eponymous city in 1735, which was at that time the cultural and entertainment centre of Europe. Antonio Vivaldi, a musician, Carlo Goldoni, an attorney and a playwright (starring Vincent Spano), and Jean-Baptiste Tiepolo, a painter (starring Massimo Daporto) live in the Venice of that epoch. It is a film mainly about artists, art, with a criminal thread (the murder of Princesse Hortense), but the city provides an undoubtedly picturesque background.

¹³ Joseph Brodsky, “Znak wodny”, trans. Stanisław Barańczak, *Zeszyty Literackie*, no. 39 (1992): 5–54 and Joseph Brodsky, *Znak wodny*, trans. Stanisław Barańczak (Kraków: Znak, 1993).

¹⁴ Cf. other less well-known films, which sometimes only refer to Venice in their titles in a non-literal (or even misleading) way, e.g. documentary films: *Stacja Wality-Wenecja* directed by Helena Włodarczyk (2004); *Żnin-Paryż-Wenecja, czyli sceny z życia prowincji* directed by Piotr Bikont and Stanisław Manturzewski (1992–1993).

It is worth bearing in mind the first of these documents, *Stacja Wality-Wenecja* (2004), because of the film’s protagonist, namely Leon Tarasewicz, a painter born in Wality in Podlasie. The artist claims that the boundaries of art are not defined, because it is art that indicates them. Therefore, for Tarasewicz, as well as for many others, Venice can be everywhere, being at the same time synonymous with the “world of art, galleries, academy.”

¹⁵ Cf. Natasza Korczarowska-Różycka, *Ojczyzny prywatne: mitologia przestrzeni prywatności w twórczości Tadeusza Konwickiego, Jana Jakuba Kolskiego, Andrzeja Kondratiuka* (Kraków: Rabid, 2007).

¹⁶ Cf. Iwona Grodz, “Komu się śnię? Między rzeczywistością a fikcją,” in Iwona Grodz, *Zasyfrowane w obrazie. Filmy Wojciecha Hasa*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria, 2008, 199–280.

¹⁷ Cf. Jacek Nowakowski, “W poszukiwaniu rajy – Metafizyka i Ogród rozkoszy ziemskich,” in Jacek Nowakowski, *W stronę rajy. O literackiej i filmowej twórczości Lecha Majewskiego* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2012), 199–218. This subject was also discussed by Magdalena Lebecka, *Lech Majewski* (Warsaw: Więź, 2010).

Cf. also Lech Majewski, “Okradanie śmierci.” An interview conducted by Grażyna Arata, *Kino*, March 2004; Feliks Netz, “Nowy, wybitny film Lecha Majewskiego,” *Śląsk*, no. 5 (2004); Jan Pniewski, “Zaklinanie czasu,” *Przegląd Powszechny*, February 6, 2004; Jan Olszewski, “Zegnaj, ogrodzie,” *Kino*, March 2004; Tadeusz Sobolewski, “Wenecja na cyfrze,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 12, 2004.

Venice in the first variant will be subject to further consideration; thus, at this point it is worth mentioning only the other two alternatives.¹⁸ The final film of Wojciech Has, *The Tribulations of Balthazar Kober*, was created on the basis of a novel by Frédéric Tristan, a contemporary French writer and traveller as well as the winner of the Prix Goncourt in 1983.¹⁹ His novel titled *Les Tribulations héroïques Balthazar Kober* was published in France in 1980. Unfortunately, so far it has not been translated into Polish.²⁰ Undoubtedly, this could have been one of the reasons why Has's project passed unnoticed in Poland. On a very basic level, the audience did not feel any bond with it.

The novel *Les Tribulations héroïques Balthazar Kober* was considered by many critics as a manifestation of the writer's postmodern inclinations. In Poland, Maria Kornatowska wrote about it in this context, pointing to the intertextual game that the author "serves" the audience. The multitude of allusions, quotations, various references to other literary texts, cultures and rituals also implies a similar inclination of Has.²¹ The director took the main plot, the characters and to some extent the mood from the literary original. He transformed the elusive verbal literary matter "in his image and likeness." However, the main difference between the novel and the film was that "the matter of the novel is life in its various aspects, while the matter of the film by Has is death as a form of life."²² The director's fascination with the passing of time and disappearance took over also in this project. Death in *The Tribulations of Balthazar Kober* is not, however, frightening or unfamiliar. Almost from the first shot (the scene of the Angel Gabriel meeting), the director announces the protagonist's contact with the extraterrestrial world, which is to allow him to tame death. Ultimately, death means meeting his beloved, and hence love and happiness. Loneliness in the face of death is overcome precisely by these feelings and Balthazar's journey to Venice becomes a road to "initiation to death."²³ It is a path shaped like a labyrinth, which is traditionally associated with confusion, closure, initiation, infinity (the spiral) and the land of the dead. The labyrinth is a kind of metaphor for human fate, its repetitiveness. The crossing of the labyrinth has always been a symbol of the path of a human being who is alienated, lost and searching.

The Italian city is also connected with the theme of the masquerade, the wandering troupe of circus artists, scenes depicting the carnival in Venice

¹⁸ The films directed by Has and Majewski have already been discussed in detail in my other scholarly works, which is why I decided this time to focus only on *Wenecja* by Kolski.

Cf. Iwona Grodz, "Oko artysty. Fenomenologia zmysłów w filmie *Młyn i krzyż* Lecha Majewskiego," *TransMissions: Journal of Film and Media Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2018).

¹⁹ Cf. Mariusz Miodek, "Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera," *Film*, April 1988, 6-7; "Wędrówka do Wenecji." A production report, *Film*, September 1988, 6-7; Maria Kornatowska, "Odczytać tajemną księgę," *Film*, March 1989, 9; "Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera - discussion of the film", *Filmowy Serwis Prasowy*, September-October 1988, 2-5; Tadeusz Sobolewski, "Teatr i teologia," *Kino*, December 1988, 14-16.

²⁰ We know only part of the book translated for the purposes of the film. The screenplay S-26663 and script S-25520 of *Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera* can be found in the National Film Archive in Warsaw.

²¹ Maria Kornatowska, "Odczytać tajemną księgę," *Film*, no. 3 (1989): 9.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

or a man dressed up as death, with whom Balthazar and Rosa sail away (the last scene). The appearance of masqueraders is already announced by a black-and-yellow harlequin that Balthazar's little brother is playing with. The Pappagallo clown is wearing precisely the same outfit as the harlequin. Moreover, it is a symbol of duality, of the bond between the living and the dead, of the world as a "circus spectacle that for a moment suspends the rules of the game of everyday reality and uncovers the deepest truths of human existence."²⁴ Illusion becomes the most powerful force in the film of the author of *Farewells*. The masqueraders also point to the idea of "upside down living," which was most fully reflected in the final film of Has. This is about pictures watched by Balthazar which depict fish catching people, a man hanging upside down or a donkey wearing human attire. They bring to mind the drawings by Jean-Jacques Grandville, one of the precursors of surrealism. The Master explains their meaning in the following way: "Our world can have different faces. Consequently, you have to find the right order of things in yourself."²⁵ In this way, Venice as the main protagonist's initiation journey becomes a place of illumination.

In the case of the film titled *Ogród rozkoszy ziemskich* (2002) directed by Lech Majewski, who drew inspiration from his own novel titled *Metafizyka* [Metaphysics]²⁶ and the painting by Hieronymus Bosch,²⁷ Venice is, above all, a space of love and a paradise (though "contaminated" with disease and imminent death²⁸). The Polish director, who has been living in Venice for many years, wrote about the paradox of the unreality of this place: "Venice is unrealistic in spring and autumn, when the air is very crisp, or on damp days, when everything looks magical, or in winter, when humidity turns into snow."²⁹

The situation is different in the film. Jacek Nowakowski noted that the symbolism of the painting by Bosch was realised by revealing its presence and actuality in the real world. The place where it was found is Venice, the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Has, *Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera* – the script, 21.

²⁶ The literary original describes Venice in the following way: "Water travels and paintings in churches rock me, 'lull,' you said dreamily. – The colors, lights and arcs of Carpaccio and Bellini are a state of grace. The eye moves gently over them, like a boat on the waters of the lagoon. Touched by a warm, soothing hand, I feel bliss. Yes, now I am really in paradise." Cf. Lech Majewski, *Metafizyka* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002), 53.

²⁷ Majewski's film was also compared to Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and to Luchino Visconti's film based on Mann's novella, indicating the presence of the Apollonian and Dionysian nature in Venice (the motif of corporeality, the chaotic element of water) and asking "whether it is possible to attribute to Venice the unconscious, instinctive, aquatic pursuit of (self)destruction" (Cf. Nowakowski, "W poszukiwaniu rajy – *Metafizyka* i *Ogród rozkoszy ziemskich*," 210).

²⁸ Magdalena Lebecka noted that: "Unlike Dante, Bosch abandoned the idea of purgatory. He was not interested in penance but in liberation, he dealt not with punishment but with reward for those who, instead of being tormented by waiting, discovered that ascension to paradise was possible and given here and now. He liberated those suffering in the hell of their own soul in the earthly garden of pleasures and established this utopia as the central theme of the triptych." Cf. Magdalena Lebecka, *Lech Majewski* (Warsaw: Więź, 2010, 217).

²⁹ Lech Majewski, "Ukryte ścieżki weneccjan," in Lech Majewski, *Pejzaż intymny. Rozmowy autobiograficzne o świecie i o sztuce* (Poznań: Rebis, 2017), 175.

city of myth. The author of the monograph titled *W stronę raju* [Towards Heaven] stressed that Majewski “transferred” Bosch to Venice (although *The Garden of Earthly Delights* can be found in Museo del Prado in Madrid³⁰), because this place functions as an earthly paradise for all art aficionados and people in love.³¹ All in all, Venice in Majewski’s film is a space of freedom and fulfilment.³² However, it should be remembered, as Aleksandra Achteлик wrote, that: “Venice never allows one to stay long in the sphere of the symbolism of life, it does not allow one to forget that it is a kind of visualisation of *memento mori*. (...) it is a warning (...) a place of memory of the living feeling after the death of the heroine (...) a diary of a love story which is doomed to an imminent end.”³³ This is what happens in Majewski’s film. Bea and Luis are witnesses of the funeral, and eventually it is in this city that the main female character dies. This is why “the city on the water” is for the director, on the one hand, a place of illusion, art, game, disguise, costume, masque, which is synonymous to pretending, but it is also, on the other hand, the paradise here and now, like in the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch. There is no other Eden.

Wenecja by Jan Jakub Kolski

Between reality and fiction

*I dream of cinematography so intense that the viewer
can produce its scent by themselves.*

Jan Jakub Kolski

Wenecja by Jan Jakub Kolski (2010)³⁴ is an adaptation of the short story titled “Sezon w Wenecji” [A Season in Venice] by Włodzimierz Odojewski.³⁵ Cinematic Venice, however, is not a city in Italy, but just an image of it. It is, in fact, a “Venetian” basement. There is a place that could have become a permanent part of the main character’s biography, but the story of that journey never came true due to the outbreak of the Second World War. The main protagonist, eleven-year-old Marek, dreams of a trip to Venice. His parents,

³⁰ It is worth remembering that the Doge’s Palace is home to another painting by Bosch, namely *Visions of the Hereafter* (which consists of four parts: *Terrestrial Paradise*, *Ascent of the Blessed*, *Fall of the Damned into Hell*, *Hell*).

³¹ Cf. Nowakowski, “W poszukiwaniu raju – *Metafizyka i Ogród rozkoszy ziemskich*,” 207.

³² Nowakowski, “W poszukiwaniu raju – *Metafizyka i Ogród rozkoszy ziemskich*,” 208.

³³ Aleksandra Achteлик, “Drugie oblicze Lecha Majewskiego, czyli o powieści *Metafizyka*,” *Postscriptum*, no. 1-2, 2003.

³⁴ Cf. selected reviews of Jan Jakub Kolski’s *Wenecja*: Andrzej Luter, “Wenecja,” *Kino*, July–August 2010, 86–87; Łukasz Maciejewski, “Wojna ukryta pod wenecką maską,” *Film*, July 2010, 80; Tadeusz Sobolewski, “Ile ciosów wytrzyma iluzja,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 10, 2010, 14; Wojciech Kałużyński, “Weneckie lustra,” *Dziennik. Gazeta Prawna. Kultura*, June 11, 2010, 4; Piotr Krajewski, “Machiny i lotne aluzje,” *Odra*, no. 3 (2011): 102–110; Janusz Wróblewski, “Wenecja,” *Polityka*, June 12, 2010, 54; Małgorzata Sadowska, “Koniec marzeń,” *Przekrój*, June 8, 2010, 23, 51; Barbara Hollender, “Świat skażony przez wojnę,” *Rzeczpospolita*, June 11, 2010, A20.

³⁵ Jan Jakub Kolski spoke about the adaptation in an interview with Barbara Hollender, “Potyczki z literaturą,” *Rzeczpospolita*, June 11, 2010, A20.

Joanna (starring Magdalena Cielecka) and Roman (Mariusz Bonaszewski) as well as his elder brother Wiktor (Filip Piotrowicz) have already been to Italy, but for Mark it is still an unfulfilled dream. The boy believes that he will soon see this city. He immortalises his dreams in writing, learns by heart the names of all the squares, streets and churches in this city. Eventually, however, he spends the summer at the manor house of Aunt Veronica, his mother's sister. Then the war breaks out and the journey does not take place. But he does not stop thinking about it. One day, torrential rains flood his aunt's house. This event inspires Marek to build an imaginary miniature of Venice in the basement of her house. Together with his teenage friends, he sails in it in a boat which is supposed to resemble a gondola and he holds musical concerts, pretending that they are in St. Mark's Square in Venice. The imaginary city turns out to be a place of oblivion and peace, which allows children and – as it will turn out – also adults to survive the turmoil of the war. Marek's aunts escape to the imaginary "Venice" hidden in the basement in the most difficult moments, hiding their fear and drowning out unwanted thoughts. They even organise a kind of Venetian carnival, swim in a gondola, dance and drink wine. With time, the war even "penetrates" this space. The death of Aunt Veronica, who dies from a stray enemy bullet in a meadow, turns out to be the turning point. This is how the core of the plot is outlined. But what image of Venice emerges from the literary original?

In "Sezon w Wenecji," Odojewski wrote about the idea of Venice which Marek has in the following way:

I think now that perhaps at that time, or not much later, his imagination produced a picture composed of stone laces and, as if woven in silver and red threads of decorations on the plaster, appearing to him to be like colorful miniatures made of porcelain caskets which were kept behind the crystal glass in one of the cabinets by his grandmother, full of canals with gondolas floating over them and arches of bridges climbing over them in the air, from which at night winged lions would fly to St. Mark's Square and where giant horses would gallop or pigeons simply walked during the day, less enchanted than those, but still.³⁶

Precisely due to its elaborate, sophisticated, "sensual" language and meandering syntax, Odojewski's prose became inspiration for Jan Jakub Kolski, who decided to adapt the story of this author to the needs of both the big (a feature, full-length film) and small screen (a TV series).

The filmmaker is known primarily for original poetics of his maverick film projects, e.g. *Pograbek*, *Jańcio Wodnik*, *Historia kina w Popielawach* [A Story of a Cinema in Popielawy].³⁷ He is less often associated with screenings of literary texts. Nevertheless, he is also an author of adaptations, for instance, he made into a film Hanna Krall's short story titled "Ta z Hamburga" [The

³⁶ Włodzimierz Odojewski, "Sezon w Wenecji," in Włodzimierz Odojewski, *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Twój Styl, 2000), 5–6.

³⁷ Korczarowska, *Ojczyzny prywatne*.

One from Hamburg] (cf. *Daleko od okna* [Far from the Window] from 2000) and Witold Gombrowicz's novel titled *Pornography* (2008). The more difficult the text, the more obliged the director felt to try to screen it. Due to such an attitude, he brought his "adaptation instruments" to perfection. This was followed by an episodic "encounter" with Dorota Masłowska's text titled *White and Red* (the unfinished 2006 project, this text was finally adapted for the screen by Xawery Żuławski in 2009). Finally, the director rose to the challenge presented by Włodzimierz Odojewski's short story.

Critics wrote that "Sezon w Wenecji" depicts "an upside down world – abnormal on the surface and strange, but the way it should be, underground."³⁸ This statement is intriguing enough to be an impulse for the creator who loved the land of his ancestors (the so-called creator of small homelands). Nevertheless, Kolski mentioned that Odojewski's story is very short, so it is "a world far from complete."³⁹ The literary material was enough for fifteen percent of what the viewer can see on the screen. The rest had to be invented from scratch. But this turned out to be an artistic challenge, not a hindrance. Additionally, Odojewski authorised the screenplay.

The motif of "the city on the water" has become an inspiration for many artists, some of whom were mentioned, for instance, by Dariusz Czaja in his article titled "W drodze do Wenecji" [On the Way to Venice].⁴⁰ Among them was also Odojewski and his short story with its telling title, in which there is the name of the city as "a personal name or an abbreviated emblem of individuality, meaningful and marking, also thickening the mystery of a single identity" and the term "season."⁴¹ Both of them, according to Dariusz Czaja, belong to the "the mysterious idiomaticity of existence."⁴² This is why there is not one Venice for all. But there are many ideas about it. Behind them there are dreams, desires, promises and non-fulfilment, experiences of a different world, sensual, sparkling, an "amalgam" of reality, full of water reflections, fantastic musing, sounds and scents.⁴³

³⁸ Korczarowska, *Ojczyzny prywatne*.

³⁹ Moreover, the director mentioned that "the Venice created in the basement of the manor house is a world governed by a clearer logic and far more ordered than the external one. Additionally, it is less oppressive. There is overproduction of women and conflicts on the surface and there is also the war going on. In any case, the war is less overwhelming for Marek than the oppression resulting from the deficit of maternal love and the domination of an excessively feminine world in the manor house."

⁴⁰ Dariusz Czaja pointed, for example, to Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912) and its 1971 screen adaptation, directed by Luchino Visconti. He presented the aim of his deliberations in the following way: "Let us now look at three completely different examples of constructing an image of Venice. These are texts whose protagonists are going to Venice, but not in one case do they do not reach it 'physically' in any of the cases. Let us take a look at how the rhetorical mechanism of making imagined visions more concrete born of the imagination work. Let us try, step by step, to reconstruct the architecture of the eye permeated by fascination." Cf. Dariusz Czaja, "W drodze do Wenecji. Podróże imaginacyjne," *Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty*, vol. 57, no. 1-2, (2003): 162.

⁴¹ Czaja, "W drodze do Wenecji. Podróże imaginacyjne," 161.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ At this point it is worth stressing the importance of scenery in Venice. It is extremely sensual. All elements were carefully selected. The creators were only unable to convey the fragrance, although the intensity of psychological experiences can help the imagination in this. Arthur Reinhart's photographs also provide an unusual visual setting.

The author of *Podróże imaginacyjne* also notices that "Sezon w Wenecji" by Włodzimierz Odojewski is unusual primarily due to the original, purely imaginary vision of this city. He reflects on the subject: "(...) there is no other such poignantly 'real' vision of this city, although the thing does not concern its actual designation even for a moment, there is no text in which we would learn so much about Venice without Venice. The issue is not just the writer's ability to use expressive means of description, the thing is much more mysterious and unexpected."⁴⁴

The story, and consequently Kolski's film, opens in 1939. The main protagonist, as it was recalled earlier, is to leave for the long-awaited and promised trip to Venice. It is a special place in his family since everyone visits it. Hence, the magic of "the city on the water" comes from "the darkness of his childhood," imagination, expectations for the materialisation of the dream which, as time will show, will never come true. In the life of the main character, the onset of the Second World War announces the end of illusions, the necessity of growing up faster and learning about death. The dream trip changes into a journey to the province, to his family, to an old manor house. However, there is some hope in this lack of fulfilment. The basement in the old house suddenly becomes an imaginary Venice. After some time, it transforms into a space of play, pretend, entertainment and an asylum where children and adults alike regain their sense of security. In this sense, as Dariusz Czaja noted, "The world of imaginary, 'conjured' Venice becomes in the story [like in the film - J.G.] a form of compensation for the nightmare of the war. Imaginary Venice (...) allows the characters to forget and daydream."⁴⁵ In this way, as Czaja puts it, Odojewski "created (...) an image of the city in line with the mythical model. Like few people before him, he unveiled some of the most ambiguous Venetian masks in a completely novel way."⁴⁶ Therefore, in this story "(...) memory is not an obstacle for the heroes, it does not summon the ghosts of the past. Memory together with imagination constitutes here a creative and productive power (...). Memory functions here like a photographic developer, it 'un-remembers' the real, strongly existing reality, creates an illusion, but with an amazingly strong consistency."⁴⁷

Ultimately, the recipients – both readers and viewers – are left with a kind of understatement. Thrown in the maze of truths and conjectures, they are unable to say clearly why Venice fills the hero with fear as the narrator will unambiguously say: "I have never really been to Venice."

So many years have passed. I have travelled half the world. So many countries, so many cities, so many different views. But he has never really been to Venice, although many times in its vicinity. Not that he was not attracted or curious. Perhaps only somewhere deep inside he was a little scared. No, he did not really know what. What he did know, however, was

⁴⁴ Ibid., 163.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 164.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

that there was a gondola waiting for him, not at all like their giant tub from Aunt Weronika's basement. So he did not want to.⁴⁸

We sense that it is not only about the traumatic memory of childhood, a memory that means non-fulfilment, but about something more. Perhaps about the meeting with the death? About the loss of illusion, because Venice can only be a name, a word, literature, a text, a ghost town, a synonym of disappearance and absence rather than a memory or its palimpsest.⁴⁹ It is a truly carnival blend of meanings, truths and deceptions that terrifies.

Finally, it is worth pointing out the changes that Kolski introduced to Odojewski's text. In general, the director takes over the structure of the story, but also makes some modifications to it. As Aleksandra Smyczyńska notes, the title of the film is the first signal of the director's departure from the poetics of faithful imitation of the original:

On one hand, *Wenecja* clearly refers to the title of Odojewski's short story, which harmonises with the attitude of "respect" towards the literary original declared by the director; on the other hand, however, he modifies it quite significantly, transforming the title "Sezon w Wenecji" characterised by temporality into the emblematic 'city name,' which in the Mediterranean culture has become a timeless metaphor or even archetype of persistence in spite of unfavorable circumstances.⁵⁰

Thanks to this, the author of *Pograbek* suggests "destruction of the old order more explicitly and in a broader context."⁵¹ Moreover, in the film it is the boy, not aunt Barbara, who invents a city on the water in the basement of the house.⁵² In addition, the director completes the information about what was before 1939.⁵³ Some characters are not present in the film: cousin Tomek or the grandfather, and this "elimination is not a coincidence,

⁴⁸ Odojewski, *Sezon w Wenecji*, 85.

⁴⁹ Cf. e.g. Italo Calvino, *Niewidzialne miasta*, trans. Alina Kreisberg (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1975).

⁵⁰ Aleksandra Smyczyńska, "Przepis na adaptację Jana Jakuba Kolskiego i jego realizacja w filmie *Wenecja*," *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Cultura*, no. 5 (2013): 58.

The author of this text also recalled that "In fact, the director also drew on two other stories by this writer: *Koń pułkownika* and *Cyrk przyjechał, cyrk odjechał*; furthermore, one of the episodes in *Wenecja* comes from the short story titled *Nie można cię samego zostawić o zmierzchu*" (58).

⁵¹ Smyczyńska, "Przepis na adaptację Jana Jakuba Kolskiego i jego realizacja w filmie *Wenecja*," 58. "Compared to the literary original, Kolski also develops and complicates the picture of social relations during the Second World War. First of all, he exposes the Jewish theme much more strongly than Odojewski." (58) "Kolski explained his interest in the Holocaust with the fact that his grandmother was Jewish, so this blood also flows in his veins" (59).

⁵² In addition, Kolski gives a symbolic and archetypal meaning to water, which becomes primarily the boundary between dreams and reality. Cf. Dariusz Czaja, "Wenecja jest kobietą. Rzecz o wyobraźni," *Konteksty*, no. 3-4 (1995): 146-152.

⁵³ In his book, the director wrote the following: "I felt that there were no events earlier than September 1939. In order to supplement it, I included episodes from the Jesuit Secondary School in Chyrów and the custom taken from there of taking an oath concerning their future lives. Due to this, I could follow that oath to see how the dreams of my and Odojewski's characters came true. There are many additions to the screenplay, but each one comes from the authority of the original world, taken from the author of the stories." Cf. Jan Jakub

because the world of Venice is primarily a female space."⁵⁴ A city of women and a place, in which cognition is achieved through merging the theme of Eros and Thanatos. After the filming, Kolski recalled:

I did not have to tame the space of Odojewski. I did not feel the need. The world of his short stories, apparently not mine and very distant, seemed surprisingly close to me. Nothing disturbed me here. Nothing at all. I did not have to say any spells and mark the territory. From the very beginning, I felt at home in those places and among those people.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, in the end, *Wenecja* is rather a variation on Odojewski's prose, with quicker action, an extended motif of water, revealing a difficult relationship with the mother, Marek's loneliness, his parents' marital crisis, lack of harmony between the sisters, a broader temporal and spatial context, and thus with a more universal expression.

Finally, it is worth recalling the words of the author of *Oksana*, who wrote that there are permanent and fleeing things. The former, like imagination, may bring salvation⁵⁶ and it seems that Kolski understood this thought of the writer and thanks to that his imagination wove an extraordinary picture about awaking, growing up and remembering.

Wenecja: "the flower of human genius"

*Venice is a myth, a mirror, an island that children dream of.
It is also an illusion of what is not there.*

Dariusz Czaja

Venice – "the flower of human genius"⁵⁷ – was made to impress from the very beginning and for many reasons: ranging from its location, the circumstances of its founding, its extraordinary past, to its enigmatic future, for which Venice is increasingly being called another Atlantis, a disappearing island. A city from imagination, a woman-city,⁵⁸ a death-city,⁵⁹ or simply a place – a labyrinth of streets, still hiding many secrets, in which it is not difficult to get lost.⁶⁰ Years ago Dariusz Czaja wrote that: "In European

Kolski, *Pamięć podróżna, Fragmentozbiór filmowy* (Łódź: Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Filmowa, Telewizyjna i Teatralna im. L. Schillera w Łodzi, 2010), 55.

⁵⁴ Cf. Smyczyńska, "Przepis na adaptację Jana Jakuba Kolskiego i jego realizacja w filmie *Wenecja*," 56.

⁵⁵ Kolski, 155.

⁵⁶ Odojewski, *Sezon w Wenecji*, 72.

⁵⁷ This is the way in which Venice was described by the creators of the documentary film titled *Czy technologia uratuje Wenecję?*

⁵⁸ Czaja, *Wenecja jest kobietą*, 146–152.

⁵⁹ Dariusz Czaja, "Wenecja i śmierć. Konteksty symboliczne," 58–65. http://cyfrowaetnografia.pl/Content/2209/Strony%20od%20PSL_XLVI_nr3-4-12_Czaja.pdf [accessed July 6, 2020].

⁶⁰ Aleksandra Achteлик, *Sprawcza moc przechadzki, czyli polski literat we włoskim mieście* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2015, 8). Cf. also Aleksandra Achteлик, *Wenecja mityczna w literaturze XIX i XX wiek* (Katowice: Gnome, 2002).

mythical geography, Venice has always had a unique place. It is a particularly distinguished space, characterised by its distinctive 'overvalue.' Probably none of the European cities has evoked such strong and varied emotions; none has been the object of feelings of fascination and admiration manifested so frequently and eagerly."⁶¹

There are many "languages" with the use of which it is possible to talk about space. This is evidenced by the literary, artistic, film and theatrical "texts" as well as even musical compositions. Venice is, undoubtedly, a special place. From the point of view of cognition, it is important to put a specific urbanised area into a valorisation network⁶² and make it a noteworthy topic, if only due to the fact that the artist and the work of art convey "a testimony of understanding of the role of the city in the concrete historical phase of the development of civilisation."⁶³ Undoubtedly, it is extremely difficult to "see" this city today in the right scale, not completely through the prism of Romanticism, symbolism or postmodernism. It is an artistry that is difficult to understand. It is universalism, which is necessary. It is understanding that Venice, and the city in general,⁶⁴ that is one of the "keys" for understanding civilisational changes, particularly noticeable at the turn of the 20th and 21st century. Film art inspired by the "city on water" can undoubtedly help to achieve this.

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⁶¹ Czaja, "Wenecja i śmierć. Konteksty symboliczne," 58. In additional, the author of the indicated text recalled that: "The phenomenon of Venice is not limited to one linguistic or cultural area, to one literary tradition. (...) Venice is a phenomenon that goes beyond the boundaries of nations and cultures. For the general public, it is a model city, a paradigm city." (58)

⁶² Cf. e.g. Wojciech Gutowski, *Mit-Eros-Sacrum. Sytuacje młodopolskie* (Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Homini, 1999).

⁶³ Gutowski, *Mit-Eros-Sacrum. Sytuacje młodopolskie*.

⁶⁴ Cf. "(...) the form has a metaphysical memory and is not just what can be seen. It is a kind of statement showing us different, unique ideas. And because of this, exceptional works are created. The space observed in this way is a starting point for further reflection on a completely new dimension of the city and architecture..." Cf. Remigiusz Konecko, *Miasto i jego ukryty wymiar w sztuce, Images*, vol. XII, no. 21, (2013): 172.

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Filmography

Wenecja (a feature film from 2010 and a three-episode series from 2015) directed by Jan Jakub Kolski based on a story titled "Sezon w Wenecji" by Włodzimierz Odojewski. The premiere of the film (June 11, 2010). Photography: Artur Reinhart. Scenography: Joanna Macha. Set decoration: Wiesława Chojkowska. Music: Dariusz Górniok. The cast: Magdalena Cielecka (Joanna, Marek's mother), Marcin Walewski (Marek), Agnieszka Grochowska (Barbara, Marek's aunt), Grażyna Błęcka-Kolska (Weronika, Marek's aunt), Julia Kijowska (Klaudyna, Marek's aunt), Teresa Budzisz-Krzyżanowska (Marek's grandmother), Mariusz Bonaszewski (Marek's father), Filip Piotrowicz (Wiktor, Marek's brother) and others.

Iwona Grodź – is a literary scholar, film expert, art historian, and musicologist. She is also interested in theatre, cultural studies, philosophy and psychology as well as the idea of the "correspondence" of the arts – in particular of literature, film, painting, theatre and music.

She is the author of such books as: *"Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie" Wojciecha Jerzego Hasa*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2005; *Zaszyfrowane w obrazie. O filmach Wojciecha Jerzego Hasa*, Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2008; *Jerzy Skolimowski*, Wydawnictwo Więź, Warsaw 2010; *Synergia sztuki i nauki w twórczości Zbigniewa Rybczyńskiego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2015; *Between Dream and Reality*, Wydawnictwo Peter Lang, Berlin 2018; *Hasowski Appendix*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Krakow 2020.

E-mail: iwonagrodz@op.pl

AGNIESZKA CZYŻAK

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań



0000-0001-8918-5264



Venice in Poetry and Prose: Adam Wiedemann's Visit to the City

SUMMARY

The main aim of the article is to identify key interpretation issues in two texts by Adam Wiedemann. Both texts feature contemporary literary pictures of visits to Venice – the Polish author wrote a short story (*Sens życia. Opowiadanie śródziemnomorskie*, 1998) and a poem (*Tramwaj na Lido*, 2015) about his journeys to Italy. Those textual visions of the urban space of Venice show that Wiedemann is fully aware of many similar attempts made earlier yet still strives to stress his distinctness, creating a record of meetings of the contemporary visitor with the unique phenomenon of the unusual urban phenomenon.

Keywords

Venice, city, spectre, palimpsest, Adam Wiedemann

Venice is a well-known city, recognisable at first sight and crowded with visitors. At the same time, it is sometimes perceived as a city associated with decay, old age and death: it continues to last – exposed to extinction and destruction – yet it can be swept away from the surface of the earth (by water) at any time. In his text titled “On The Uses and Disadvantages of Living Among Specters,” Giorgio Agamben argues that Venice has long since acquired the status of a spectre, or rather a collection of palimpsestically

overlapping spectres, each of which is made up of signatures that time engraves on the surface of things:

A specter always carries with it a date wherever it goes; it is, in other words, an intimately historical entity. This is why old cities are the quintessential place of signatures, which the flaneur in turn reads, somewhat absentmindedly, in the course of his drifting and strolling down the streets. This is why the tasteless restorations that sugarcoat and homogenize European cities also erase their signatures; they render them illegible. And this is why cities – and especially Venice – tend to look like dreams.¹

Immersion in the signs of time preserved in the space of cities becomes a special act of cognition, during which attempts are made to penetrate their spectral essence and efforts are made to transcend this essentially elusive phenomenon.

Venice resisted historical turmoil for a long time. In her volume published in London during the war in 1940 (titled meaningfully *Róża i lasy płonące* [A Rose and Burning Forests]), Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska featured a poem titled “Wenecjo” [Oh, Venice]..., which is her special farewell to the city:

Do dziś jeszcze nietknięta koronko	Oh, stone lace intact to this day!
[kamienna!	I take leave, as you are too fine. Not today,
Żegnaj cię, boś zbyt piękna. Nie dzisiaj,	[then tomorrow,
[to jutro,	Not this war, then another. You're already
Nie ta wojna, to inna. Jużeś dla mnie	[a spectre to me.
[widmem... ²	

‘Lacey’ (fragile, ephemeral, phenomenal) Venice, despite being made of stone (which is a durable, time-resistant material), has become a lyrical sign of the disintegrating European order, its cultural trace, but it continues to exist, albeit merely as its spectre, while other cities were consumed by fire similar to that which destroyed Pompeii. The annihilation of Venice – expected and foretold many a time – is thus tantamount to the slow dying out of its vitality, the erosion of the walls, the disintegration of the foundations. Speaking about it – freezing the image of the city in words – involves evoking the extraordinary, unique, spectral beauty that grew out of centuries of

¹ Giorgio Agamben, “On The Uses and Disadvantages of Living Among Specters,” in *Nudities*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), <http://www.carouselvenezia.eu/lettura/giorgio-agamben-cadaverous.html>.

² Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, *Poezje zebrane*, vol. 2, ed. Aleksander Madyda (Toruń: Aldo, 1993), 7. The work also presents the anxiety caused by the feeling of the city’s imminent destruction: “O dworzyszczą syrenie, z ciemną wodą w progu, / Z gwiazdą kraba pod oknem! Drżę o was czarowne, / Byście nie runęły gruzem kolumn, fasad” [Oh mermaid courts, with dark water at the doorstep, / With a crab star at the window! I tremble for you, adorable, / So that you do not fall with the debris of columns, fa HYPERLINK "https://translatca.pl/translatca/po-polsku/facade;385945.html" çades]. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish]

tradition and the bitter awareness that it is constantly exposed to irreversible destruction.

In the introduction to the collection of critical sketches titled *Poczytalność. Przygody literackie* [Readership. Literary Adventures], Adam Wiedemann presented his vision of the literary text and its relationship with the reality. As the author argued, it is not only the relationship between a word and its designates or between a word with other words that are important to him:

I therefore need to have an idea about the relationships of the relationships between words and the relationships of designates which are completely independent from the words; it is an enigma, and it is an abyss I like to fall into for I know that it is easy to get out of this particular abyss with the proverbial fish in equally proverbial (although less and less natural) teeth. I have this bite and there is always some species of fish that is willing to fall into it.³

The conviction of the existence of such multifaceted and multi-level ties between words and designates provokes Wiedemann to arrive at a conclusion: "Literature seeks to communicate with the truth it creates,"⁴ hence it is in the course of artistic explorations that the 'truth' created within their framework can be found and grasped.

The Shakespearean 'creation' of Venice in verse appeared, in fact, to break down its image as the political and economic power of the Renaissance era, the steadfast queen of sea routes: Venice is, above all, a place where the transitoriness of all human illusions and delusions is revealed, and where the masks hide rotting, death and an inherent sense of unfulfillment. Antonio of Venice, the protagonist of *The Merchant of Venice*, spoke about it with conviction:

I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano,
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.⁵

Appearances, which rule the world, cause sadness, while wealth, superfluity and success reveal their fleeting nature. In his study of Shakespeare's play titled *Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare*, René Girard stresses that "Venice is a world where presentation and reality do not match (...) an astute Venetian knows very well how deceptive the wonderful superficiality can be."⁶ In turn, the protagonist of the story about the fate of the Venetian Moor expresses his conviction that all social and legal rules of life are fragile and fleeting – Iago's words contradict the importance of the legal and

³ Adam Wiedemann, *Poczytalność. Przygody literackie* (Wrocław: Warstwy, 2016), 10.

⁴ Wiedemann, *Poczytalność. Przygody literackie*, 11.

⁵ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, Scene 1, https://www.opensource-shakespeare.org/views/plays/play_view.php?WorkID=merchantvenice&Act=1&Scene=1&Scope=scene (accessed on: 5.10.2020).

⁶ René Girard, *Teatr zazdrości*, trans. B. Mikołajewska (Warsaw: KR, 1996), 311, trans. mine.

religious foundations of everyday existence: "if sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a supersubtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her."⁷ Comforting Othello's defeated rival, who lost his chance (in his opinion only temporarily) to have a relationship with Desdemona, he repeated to him many a time, like a mantra, his good advice in all circumstances of life: "fill thy purse with money,"⁸ although he too soon learnt that a full purse and skillful intrigue would not be able to save even the most cunning and far-sighted man from falling.

In the city's heyday, both the principles of community life and transparent social hierarchies built on the basis of financial position seemed to be inviolable. Using wealth to multiply everyday pleasures used to be accompanied by the desire to make it visible in every form available. In his text titled "Fear of Touching: The Jewish Ghetto in Renaissance Venice," Richard Sennet notes that "The basic element in the image of Venice – both in the eyes of Europe and the Venetians themselves – was sensuality. The splendid palaces along the Grand Canal had richly decorated façades, their colours reflected in the water"⁹. However, in the end, all debauchery reveals its (self-) destructive power: interpreting *The Merchant of Venice*, Sennet argues that it is a story about the liberation of man from the burden of culture, and with the end of art we enter the modern world¹⁰. Paradoxically, the 'sensual' city, rich and full of superfluous space for show, could be treated as a blurred, less and less readable sign of the old order, a decorative façade covering the disintegration, a mask concealing the inherent evil of human nature.

In his volume *Sęk Pies Brew* [A Knot, a Dog, an Eyebrow], Adam Wiedemann published "five short literary pieces" (the title refers phonetically to the French version of the content description of the collection). The stories published in 1998 are primarily a special play with tradition. The last one, provocatively titled *Sens życia* [The Meaning of Life], has an equally perverse subtitle, namely *Opowiadanie śródziemnomorskie* [The Mediterranean Story]. In this case, a 'journey to Italy' – 'sacred' in the records of many predecessors – becomes a casual hitchhiking trip, and the young protagonists, loaded with backpacks, want above all to have a nice time, not wasting it on visits to museums and galleries or sightseeing (activities otherwise exceeding their limited financial possibilities). The 'meaning of life', which was previously sought after by wanderers from Italian trails, turns out in the story to be a variety of shiny objects: cleverly inserted by

⁷ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, Act 1, Scene 3, https://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/play_view.php?WorkID=othello&Act=1&Scene=3&Scope=scene (accessed on: 5.10.2020).

⁸ Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, Act 1, Scene 3.

⁹ Richard Sennet, "Lęk przed dotykiem. Żydowskie getto w renesansowej Wenecji," in: *Ciało i kamień. Człowiek i miasto w cywilizacji Zachodu*, trans. M. Konikowska (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Marabut, 1996), 179.

¹⁰ Sennet, "Lęk przed dotykiem. Żydowskie getto w renesansowej Wenecji," 201. Richard Sennet stresses that the establishment of the ghetto in Venice was accompanied by a change in the status of the urban 'organism'; from that time on the 'city' began to denote "a legal, social and economic creation which is too large and too diversified to be able to unite people" (183). It was in Venice that the first fully isolated ghetto for Jewish inhabitants was established.

'modern artists' in their installations or bought in street stalls as fugitive holiday souvenirs.

In his short stories (including those from the previous volume titled *Wszędobylstwa porządku* [The Ubiquity of Order]), Wiedemann reconstructs the special aura of the last decade of the 20th century: here young travelers relish the very opportunity to move around in previously inaccessible lands. The lack of sufficient resources proves to be an inconvenience forcing people to give up traditional behaviour and confine themselves to superficial encounters with new places on their route, which, however, allows for all forms of self-restraint rather than cause frustration. In his text titled "Horror metaphysicus czyli banalizm rzekomy" [Horror Metaphysicus or Supposed Banality], Arkadiusz Morawiec argues that Wiedemann did not deal with the banality of everyday experience in his texts but with the intellectual reflection on its inevitability. According to Morawiec, he presented a rather special youthful cognitive optimism, testifying that even when we are adults, we do not want to get rid of childish naivety, namely:

The temptation to explain the world ambivalently treated in Wiedemann's prose – to see it as 'constructed', purposeful, as a secret code, to which we stubbornly try to find the key. Even when the hieroglyphs are: a cassette tape, a trip to a shop, a handle in a toilet, a gadget shining in cold light.¹¹

Thus, the apparent, 'sincere' naivety turns out to be a concept, allowing both the description of the world and its (conditional, partial, temporary) ordering.

Encounters with art – as if 'obligatory' during Italian trips – have a special course in Wiedemann. In Padua, young people take advantage of a free screening of student film etudes and an art exhibition. In the background one can hear amateur orchestra playing Vivaldi. Later, they decide to watch more 'avant-garde' projects, small rooms with artistic installations hidden in them (this is what the central part of the story, entitled *Monstra* [Monsters], is about). The experience of that day, however, primarily arouses a desire to crack jokes, play and even mock the 'works of art' which they watched. In addition, all their choices are to a large extent conditioned by the need to carry heavy backpacks and look for the cheapest accommodation and free means of transport. In such conditions, the 'barbaric' trip becomes an end in itself as a fully accepted model for spending holidays together (because finally available).

The third part of *Opowiadanie śródziemnomorskie*, titled *Wenecja* [Venice], begins with the image of the characters (with their inseparable backpacks) waiting in St Mark's Square for the rest of the scattered group of hitchhikers:

This time we chose as a meeting point the winged lion standing on a pole in St. Mark's Square (...) In the end, we began to wonder if we should not hang the white-and-red flag and proclaim a Polish colony on this area under the lion (fenced with thick chains), which would cause an unavoidable

¹¹ Arkadiusz Morawiec, *Horror metaphysicus czyli banalizm rzekomy. Uwagi o prozie Adama Wiedemanna*, <http://culture.pl/pl/artukul/horror-metaphysicus-czyli-banalizm> (accessed on: 5.10.2020).

intervention of the Carabinieri and, consequently, resonance in the local press and beyond, and after the (probably forced, and thus free) return to the country, medals and honours would be already awaiting us.¹²

'Dreaming of fame' is, however, only a temporary project to kill time, a way of surviving in unfavourable conditions.

The last sentence of the story apparently looks like its pathetic *coda*: "A storm broke out at night, and four orchestras, filling the air over San Marco with their casual aleatoric buzzing, went quiet with unexpected unanimity and after a while, only the wind was hurling white papers and rags across the dark square"¹³. However, this short text is accompanied by two pages of footnotes, which are a faked and derisive 'deepening' of the travel observations and philosophical reflections on the 'meaning of life' written in it. The last footnote to the last sentence says: "After such a sentence, each subsequent one would really be something inappropriate."¹⁴ In this way, the account of the summer expedition understood by young Poles at the end of the 20th century turns out to be a kind of literary joke and, at the same time, a testimony to the change of perspective in the perception of foreign travels devoid of Eastern European complexes, emigrant occurrences or xenophobic stereotypes.

A visit to a place like Venice even demands to be written down as if the uniqueness of the city induced the visitor to leave a trace which would be personal yet determined by previous descriptions of the experience. Polish post-war variants of such stories lie between testimonies of absolute fascination and total disavowal of the cultural rank of the place, considered to be one of many similar (and likewise foreign) places. The uniqueness of the city was beyond any doubt for Gustaw Herling-Grudziński. In the short story titled "Portret wenecki" [A Venetian Portrait] from the volume *Gorący oddech pustyni* [The Hot Breath of the Desert], Venice appears as it appeared to the eyes of a wartime castaway "with the unparalleled elegance, dignity and mysterious loftiness of an untouchable creature, a city so proud that there is no daredevil capable of raising his hand to it."¹⁵ Beauty saved from the war calamity could be seen as a value capable of resisting evil.

The meeting with the city was described by the narrator as "a love initiation into Venice":

Each day I fell more and more for the city, which the poet describes as built of dreams and which I admired for its special relationship, one might say: for the marriage of dreams with reality (...) I quickly came to terms with the fact that even if I lived here or often came here over many years, I would never break through to the heart of Venice as it happens in other cities. For it is not there.¹⁶

¹² Adam Wiedemann, *Sęka Pies Brew* (Warsaw: W.A.B., 1998), 134.

¹³ Wiedemann, *Sęka Pies Brew*, 135.

¹⁴ Wiedemann, *Sęka Pies Brew*, 137.

¹⁵ Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, "Portret wenecki," in *Gorący oddech pustyni* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1997), 99.

¹⁶ Herling-Grudziński, "Portret wenecki," 100.

The inability to reach the (non-existent?) heart of the city was considered an advantage, and the cognitive limitations were deemed the ultimate proof of its uniqueness. The narrator of the story, who lives in the house of a restorer of Renaissance paintings by Venetian painters, had the opportunity to see the process of copying, reproducing, reconstructing – and thus falsifying – the works of the old masters.

In later years, this emigrant, thrown into the unacceptable realities of London's peripheral district, was forced to "evoke images of Venice on a piece of dilapidated and dirty wall"¹⁷ and in that way he managed to survive the several years that separated him from his departure for Italy, where he finally settled for good. He succeeded in achieving the status of an art expert and connoisseur of the past, and, in a way, blended into the cultural landscape of Italian tradition. Eventually, however, the city on the lagoon also revealed its ambiguity in this story, because as it turned out in the ending of "Portret wenecki," capturing the essence of the Evil of the war and at the same time transforming it into a beautiful painting, into true – though at the same time falsified – Art, was possible precisely in Venice.

A completely different picture of a visit to Venice can be found in the grotesque approach of Sławomir Mrożek. The protagonist of the short story titled "Moniza Clavier," a modern barbarian, shows no interest in the city in which he finds himself for an unknown reason. He had no business to do in Venice (nor, as he admitted, anywhere else), and at no time was he interested in sightseeing. He simply walked through the streets, pretending to be in the right place at the right time, angry at everything that was different or alien, cursing the unknown and creating melancholy images of 'the familiar': "I was seething with anger. They planted the palm trees but they seem unable to make a decent footpath. In our country this is different. There are no palms here, but the pavements are fine."¹⁸ These were compensatory measures on his part allowing him to ignore the uniqueness of Venice: the protagonist only sometimes admitted to his sense of inferiority, although he did so only to himself: "I was walking around Venice to my distress, as it was a bold walk, making me feel more and more feeble and insipid."¹⁹

The feeling of incomprehensible superiority gave him, for some time, the possession of a stock of *kabanos* sausages brought by him from his homeland, which he had been feeding on since his arrival. After some time, however, this activity was no longer a consolation either and he was forced to admit that "in the face of the lagoon, with black gondolas tossed by waves in front of them and the Doge's Palace behind my back, I was eating that *kabanos* sausage in a cursed marriage with it."²⁰ The sight of another,

¹⁷ Herling-Grudziński, "Portret wenecki," 116. The record of everyday life in a wretched London apartment building was created by contrast: "as our life in the dark room was becoming a nightmare, short-lived euphoric delusions multiplied before my eyes. Later, the phenomenon went beyond our tenement house and I happened to succumb to similar illusions in the ugly and shabby streets soaked in the yellow light of lampposts" (116).

¹⁸ Sławomir Mrożek, "Moniza Clavier. Romans," in *Opowiadania 1974-1979* (Warsaw: Oficyna Literacka Noir sur Blanc, 1995), 147.

¹⁹ Mrożek, "Moniza Clavier. Romans," 170.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

magnificent 'foreign' sausage, revealing the misery of the food brought from Poland turned out to be the final blow:

wearily – despite my refractory youth – dragging my legs and no longer trying to keep up appearances, I saw giant gammon hanging from a hook in front of the butcher's. It was of such magnitude that it was likely to serve not only advertising but also metaphysical purposes. The triumph of frenzied sausaginess which goes beyond itself.²¹

After many attempts to find himself in a foreign space, this resident of a small country in the East of Europe who pretended to be a Russian was condemned to miserable vegetation in a world which he did not even try to understand. A short-lived social success, achieved through the role of a barbarian played by him with bravado, remained only a dream²², which he could feed on in later years of emigrant misery.

Only strangers who are open, if only partially, to the uniqueness of Venice, can fall in love with the City or otherwise just 'score' it – conquer and include it in the catalogue of memories.²³ The situation of inhabitants growing up in the shadow of an unusual place which functions as a special landmark on every tourist map is different. Giorgio Agamben even expressed his conviction that Venetians are incapable of loving their city:

They do not know that they can love it for it is difficult to love the dead. It is easier to pretend that it is alive, to cover its fragile and bloodless parts with masks and lipstick so as to show them to tourists for a fee [...]. And it is, after all, about the spectre, that is to say, if it knows that it is a spectre, a thing that is extremely ethereal and airy, infinitely distant from the corpse.²⁴

²¹ Mrozek, "Moniza Clavier. Romans," 156. The meeting with the extraordinary 'sausaginess' determined the fate of the protagonist: "The *kabanos* sausage was of no avail (...) The weapon was thrown out of his hand. There was no other alternative but to throw oneself blindly into this world, to fight with it hand to hand, to defeat it or to die" (Mrozek, "Moniza Clavier. Romans," 156).

²² After one of the more successful parties, the protagonist recorded: "And it was a feast of lovers. I was in love with Europe, Europe with a Russian, and the Russian – you do not know because he was not there." (Mrozek, "Moniza Clavier. Romans," 178).

²³ Cf. Anna Wiczorkiewicz, *Apetyt turysty. O doświadczeniu świata w podróży* (Kraków: Universitas, 2012). The ambiguity of the term 'score' shows the ambivalence of modern tourist activities: this could mean both the compulsion to 'tick' new places off the list, places which are considered fashionable and an absolute 'must-see' at the time, and the brevity of such contact, being a denial of any deeper feelings.

²⁴ Giorgio Agamben, "On The Uses and Disadvantages of Living Among Specters," 49–50. The philosopher argues that our times, designed as the 'latest', are at the same time the 'last' and therefore posthumous and phantasmal: "That is why we see a parade of skeletons and mannequins with their breasts outstretched, and why we see mummies trying carelessly to control their exhumation without noticing that they are losing pieces and shreds of their decaying limbs and that their words sound like incomprehensible gibberish. The spectre of Venice does not know about all this at all. The Venetians could not see it, and certainly not tourists" (52). Trans. mine.

However, if the inhabitants lost the ability to form an authentic bond, it may be because of the overwhelming burden of countless stories about 'their' city (constantly appropriated by strangers), from underneath which it is difficult to reveal its 'real' image, authentic experience, the matter of real existence. The protagonist of *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino (published in 1972), referred to as Marco Polo or the Venetian, confided in the character called Kublai Khan: "Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice."²⁵ Hence, he admitted that it is the place of birth that represents the prism through which every space experienced later is perceived. He knew, however, that the story could become a special veil for memories, and he argued with conviction: "Memory's images, once they are fixed in words, are erased."²⁶

In a poem written in the 2010s titled "Tramwaj na Lido" [A Tram to the Lido], Adam Wiedemann showed this specific state of suspension between the memory enclosed in countless stories about the history of the city and its falsified 'life' for use of foreigners:

W mieście nic się nie dzieje,
dzianie się jest odziane
w te żmudnie wydziergane
przez protoplastów koleje

losu, po których płyną
i dziwnie w nich nie toną
ani się dławią słoną
wodą jakby odwinął

się znad ryby pergamin
i zamoczywszy w wodzie
dłoń, starano się nią

objąć cały stół, co dzień
zastawiony źródłami,
które też dokądś brną.²⁷

In the city nothing happens,
happening is dressed
in the ancestors' painstakingly
knitted turns

of fate on which they sail
and oddly enough never sink in them
or suffocate with salty
water as if parchment

unwrapped from above the fish
and having soaked a hand
in the water, trying to use it

to embrace the whole table laid
with springs each day,
which also wade somewhere.

The poem is also marked with the date, namely 1.08.15, and contains a vision of a city determined by its own past. An image enclosed in the recognisable framework of a sonnet still considered to be 'elaborate,' reveals the repetition of arduous (and hence boring) activities, primarily aimed at recreating the rituals invented by the 'ancestors.' The rhythm of everyday

²⁵ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver, accessed October 7, 2020 <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/68476-le-citt-invisibili>.

²⁶ Calvino, *Invisible Cities*. Subsequently, Marco Polo pinpoints his own concerns: "Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it, or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little," <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/68476-le-citt-invisibili> (accessed on: 7.10.2020).

²⁷ Adam Wiedemann, *Tramwaj na Lido*, <http://www.poecipolscy.pl/poezja/prezentacja/adam-wiedemann>

life, once determined by their decisions, serves the purpose of playing a spectacle of extraordinary life rather than really experiencing it. Looking for traces of novelty (or even 'modernity') in Venice seems to be an activity which is not so much meaningless as it is inappropriate.

Trying to penetrate the phenomenon of the city's durability in spite of all external and internal adversities, the writer perceives the theatrical (theatricalised) repetition of everyday activities as a way of swimming (in circles) without sinking. An expedition to Venice in search of variety or current fashionable attractions would have to meet with failure. In the end, however, staying in a city infected with death and threatened with extinction may help familiarise one with the inevitability of passing away. After all, Aschenbach found out about this already at the beginning of the 20th century, since in his case the last, ante-mortem visit to Venice was a particular challenge, consisting in overcoming old weaknesses combined with a constant, though already impossible, desire to depart:

When Aschenbach opened his window he thought he smelt the stagnant odour of the lagoons. He felt suddenly out of sorts and already began to think of leaving. Once, years before, after weeks of bright spring weather, this wind had found him out; it had been so bad as to force him to flee from the city like a fugitive. And now it seemed beginning again—the same feverish distaste, the pressure on his temples, the heavy eyelids.²⁸

Nonetheless, the willingness to flee passes once you realise that there is, in fact, no rescue from the approaching end of life.

Venice as a telltale sign of the inevitable annihilation of civilisation can also be seen as a warning, the understanding of which is capable of turning things around. In his article titled "Wenecja jako widmo" published in 2013 Dariusz Czaja argues:

Maybe the Venetian spectre circulating over Europe can be at least partially tamed, or maybe it can make life with it somehow possible. And one more thing. It cannot be ruled out that the spectral Venice is a sign that we are still unable to read. Perhaps some important information is recorded not only in the Venetian palaces, but also in the despised Venetian 'wastelands'.²⁹

Nowadays, however, the need to read signs, listen to warnings and explore the secrets of destiny is disappearing both in individual and collective life. Sliding on the surface of phenomena and places makes it easier to accept the everyday reality, pushing away the need to ask questions about the future.

²⁸ Thomas Mann, "Death in Venice," in *Death in Venice and Seven Other Stories*, trans. Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter (New York: Random House, 1989), 27.

²⁹ Dariusz Czaja, "Wenecja jako widmo," in: *Inne przestrzenie, inne miejsca. Mapy i terytoria*, ed. Dariusz Czaja (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2013), 142.

The reluctance to read the traces of the past also lies at the root of a general retreat from the palimpsestic perception of space. In her book from 2019 titled *Pytania o miejsce* [Questions about Place], Elżbieta Dutka, summing up the findings of many contemporary researchers, states that:

The figure of the palimpsest also signals a certain order, assumes that – notwithstanding its discontinuity – it is possible to indicate what belongs to the earlier layers that only shine through, and what belongs to the later ones, what refers to the real space, and what is part of the layer of cultural memory. However, separating the layers proves difficult or even impossible on many occasions.³⁰

The inability – or even more so the feeling of redundancy to make another effort to separate the layers of meaning, to penetrate their senses, to explore their mutual relations – leads to a common perception of heterogeneity of space or hybridity of places, and at the same time to considering them as illegible or even not worth reading. From this perspective, Venice may be seen as a beautiful but empty model of the past, and the destruction looming over it may turn out to be just another piece of information in the media that does not arouse much interest among the public.

The literary records of Adam Wiedemann's meetings with Venice can be interpreted as significantly different since the gestures of establishing contact with otherness closed in the urban phenomenon belong to different epochs in both the author's biography and the social history. In such an approach, it seems rather natural for the artist to move from the perspective of a young 'barbarian' to a mature, illusion-free 'connoisseur of tradition'. However, in this case, another aspect of artistic research seems to be more important, namely checking the limits of the expressiveness of literature (the constant writing about those "relationships of the relationships between words and the relationships of designates which are independent from the words"). Saying something 'new' about Venice seems impossible today: therefore perhaps it is enough to try to say 'something more' from oneself?

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³⁰ Elżbieta Dutka, *Pytania o miejsce. Sondowanie topografii literackich XX i XXI wieku* (Kraków: Universitas, 2019), 200.

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Agnieszka Czyżak – dr hab., professor of Adam Mickiewicz University, Department of Literary Poetics and Criticism, Institute of Polish Philology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. She focuses on modern literature, mainly works written since 1989. She co-edited collective works, e.g.: *Powroty Iwaszkiewicza* (1999), *PRL – świat (nie)przedstawiony* (2010), *Pokolenie „Współczesności”. Twórcy. Dzieła. Znaczenie* (2016). She is the author of the books: *Życiorysy polskie 1944–1989* (1997), *Kazimierz Brandys* (1998), *Na starość. Szkice o literaturze przełomu tysiącleci* (2011), *Świadectwo rozproszone. Literatura najnowsza wobec przemian* (2015), *Przestrzenie w tekście, w przestrzeni tekstów. Interpretacje* (2018), *Pasja przemijania, pasja utrwalania. O dziennikach pisarek* (2019, co-authors: B. Przymuszała, A. Rydz), and *Przeciw śmierci. Opowieść o twórczości Wiesława Myślińskiego* (2019).

E-mail: agaczysz@amu.edu.pl

Venice

from Another Perspective

SUMMARY

This essay with a clearly personal touch is a narrative anchored in cultural texts which deals with experiencing Venice in a multi-faceted way. Talking about his many years of wandering around the city (in the company of, for instance, Joseph Brodsky) and describing places and architectural details important to him, the author argues that especially the mediation of painting, which also documented the history of Venice, allows for a better understanding of the phenomenon of the city. This fusion of the two modalities of experience is also reflected in the structure of the text, which closes the reflection on the contemporary condition of the city and various threats which Venice has to face.

Keywords

space experience, Venetian culture and art, Joseph Brodsky

I was conceived in a modest Venetian hotel at the back of a railway station in the mid-1950s during my mother's love escapade with her professor. From that day on, my parents would return there every year and, after I reached the right age, they would take me with them, eagerly leaving our hometown of Florence for a few spring days.

When I was born, Venice on the lagoon had a population of 157,000 whereas today it has 51,000 inhabitants. And that is the main cause of many of its problems: the deserted city, which – especially in winter – is somewhat amazing when you sail through the Canal Grande at night because all the *palazzi*

are dark. A large part of the houses in the centre are the holiday homes of people who neither live nor work in Venice, but only come to it from time to time.

Since my childhood, I have become accustomed to admiring Venice through great art: paintings and frescos by Bellini, Carpaccio, Titian, Tintoretto, Tiepolo... The images which anticipated my first visits to this city and the illumination that I actually found the same lights, the same potbellied clouds and the same pink sunsets that flame up the water. For me, Venice was, for a long time, a reality mediated by works of art: it never appeared to me in a raw form, but in a form already ordered, as part of culture. I had before my eyes *The Death of Adonis* by Sebastiano del Piombo (approx. 1512) from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence (where it was damaged during the night of 26 to 27 May 1993, during a mafia attack in via dei Georgofili, which resulted in five deaths), a painting depicting naked Venus, surrounded by her nymphs (also unclothed) and Cupid mourning the death of Adonis, who rests on the ground, killed by a boar. The scene seems to be located in a non-existent forest on the Venetian Isola di San Giorgio: the Doge's Palace and St Mark's Basilica can be seen on the other side of the canal. This painting has always seemed to me to be the saddest in the whole Gallery and the most stigmatised with death. Due to the common root of Venus/Venice (*Venusia* in Latin), this scene foreshadows in a way the end of life and the end of Venice's beauty.

When not in Milan, I have lived for many years in Venice in a house that used to be a boat storeroom at one of the palaces on the Canal Grande: from a window overlooking a side canal, you can see in the background peaceful water trams flowing and motorboats speeding away, which exacerbates the devastating movement of the waves. This makes me feel somewhat Venetian, too.

Nonetheless, *vedute*, or views, of Venice still fill me with slight melancholy. It is as if painters were better at capturing certain signals that often escape our attention among the problems of everyday life. I have in mind, for instance, small, wonderful pictures by Francesco Guardi (1712–1793), in the Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia, one of the most beautiful museums in the world, which is often overlooked by distracted tourists. Guardi's tiny figures, merely sketched, are more than a century ahead of the Impressionists. The views of Venice, so gloomy and ill, contradict the excesses of Canaletto's sugar-coated sweetness as they show, in bitter colours, decadence, often interspersed with ruins, which will shortly also coincide with the political demise of the city.

In Milan, in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum, there is a small painting by Guardi that is impossible to be forgotten. It is titled *The Gondola on the Lagoon*: all in grey and sky-blue, with the weak pinkish light of the city on the horizon line, separating the sky and the sea into equal parts, ghostly and uniform in colour. I owe the discovery of Guardi to Joseph Brodsky, a Russian poet who spent a longer period of time in Venice in 1989 at the expense of "Il Consorzio Venezia Nuova" (the one that was linked to the chaos of the MOSE System¹: a clear example of the heterogenesis of objectives). This stay

¹ The MOSE project (Moses, after the famous Venetian church) - the much delayed yet recently completed gate-system project aimed at protecting the city from flooding.

resulted in *Watermark*, a wonderful book about Venice published in Italy in 1991 by the Adelphi publishing house under the Italian title *Fondamenta degli incurabili*. Brodsky claimed that he had been inevitably brought to Venice by fate, as he was born in 1940 in Leningrad, a city of sea and ice, where water and the sky seem to touch, just as they do in Venice. In addition to the book, he dedicated three of his most beautiful sonnets to the city on the lagoon, namely "Lagoon" (1973), "Venetian Stanzas I" and "Venetian Stanzas II" (1982): "Let me reiterate: Water equals time and provides beauty with its double. Part water, we serve beauty in the same fashion. By rubbing water, this city improves time's looks, beautifies the future. That's what the role of this city in the universe is."²

One beautiful windy afternoon we went with Brodsky and a friend of mine, a Venetian Russicist, Mauro Martini, to see Guardi, and having rushed through the other rooms (with only one mandatory stop in front of *The Tempest* by Giorgione), we found ourselves in a small side room and leaned before *The Fire at San Marcuola* (1789). The fire took place on 28 December that year and the painter, while preserving it on paper, was already seventy-eight years old. Based on these sketches from nature, Guardi later painted two pictures. The first version, clearer but with less raging flames and even more defenceless onlookers, can be found in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. The Venetian painting is divided into four parallel horizontal parts. From the bottom to the top: a crowd of onlookers, seen from behind, in three-cornered hats and cloaks; the front of the flames; buildings already consumed by the fire; the sky covered in black heavy clouds. The sky takes up half the picture. "A real masterpiece!", Brodsky said, "it resembles the burning Ghetto in Warsaw and we, like them, look and do nothing." This image inevitably came back to my mind on 28 January 1996, when Teatro della Fenice burned like a match; then it was rebuilt quite quickly and stood "identical and in the same place." From an aesthetic and functional point of view, today's counterfeiting was perhaps not the best idea. In this case, the rescue operations were to some extent slowed down, as they say, by works connected with "clearing the canals." Massimo Cacciari, the Mayor of Venice, was the last to commission these absolutely essential conservation works: this has been evident in recent days, because the canals, as time passes, get logged like veins and water flows with greater difficulty. During the works, when dredgers were pulling out sand with all kinds of things to the surface, Mark Dion, a young American artist, began to collect, like an archaeologist, objects which the Venetians had thrown away into the water over the years (or which the water lifted during the tides): broken plates, dishes, pots and pans, parts of household appliances, toys, bottles, shells... He cleaned them and displayed them in showcases as if they were valuable museum exhibits. The result was something like *Wunderkammer*, a cabinet of curiosities, of what is marginal, showing the memory of Venetian canals. The initiative absorbed him so much that, in 1999, he began excavations on the banks of

² Joseph Brodsky, *Watermark: An Essay on Venice*, (London: Penguin, 2013) 134–135. The Italian title, *Fondamenta degli incurabili* [The Embankment of the Incurables], was chosen by the author himself.

the Thames, on a strip between the line of high tide and low tide. But, naturally, he did not find similar “miracles.”

Whenever I can, I go to the San Michele cemetery on the isle of the dead situated on a lagoon north of Venice to visit the graves of Joseph Brodsky and Mauro Martini. Brodsky wanted to be buried (on 21 June 1997) next to Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Diaghilev, Ezra Pound and his life partner Olga Rudge (whom he met through Susan Sontag).

As Czesław Miłosz recalled in his poem titled “Czeladnik” [A Journeyman]: “I think of Venice coming back as a musical theme (...) / When having buried Joseph Brodsky / We were feasting at *palazzo* Moncenigo, just the same / In which Lord Byron had lived (...) / Venice sails away like a great ship of death / With a swarming crowd on its board turned into a spectre. / I said goodbye to her in San Michele at the graves of Joseph Brodsky and Ezra Pound. / Ready to welcome people still unborn, / For whom we will only be an enigmatic legend.”³ In the half deserted evangelical sector, in the middle of the lawn, there is a simple tomb of Brodsky. Visitors, in accordance with the Russian custom, leave cigarettes and lighters, pens, stones and letters on it. Tomas Venclova, a Lithuanian poet and a friend of Brodsky and Miłosz, describes it in the following way: “Grass, stones. This is the island, / this is how the petrified wanderer listens / as silence grows above the bushes, / as a sphere responds dully to a sphere, / as waves cut rocks without mercy - / before consciousness awakens from apathy / not the blade of pain, and still / not a ship, water or human voices.”⁴

When Mauro Martini was still alive (he died prematurely in 2005), we used to go together to put red roses on Brodsky’s grave. On our way back, as if in the form of a ritual, we walked in silence along Fondamenta dei Mendicanti, which runs along the Hospital, to Campo S. Giovanni e Paolo, where we would sit down to drink a couple of spritzers to his memory in an old ice-cream parlour called “Rosa Salva,” gazing at the beautiful windows overlooking the canal of Ennio Concina’s house, an insightful and sulky researcher of Venetian and Byzantine architecture. His books helped us to understand how, through Byzantine culture, Russia is so strongly linked to Venice (it is not without reason that a collection of essays written in English and published by Brodsky in 1986 is titled “Flight from Byzantium”).⁵ Paul Muratoff (1881–1950), an eminent Russian art historian and the author of the monumental work titled *Images of Italy*⁶ (1911–1924) containing brilliant pages on Venice “immersed in its own eternal atmosphere of concentration” and on its art, wrote about it in the following fashion: “Venice looks to the East. For us, Russians, therefore, it is always the first and last stage of a journey to Italy. Never do we worry with such force about the uniqueness of the old journeys, and at the same time about the desire for new expeditions to

³ Czesław Miłosz, “Czeladnik,” in *Druga przestrzeń* (Krakow: Znak, 2002) 96. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish]

⁴ Tomas Venclova. “Obrócone w ciszę,” trans. Beata Kałęba. *Zeszyty Literackie* (2017), 115.

⁵ Joseph Brodsky, “Flight from Byzantium,” in Joseph Brodsky, *Less Than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1986), 393–446.

⁶ Paweł Muratow, *Obrazy Włoch*, trans. Paweł Hertz (Warsaw: PIW, 1972).

places still unknown to us." In 1914, Muratoff was looking from the windows of a small Italian *albergo* in the Riva degli Schiavoni at the "Torino" steamboat, which was about to sail off to Piraeus and Constantinople: "it lured to come near with its glowing electric lights. Its dark body resting in the *bacino* of San Marco did not disturb the Venetian silence with a single sound."⁷ What seemed to disturb the peace of the city, as big passenger ships do every day, was a huge grey whale, which appeared in the spring of 2014 in the Grand Canal. The photo, published by many newspapers, was of course a forgery, as the signature confirms, featuring the name of the author: "A Whale in Venice, Italy. Photo Manipulation by Robert Jahns."

Rather than a fish, as Tiziano Scarpa suggested, Venice is a maze. That is exactly how Jacopo de' Barbari presented it in 1500 on his astounding bird's-eye-view *Veduta* cut in pear wood. An uninhabited, almost ghostly Venice, which, with its attention to detail, makes one's head spin. Its endless twistiness, highlighted on this old map, reminds me of the tracks of the Lido beach ball race. We marked out these routes by choosing the smallest and lightest child and pulling it like a plough to different sides on the sand back to the starting point, so as to close these winding tracks. Streets and bridges which often do not lead anywhere take me back to these games. When a person gets lost in Venice, traversing these twisted paths, they recover images of their own past.

There is a detail that Jacopo de' Barbari could not get out, and which is a frequent destination of my walks and a reference point for my memories. At a height of three metres, a white marble head is inserted in the high old wall that marks the perimeter of Corte Centani, at the embankment of Fondamenta Vernier dei Leoni, at the back of the Guggenheim Foundation. It looks like a ghost, or like Zephyr, who wanted to get out but got stuck when it was breaking through the bricks. It is the face of a chubby boy with his puffed cheeks and his lips tightened as if he was just about to blow.

Venice is full of fragments of old statues, built into the corners and walls of palaces. Like the figures of Moors from which the name of the embankment and the square is derived from. People bump into them unexpectedly, at eye level, like into cool and mysterious travellers.

These fragments show that much of Venice's beauty was created through plundering Eastern palaces. Every returning ship brought (and, what is more, it had to bring) statues, columns and floors to beautify the city. St. Mark's Basilica is the most evident example of a patchwork of theft, a conglomerate of styles and materials torn out of their context and detached from their original function, which makes it unique and impossible to imitate. On its left side there is a bas-relief showing Alexander the Great, lifted to the sky by a pair of griffins. A strange image indeed in a Christian church! Some even claim that the remains of the Macedonian leader are kept in St. Mark's Basilica instead of the relics of a saint (smuggled from Alexandria in Egypt by two Venetian merchants as it is depicted by the famous painting by Tintoretto in Gallerie dell'Accademia). St. Mark's Basilica

⁷ Muratow, *Obrazy Włoch*, 123.

(which was originally not the Basilica of Venice, but something like a chapel of the Doge's Palace) is a symbol of strong political power which uses religion – in the Byzantine fashion – as both the legitimacy and tool of their rule.

The Harlequin character of Venetian buildings makes the city cheerful. Whoever extolled the city as melancholic or, worse still, sad made a mistake (which is not difficult, as Venice is based on constant errors and misunderstandings). Just like Carnival, which has moved a little bit into the category of melancholy events, permeated by the subsequent Lent. The distinction is no longer clear: like in *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* (1559) by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, where the whirl of characters does not allow for understanding where joking ends and where restraint begins. Venice, even covered by fog, in cold rain and with *acqua alta*, still emanates life. As if the waters of the lagoon (both fresh and salty) were mixing and hiding the differences, but in the end always revealing its most beautiful face (excellently presented by Canaletto and his nephew Bernardo Bellottotto), before the advent of the era of Guardi, who balanced these *vedute* with a bit of melancholy, and Turner with his dazzling light. It is clear what the poets had in mind when they wrote that Venice is woven from dream visions, and Gustaw Herling-Grudziński (1919–2000), a Polish and Neapolitan writer, the author of the mysterious short story titled *Portret wenecki* [Venetian Portrait], who admired “the city built of dreams” (...) “for this special relationship, I would like to say: for the marriage of dream with reality.”⁸

Last night, after I had read, among the various proposals to save the city in the face of recurrent floods, the project to “lift” it, I dreamt of about a thousand or so Zeppelin airships which pulled St Mark's Square into the air with ropes, as if it were an ashtray model, one of the kind sold in stalls, amidst the spectacle of confetti and pigeons and gulls escaping in panic. Venice is considered a romantic city. That is why millions of people in love come to it. Its streets and squares are swarming with people who look into each other's eyes, embrace each other and exchange affection. And then, they kiss passionately on bridges. And below, struggling to keep balance on folding chairs, dozens of painters and watercolourists immortalise, like members of the celebratory choir, the luminous crinkum-crankum of clouds and oblique lights on old stones. Of course, for someone who is lonely and sad, it is not a very pleasant sight to see the collective overflowing happiness. But all this joyful excess of love sometimes makes us forget that Venice is dying. Not only because it is corroded and eroded every day, crushed and trampled, strangled by falsity and trash. But also because of the provincial conviction of its many inhabitants that everything already happened and the future does not exist. This is a strange and not always consistent concept of protection that tries to keep modernity and, in fact, the course of life at bay from the city. It suffices to think, for example, of the rejection by the general public in 1953 (under the leadership of Antonio Cederna) of a beautiful palace designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for his friend Angelo Masieri,

⁸ Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, *Portret wenecki. Trzy opowiadania* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1995), 73.

which could finally enrich the Grand Canal with a touch of modernity. But almost no one reacted when the arcades of Fondaco dei Tedeschi near Ponte di Rialto were devastated and turned into an ugly large luxury warehouse or when Ponte dei Sospiri was framed by vulgar advertising boards or when *palazzi* to be renovated were covered with really inappropriate light images. Venice cannot end up as something that resembles a flat and sad theatre decoration, intended to cover the gradual sinking that has been repeated with increasing frequency, as the recent dramatic days have shown.

How will Venice be saved? In 1940 Simone Weil wrote this, with a bit of hope and faith, in her unfinished theatrical text titled *Venice Saved*⁹ (published in Italian by the Adelphi publishing house and edited by Cristina Campo in 1987, the text went out of print and it was reprinted in 2016 by the Castelvecchi publishing house and edited by Domenico Canciani and Maria Antonietta Vito). There is a legend saying that in 1618 Venice was to be burned and destroyed by a Spanish conspiracy. It was saved by the remorse of a Jaffier, who betrayed his comrades: "God will not allow something so wonderfully beautiful to be destroyed. And who would like to harm Venice? The most relentless enemy would not have the conscience to do so. (...) A human being would not be able to create anything as beautiful as Venice. Only God. And since the human being is not alone capable of performing miracles, in order to come closer to God, they must do what they can: protect the beauty that God created."

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Francesco Matteo Cataluccio (1955) – studied philosophy and Polish philology in Florence and Warsaw. He is an author of many articles on the history and culture of Poland and Eastern Europe as well as an editor of the Italian edition of works by Witold Gombrowicz, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński or a collective Italian and Spanish edition of works by Bruno Schulz. He

⁹ Simone Weil, *Wenecja ocalona*, trans. Adam Wodnicki (Krakow: Austeria, 2007), 68.

is known to the Polish reader as an author of books such as *Niedojrzałość, choroba naszych czasów* [Immaturity: Disease of Our Time] (ZNAK, Krakow 2006), *Jadę zobaczyć, czy tam jest lepiej. Niemalże brewiarz środkowoeuropejski* [I'm Going to See if It's Better There] (ZNAK, Krakow 2012) and *Czarnobyl* [Chernobyl] (Czarne, Wołowiec 2013). His correspondence with Zbigniew Herbert was published in the volume *Herbert. Studia i dokumenty* [Herbert: Studies and Documents] edited by Piotr Kłoczowski (Warsaw, 2008). He received the Ryszard Kapuściński Award for Literary Reportage in 2013.
E-mail: cataluccio.francesco@gmail.com

READING
FROM A PERSPECTIVE

MAGDALENA SIKORSKA
University of Lodz

 0000-0001-6345-3742



The Category of Ugliness in *Historie maniaków* by Roman Jaworski

SUMMARY

The article undertakes to interpret the collection of short stories titled *Historie maniaków* by Roman Jaworski using the category of ugliness. So far, this work has been analysed through a different aesthetic category, namely the grotesque, while the author himself drew attention in the discussed collection of short stories to ugliness and recommended that it should be chosen as the principle perspective. The analysis focuses on the impact of the ugliness category on the shaping of elements of the world presented in the work: the creation of the characters and their corporeality, settings, as well as the very composition of the collection and the construction of the language used by the author. The paper finishes with an attempt to interpret *Historie maniaków* using contemporary humanistic theories, which consider the category of ugliness as a positive value.

Keywords

abject, ugliness, corporeality

Roman Jaworski is a writer who is associated by literary scholars primarily with the category of the grotesque and parody. Michał Głowiński called him the precursor of the parody and grotesque current in Poland,¹ stressing the impact of his work on the development of this trend. On the other hand, Jaworski created an innovative concept of the aesthetics of ugliness, which, oddly enough, occupies a marginal place in the research on his work and has not yet been widely discussed. Probably the reception of his literary output has been influenced by the fact that, at the beginning of the 20th century, the category of ugliness was identified with the grotesque. Nowadays, however, it is possible to distinguish between the two aesthetics and, despite many common features, to attempt to define their distinctiveness. Therefore, it is worth rereading Jaworski's work, but this time through the prism of the category of ugliness. The author's interest in this very aesthetics is visible in all his works, yet it is the collection of short stories titled *Historie maniaków* [Stories of Maniacs] that is of particular interest due to the presence of the ugliness category. The book, which was published in 1910, is a testimony not only to the writer's aesthetic preferences, but also to his extensive reflections on aesthetics, its place and role. Jaworski reached for ugliness while constructing the presented world and he also directly expressed his views on his aesthetic tastes in passages taking on the character of quasi treatises. In terms of the category of ugliness, he was therefore both a practitioner and a theoretician, which distinguishes him from not only Young Poland artists but also from the later ones. It is certainly worth tracing Jaworski's original approach to the category of ugliness, both in the theoretical component and in numerous artistic realisations. This analysis included the stories from the collection *Historie maniaków* and the ugliness present in them was investigated from the point of view of the construction of characters and their corporeality, the language which they used as well as the overall composition of the collection. The layer of meaning was explored for the values which are connoted by ugliness used in the work and the meanings it carries. The vision of total ugliness, both declared in theory and consistently implemented in the stories, seems very interesting and worthy of attention. The spectre of this phenomenon in Jaworski's case requires a thorough analysis of his work, the use of a new research key and a deepened reflection, which must be free from the well-worn interpretation based on the grotesque.

Jaworski's theory of ugliness

At the beginning of a short story titled "Amor milczący" [Silent Amor], Jaworski declared that in spite of "a pretentious gang of lyrical stinkers,"² "he wishes to introduce literature which is ugly and difficult in Poland."³ His

¹ Michał Głowiński, "Sztuczne awantury," introduction to Roman Jaworski, *Historie maniaków* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie Kraków, 1978), 22.

² Roman Jaworski, *Historie maniaków* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Analiz, 2004), 138. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish]

³ Jaworski, *Historie maniaków*, 139.

goal was a literature which is ugly and difficult to read, as he extended his thought later, saying that the reading of *Historie maniaków* should not take place "on a chaise longue and with a full stomach."⁴ Thus, it was not literature intended for thoughtless and easy entertainment. In this way, he manifested not only his poetics, but he also pointed out the thematic areas he would explore in his works. The formal ugliness coincided in this auto-thematic narrative with the ugliness of the presented content. Jaworski referred to *Historie maniaków* as "unmerry stories," and he justified his choice of the topic in an ironic way: "all the merry ones sold thousands of copies."⁵ This difficulty and ugliness, to which he intentionally aspired, was to be the guarantee of uniqueness, a distinguishing feature among other works. Using the words of the narrator, Jaworski warned the readers not to look for "banal morbidity" in the stories. He suggested that it is through reading that it is possible to get to know "people who tend to be overlooked, living a double life"⁶ – ugliness was not merely a provocation, but it was semantically and epistemologically characterised by its cognitive function. The narrator's words have a metaliterary character and the speaker can be identified with the writer himself, who – with a considerable amount of irony and perversity – draws a vision of his entire work, specifies the conditions of reading it and gives instructions on how to read and interpret his prose. Another protagonist of Jaworski's prose speaks about the aesthetics of ugliness in a different way, no longer provocative but rather elevated and almost pathetic. The journalist in the short story titled "Trzecia godzina" [The Third Hour] could be the *porte parole* of the author, and his statements can be viewed as defining the author's aesthetic concept:

The structure of official aesthetics is collapsing, yearnings for beauty die down. There are no beautiful people, no long-haired troubadours or robust knights. The people of our modern times are ugly. They boldly face a life of abomination, they get stuck in the trash, and they only sometimes quietly long for a better life. Their suffering must be ugly and odd, and this is all their beauty. Let us teach the new beauty, let us get acquainted with our fellows, with our brothers. While writing about them, let us not write beautifully about their oddity; instead, let us talk strangely about their ugly beauty. Let us create the necessary, contemporary aesthetics of ugliness, let us give it artists, let us preach a religion, let us look for worshippers.⁷

The views of the protagonist of the work show Jaworski's deep reflection on aesthetics, its place in the world of his day and the system of values. It is worth drawing attention to the statement that the previous model of aesthetics lost its relevance and it is necessary, following the thought of Nietzsche, to redefine all values. The writer urges for ugliness in the name of

⁴ Jaworski, *Historie maniaków*.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

truth, which is free from the artificiality of idealisation. Using this aesthetic category, he wants to undermine and discredit the aesthetic cliché based on the stereotypical understanding of beauty. The programmatic appreciation of ugliness is also a manifestation of the aesthetic rebellion against the *petite bourgeoisie* value system. The writer mocks the readers who, lying down, entertain themselves with the book only to find “banal morbidity” in it. They bring to mind the provincial bourgeois that lacks higher aspirations. The behaviour of philistines, criticised by Young Poland bohemians, will be depreciated by later artists. Thus, Jaworski represented a trend that has not lost its importance in the subsequent decades. The writer defied the traditional scale of values and sought originality in undermining the current aesthetic standards (also with regard to literary conventions).

In his vision of the world, there is no place for over-aesthetic knights and troubadours, therefore he appreciates ugly people who face not so much the prose of life as its abomination. The focus of the writer’s attention is on people who were previously marginalised, stigmatised, and pathologised to some extent not conforming to the “standards.” The way of characterising the group, which is the centre of Jaworski’s interest, brings to mind the abject from the theory of Julia Kristeva.⁸ According to one of the definitions of this concept, the abject in social terms is represented by those who do not fit into the specific identity adopted by a given community, but they are also not outside it.⁹ Like the abject, the ugliness of Jaworski’s characters repulses and at the same time fascinates. The author rehabilitates his abjective characters and treats their perspective as the model one, making their ugliness and oddity a positive value. In this way, he suggests that literature should turn to everyday reality, which is not free from abomination.

Rejecting idealisation does not, however, mean turning towards *verismo*: Jaworski does not reproduce reality, but instead creates it using the category of ugliness. The world presented in his stories is constructed of fantastic and unbelievable elements, which correspond to the oneiric element present in the stories. The previously quoted fragment can be called the aesthetic manifesto of Jaworski, in which he presents his artistic *credo*. The aesthetics of ugliness, which he proclaimed, was to be realised through the subject matter of short stories and a sophisticated form of presentation. Jaworski’s theoretical consciousness makes *Historie maniaków* an important voice in the literary discussion about values and about the place of what is despised, repulsive, stigmatised in the modern world, and the writer himself becomes a precursor of the category of ugliness as well as a visionary: he is the first to formulate a literary programme which confirmed its validity in the following decades.¹⁰

⁸ Cf. Julia Kristeva, *Potęga obrzydzenia. Esej o wstręcie*, trans. Maciej Falski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2007).

⁹ Izabela Kowalczyk: abiekt [the abject] in *Encyklopedia gender. Płeć w kulturze*, eds. Monika Rudaś-Grodzka, Katarzyna Nadana-Sokołowska, Agnieszka Mroziak, Kazimiera Szczuka, Katarzyna Cieczot, Barbara Smoleń, Anna Nasiłowska, Ewa Serafin, Agnieszka Wróbel (Warsaw: Czarna Owca, 2014).

¹⁰ Głowiński, “Sztuczne awantury,” 22.

Ugliness in Jaworski's practice: Corporeality

Jaworski's theory of aesthetics puts ugliness at the centre not as an abstracted aesthetic value, but as an ugly human being who, according to the writer's words, comes from the present day. It is the human being – their ugliness, suffering and eccentricities – that the author wants to explore. The confirmation of the writer's words can be found in the thematic layer of all the stories, since it is the protagonists, or more precisely their defects, that are the main topic *Historie maniaków*. A teasingly complex and unrealistic plot only serves to expose further human distortions. In addition, the settings are also subordinated to the ugliness of the protagonists: they merely complement the caricatured physicality and mentality of the characters. The impact of the category of ugliness is not limited only to the creation of the presented world, it can also be observed in the layers of the composition and language of the text.

The author places the characters' ugly bodies, often marked by old age, diseases and handicaps at the centre of his deliberations. Physical ugliness represents an aesthetic dominant in all the stories that make up this original volume. The procession of characters marked by physical ugliness creates an image modelled on *danse macabre*. It is led by a crippled old woman with a lisp, along with a stinking stallholder selling dirty sweets and dried oranges, a dark, half-witted peasant who moves his dirty finger on a greasy book, a creeping "ragged old hag, weeping through her bleary eyes, regurgitating prayers through her toothless mouth"¹¹ or a lipsticked monster, whose mouth reeked of herring and tobacco – anonymous characters who are not in the centre of events and whose presence confirms the thesis about the ubiquitous ugliness which affects all senses: sight, hearing and smell. The author seems to be fascinated by the abomination of the human body. With misophonic precision, he keeps track of sounds that are disgusting: Honoria's smacking her lips and crunching pretzels, ominous tickling from under Pichoń's rotten teeth, the sinister chomping of Dr. Lipek's patients or the wheezing of a dying baby crushed by its mother's corpse. The accumulation of disgusting sounds makes the reader realise how abundant the language used to express abominations is. This language also strongly emphasises human corporeality in its most repulsive dimension: "the gibberish of the mute was heard, there were slithering squeals of a little waif in a cesspit and cries of birds for the knocked nest, and the ante-mortem gurgling of hanged people was roaming."¹²

The physical ugliness of the depicted characters also appears in Jaworski's work as a sign of posthumous decay. Their bodies are rotting; they are damaged and incomplete, repugnant with their smell and disgusting because of the sounds which they make. The repulsive descriptions of corporeality seem to remind us of the fragility of human existence. The physical ugliness of the characters is not only an extremely suggestive way of

¹¹ Jaworski, *Historie maniaków*, 139.

¹² *Ibid.*, 167.

evoking a sense of disgust in the reader. It also characterises the condition of the portrayed: they are depicted as if they were no longer alive; they seem to be dead still during their lifetime.

What is more, Jaworski uses the relationship of the categories of ugliness and corporeality to create a specific mood: the short stories comprising *Historie maniaków* are riddled with the putrid smell of autumn, the stinking sap of a dead cuckold, the odour of the corpse or lustful embraces smelling of vomit. These extremely evocative images, affecting the imagination and pervaded with synesthesia, attack the reader with their bluntness.

Jaworski places some characters whose bodily ugliness he equips with additional meaning above those whose ugliness constitutes a kind of background for the plot. Old age, infirmity and poverty, so strongly exposed in secondary characters, give way to illness or other ailments. The crippling physiognomy of the main characters of individual stories is marked semantically. Medi, a girl with a red spot on her face, Mr Pichoń, a squint-eyed epileptic, doctor Fallus with his "dangling figure," for which he given his name, or finally patients with mental disorders from the health care institution of Dr. Lipek – what these characters have in common is the "proper" ugliness, being a carrier of meaning in the work. Their disabilities are a stigma, on the one hand, and a sign of their uniqueness, on the other. These shortcomings make them suffer, yet the defects also make them extraordinary, make them stand out against a bland, anonymous crowd.

A spot on the cheek of the eponymous character of the story titled "Medi" is the reason for her misfortune and, consequently, her death. The skin defect resulting from a childhood illness made the father, a perfectionist and a glorifier of perfection, turn away from his child. He claimed that "perfection should avoid fruit that becomes unnecessary due to some deficiency or error."¹³ After the father of the family leaves, the rejected and abandoned mother becomes mentally ill, blaming the family misfortune on Medi and her spot. The short story ends with the death of a child who is either deprived of life by her insane mother who cannot stand the fact that she exists, or commits suicide as a result of the lack of acceptance and contempt of her mother. The stigmatising ugliness was the cause of the family tragedy.

It was the disease, which was depicted with the use of ugliness, that brought misfortune to Jerzy, nicknamed Dr. Phallus, an attorney from the short story titled "Amor Milczący." His physiognomy, which carried unambiguous connotations, was not the main cause of the character's problems. The attorney suffered from "a demonic manner," "mystical incapacity" or "a painful stigma" – the protagonist's affliction was not named directly, and the terms proposed by the author are metaphorical. The doctor was depicted as a torn figure, a victim of the struggle of internal forces: "As a result of every undertaking or a bold gesture, a mysterious companion-kobold sprang out, like a clown on a wire, somewhere from the depths of the attorney's mouth, and withholding the ending, reported his veto in the wildest

¹³ Ibid., 61.

of tones."¹⁴ Burdened by an enigmatic affliction, Jerzy was not able to control his behavior, he was powerless in the face of reactions that he tried to curb with great effort. This "mysterious veto" was manifested by a broken voice, the convulsive trembling of his hands, the misty tearing of the eyes or a painful half-smile. The protagonist's dilemma and his physical suffering were extracted with the use of the category of ugliness, which was reflected in his physiognomy: "In this way he conveyed in the expression of his face the struggle of the forces, which were hostile to each other and mysterious."¹⁵ The inability to express his views unequivocally complicated his professional life and was also the cause of his failure in his personal life. The enigmatic affliction made Jerzy unable to declare love to his beloved, but also accept his feelings for her. Not only did his ugliness mark his physiognomy, but it also influenced his inner life and caused personal tragedy.

Interestingly, the category of ugliness in the context of the characters' corporeality has not been applied in the same way throughout the text. Its most original realisation is undoubtedly the story titled "Trzecia godzina," which is of particular importance for the whole collection. The fragment quoted earlier, which might be well regarded as Jaworski's aesthetic manifesto, is a part of it. One can be tempted to say that the way ugliness is used in this work best fulfills the writer's postulates. The ambivalent perception of the ugliness of the characters comes as a surprise in this story. The physical defect is not perceived as a disadvantage – it is turned into a positive value. The main character of the story drew knowledge about himself and the world from the visions which he had during the seizures of epilepsy and narcolepsy: "He drew his views from the sick imaginings to which he succumbed when, all of a sudden, he was grabbed by a muscle contraction near his heart and gently placed on the ground."¹⁶

Visions and delusions were valued positively by him, and the bout of the disease itself was described as noble and indicative of his extraordinary sensitivity and nonconformity: "He wiped the foam from his mouth, a trace of noble indignation at the revealed eternal abomination, and girded his torn forehead with a red foulard."¹⁷ One distinguishing feature of Pichon's was the strabismus, thanks to which he saw more than the average person: the change of the viewing angle broadened his horizons and made it possible to reach content which remained unattainable for others. The strabismus was by no means a shortcoming, but instead, it was treated as a gift, a kind of anointment: "He could reason calmly, attributing all his misfortunes to a strabismic error in his eyes which he had received as a gift from birth."¹⁸ The importance of Pichon's disability was emphasised by the fact that, not having a descendant, he chose as his heir Franek, a boy who "flashed with his dirty eyes, having a bad squint."¹⁹ In the case of this character, ugliness

¹⁴ Ibid., 185.

¹⁵ Ibid., 83.

¹⁶ Ibid., 82.

¹⁷ Ibid., 89.

¹⁸ Ibid., 81.

¹⁹ Ibid., 139.

is a sign of being above-average, which entitled him to gain knowledge inaccessible to others. Due to his ugliness he became worthy of knowing the mystery of the world – its “ruler who only craved for the death of people,”²⁰ and thanks to his uniqueness he was able to discuss with the stone statues which he called the prophets and learn about their wisdom. The ugliness depicted in “Trzecia godzina” thus becomes a carrier of metaphysical truth.

The setting

In Jaworski’s concept, ugliness is strongly connected with the human body. The writer uses this aesthetic category to explore corporeality and to present those aspects which are not subject to aestheticisation. Ugliness is also a relevant element of the presented world and it shapes the mood of the work. The space marked by it creates a background for equally ugly characters and events. This category organises not only the presented plant scenery and greenery, it is also used to show the buildings and interiors where the story is set.

In Jaworski’s creation, the natural world is shabby and crippled. Vegetation is shown in such a way so as to bring out its repulsive side. In creating an image of nature, the writer used ugliness affecting all the senses, which is characteristic of his prose. The scenery depicted in *Historie maniaków* prompts disgust because of its smell, it disturbs with sounds and repulses with its appearance: “At that time, he had to wander around the edges of a dead pond which was wheezing with rotten sludge. Rumma- ging in green-leafed yarns, he was looking for his lily, his nenuphar, the flower of past beliefs. The pond stank, the toads were mumbling.”²¹ The green idyll changes in Jaworski’s work into disgusting and repulsive places. It is virtually impossible to find animals in his prose that would not be characterised by ugliness, or would not trigger associations with this category. When the author creates the image of horses in the story titled “Miał iść” [He Was Going to Go], he stresses the specificity of their skeletons: “Under the wall of glows, he saw the skeletons of sleeping horses crowded together in herds. Their ribs and tibias, which were soaked in light, formed a great symbol of silent history.”²²

It is not difficult to guess that the interiors evoked in the narrative will be consistent with the aesthetic vision of the whole. Jaworski chooses dirty chambers filled with the pungent fug of sauerkraut cucumbers, wretched mud huts supported by rotten piles or rat-infested rooms as his settings: “In the corners of the chamber lofty rat traps shot up like ornamental water towers.”²³ The very choice of settings is subordinated to Jaworski’s aesthetic imperative. The events which he describes take place in such suggestive places as a psychiatric hospital; a poisonous cake confectionery with the grotesque name of “The Coltish Witch’s Cave”; and a funeral house or a brothel,

²⁰ Ibid., 135.

²¹ Ibid., 110.

²² Ibid., 28.

²³ Ibid., 119.

where specific customs and manners are preferred: "Whistling, he slammed open the door of the living room, which was considered the first evidence of refinement there and found the interior unexpectedly dark and empty."²⁴

Composition and language

Another important element of *Historie maniaków* is its composition. In the introduction to the 2004 edition, Piotr Kitrasiewicz draws attention to the precursory nature of Jaworski's writing, proving this on the basis of juxtaposing elements characteristic of the Young Poland poetics in his work against the background of which the elements constituting a significant novelty clearly stood out. One of them, according to the scholar, is the composition of the work.²⁵ One can be tempted to develop this observation, arguing that Jaworski's choice of literary devices is greatly affected by ugliness. For instance, ugliness is revealed by the original construction of the plot, which the writer completely freed from the principles of logic or even probability. The cause and effect relationship becomes distorted in *Historie maniaków*, and events are marked by absurdity and unpredictability. Jaworski's short stories are characterised by the lack of a clearly defined time frame or background of events. The strongly accented impressionism makes the events presented by the writer fragmentary and ephemeral, resembling an attempt to grasp the state closer to the landscape, without drafting a fast-moving plot. The composition also determines how this writing should be read: it requires attention. And this is where Jaworski's novelty is manifested, namely in the creation of the anti-text, anti-literature with the help of the category of ugliness long before the postulates of postmodernists. The composition of *Historie maniaków* contradicts the conventional way of constructing the narration and the plot. Its otherness goes beyond the framework of a traditional novel. If one considers what is traditional, familiar and consistent with the principles in the context of something "pretty," then the bold and unusual form chosen by Jaworski may be the realisation of "ugliness" in the composition.

Jaworski's way of constructing the plot also determined a certain stylistic mannerism: his fantastic world, far from being predictable, is described with sentences as incomplete as the presented plot. Creation using the category of ugliness takes place also on the level of stylistic construction in the writer's prose: sentences tend to be flawed, torn, crippled, often short, single-worded or, in other passages, pretentiously complex, which can be seen as a parody of the Young Poland style. The juxtaposition of such forms intensifies the effect achieved with the help of a specifically built plot and embedding the extraordinary protagonists in it, the eponymous "maniacs," i.e. disturbed people, misfits, characters from the borderland of worlds, who were created in spite of the habits and expectations of the reader.

²⁴ Ibid., 92.

²⁵ Cf. Piotr Kitrasiewicz, introduction, in Roman Jaworski, *Historie maniaków* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2004).

Provocation with ugliness

The ludic aspect of the work is extremely interesting. It is accomplished with the use of the category of ugliness: the writer uses this aesthetics to play with the reader. It may seem that this game is intended to test the limit of the recipient's good taste. After all, it is impossible to remain indifferent to the fragments of stories in which the accumulation of ugliness is a provocation, consciously leading to a conflict with the reader.

She was sowing where her lost sons and daughters went. And mourning purples were seeping, and night birds caught them on their wings and, dragging them, they took them far away to homesteads, where infants whimpered and where a blind man's violin wailed in the attic, where an ill lad was at a harlot and where resinous wood smouldered under a dried haystack, where a grandma stole silver coins for her hungry grandchildren and where a maid made love to a stranger, where a madman hung from the hospital bars.²⁶

In these words, Jaworski defines the setting of the short story titled "Miał iść." It opens the whole collection, and the provocative fragment is placed at the beginning like a warning, or perhaps a kind of test for the audience – will the reader dare to turn the page and continue to read the text full of such images? Such tension-building, shocking the reader with provocative ugliness is not a one-off device, and it can also be found in the story titled "Bania doktora Lipka" [Doctor Lipek's Gourd]. The short story opens with a strange-sounding apostrophe used to address eyelashes which are faded from looking at horrors, faint hares snatched by hawks, babies who died without being baptised, a drunken hangman, an unsightly stinking girl at the corner, a mangy little dog, or Jewish cemeteries from which leprosy spreads to the city – or the recipients of tender greetings from Christ's mercenaries, as patients of Dr. Lipek, a psychiatrist, dubbed themselves. Ugliness, in the case of the above mentioned enumeration, has a comedic effect, which in turn leads directly to the grotesque – iconoclastic, surprisingly rebellious, even with contemporary reading. As Krzysztof Kłosiński rightly observes, this effect was achieved with the use of diminutives – "(...) a mother with her daughterling boarded a ferry prom. The daughterling was very much in love and she was about to become a great lady. Only the horses bolted away and the little carriage fell into the water, and the daughterling became a little fishy"²⁷ – as well as the juxtaposition of diminutives and sublimation used concurrently with reference to either a commonplace or an ugly designate.²⁸

It seems particularly provocative to use the category of ugliness in the context of the subject of sexuality. The protagonist of "Trzecia godzina,"

²⁶ Jaworski, *Historie maniaków*, 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁸ Krzysztof Kłosiński, *Wokół „Historii maniaków.” Stylizacja, brzydota, groteska* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1992), 191.

Mr. Pichoń, felt an undisguised fascination with Honorcia's physicality, especially one detail of her body, namely a wart: "He admired the black velvet dressing gown embroidered in yellow flowers, its deep cuts on the neck and back, and especially a serious wart, which sat like a seductive cuckoo on her protruding gaunt shoulder blade."²⁹ The wart affected its aficionado so much that he could not refrain from touching it with his lips, for which he was severely rebuked by its owner. It is possible to see here the conceptualisation of the *vetula* topos, which has been present in literature and fine arts for centuries. Kristeva refers to it in her reflections on the abjective mother.³⁰ Honorcia becomes the equivalent of the archetypical figure of a repulsive hag, embodying all the taediogenic factors, ranging from the wrinkled, sunken body covered with warts to the detestable smell, imminent death and the evocations of the decomposing corpse. The *vetula* represented an articulation of male sexual aversion. Constructing an image of erotic fascination with the use of the category of ugliness and disgust bears the hallmarks of perversion, which once again appeared in the short story titled "Amor milczący": "Never have I touched a young, alive body with a longing hand, my youthful lips rubbed their purple on the grease of the grey-haired plait and on the coarse skin of dried breasts. A gigolo and a pupil of a half-corpse, I think of love deathly."³¹ Also in this case, it is possible to observe a clear gradation of the device used. The purport of "deathly love" seems much stronger than that of an innocent kiss on the wart. Love with a hint of necrophilia, a combination of excitement and normally repulsive elements, becomes another way to shock readers by violating a cultural taboo.

Being iconoclastic, the provocations with ugliness had also humorous overtones. Not only did they arouse aversion, but they also allowed the author to create jocular images with the help of that sophisticated sensitivity, as in the case of the situation in which a national monument of the bard was desecrated with a certain physiological activity: "Clumsy and huge, he sat under the statue of a national bard, he opened an umbrella, dropped his pants and he did a very ugly thing under the umbrella, polluting the inviolable place."³² The clash of two opposing categories, namely sublimity and humour legitimised by ugliness, allowed the author to create a scene that attacks the widely recognised authorities. The play of contrasts and disharmonies irretrievably remove pathos from Jaworski's literary output and depict him as a writer capable of creating images which are far from stereotypes.

The grotesque

The aforementioned combination of ugliness and humor evokes associations with the grotesque. This category is an important element in Jaworski's prose. Due to the presence of the grotesque in his works, the writer is

²⁹ Kłosiński, *Wokół „Historii maniaków.” Stylizacja, brzydota, groteska*, 92.

³⁰ Winfried Menninghaus, *Wstręt. Teoria i historia*, trans. Grzegorz Sowiński, (Kraków: Universitas, 2009), 15.

³¹ Jaworski, *Historie maniaków*, 193.

³² Jaworski, *Historie maniaków*, 154.

linked to a trend favouring parody, and he was also hailed as the precursor of a trend advocating the use of the grotesque in Polish literature. All the analysed elements in the presented world can be considered in terms of the grotesque, which is also visible in moments marked by situational humour. One of the more grotesque passages in the whole collection of short stories is the one about the will of Pichoń, in which he gives his instructions to posterity on how to die: "It is best to die in spring when idle longing lives in the bones and the boredom of life pulsates tiringly in your ears, like the clatter of Good Friday rattles. Then self-willed dying comes as a good duty. Opposing it, like ordinary people tend to do, is not advisable in this case. It is better to surrender."³³ The *Ars bene moriendi* by Jaworski is rather trenchant and amusing in this trenchancy, and it stands as another example of valuing ugliness positively. Even in the face of death, he differentiates between "ordinary" people and contrasts them, by implication, with the "chosen ones," including the author of the will, Pichoń, who was "endowed" with strabismus and marked by ugliness. The same character also used to engage in grotesque conversations in restaurants, discussing the statistics of suicides and sudden deaths, which met with the disapproval of his interlocutors: "Of course, he would scare his paler and paler audience, who – with a sweet grimace in the corners of their pupils – thanked the apostle of death for the fortifying retreat."³⁴

The grotesque associated with the topos of death occupies a privileged position due to the topic of the collection. It is created by combining elements of humour with death, which is described with the use of ugliness. This is possible due to the similarity of both categories. The root of all the analogies leading to this can be found in deformation, distortion, incoherence, the essential determinants of ugliness, also creating phenomena defined as the grotesque.³⁵ Ugliness, however, is a wider, more capacious, heterogeneous classification, from which the grotesque can be abstracted. It will be always possible to define the grotesque through the use of ugliness, while ugliness will not always constitute the grotesque: the cited examples are not always funny, or surprising, and some of the examples quoted point to the sadness, fear, or repulsion which it connotes.

The significance of Jaworski's work today

It comes as a surprise to see the state of literary research on the issue of ugliness and the grotesque in *Historie maniaków*, or – to be more precise – the blatant disproportion of the research clearly dominated by the narrative focusing on the aesthetics of the grotesque.³⁶ Jaworski's collection of short

³³ Jaworski, *Historie maniaków*, 129.

³⁴ Jaworski, *Historie maniaków*, 121.

³⁵ Lech Sokół, *Groteska w teatrze Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo PAN, 1973), 27.

³⁶ Cf. Michał Głowiński, introduction to Roman Jaworski, *Historie maniaków* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie Kraków, 1978); Krzysztof Kłosiński, *Wokół "Historii maniaków". Stylizacja. Brzydota. Groteska* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1992); Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn, *Gest Pięknoducha. Roman Jaworski i jego estetyka brzydoty* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL

stories was written at the beginning of the 20th century, when ugliness and grotesque were treated as synonymous: the terminology worked in favour of the grotesque at that time, the result of which ugliness lost its autonomy. Currently, these two aesthetic categories, despite being related, are no longer regarded as equivalent, yet Jaworski's work is still considered and interpreted mainly in terms of the category of the grotesque.

Reading his literary output in such a way does not fit into the writer's artistic vision and is not sufficient in light of contemporary literary research. The category of ugliness – valued positively by Jaworski and created in relation to the author's original aesthetics – is not only the background, but also a relevant component, with the help of which the writer accomplished the aesthetics of the grotesque widely discussed later. Jaworski exploited ugliness on every level of the construction of the text, ranging from the topic of the work, the way of characterising the physicality and psyche of the characters as well as the places where the story is set, to the innovative composition and idiosyncratic language of the text. Through the prism of that aesthetics, he looked primarily at the specificity of humanity and corporeality, often breaking a cultural taboo. Jaworski's stance corresponds to contemporary freak studies, i.e. studies concerning the subjectivity of bodies which are excluded due to the obscene, uncensored status of old age, illness and disability.³⁷ Each of his characters was distinguished by a certain disability, which Jaworski did not marginalise: on the contrary, he turned it into a positive value in his axiology. In this way, he went beyond the canon of perceiving the non-normative carnality of his day.

The category of ugliness was used by Jaworski to parody the lyrically solemn style of Young Poland and its literary stereotypes: in this mocking way, he showed his distance to the stylistics prevalent at the time of his literary debut. Making ugliness the indicator of his writing, he developed an innovative and unique style, which had its followers. Jaworski was not only a precursor of the grotesque trend, but also of turpism, which in principle glorified ugliness and the everyday life embedded in it. The writer's literary output may be referred to as pre-turpism, or turpism of early modernism. Many of his postulates were later put into practice in literature. Jaworski's work could be described using the slogans of postmodernism, such as the deconstruction of aesthetic and ideological canons, the idea of the exhaustion of language, or even banalisation of literature and creating anti-literature.³⁸ The writer was not only a literary phenomenon of his day, but he also significantly influenced the following generations of modern and postmodern artists.

PAN, 2003); Jerzy Maciejewski, *Konstruktor dziwnych światów: groteskowe, ludyczne i karnawalowe aspekty prozy Romana Jaworskiego* (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 1990); Anna Kubale, "Próba analizy groteski Romana Jaworskiego." *Wesele hrabiego Organza, Prace Humanistyczne*, series I, no. 4 (1975); Katarzyna Zwierzchowska, "Twórczość Romana Jaworskiego początkiem nurtu parodystyczno-groteskowego w literaturze polskiej," *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica*, no. 14/2 (2011): 131-142.

³⁷ Kazimiera Szczuka, "Groteska," in *Encyklopedia gender...*, 174.

³⁸ Włodzimierz Bolecki, "Modernizm w literaturze polskiej XX w." *Teksty Drugie*, no. 4 (2002): 11-34.

Jaworski managed to highlight the instability of the canons of beauty and discredit them as a value which is no longer valid. In this way, he anticipated avant-garde movements whose supporters questioned the primacy of the category of beauty. In terms of aesthetics, *Historie maniaków* is close to camp – sublime aesthetics that assumed opposition to marginalisation and unambiguity, while giving primacy to values which tend to be rejected. Jaworski was guided by this imperative, as he repeatedly mentioned it in his texts. Camp uses mainly aesthetic devices. One hallmark of this sensitivity is the manifestation of unnaturalness: artificiality, exaggeration and hyperbolic expression,³⁹ (i.e. features which comprise ugliness representing an aesthetic dominant in Jaworski's prose, and being, at the same time, a successful attempt to describe the poetics of the author). Currently, camp also assumes the perception of the surrounding reality as an aesthetic phenomenon, which was certainly close to Jaworski as a declared dandy. Hence, camp is a kind of ludic distortion of morality, because it treats not only the phenomena of an aesthetic nature but also those subject to ethical evaluation through the prism of aesthetic values. This element of ludicity resounds in *Historie maniaków* and is intended for entertainment and a struggle against boredom, even at the cost of transforming *sacrum* into *profanum*. Camp is manifested in Jaworski's writing by the triumph of the sublime style over the content, aesthetics over morality and mocking irony over seriousness, yet his stories lack features pointing to the camp concept of human identity and sexuality as camp in the broader sense also applies to the subversion of gender roles, or more generally, to a post-gender perception of the human being.⁴⁰ At the end of the 20th century, the theatricalisation with its exaggerated gestures changed into enacting culturally established social roles, into stressing the most characteristic features and manners or, on the contrary, into glorifying the androgenic human being. Hence, Jaworski can be considered to be an author who writes in the camp aesthetics, or who represents a system of values similar to that articulated by camp.

Ugliness in Jaworski's work often expresses disgust. As Julia Kristeva pointed out, it is in literature that repulsion, together with disgust, accomplishes the fullness of its power.⁴¹ In order to stress the specific relationship between this part of culture and the primordial impulse of disgust, Kristeva draws on de Saussure's Theory of Signs: she calls literature the main signifier for disgust and aversion which causes it. Her words find confirmation in Jaworski's prose, which abounds in repulsion triggered by the use of ugliness. The full power of disgust in the case of *Historie maniaków* is manifested in the accuracy with which the writer evokes images, smells and sounds which cause disgust. What draws attention is the consistency with which Jaworski uses this type of imaging and the extent of this stylistic device:

³⁹ Maria Gołębiewska, "Kamp jako postawa estetyczna – o postmodernistycznych uwikłaniach," in *Demontaż atrakcji. O estetyce audiowizualności* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2003), 151-181.

⁴⁰ Przemysław Czapliński "Kamp – gry antropologiczne," in *Kamp. Antologia przekładów*, ed. Przemysław Czapliński, Anna Mizerka (Kraków: Universitas, 2012), 21.

⁴¹ Kristeva, *Potęga obrzydzenia. Esej o wstręcie...*, 193.

the narration is conducted in such a way that repulsion affects every sense of the reader and does not remain indifferent with regard to the sphere of moral issues. The way in which the characters are shown, their appearance and behavior, highlighting their phobias, obsessions and perversions bring to mind the researcher's observations on the abject, or what is denied the right to be a subject. The characters in Jaworski's work are abjective: they evoke disgust, frighten and fascinate with their otherness, go beyond the symbolic order, do not fit into accepted social norms, and deviate from heteronormativity. Kristeva considered in the category of abject also those areas which were of particular interest to Jaworski: what they have in common is the reflection on corporeality visible in each short story comprising *Historie maniaków* as well as on perverse sexuality, which the author depicted in his short stories including "Trzecia godzina" and "Amor milczący." Therefore, it is justified to say that the subject of Jaworski's interest was the abject, to use today's terminology proposed by Kristeva.

In the case of Kristeva, disgust represents a line of demarcation, setting the boundaries of culture and protecting against a fall. Jaworski, in turn, aimed to provocatively introduce ugliness and repulsion into culture. He wanted the disgusting ugliness not to be marginalised any longer and he demanded that it should establish a new aesthetic canon. Using ugliness, he wanted to push the boundaries that Kristeva wrote about later, which makes his work fascinating and extremely up-to-date more than a century after its publication. As Magdalena Popiel notes: "It is a fact that the literature of Young Poland has been included in the current of intellectual ferment taking place nowadays owing to postmodernism."⁴²

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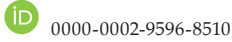
⁴² Magdalena Popiel, *Oblicza wzniosłości. Estetyka powieści młodopolskiej* (Krakow: Universitas, 2003), 9.

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Magdalena Sikorska – is a doctoral student in the Department of Literature and Tradition of Romanticism at the University of Lodz. Her research interests focus on the category of ugliness, its place in literature and contemporary humanistic discourse.

E-mail: mmm.sikorska@gmail.com

TOMASZ JATIVA
University of Warsaw



Form and Power

On the Disciplinary Coding of National Identity in “Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego” by Witold Gombrowicz

SUMMARY

The aim of this article is to analyse Witold Gombrowicz’s short story entitled “Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego” in the context of the convergence between the writer’s worldview and the philosophy of Michel Foucault. Nietzschean motifs inspired both authors to formulate a similar constructivist anthropology and a similar criticism of the concept of discipline. The themes of form and creating a human being by a human being – central to Gombrowicz’s writing – correspond to Foucault’s notion of the production of the subject. In such a perspective, “Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego” can be read as a record of the experience of an individual subjected to social practices of disciplinary embarrassment, aimed at producing a subject defined by nationality and heteronormativity, as well as the experience of rebellion against an imposed identity. Such a reading reveals the political stakes of the literary output by the author of *Ferdydurke*: expressed in the deconstruction of authoritarian forms of empowerment and in the pursuit to replace them with forms of subjectification based on irony, fluidity and distance.

Keywords

Witold Gombrowicz, Michel Foucault, discipline, national identity, repulsion

According to Ryszard Nycz, modern literature conveys a particular epistemological complexity: its task is to express and describe an experience which is denied any claims to directness.¹ The centre of its interest is no longer the objective world; it focuses instead on the mechanisms of social and psychological construction of experience. Modern literature seen in this way would reveal its closeness to the intellectual work of social philosophers and cultural anthropologists.

An experience that is portrayed particularly often in the works of Witold Gombrowicz is one of being subject to disciplinary restraint. Hence, the silent moments of embarrassment are so eagerly captured in the narration of the author of *Ferdydurke*, in which it seems to be too late to say anything to defend oneself. This is also where the blades of the Knights of the Golden Spur from *Trans-Atlantyk* come from, cutting into the bodies of those who will take the liberty to violate the designated forms, particularly that of heteronormativity which is, in the opinion of the writer, programmatic for the Polish national identity.² Despite the differences between the conceptual rigour of philosophy and literary creation, the discourses of Witold Gombrowicz and Michel Foucault seem to illuminate the same segment of reality. This article aims to understand the possible convergence between the two authors and the detailed interpretation of Gombrowicz's early short story titled "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego," developed from the perspective set out by a critical analysis of the concept of discipline.

It is possible to speak of a specific trend in which Gombrowicz's work is presented in the context of French structuralism and poststructuralism.³ It is worth quoting here Marian Bielecki's suggestion of reading Gombrowicz's meta-literary views with regard to the critical dialogue which they may hold with Foucault's *The Order of Things*⁴ as well as Karol Hryniewicz's analysis of the vision of carnality included in *Kronos*, a vision which uses the idea of the care of the self typical of Foucault's late reflections.⁵ Nevertheless, the concept of discipline developed in such works as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* or *The History of Madness* seems to be absent from the work of researchers of the author of *Pamiętnik z okresu dojrzewania*. Given the popular association of Gombrowicz's name with the vision of the school as an authoritarian institution, this seems even more puzzling. And

¹ Cf. Ryszard Nycz, "Literatura nowoczesna wobec doświadczenia," *Teksty Drugie*, 6 (2006): 59.

² Ewa Płonowska-Ziarek wrote on the links between social coding of sexuality and the performance of national identity in the texts by Gombrowicz. Cf. Ewa Płonowska-Ziarek, "Blizna cudzoziemca i barokowa fałda. Przynależność narodowa a homoseksualizm w *Trans-Atlantyku* Witolda Gombrowicza," in *Grymasy Gombrowicza. W kręgu problemów modernizmu, społeczno-kulturowej roli płci i tożsamości narodowej*, ed. Ewa Płonowska-Ziarek, trans. Janusz Margański, (Kraków: Universitas, 2001).

³ Cf. Ewa Płonowska-Ziarek, Introduction to *Grymasy Gombrowicza. W kręgu problemów modernizmu, społeczno-kulturowej roli płci i tożsamości narodowej* (Kraków: Universitas, 2001), 13.

⁴ Cf. Marian Bielecki, *Literatura i lektura. O metaliterackich i metakrytycznych poglądach Witolda Gombrowicza* (Kraków: Universitas, 2004), 256-405.

⁵ Cf. Karol Hryniewicz, "Przygody ciała w dziennikach Gombrowicza zapisane (perspektywa nie tylko fenomenologiczna)," in *Gombrowicz z przodu i z tyłu*, eds. Krzysztof Cwikliński, Anna Spólna, Dominika Świątkowska (Radom: Wydawnictwo UHT, 2013).

as Foucault wrote, pointing to the prison as a model of modern disciplinary institutions:

The practice of placing individuals under 'observation' is a natural extension of a justice imbued with disciplinary methods and examination procedures. Is it surprising that the cellular prison, with its regular chronologies, forced labour, its authorities of surveillance and registration, its experts in normality, who continue and multiply the functions of the judge, should have become the modern instrument of penalty? Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?⁶

Gombrowicz himself encouraged the reading of his texts through the prism of structuralist thought. Answering the survey of *Wiadomości*, a Polish cultural magazine published in London, the writer hoped that "today's structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, Lacan, together with some, God forbid, war, will make immersion in the cosmos of my *Cosmos* as easy as bathing in a nearby pond on a clear day."⁷ A fake interview titled "Byłem pierwszym strukturalistą" [I Was the First Structuralist] seems to be of particular importance in this context. Despite the extremely perverse construction of the text – the interviewer's statements are often reduced to murmurs such as "Hey!," "Bam" and "Hush!," while the interviewee mocks the style of French intellectuals of the 1960s, which, according to Gombrowicz, was over-intellectualised – and the fact that *Course in General Linguistics* by Ferdinand de Saussure was published by 1916 when the writer was only twelve years old, it seems that the declaration in the title is more than just an attempt to lead readers by the nose.

Both Foucault's micro-physics of power and Gombrowicz's literary discourse seem to be based on similar ontological assumptions inspired by the works of Friedrich Nietzsche.⁸ According to Gilles Deleuze, the concept of antagonistic pluralism of forces was the theoretical background to both the Nietzschean genealogy of morality as well as Foucault's perspective. Deleuze explained this concept in his book titled *Nietzsche and Philosophy*: "All force is appropriation, domination, exploitation of a quantity of reality. Even perception, in its diverse aspects, is the expression of forces which

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 227–228, accessed October 11, 2020, https://monoskop.org/images/4/43/Foucault_Michel_Discipline_and_Punish_The_Birth_of_the_Prison_1977_1995.pdf.

⁷ Witold Gombrowicz, [A response to a survey by *Wiadomości*: A welcome question to Tarnawski], in Witold Gombrowicz, *Publicystyka, Wywiady. Teksty różne 1963–1969*, eds. Jan Błoński, Jerzy Jarzębski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1997), 522.

⁸ The relationship between the perspective of Gombrowicz and that of Nietzsche was widely commented in literature. Cf. Piotr Dziewoński, *Fryderyk Nietzsche i światopogląd ironiczny w „Ślubie” Gombrowicza* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2008). Foucault wrote of the inspiration he drew from Nietzsche's philosophy in the text titled "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." Cf. Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, genealogia, historia*, in Michel Foucault, *Filozofia, historia, polityka. Wybór pism*, trans. Damian Leszczyński, Lotar Rasiński (Warsaw-Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000).

appropriate nature.”⁹ In this perspective, a question about the meaning of a phenomenon is a question about what forces have taken possession of it or what kind of the forces it represents. In his monograph devoted to the intellectual output of the author of *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Deleuze wrote that: “Foucault’s general principle is that every form is a compound of relations between forces. Given these forces, our first question is with what forces from the outside they enter into a relation, and then what form is created as a result.”¹⁰ Hence, Foucault’s philosophical methodology consists in considering discourses and disciplinary institutions (psychiatric hospital, clinic, school) as a configuration of forces serving to produce a subject exposed to social domination.¹¹ From this point of view, discipline is a form of power exercised over the bodies of individuals through institutions such as schools, workhouses, hospitals, barracks and prisons:

The disciplinary mechanism is characterized by the fact that a third personage, the culprit, appears within the binary system of the code, and at the same time, outside the code, and outside the legislative act that establishes the law and the judicial act that punishes the culprit, a series of adjacent, detective, medical, and psychological techniques appear which fall within the domain of surveillance, diagnosis, and the possible transformation of individuals.¹²

The situation of a “subject” in a disciplinary institution is therefore described in the binary category of what is permitted and what is prohibited, and then, on the basis of this knowledge, the staff of these institutions apply a series of practices and procedures for subordination and socialisation or re-socialisation.

The social mechanism, which in Foucault’s texts was called the production of the subject, is referred to in Gombrowicz’s language as the form. Three sequences of *Ferdydurke* end with a vision of a swarm of human bodies: when a socially established symbolic order implodes, the protagonists of the novel turn into a disorderly, magmatic mixture in which the boundaries between the different characters are blurred. In the writer’s world, the apparent reality of the form seems to be reduced to a configuration of biological disorder determined by social interaction. What gives shape here – always felt to be inadequate – is the interpolation applied by the other subject. In “Byłem pierwszym strukturalistą” the basis of comparison is therefore

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London–New York: Continuum, 2002), 3, accessed October 10, <https://antilogicalism.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/nietzsche-and-philosophy.pdf>.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, ed. Seán Hand, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis–London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 124, accessed October 10, 2020, <https://altexploit.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/gilles-deleuze-sean-hand-foucault-university-of-minnesota-press-1988.pdf>.

¹¹ An example of the composition of forces analysed by Foucault can be provided by the famous figure of the panopticon. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 195–228.

¹² Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, edited by Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 5.

the conviction that the nature of man is determined by factors external to him, impersonal and abstract:

As a matter of fact, I repeat, it is about a certain way of seeing a human being, and it is on this basis that my “formal” human being can make a number of confessions to a “structural” human being. (...) Do you not say that the human being makes themselves known through certain structures independent of them, such as language, and is constrained by something that simultaneously pervades and defines them, so that their *vis movens* is external to them? Well, such a person can be found in my books.¹³

Just as the individual turns out to be a function of the form in Gombrowicz's work, analyses of structuralists reduce the individual to an update of linguistic, socio-cultural, economic or psychological structures. The construction of the characters described by the author of *Cosmos*, consisting mainly of reactions to the behaviour of others and a sense of inadequacy to cultural norms, presents a vision of subjectivity concentrated around the concept of intersubjectivity. In turn, in his sketch titled “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” Gilles Deleuze argues that “the subject is essentially intersubjective.”¹⁴

At the same time, in “Byłem pierwszym strukturalistą,” the writer highlights the differences between his own perspective and the point of view of the then fashionable current of thought: “It is different in the case of structuralists: they look for their structures in culture, I look for them in the immediate reality.”¹⁵ Whereas structural analysis seeks to draw up a theoretical model of the structure under study, the literature of the author of *Pornography* aims to reflect the effects of social structures in a concrete experience.

Gombrowicz's short story titled “Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego” was first published in the anthology titled *Pamiętnik z okresu dojrzewania* [A Diary from Adolescence] in 1933 (The original title of the work was “Pamiętnik Jakóba Czarnieckiego” [A Diary of Jakób Czarniecki]). It presents the impact of the social coding of bodies by Polish nationalism and anti-Semitism on the experience of a person of mixed Polish-Jewish origins.¹⁶ The motif which structures the composition of the story is the theme of “the language of the mystery.” Initially, it is connected with the unspoken knowledge of the Jewish roots of the eponymous character's mother. In the following parts of the text, however, it is referred to the social sphere of

¹³ Witold Gombrowicz, “Byłem pierwszym strukturalistą,” trans. from French Maciej Broński, in *Gombrowicz filozof*, eds. Francesco M. Cataluccio, Jerzy Illg (Krakow: Znak, 1991), 146.

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” in Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953–1974*, trans. Michael Taormina edited by David Lapoujade (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 190, accessed October 15, <https://palmermethode.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/semiotexte-foreign-agents-gilles-deleuze-desert-islands-and-other-texts-1953-1974-2003-semiotexte.pdf>

¹⁵ Witold Gombrowicz, “Byłem pierwszym strukturalistą,” 323.

¹⁶ Eric Hobsbawm wrote about considering the category of the nation as a social construct (cf. Eric Hobsbawm, *Narody i nacjonalizm po 1780 roku: program, mit, rzeczywistość*, trans. Jakub Maciejczyk, Marcin Starnawski (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Difin, 2010)).

sense production. It is a mystery for the eponymous character of the story to see the behaviour of his classmates who prefer to bully a frog and nurture a swallow as well as the language of national narcissism which he encounters at school and the contempt which others show to him, conditioned by the anti-Semitism of the surroundings. This problem was discussed by Jerzy Jarzębski:

the society creates a kind of 'common cage' woven from popular beliefs and a generally accepted ideology that defines the semantics of each phenomenon. Gombrowicz refers to what is consequently created as 'the language of the mystery.' The process of upbringing and the acculturation of an individual consists in learning this 'language,' while maturity - in internalising stereotypes.¹⁷

Although Foucault remains absent from Jarzębski's interpretation of Gombrowicz's works, the literary scholar built his understanding of "the language of the mystery" on the basis of penitentiary metaphors. What seems interesting in the prose of the author of *The Marriage* is the fact that it relates internalised stereotypes not only to the level of discursive understanding of the world by the characters described, but also to the perceptual and affective dimensions.

Gombrowicz's narration in "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego" depicts the discourse of Polish nationalism, anti-Semitism and militarism as well as patriarchal masculinity as a kind of whole written down in the thoughts, gestures and experiences of the characters. The secret is guarded by the iron discipline exercised over Stefan, whether by his parents, teachers, classmates, his beloved or, ultimately, military regulations. It was implemented by gestures of intimidation and embarrassment, expressing contempt or disgust. The reverse of this discipline seems to be the compulsive bigotry of his Jewish mother, by means of which she legitimises her presence in the "Polish home" and which allows her to express her resentment towards her husband in the form of moral condemnation of his numerous marital infidelities. Czarniecki is disciplinarily implemented into the language of the mystery in four areas of social life: family, school, erotic life and the army. Each of these areas urges Gombrowicz's protagonist to adopt a specific identity, tames him, produces the given form of subjectivity. The family is presented as a space for the production of national and religious identity, in the same way as the school. His erotic contacts, Stefan's rendezvous with his beloved Jadwisia, are intended to produce a heterosexual identity, while the army is intended to produce the identity of a soldier who is ready to willingly sacrifice his life for his country.

Błażej Warkocki wrote about the fundamental importance of the category of shame in the process of social construction and imposition of subjectivity in *Tancerz mecenasa Kraykowskiego*.¹⁸ While it is shame that seems to play the main role in the short story opening *Pamiętnik z okresu dojrzewania*,

¹⁷ Jerzy Jarzębski, *Gra w Gombrowicza* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1982), 142.

¹⁸ Błażej Warkocki, "Co za wstyd! Pamiętnik z okresu queerowego dojrzewania: prolegomena," *Teksty Drugie*, 4 (2016): 88-105.

this role in "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego" is assigned to the demonstration of repulsion.¹⁹ The protagonist of the short story comes across this form of disciplinary power already in his family home: "I soon noticed that the father avoided touching my mother like a fire. Even more so, he avoided looking into her eyes and, speaking most often, looked sideways or at his fingernails while talking to her."²⁰

Stefan's father is an impoverished nobleman who, motivated by a desire to maintain his high position, married a woman from a wealthy Jewish family, which led to the questioning of the material basis of his power as a patriarch. One way to keep it is to show contempt and disdain, which is conveyed in the following way by Gombrowicz's style prone to hyperbole and the grotesque: "I once overheard him yelling at my mother, cracking his knuckles: 'You're going bald! 'You're soon going to be as bald as a coot! (...) Oh, you're so awful. You can't know how awful you are.'"²¹ The father of the eponymous character also subjected him to strict, almost phrenological observations, scrutinising his physiognomy in the search of the predominance of the alleged features of the Polish "race" over the alleged features of the Semitic "race." As the story unfolds, Stefan is subjected to numerous tests and examinations during which, in accordance with the Foucault's scheme of disciplinary institutions, his body acts as the third element in relation to the binary system dividing the world into what is allowed (prescribed by the cultural model) and what is prohibited. Showing disgust is depicted, in turn, as a way of establishing a hierarchy of dominance and a corrective mechanism aimed creating the willingness in Stefan to "improve."

The unspeakable mystery of the protagonist's dual Polish-Jewish origin becomes the reason why he is rejected by the school environment. He discovers that the nursery rhyme "Raz, dwa, trzy, wszystkie Żydy psy, a Polacy złote ptacy, a wychodzisz ty" [One, two, three, four, each Jew is a dog, each Pole's a golden boy, and it's your go]²² speaks the language of the mystery. It is about the experience of anti-Semitism and disciplinary behaviour that reinforces it in the earliest stages of adolescence. The binary division, described by Foucault, between what is allowed and what is forbidden, is superimposed on the difference between Polish and Jewish identities, the discipline of disgust and contempt serves to implement this structure in the dimension of everyday, standardised experience. Neither a Jew nor a Pole, the protagonist cannot find himself in the symbolic order of the society described, and he is assigned the position of an outsider. Stefan perceives this order as arbitrary and incomprehensible. This will allow him to understand the conventional nature of socially established identities in the climax of the story.

¹⁹ It is possible to talk about a certain change in the perspective here since shame can be described as an emotional correlate of the practice of showing disgust. However, if, in the context of reading Gombrowicz, I prefer to write about showing disgust, it is because shame can be experienced individually, while the expression "showing disgust" directly connotes a type of social interaction.

²⁰ Witold Gombrowicz, "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego," in Witold Gombrowicz, *Bakakaj* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, Wrocław 1986), 16.

²¹ Gombrowicz, "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego," 17.

²² Gombrowicz, "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego," 20.

Therefore, Gombrowicz seems to share the intuition later expressed by Julia Kristeva about repulsion as an emotion that appears in response to the disruption of the socially established symbolic order and of the identities that are based on it.²³ The philosopher's reflections also shed light on the fact that anti-Semitism belongs to the subject matter of the story that focuses on showing repulsion in a social context: "Anti-Semitism, for which there is an object as phantasmic and ambivalent as the Jew, is a kind of para-religious formation: it is a sociological thrill, or rather a story that is created by believers as non-believers so as to feel repulsion."²⁴ In other words, the anti-Semitic phantasm of the Jew functions as an affective machinery for generating disgust. As Gombrowicz's narrative indicates, the mental energy, which is initially associated with the feeling of disgust crafted in this way, is then utilised by disciplinary practices aimed at instilling hierarchical identities.

The production of nationalised subjectivity, which began in the family home and which is subsequently referred to as "the national form"²⁵ by Gombrowicz in *Trans-Atlantyk*, later continues at school. In his memoirs, Czarniecki evokes the figure of a history and literature teacher: "'Gentlemen,' he would say, coughing in his large foulard handkerchief or shaking something out of his ear with his finger, 'which other nation was the Messiah of nations? The bulwark of Christianity? Which other nation had Prince Józef Poniatowski?'" Such education can be defined by the expression with which Foucault described prison and other disciplinary institutions' staff in the quotation above: "the teacher of normality." The climax of Stefan's education is, of course, an examination: a paper on the alleged superiority of Poles over other nations, which the protagonist concludes with the following words: "Only Poles do not fill us with disgust."²⁶ He comments that he wrote these words without conviction yet with a sense of bliss resulting from mastering the language of the mystery.

The erotic thread is introduced in the story in close connection with the coding of national identity which takes place at school.²⁷ Stefan recalls the following words of one of his professors: "A Pole has always been what they say: a rascal and a rebellious soul. He will not sit in one place... this is why Swedish, Danish, French and German women are very fond of us, but we prefer our Polish girls, because their beauty is world famous,"²⁸

²³ "Thus it is not a lack of cleanliness or health that makes something repulsive; repulsive is what disturbs the identity, the system, the order" (Julia Kristeva, "Potęga obrzydzenia. Esej o wstręcie," trans. Maciej Falski, Krakow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2007, 10).

²⁴ Julia Kristeva, "Potęga obrzydzenia. Esej o wstręcie," 166.

²⁵ Witold Gombrowicz, *Trans-Atlantyk* (Krakow-Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986), 6.

²⁶ Gombrowicz, "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego," 24.

²⁷ Foucault criticised the concept of gender/sexual identity as a correlate of a certain composition of power relations in *The History of Sexuality*. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Historia seksualności*, trans. Bogdan Banasiak, Tadeusz Komendant, Krzysztof Matuszewski (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria, 2010). Foucault's theory, in addition to Lacan's thought, also gave grounds to classical considerations for the gender performativity theory of Judith Butler. Cf. Judith Butler, *Uwiktani w płęć: feminizm i polityka tożsamości*, trans. Karolina Krasuska (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2008).

²⁸ Gombrowicz, "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego," 21.

and then he goes on to say: "These and other similar remarks affected me so much that I fell in love with a young lady, with whom we studied on one bench in the Łazienki Park."²⁹ "The young lady" arranges the relationship with Stefan within the framework of quite cynically played conventions of the Young Poland woman-vamp and chivalrous love, in which the admirer has to prove his feeling with unusual deeds. To put it bluntly, she bullies Stefan and humiliates him.

Gombrowicz's narration points to the conventional nature of heteronormativity imposed top-down and its relation to the performance of national identity.³⁰ Just as the Jewish identity was marked by a disciplinary ban in the family home and in the school yard, the homosexual desire becomes excluded in socially accepted eroticism. From the narrative perspective, this motif makes it possible to show the erotic experience as founded on socially established forms as well as to present – from the perspective of power analysis – disciplinary practices aimed at maintaining and domesticating these forms. The protagonist sums up his recollection of erotic experiences in the following way: "But she never wanted to respond to my 'I want you.' 'There is something in you,' she spoke with embarrassment, 'I don't really know, some kind of distaste.' 'I knew very well what it meant.'"³¹ In the direct experience of both Stefan's father and his 'girlfriend,' the disciplinary power manifests itself in the form of a sense of disgust which is to guard the racist phantasm prohibiting the "mixing of races."

Czarnecki is constructed by Gombrowicz as a figure who fails to understand "the language of the mystery" and who is unable to find himself in the symbolic order. Stefan gets rid of the feeling of alienation for the first time in the army: "I had no doubt about how to act and what to choose; tough army discipline was a signpost of the Mystery."³² As the main character points out, the very act of putting on the uniform already provides him with an opportunity to receive a tribute, to which he was denied access before. The narration of the story captures the mood of optimistic nationalism which swept across the society shortly prior to the outbreak of the war. It shows in a grotesque and comical way how militaristic discourse is implanted in a soldier's psyche by associating it with the social mechanisms of producing a model heterosexual desire: "Every time I managed to fire a rifle properly I felt as if I was hanging on an inscrutable smile of women and on the bars of a military song, and even, after much effort, I succeeded in obtaining the graces of my horse (...), which till then had only been picking and biting me."³³

²⁹ Gombrowicz, "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego."

³⁰ Błażej Warkocki puts forward a similar thesis with reference to "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego." Cf. Błażej Warkocki, *Pamiętnik afektów z okresu dojrzewania* (Poznań-Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2018), 72–94. The author referred to the analysed story by Gombrowicz also in his earlier text. Cf. Błażej Warkocki, "Rasowy kształt niemieckości. O Pamiętniku Stefana Czarnieckiego Witolda Gombrowicza," *Autobiografia. Literatura. Kultura. Media*, 1 (2016): 97–112.

³¹ Gombrowicz, "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego," 23.

³² *Ibid.*, 26.

³³ *Ibid.*

For Stefan, the war experience is initially associated with a sense of identification with the symbolic order. As compared to Gombrowicz's later works, the main characters of his debut collection of short stories are distinguished by the fact that they are not – in such an obvious way – the author's *porte parole*.³⁴ In the starting points of the plots, the protagonists are often presented as naive, devoid of the paranoid perspicacity in the interpretation of social life, which is characteristic of the narrators of *Ferdydurke*, *Trans-Atlantyk* or *Cosmos*. "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego" can be read as a text which speaks about the development of this particular perspective.³⁵ During the battle, Stefan hears the hysterical laughter of his mortally wounded comrade-in-arms. The traumatic experience once again makes the protagonist unable to identify with the symbolic order and convinces him of the conventional status of socially constructed meanings. Jerzy Jarzębski seems to be right in pointing to the affinity of "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego" with the "sneering nihilism" of the literature of "the Lost Generation" which expressed the alienation of World War I veterans in works such as "Howl" by Allen Ginsberg.³⁶

The climax of the analysed story concerns the eponymous character's affirmation of his own otherness. His personal secret is that, being neither a Pole nor a Jew, he is – as he calls himself – "a rat without any colour,"³⁷ a man without qualities or a clearly defined place in the social imaginary. He responds to the incomprehensible arbitrariness of social conventions with the arbitrariness of his private programme which involves the continuous subversion of universally recognised holiness. Parody becomes his tactic for political action: generating counter-senses and opening up spaces of existential liberation. Gombrowicz's satire is directed against the desire to submit to authority and discipline. The final effect of reading the story is the deconstruction of nationalistic, militaristic, anti-Semitic or machismo discourses, which consists in drawing attention to experiences that reveal their productive character. Contrary to the claims of nationalism, militarism or machismo to be established in a normative notion of nature, the writer points out that the objects of reference of these discourses appear in reality only as effects of disciplinary practices.

³⁴ Jan Błoński wrote in an interesting way about the relationship between Witold Gombrowicz, the writer, and Witold Gombrowicz, the subject of first-person narrative: "in novels, the narrator tends to be inaccurately and mendaciously identified with the author." Cf. Jan Błoński, "O Gombrowiczu," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 8 (1970): 46.

³⁵ The belief that *Pamiętnik z okresu dojrzewania* announces almost the entire scope of topics of Gombrowicz's mature works seems to be quite well rooted in the literature on the subject. Cf. Andrzej Kijowski, "Strategia Gombrowicza," in *Problemy literatury polskiej lat 1890–1939. Seria II*, eds. Hanna Krichner, Zbigniew Żabicki (Wrocław: Instytut Literatury, 1974), 261–298.

³⁶ Cf. Jerzy Jarzębski, *Gra w Gombrowicza*, 172.

³⁷ Gombrowicz, "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego," 23. Marek Mikołajec presented an interesting analysis of the metaphor of "a rat without any colour" in the of Gombrowicz's attitude to the theories of Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel. Cf. Marek Mikołajec, "Arcyludzkie i zwierzęce na przykładzie *Pamiętnika Stefana Czarnieckiego*," in Marek Mikołajec, *Profanacje, rewizje – przeciw doktrynom. Dwa opowiadania z debiutanckiego tomu Witolda Gombrowicza* (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 2014), 74–92.

The political dimension of Gombrowicz's writing manifests itself in this context. Although the author of *Ferdydurke* often put on the mask of an artist – a spiritual aristocrat not involved in the trivial reality of political games – this dimension is indeed present in both his early and later works. "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego" was written between the late 1920s and early 1930s, i.e. during the period when fascist and far-right organisations were developing both in Poland and in Europe. In 1920, whose memory undoubtedly shaped the image of the war in the short story in question, sixteen-year-old Gombrowicz was then sent not to the army, but to alternative military service, which resulted in social stigmatisation. Later, the mature writer recalled the period of his adolescence in the following words: "I was mortified, and at the same time I was in a state of rebellion... for the first time I turned against the fatherland, the state, and other instruments of collective pressure on the individual."³⁸ The above formula clearly indicates the direction which the type of political commitment inherent in Witold Gombrowicz's literary output is directed against.

As Błażej Warkocki points out, the classical reception of "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego" was primarily focused on the issue of anti-Semitism.³⁹ This is where he places the interpretation of the story proposed by Michał Głowiński⁴⁰ and Bożena Umińska, from whose reflections he recalls a passage according to which it would contain "probably the most interesting parabola in the literature of the interwar period, concerning the distribution of values in Polish-Jewish relations."⁴¹ As a peculiar curiosity, it is worth mentioning a text titled "Kosmo-małki" written in 1933 by Adolf Nowaczyński, who – in a gesture of tragic inability to understand the ironic and grotesque formula of the work – perceives Gombrowicz's short story as a warning against the disastrous effects of "mixing of races."⁴² It seems, however, that the change of the title (from "Pamiętnik Jakóba Czarnieckiego" to "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego" in the post-war edition of the debut collection) was motivated by the desire to prevent the anti-Semitic reading.⁴³

The writer himself distanced himself from Nowaczyński's unexpected enthusiasm for his work:

it was my misfortune that the hero of one of my short stories was born of a Polish father and a Jewish mother. This was enough for me to be showered with praise by Adolf Nowaczyński, a pathological Jew-hater; (...) I was utterly innocent: In the story in question racial issues in the everyday

³⁸ Witold Gombrowicz, *Polish Memories*, trans. Bill Johnston (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 5.

³⁹ Błażej Warkocki, *Pamiętnik afektów z okresu dojrzewania*, 73.

⁴⁰ Cf. Michał Głowiński, *Gombrowicz i nadliteratura* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002), 45.

⁴¹ Bożena Umińska, *Postać z cieniem. Portrety Żydówek w polskiej literaturze od końca XIX wieku do 1939 roku* (Warsaw: Sic!, 2001), 275.

⁴² Cf. Adolf Nowaczyński, "Kosmo-małki," 275 (1933). The danger of anti-Semitic reading of "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego" is further analysed by Kazimierz Adamczak. Cf. Kazimierz Adamczak, *Doświadczenia polsko-żydowskie w literaturze emigracyjnej (1939-1980)* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2008), 25-38.

⁴³ Cf. Błażej Warkocki, *Pamiętnik afektów z okresu dojrzewania*, 74.

sense of the word were of no interest to me; I had a great number of Jewish friends and had never engaged in anti-semitism (...).⁴⁴

In fact, Gombrowicz's story seems far more radical in his criticism of anti-Semitism than a parody of common clichés of that discourse. As Karl Marx wrote: "To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter. But, for man, the root is man himself."⁴⁵ The subject of Gombrowicz's criticism is not the superficiality of anti-Semitic discourse, but the structure of subjectivity created through its internalisation.

Indeed, disciplinary practices are produced not only by dominated individuals, but also by those who want to dominate and who are only able to see the social world in dominating-dominated categories. According to the thesis expressed by Theodor Adorno in *The Authoritarian Personality*, racial bias has a quasi-transcendental character: it does not represent misconceptions but the tools of misinterpreting the reality.⁴⁶ Therefore, in the philosopher's view, in the case of people who are extremely biased, education and contact with representatives of the groups against which they are prejudiced will not be an effective way of breaking the stereotype.⁴⁷ We had already seen in "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego" that the construction of Gombrowicz's characters seems to be based on similar epistemological assumptions, according to which socially induced stereotypes turned out to be structures allowing for specific affective reactions and actions.

In the context of reading the political aspects of Gombrowicz's early story, it is worth referring to the theoretical proposals presented by Klaus Theweleit in his book titled *Male Fantasies*. According to the author's perspective, the source of the subjective formation with fascist characteristics lies in the disciplinary imprinting of puerile bodies with male chauvinist, militaristic or extremely national discourses.⁴⁸ In such an interpretative context, the political significance of "Pamiętnik Stefana Czarnieckiego" would be included in the criticism of those mechanisms of social life which, although they function in everyday life under the guise of normalisation, they lead, in fact, to the production of fascist identity.

In the introduction to *Trans-Atlantyk*, one of his most openly political texts, Gombrowicz wrote that that with this book he wants to make "a very far-reaching revision of our relationship to the nation" aimed at "strengthening, enriching the life of the individual, making him more resistant to the oppressive superiority of the masses."⁴⁹ The author's writing can be reco-

⁴⁴ Witold Gombrowicz, *Polish Memories*. 125.

⁴⁵ Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), accessed October 10, 2020, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1f80/c14a0b1cd94d6814d2e893792d88e763615e.pdf>, 15.

⁴⁶ Cf.: „Rather, experience itself is predetermined by stereotypy” (Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*, (New York: Norton, 1969), 617.

⁴⁷ Cf. Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*.

⁴⁸ Cf. Klaus Theweleit, *Męskie fantazje*, trans. Mateusz Falkowski, Michał Herer (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2016).

⁴⁹ Witold Gombrowicz, *Trans-Atlantyk*, trans. by Danuta Borchardt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), xvi-xvii.

gnised as a symbolic activity of political nature: its meaning would consist in the re-formation of subjectivity by breaking the apparent coherence of fascist discourses and revealing the disciplinary practices that guard them. It would be a deconstruction of the authoritarian personality and its replacement by new forms of subjectivisation. Such ways of becoming oneself, which would be characterised by the humorous lack of seriousness, ironic distance, but also by a fundamental inner openness and dynamism – liberation from the nameless orders, and bans of the superego and the toxic structures of subjectivity which they produce. In such a perspective, the Nietzschean ontology of power would turn out to be a tool to express emancipatory hopes. The fullness of individual life, which in the philosophy of the author of *The Gay Science* is to be considered the highest value, turns out to be impossible to achieve in conditions of social oppression.

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Tomasz Jativa – (born 1992), a doctoral student in the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Warsaw. A graduate of Inter-area Individual Humanistic and Social Studies at the University of Warsaw (MISH UW) in philosophy and cultural studies. His scholarly interests revolve around German classical philosophy, with a particular focus on the thought of Kant and Hegel, Marxism and the anthropology of literature. Recent publications: *Humanizm socjalistyczny czy ekonomiczna predestynacja: Marks, Engels, Plechanow*. Warsaw: Monografie Naukowe Kolegium MISH, 2017;

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E-mail: tomaszjativa@gmail.com

MARTYNA MIERNECKA
University of Warsaw

 0000-0003-2854-6155



“A Production Center”: A Model of Creative Work in Tadeusz Konwicki’s Early Prose

SUMMARY

The aim of this article is to outline the issues related to the specificity of the image of the writer and his role in society created in Tadeusz Konwicki’s early works. This stage in the writer’s life opens with the first short story that Konwicki published, namely “Kapral Koziółek i ja” from 1947, after which the initial model of his writing is subject to gradual erosion and ends between 1954 and 1955 with the novel titled *Z oblężonego miasta*. Investigating the motif of the creative work house on the basis of *Z oblężonego miasta* is a pretext for reflection on the category of the writer’s work. The article traces the motifs of the professional category of the writer, through analysing the constructions on which Konwicki’s narratives are based. At the same time, due to the analysis of social discourse in which the author participated, the article outlines the social functions he performed at a given time.

Keywords

Tadeusz Konwicki, writer, socialist realism, total institution, creative work house

Tadeusz Konwicki constantly challenged his image of a professional writer and he did not aspire to the position of a recognised professional at all. He kept on being ironic: “Of course (...) I was the venerable, majestic writer who quarrels with God and history, goes for walks in a straw hat, and then, spread out in his chair, sprawled in an armchair, perorates in a resounding

voice about poetry.”¹ Imagining a “special train of our literature,” he placed himself behind third-class literary wagons and behind passenger and freight wagons: “I saw my pale body at the end of the mixed train, beside the toilet.”² Essentially at every stage of his literary career – though more categorically in his late works – he tried to distance himself from belonging to his professional environment, from dealing with subjects considered “worthy” of professional literature, as well as from the practices of private and public life associated with being a writer.

The aim of this article is to outline the issues related to the specificity of the image of the writer and his role in society created in the early works by Konwicki. This stage opens with the first short story that Konwicki published, namely “Kapral Koziółek i ja” [Corporal Koziółek and I] from 1947, after which the initial literary model gradually erodes and closes at the end of 1954 and the beginning of 1955 with the novel titled *Z oblężonego miasta* [From the Besieged City]. The article also undertakes to trace the threads concerning the category of a professional penman through analysing the constructions on which the author’s narratives are based. In addition, the social functions performed by the author at that time will be outlined while exploring social discourse³ in which the author participated.

It seems to be a problematic issue to analyse the transformation of the writer’s profession against the background of concrete social structures, firstly due to the difficulty in defining the category of the profession itself and, secondly, because of the difficulty in determining the extent to which the writer’s activity is professional and at what point it can be considered as such. Adopting – after Andrzej Siciński – the basic sociological criteria, such as the function (a person who writes) and the recipient (a writer has readers), one may look at the transformations of this profession, conditioned by the “product” itself and external factors.⁴ The historical approach shows some established patterns of authorship and the writing profession, patterns closely related to the social structure of the given epoch.⁵

An analysis of the motif of the creative work house based on *Z oblężonego miasta* is a pretext for a reflection on the category of the writer’s work. These findings are put in the context of cultural history of the Creative Work House in Obory so as to look, on the one hand, at Konwicki’s attitude towards this institution and, on the other, to take into account the perspective of how functioning within its official structures influenced his work and literary condition. What is important here is the space itself, which can be placed

¹ Tadeusz Konwicki, *Wschody i zachody księżycy* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza INTERIM, 1990), 160–161. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish.]

² Tadeusz Konwicki, *Kalendarz i klepsydra* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1989), 168.

³ Stefan Żółkiewski, *Kultura literacka (1918–1932)* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1973), 6.

⁴ Andrzej Siciński, *Literaci polscy. Przemiany zawodu na tle przemian kultury współczesnej*, (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1971), 14.

⁵ Ian Watt, “Literatura i społeczeństwo,” in *W kręgu socjologii literatury. Antologia tekstów zagranicznych*, introduction, selection and editon by Andrzej Mencwel, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980), 65.

in the perspective of the geography of literary circles: from this perspective, it becomes a creative space which allows for literary activity.⁶ The creative work house is the place for sanctioning the creative profession. The position of the given person is established by the right to go there and be in that environment, the way in which one functions there. The uneven rhythm of Konwicki's stays in Obory may interestingly correspond with his status in the official cultural life.

Avant-garde heritage

Before Konwicki began to renounce his professional position, he took his writing vocation seriously as one of the representatives of the young generation. Shortly after the war, he became involved in the construction of the "new" Poland: his literary path began in the preparatory period (1944–1948) and developed at the time when the Stalinist model of society was introduced and its rules were established (1948–1950). Jerzy Smulski presents this process in two aspects: the perspective of literary life and the level of literary phenomena themselves.⁷ He sees symptoms of the Stalinisation of literary life in 1947, a period of violent political change, and the climax – in March 1950, when *Kuźnica* and *Odrodzenie* were liquidated and when *Nowa Kultura* was established in their place.⁸ Needless to say, Konwicki was at the scene of these events and was entangled in them.

It was the engineer that became a real artist in accordance with the conviction prevalent at that time that, as Wojciech Tomasiak puts it in his analyses, "great works of art will be born not in the comfort of artistic studios, but on hectic construction sites."⁹ This reformulated the role of the writer, who was socially engaged and conveyed an ideological message, becoming an "engineer of human souls," designing a "new person" and a "new" social structure. The writer was supposed to organise their "workshop" following the example of an engineer, to break with the institution of the author, which elevated and isolated the artist from the rest of the society, to move away from the concept of "creativity" related to individualistic creation: "In the questioned cultural paradigm, 'creativity' and 'work' ('production') are a pair of mutually exclusive concepts: the former means talent, the play of imagination, absolute freedom of action; the latter entails knowledge of production rules, organisation, discipline, subordination to others."¹⁰

According to Wojciech Tomasiak, breaking with this distinction has important consequences. First of all, the artist appeared to be a social order contractor ("a producer of poems"), his social role was still quite prestigious, but it was subject to democratisation. Secondly, the earlier "creation" of

⁶ Elżbieta Rybicka, *Geopoetyka. Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich* (Kraków: Universitas, 2014), 36.

⁷ Jerzy Smulski, *Od Szczecina do... Października. Studia o literaturze polskiej lat pięćdziesiątych* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2002), 13.

⁸ Smulski, *Od Szczecina do...*, 55.

⁹ Wojciech Tomasiak, *Inżynieria dusz. Literatura realizmu socjalistycznego w planie „propagandy monumentalnej”* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 1999), 7.

¹⁰ Tomasiak, *Inżynieria dusz...*, 28.

works of art shifted to related activities, the so-called applied arts, or – in extreme cases – “to all activities which in one sense or another are considered henceforth ‘production.’”¹¹ The aim was to mix different styles and materials in one artistic undertaking, to achieve a kind of “correspondence of arts” and, finally, to implement the idea of integrating art with other areas of social practice, a directive of “bridging the gap between the order of art and the matter of life, subjecting the widest possible areas of social practice to the principles of aesthetics.”¹²

Tomasik poses questions concerning the approach of the Stalinist culture to tradition and he points to its relationship with avant-garde movements. Whereas this issue is rarely raised in studies devoted to literature, it often appears in the history of art. Tomasik is rather reserved about the most radical theses (such as those put forward by Wojciech Włodarczyk, who argued that “socialist realism focused and polarised the issue of the avant-garde which was of key importance for the 20th century”¹³), perceiving the approach in question “as an adaptation and reprocessing of certain principles and slogans while negating the stylistic and compositional devices which they exploit.”¹⁴ It is striking that with the declared reluctance of the socialist authorities to the avant-garde, socialist realism took over some of the mental attitudes that were common to the representatives of numerous avant-garde movements from the early 20th century, including the subordination of art to life, “progressiveness” and leaning into the future, the postulate of activity, the slogan of the democratisation of art denoting, among other things, bringing the creator closer to the recipient and changing the social status of the artist-producer.

It is worth paying attention to the avant-garde legacy, since it can be linked to the idea of the institution of the creative work house, tracing it back to the Soviet concepts of the avant-garde of the 1920s.¹⁵ Needless to say, the continuity between pre-war art and post-war socialist realism is marked mainly on the level of general theoretical assumptions which refer to the blurring of the boundary between artistic activity and the sphere of life practice, the juxtaposition of activity and passivity or the introduction of scientific organisation of work. Not resolving the dispute concerning the extent to which the avant-garde slogans were continued and how much they were appropriated and destroyed by the Stalinist culture, it is worth analysing the ideas which contributed to the establishment of the institution of creative work houses; to return to the utopia about a collectivist, peaceful society and the tradition of the utopia of art as a tool to shape the reality.

¹¹ Tomasik, *Inżynieria dusz...*, 29.

¹² Tomasik, *Inżynieria dusz...*, 38.

¹³ Wojciech Włodarczyk, *Socrealizm. Sztuka polska w latach 1950–1954* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1991), 146.

¹⁴ Tomasik, *Inżynieria dusz...*, 20.

¹⁵ Marek Zaleski, “Obory, czyli o nowej pastoralności,” in Marek Zaleski, *Echa Idylli w literaturze polskiej doby nowoczesności i późnej nowoczesności* (Kraków: Universitas, 2007), 193. First print: “Obory, czyli o nowej pastoralności,” *Res Publica Nowa*, no. 1/2 (1999), 12–22. English version: *Between Utopy and Parody. A Home for Creative Work in Framing the Polish Home. Postwar Cultural Construction of Hearth, Nation and Self*, edited by Bożena Shallcross, Ohio University Press, Athens 2002.

Piotr Piotrowski points to the year 1945 as the moment when it could have seemed that a revival of the utopia was possible; the role of art in shaping the "modern" reality was revived in the circles of modern artists, also in Poland, but the researcher immediately stresses that the authorities succeeded in dissuading artists from that idea already in the late 1940s.¹⁶ As Tomasiak argues: "(...) the further we move away from (...) the theoretical foundations, getting closer to artistic techniques and solutions, the more clearly we see the differences."¹⁷

"A close-knit, strong, task-conscious collective"

In his first text, Konwicki accounted for his intellectual provenance, affirmed the new political order and "activated" himself. He moved to Warsaw in 1947 together with the editorial staff of several people from the weekly magazine *Odrodzenie*. He had already debuted as a writer of reportage and an illustrator, and he was soon to begin publishing reviews and try his hand at journalistic writing. He published his first short story, "Kapral Koziółek i ja" in November 1947, together with which, as researchers tend to stress, "Konwicki the writer was born,"¹⁸ followed by another short story titled "Ogródek z nasturcją" [A Garden with a Nasturtium].

The main protagonist and first-person narrator of his early stories is a young, isolated individual, each time – albeit to a varying degree – confronted with a group and compromised in the eyes of the reader. As Tadeusz Lubelski points out, the principle of the opposition "the protagonist – the others," in accordance with which Konwicki constructed his early plots, is valued differently by him: in his debut story, the protagonist-intellectual is admittedly nicknamed a "knucklehead" and a "tramp," but it is the "others" that are inauthentic; in the other early short story, the opposite happens: what is not authentic are the intellectual and military roots of the protagonist who has to overcome his passivity.¹⁹ "I was lying on a bunk alone with heavy and chaotic thoughts. I had always suffered from unproductivity,"²⁰ the protagonist confesses as the story opens, still looking with derisive eyes at the work of his companions. They are trying to convince him: "Stop messing with that. You have to forget and to start the new."²¹ Work is a remedy for their war experiences; it is a key element in the process of overcoming the state of apathy, and it fulfills their need of belonging through the inclusive, community activity.

Przy budowie [During Construction] from 1950 was the first book that Konwicki managed to publish (the real debut, *Rojsty*, was not published

¹⁶ Cf. Piotr Piotrowski, "Sztuka w czasie końca utopii," in Piotr Piotrowski, *Sztuka według polityki. Od Melancholii do Pasji* (Kraków: Universitas, 2007).

¹⁷ Tomasiak, *Inżynieria dusz...*, 196.

¹⁸ Tadeusz Lubelski, "Introduction," in Tadeusz Konwicki, *Wiatr i pył*, Warsaw 2009, 5–7.

¹⁹ Tadeusz Lubelski, *Poetyka powieści i filmów Tadeusza Konwickiego (na podstawie analiz utworów z lat 1947–65)* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1984), 31.

²⁰ Tadeusz Konwicki, "Ogródek z nasturcją. Opowiadanie brata z prowincji," in Tadeusz Konwicki, *Wiatr i pył...*, 38. First print: *Odrodzenie*, no. 37 (1947).

²¹ Konwicki, "Ogródek z nasturcją..." 31.

until in 1956 for censorship reasons). As researchers indicate, this production novel has a special place in the writer's "biographical legend" since Konwicki wrote it after his experience of working on the construction site of Nowa Huta, a district of Krakow.²² In the novel, he focused both on physical as well as "educational and awareness-raising" work which was to prepare the team ideologically. The action develops dynamically from the very beginning ("You have to be active, don't you think? There'll be a lot of work to be done here."²³) to the triumphant end of the battle for the new man ("A close-knit, strong, task-conscious collective"²⁴). This process is presented by the narrator who is no longer personal, as it is the case in *Rojsty*, but all-knowing and omnipresent, clearly defining the order of proper ideological evolution.

"Production Centre"

The outlined findings concerning literary life and cultural transformations are essential in the context of the idea of establishing creative work houses. Such a house was supposed to be a place where the opposition between art and life was abolished and creation and production were equal. Its space was supposed to shape "a close-knit, strong, task-conscious" collective of writers and it was referred to as a "production centre"²⁵ by Konwicki himself. The concept of the creative work house, which was to use socialist working conditions and methods of work production, became an element of planned policy. The aim was, beyond any doubt, to stimulate writers' activity and production of specific literary forms, and then to control the results of their work.

The project of creative work houses includes organisation of numerous gatherings, meetings and assemblies that defined the form, structure and order of official political life:

To live in this world is to remain in some kind of community, to participate in one form or another of a meeting, in a group venture of one kind or another as there is no individual in this world – there is the collective, there are no individual thoughts – there is a team meeting, there are no individual actions – there is mass participation. In other words: this is the world in which the basic way of functioning – apart from work, of course – is participation in meetings, the world in which one lives from one plenary to another, from convention to convention.²⁶

²² Cf. Marcin Gołąb, "«Patrz ojczyste, jak ciężko jeszcze pracują ludzie». Konwicki, «Władza» i robotnicy," in *Ułamek błękitu i chmur. Warszawa Tadeusza Konwickiego*, edited by Agnieszka Karpowicz, Piotr Kubkowski, Włodzimierz Karol Pessel, Igor Piotrowski (Warsaw: Lampa i Iskra Boża, 2017), 71–93.

²³ Tadeusz Konwicki, *Przy budowie* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1954), 17.

²⁴ Konwicki, *Przy budowie*, 90.

²⁵ Tadeusz Konwicki, "Jak napisać pierwsze opowiadanie," in Tadeusz Konwicki, *Wiatr i pył...*, 95. First print: *Nowa Kultura*, no. 7, 1953.

²⁶ Mariusz Zawodniak, *Zjazdy, narady, konferencje literackie*, in *Słownik realizmu socjalistycznego*, edited by Zdzisław Łapiński, Wojciech Tomasiak (Krakow: Universitas, 2004), 404.

The motif of a meeting, plenary or convention – not devoid of some humorous elements – appears in Konwicki's early works. When the characters of the production novel titled *Przy budowie* prepare a report for the Headquarters, they stress that: "Do write (...) that he doesn't do anything whatsoever, that he doesn't hold any meetings. It will hurt them most. Meetings are the most important for them."²⁷

The spatial, time and thematic framework of literary meetings was strictly defined: a concrete topic on Marxist criticism, working time separated from leisure time, closed space. The organisation of literary life under the supervision of the authorities openly assumes shaping of "a new human being." And it immediately raises the question of the behaviour of "the new human being," a participant – usually a male – of a meeting; about private and behind-the-scenes discussions, which tend to stretch and extend: on the one hand, they offer an opportunity to expand the boundaries of one's own freedom but, on the other, they may be controlled by the authorities. The tension between these extremes was also visible in the case of the institution of creative work houses, and the question concerning "using" this house remains open.

The first creative work house in post-war Poland was opened in Obory in 1948. It immediately began to play an important role on the map of literary life in the country. Beside Astoria, a holiday home transformed into Stefan Żeromski Creative Work House in 1952, it was the most important holiday destination for writers, with all the mythology built around it, feeding the collective imagination. Before staying in a creative work house became an attribute of the urban lifestyle, it had been included in the model of state leisure organisation, which assumed a strong relationship between models of leisure and work. As Paweł Sowiński notes, "[in] the Stalinist period, any investment in tourism or, more broadly speaking, services for the population was perceived with regard to their usefulness for the development of industry, and therefore the system of work."²⁸ In the period of the People's Republic of Poland, this idea took on characteristic forms, leaving behind its terminology, such as creative work houses.

Located near Warsaw and surrounded by nature, the house in Obory provided suitable working conditions. At the same time, it represented a way of organising life, which was supposed to meet the postulates of socialist realism, being in line with the party's scenario: it made it possible to play a kind of spectacle using the semiotics of propaganda. The authorities prepared a place for creating art in accordance with the officially conducted narrative.

It should be remembered, however, that the concept of establishing creative work houses was also a response to the authentic financial needs of writers; the house in Obory functioned as a real shelter, particularly in the context of post-war housing problems. The memories of Julia Hartwig, who returned from Paris in 1950, are symptomatic in this respect: "I got off the plane in Warsaw on a wet, cold, March evening: sleet, slush, puddles, tired

²⁷ Konwicki, *Przy budowie...*, 39.

²⁸ Paweł Sowiński, *Wakacje w Polsce Ludowej. Polityka władz i ruch turystyczny (1945–1989)* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2005), 65.

people, gloomy moods.”²⁹ While waiting for her flat, she first stayed in a flat that belonged to Joanna Guze, a friend of hers, and then lived in Obory: “(...) I moved for long months to Obory, where I became a permanent resident for some time. The outbuilding was not yet rebuilt, and I occupied a room on the second floor of the palace.”³⁰ The fact that she found shelter there is undoubtedly one of the reasons why the house in Obory was an important place for her to go for the rest of her life.

A similar emotional load can be found in “Notatnik oborski” [Obory Notebook] by Aleksander Wat, who wrote the following lines in Obory in 1953: “In a word, it was an island/an enchanting island!/An isle of escapism/(for God’s sake, don’t tell anyone!)/filled to the brim/of heaven with the smile/of people the goodness/beauty of trees/breaths of summer/sweetness and light”³¹). The poet found in Obory a substitute for a real home and spoke about it with sentiment. It is a type of narration that characterises some of the statements made by visitors to Obory, shaping a specific myth concerning both the institution and the space itself. Therefore, Obory can be interpreted as a bucolic world, as Marek Zaleski proposes,³² seeing in it an idyllic corner where it is possible to reconcile what is private with what is public. The vision of a modern, urban idyll, genealogically rooted in the cultural tradition, contrasts with the perils of Stalinist postulates with regard to the organisation of creative work. It is a good idea to juxtapose these perspectives, look for tensions rather than blur them.

Obory debut

Konwicki made his “debut” in Obory in the winter of 1954 and 1955, writing *Z oblężonego miasta* there. The book, being one of his “juvenile” works, announces to some extent Polish October: as Przemysław Kaniecki argues, “the message about the human right to make one’s own choices is this time completely clear.”³³ The researcher interprets this work in the context of the then ongoing discussions around the choices of Roman Palester, Andrzej Panufnik and Czesław Miłosz.

The novel has the form of a monologue by the main character, Bolesław Porejko, asking the officials of an undefined country for asylum. Porejko relates his life, but despite speaking in the first person singular, he speaks as if everything that happened to him happened beyond him: he becomes involved by accident or someone makes a decision for him. He disgraced himself during the war, and after the war he establishes first contacts with the communists and feels “an irresistible desire to join in these events,”³⁴ but apart from curiosity, he also feels fear: being torn apart emotionally, he is

²⁹ Julia Hartwig, *Dziennik*, vol. 1 (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011), 38.

³⁰ Hartwig, *Dziennik*.

³¹ Aleksander Wat, *Poezje zebrane*, edited by Anna Micińska, Jan Zieliński (Kraków: Znak, 1992), 224.

³² Zaleski, “Obory, czyli o nowej pastoralności...”.

³³ Przemysław Kaniecki, *Wniebowstąpienia Konwického* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Sub Lupa, 2013), 57.

³⁴ Tadeusz Konwicki, *Z oblężonego miasta* (Warsaw: Iskry, 1956), 109.

unable to make a final decision. His mental construction is unstable – completely empty on one occasion ("And I succumbed to these ecstasies, since I was empty and this emptiness tormented me"³⁵), and on another it turns out that he is full of hope and great expectations with regard to the good future.

Loneliness in the "besieged city" is normally associated with an empty aesthetic pose and as such is mocked:

Once again the predilection for conscious solitude returned. I analysed it carefully, enjoying every element of it. I aroused in myself the receptivity to artistic impulses. I stood for hours in front of a church painting, sometimes a poor one, searching for what was inside me. These practices provided me with a lot of pleasant anguish.³⁶

At the same time the protagonist is aware of the fact that "pure" loneliness, total isolation and individualism are not possible to achieve:

It is difficult for a person to stay in seclusion. Even loneliness requires someone's complicity, which makes us realise that we demonstrate to someone rather than to indifferent, dead emptiness (...). However, deep down, I expect that this community of human affairs, the ability to perceive them with affection, in error and victory, determines the rank of man.³⁷

It is difficult not to get the impression that many elements of the world presented in this novel are related to the place of its creation. Focusing on the issue of being among others – the desire to belong to a community, interrupted by a reflex to escape from people – seems by no means accidental during the stay in Obory. In general, the "palace games," which are mentioned in the work, bring to mind the way of acting and communicating in the creative work house.

For some time Porejko strives to cut himself off from his intellectual and artistic roots: "I want to build houses. I don't write poems,"³⁸ he declares. On announcing this, he is supposed to prepare a project of a housing estate together with Gałeczki, a friend of his. The initial enthusiasm is associated with the very act of deciding to act, with the very idea of overcoming his passivity. The plan of creating a new housing system, arranging people's living space and mapping out their daily existence inspires optimism in him; the potentiality of these new constructions and his own role in giving them form fills Porejko with joy: "The lifestyle of these several thousand people depends on our creativity."³⁹

Eventually, the plan begins to overwhelm him. The eponymous "besieged city" seems to be connected, first of all, with the vision of organising

³⁵ Ibid., 83.

³⁶ Ibid., 84.

³⁷ Ibid., 80.

³⁸ Ibid., 124.

³⁹ Ibid., 136.

space and shaping the closest human environment and, consequently, forming relations between people and, as a result, building a new society. Porejko notices the agency of space, the possibility of shaping individuals who are in it, and begins to associate this with increasing control and manipulation. The institution of the “besieged city” becomes total.

Walls, entanglements and banks

Porejko, longing for independence and caring for his own privacy, opposes any interference of the authorities in his life, including the way the author’s life is organised. The metaphor of the “besieged city” embraces the whole world presented in the work, but it can also be read as a reference to the place where the book was written, and the accusation expressed by the protagonist: “Yes, you live there like in a besieged city”⁴⁰ directed to residents of the Creative Work House in Obory. Does the house become a total institution in the eyes of the writer?

Total institutions which Erving Goffman mentions include such factories or establishments “in which activity of a particular kind regularly goes on,”⁴¹ which take control over the time and interests of the members of the institution and provide “something of a world for them.”⁴² Their main feature involves “handling of many human needs by the bureaucratic organization of whole blocks of people—whether or not this is a necessary or effective means of social organization in the circumstances.”⁴³ Each of the different types of total institutions seeks to limit the number of people staying in it. Their limiting, total character is often symbolised by physical barriers that prevent contact with the outside world: “high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests, or moors.”⁴⁴

Another fundamental feature of total institutions consists in breaking down the barriers between places for sleeping, playing and working. The three areas of life, usually separated in modern societies, happen in one and the same place where the whole life of its inhabitants concentrates and is subject to the same single authority. Residents are treated equally and have to work together and do the same things. Time is strictly planned, individual activities take place at specific hours of the day, the schedule of which is set forth by formal regulations. The activities are compulsory and form part of one overall plan, the purpose of which is to carry out the official tasks of the given institution.

The schedule of the day and its organisation is supervised by personnel employed in the institution. The supervisors’ “work, and hence their world, have uniquely to do with people,”⁴⁵ and the “processing” of people comparable to the processing of things: “As material upon which to work, people can take

⁴⁰ Konwicki, *Z oblężonego miasta*, 206.

⁴¹ Erving Goffman, “On the Characteristics of Mental Institutions,” in *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 3.

⁴² Goffman, “On the Characteristics of Mental Institutions,” 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

on somewhat the same characteristics as inanimate objects."⁴⁶ Goffman defines total institutions as "the forcing houses for changing persons," in which the authorities "each is a natural experiment on what can be done to the self."⁴⁷

Goffman explains the essence of the total system in the following way: "The privilege system consists of a relatively few components, put together with some rational intent relatively small number of privileges with a specific, rationally justified purpose."⁴⁸ The institution members are constantly reminded of the relationship between these elements: "The over-all consequence is that co-operativeness is obtained from persons who often have cause to be uncooperative."⁴⁹ Members of the institution must subordinate themselves to it: on the one hand, the institution creates a network of coercion and judgment around them and, on the other, it allows for a certain degree of separation, giving a sense of freedom and reducing the risk of resistance or rebellion against the rigour of the institution.

Although calling the creative work house in Obory a total institution would certainly be a simplification, the similarities between these projects illustrate the "besiegement" which Konwicki experienced and point to the reasons for the turnaround in his work as well as changes in his perception of his function as a writer. When Porejko screams: "I've had enough of all this! Enough of correcting the world, enough of regulating the life of others. Let no one interfere in my affairs, in my fate!",⁵⁰ it becomes apparent that Konwicki clearly crosses a certain boundary.

Z oblężonego miasta can be seen as a transitional book, closing the "juvenile" period and announcing later works devoid of the "hard" structure of the presented world or clearly outlined and valued paths of plot development. Konwicki gradually freed himself from the doctrines of socialist realism, at the same time abandoning, as it seems, a deepened commitment to collective life in favour of concentrating on himself. The simplest expression of this can be found in the "besieged city": "I want to be alone. Goodbye."⁵¹

Having considered both the metaphorical space of the "besieged city" and the specific institution of the creative work house as total, Konwicki decided to turn to his inner life. This turn is also important in the context of his perception of the model of creative work. Constructions of Konwicki's early short stories, contrary to the individualized model of the writer, refer to collectivity and the community dimension of action. They suggest the necessity to build solidarity between representatives of different professions and the creators themselves. The institution of the creative work house should be an extension of this idea, or even its materialisation as the house space has specific functions, sensitive to the forms of social being together, shaping a community of writers in solidarity. Konwicki's turn is significant: responding to the unsatisfactory realisation of the idea of the creative work

⁴⁶ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁵⁰ Konwicki, *Z oblężonego miasta*, 209.

⁵¹ Ibid., 76.

house after the war and totalitarianism of the reality surrounding him, the author objects to any interference of the institution in the lives of people, in this case of writers. His works become metaphorical, departing from the material concreteness and focusing on the "I" of the author.

The first disillusionment, followed by fear of another commitment or choice, becomes a characteristic feature of Konwicki's protagonist; it weakens his construction. The protagonist of the "besieged city" tries to be faithful to himself, but this faithfulness is associated with a betrayal of values and people and, as a result, with an eternal sense of guilt. The feeling of being a "foreigner" or a stranger who is nowhere at home is beginning to dominate. "When the alienation of the surrounding world is growing, escape seems to be Bolek's only way out,"⁵² as Lubelski argues. This escape can be real or imaginary. This is how the future foundations of Konwicki's poetics spring to life: places where the protagonist feels a stranger turn into the familiar land of childhood. In his imagination, space takes on the form of a Vilnius valley: "There is a motif in the novel of 'strange holidays' during which Bolek – remaining in reality in Zarzecze – lives in a state of constant dreams, he is mentally 'somewhere else.'"⁵³

Punching the world

Although the criticism of socialist realism included in the "besieged city" is rather shy – or, as Lubelski puts it, "scared by its own boldness"⁵⁴ – it was clear that the novel could not be published before 1956. It was published, ironically, in October 1956. Writing it, let us recall, between 1954 and 1955, Konwicki gradually lost his confidence in general: as a man who believed in the new world of socialist realism, as an activist who was involved in the creation of this world and as a writer who constructed this world in his works.

A turn in the poetics of Konwicki's works (slow "punching" of his world) and the character of his professional life was parallel to the October breakthrough and changes in the party's internal policy. The writer broke down due to a sudden change in the attitudes of people around him:

Those who somehow tried to shape me ideologically, who instructed me, who used some kind of pedagogy towards me, who embarrassed me because of my inappropriate biography, who somehow blackmailed me with regard to my worldview, those circles that introduced me to the party – very diverse circles, ranging from friends, acquaintances to certain social and literary groups – one day all these people suddenly told me: 'Did you believe all that, you sucker? Were you really so naive?' Of course, this influenced me in such a way that I said to myself that I could trust and rely only on myself.⁵⁵

⁵² Lubelski, *Poetyka...*, 87.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁵ Tadeusz Konwicki, *Cień obcych wojsk*, written down by Małgorzata Oldakowska, in Tadeusz Konwicki, *Wiatr i pył...*, 419. First print: *Polityka*, no. 16 (1992) (*Kultura* supplement, no. 4).

Nowa Kultura ceased to be the organ of the Polish Writers' Union in 1956, and Wiktor Woroszyński became the editor-in-chief. Disillusioned and gaining distance to the social and literary circles, Konwicki dealt with the magazine's artistic matters, including the graphic layout. Kaniecki highlights this but not so much to emphasise the versatility of the artist as to interpret this movement in the context of the need to find asylum in his work.

After the publication of *Z obłązonego miasta*, Konwicki did not print any book until 1959. Three years of silence was a relatively long time, considering how much Konwicki published. He was believed to have kept a diary at that time, but it was intended for his own needs – "cathartic needs" as Kaniecki puts it⁵⁶ – and not for publication. He continued to work as an editor, but the nature of his activity clearly changed. In the early 1950s, Konwicki outlined the role that a writer should play in the society in the following way: "Writers who are conscious fighters for socialism and peace, use in their daily struggle every weapon available to them: a novel, a poem, a newspaper column or journalism. Cooperation with a newspaper is a consequence of their political attitude, their ideological activity."⁵⁷

Konwicki was both a fighter and an agitator as well as a writer or, to be more precise, a reporter and an expert who knew the area that he wrote about.⁵⁸ Once he began to doubt the validity of his "political attitude" and "ideological activity," his editorial choices became significant: for example, he accepted for print "Pamiętnik uczennicy" [A Diary of a Student] published in *Nowa Kultura* at the end of 1953 and wrote a high-profile introduction to it. It is also important, as Przemysław Kaniecki argues, to remember about his journalistic activity: as the editor of the "Abroad" section, Konwicki published, among other things, reports on discussions of Soviet artists, thus reporting on the symptoms of changes.⁵⁹ Therefore, although in his later statements Konwicki expressed his distrust of the changes connected with Polish October, he undoubtedly took part in shaping the new atmosphere of literary life.⁶⁰

He interrupted his writing silence, also journalistic, only exceptionally: he reacted to the review in which Julian Przyboś criticised Mieczysław Piotrowski's drawings, furthermore, he wrote short, intervention texts, for example, concerning the failure to grant Bohdan Tomaszewski accreditation for the Olympic Games in Melbourne or the closure of a street gate at Nowy Świat 35.⁶¹ As Kaniecki stresses, it was not a coincidence that his first reviews after Polish October concerned works of his close colleagues: Konwicki wrote a review of *Gorzki smak czekolady Lucullus* [The Bitter Taste of Lucullus Chocolate] by Leopold Tyrmand and discussed the book titled *Halo, halo, tu mikrofony Polskiego Radia w Melbourne* [Hello, Hello, These Are the Microphones of the Polish Radio in Melbourne] by Bohdan Tomaszewski.

⁵⁶ Kaniecki, *Wniebowstąpienia Konwickiego*, 20.

⁵⁷ Tadeusz Konwicki, "Literat w gazecie," *Nowa Kultura*, no. 6 (1952), 3.

⁵⁸ Lubelski, *Poetyka...*, 67.

⁵⁹ Kaniecki, *Wniebowstąpienia Konwickiego*, 55.

⁶⁰ Jerzy Smulski, "Trzy redakcje „Władzy” Tadeusza Konwickiego: przyczynek do dziejów realizmu socjalistycznego w Polsce," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 7 (1997), 179.

⁶¹ Kaniecki, *Wniebowstąpienia Konwickiego*, 21.

It seems that the author began to narrow down his circle of friends and limit the space in which he functioned. It should be remembered that in 1956 he moved to a new apartment on Górskiego Street in the centre of Warsaw. Moving house was a very important event for many reasons. First of all, it eased his housing problems, giving him a sense of security and stability; in any case, Konwicki did not move from that apartment until the end of his life. Secondly, it is an important fact in the context of the position of the writer at that time and his concerns over his problems of living; although Konwicki refused to accept that position, he benefited from it. Thirdly, a local, rather hermetic world slowly formed around the new place of residence, within which Konwicki organised his private workshop (niche) as well as professional and social life (cafés).

Konwicki moves from the position of a committed writer-activist who participates in official cultural life, including stays in Obory, through the process of distancing himself from the official poetics and the way of organising creative work to the strategy of withdrawing, working in a small circle of friends and meetings in an intimate circle.

Karlsbad policy

Having resigned from his job in *Nowa Kultura* in 1957, Konwicki began to work on his own film. Looking for a new language of expression, he filmed *Ostatni dzień lata* [The Last Day of Summer]. "I wrote my last book between 1954 and 1955. Then I did not write anything for three years. I just made a film to purge myself somehow,"⁶² he recalled. Firstly, he reached for visual rather than literary form. Secondly, changing the poetics was supposed to be purging: an ascetic, restrained means of expression. Thirdly, he worked in an intimate group, without professional film equipment, in an almost amateurish atmosphere. In his later interviews, Konwicki is extremely eager to recall the circumstances of working on that film; relationships of friendship and elements of randomness are the sources of elaborate narratives, for example concerning the composition of the small crew:

At that time I was friends with Mieczysław Piotrowski, an excellent graphic designer and writer; he was married to Irena Laskowska, a young, beautiful actress, in whom I sensed great dramatic possibilities (...). And it just so happened that she came from the grand Laskowski clan. Her brother, Janek Laskowski, was an extremely talented and technically capable cameraman. And there was also another brother, Jurek, or – as they called him at home – Mietek Laskowski, who admittedly worked in a completely different industry, but he had all the makings of a great manager (...). And the most important and the most powerful figure of the clan was Laskowska mother, who came from the region of Maladzyechna – as the whole clan was from the Vilnius Region – and was the quintessence of Eastern Borderlands.

⁶² Stanisław Bereś, pseud. Stanisław Nowicki, *Pół wieku czyśćca. Rozmowy z Tadeuszem Konwickim* (London: Aneks, 1986), 75.

She became the moral patron of our team, as well as material one, since she fed us for some time.⁶³

Jan Machulski joined the team and took his wife and three-year-old son to the seaside film set:

We managed to hunker down in a forester's house which was called Szklana Huta; the Laskowskis clan, me and Machulski with his family. Then some volunteers joined in. From his backyard in Łódź, Janek Laskowski brought a very nice lad who was an athlete and helped him to carry the equipment. And Małgosia Jaworska, now an outstanding sound engineer, happened to be on holiday nearby. She may have been sixteen at the time and she was a secondary school student; She was fascinated by our ordeals and she helped us a lot.⁶⁴

It seems that Konwicki additionally emphasised the spontaneity and freedom of action while filming *Ostatni dzień lata* so as to contrast them with his earlier descriptions of work in the Stalinist system. Also the non-literary, "technical" character of the script for this film can be interpreted as the essence of Polish October in Konwicki's work. According to Jan Walc, from that moment on, the narration in his work begins to disintegrate while in the opinion of Przemysław Kaniecki it is when the auto-polemic strategy appeared. The author refrained from making any final, direct comments, and started to withdraw from the positions taken in his earlier works or even undermine them:

I have adopted a policy of going to the waters, to Karlsbad from time to time. I went there in order to purge myself by making a film. My friends were even slightly indignant of this. They said, for example, that while filming *Salto* I annulled some values included in *Sennik współczesny*. And perhaps it was true that when I was in Karlsbad I entered into polemics with myself.⁶⁵

Konwicki referred to the act of immersion in water and its symbolism of purification and renewal primarily in the context of his film activity, which developed from 1956, when he became the literary director of the *Kadr* Film Studio. This activity allowed him to make some kind of self-commentary on the rest of his work. The holiday, spa character of film activity is also interesting, not only while making a film as it was the case with *Ostatni dzień lata* on the beach between Białogóra and Łeba, but also during the preparation of the scripts and scenarios. Konwicki tried to work on the material for his

⁶³ Tadeusz Lubelski, "Zacząć na nowo. Rozmowa z Tadeuszem Konwickim," in *Nasze historie, nasze nadzieje. Spotkania z Tadeuszem Konwickim*, selected and edited by Przemysław Kaniecki (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Iskry, 2013), 323–324. First print: *Debiuty polskiego kina*, vol. I, ed. Marek Hendrykowski, Konin 1998.

⁶⁴ Lubelski, "Zacząć na nowo. Rozmowa z Tadeuszem Konwickim," 327.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 335.

films precisely in the Creative Work House in Obory: these are, however, the only traces of time he spent there “creatively.” Discouraged by this “production centre” after experiencing a worldview and professional crisis, Konwicki ceased to treat it as a place for writing his books. While constructing his story about that period, he stressed the act of “breaking up with everything” – both with the social and professional environment as well as with the literary language. He maintained that *Z oblężonego miasta* was the only work that he wrote in the Creative Work House in Obory and he never tried to write in it again.

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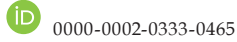
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Martyna Miernecka – is a literary and cultural scholar, doctoral student in the Institute of Polish Culture at the University of Warsaw, and member of the Urban Studies Team, a unit in the Institute of Polish Culture at the University of Warsaw. Her research interests include 20th and 21st century literature as well as more recently, research on the field of geopoetics and word anthropology. She has published in, for instance, *Białostockie Studia Literaturoznawcze* and *Rocznik Komparatystyczny*.
E-mail: martynamiernecka@uw.edu.pl

READING
TRADITION

MACIEJ KIJOWSKI

University of Occupational Safety Management in Katowice



Kwiaty polskie

by Julian Tuwim as a Reflection on Law, the Political System, and the State

*In celebration of Łódź
and its inhabitants*

SUMMARY

Kwiaty Polskie by Julian Tuwim a multi-thread multifaceted masterpiece. The author of the article discusses it through the prism of legal and political content identifiable in the text without omitting references to the state and its system in Tuwim's earlier works, and indicates the way in which the short-term student of law school perceived and experienced law. The superb boyish laws are the fragment of *Kwiaty Polskie* which the author analysed in terms of the legislative technique.

Keywords

Julian Tuwim, *Kwiaty polskie*, law, political system, state

"His talent was that of a genius. (...) A great man has passed, who was a grand poet. His work and memory shall remain."¹
 "Who else since the Romantics has done more?"²

Today, he and his arch-narrative poem are often forgotten.³ *Kwiaty polskie* is a lyrical work *par excellence*,⁴ a recapitulation of the poet's output,⁵ and at the same time – as he himself aptly argued – his *opus magnum* and *opus vitae*, his "greatest and grandest work."⁶ It was its fragments that operated in the occupied country circulating anonymously,⁷ like *Pierwsza przechadzka* by Leopold Staff, *Żołnierz polski* by Władysław Broniewski, and *Pieśń o żołnierzach z Westerplatte* by Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński.⁸

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I.

The stereotypical perception of Julian Tuwim as a writer indifferent to legal issues resulted from an excessively unilateral recollection of his sister regarding the beginnings and later course of the poet's legal studies. Irena Tuwim was certainly correct in writing that both their parents' dream, especially their mother's, was for their son to enrol at the university in Warsaw and to pursue the career of a lawyer or doctor after completing his studies. Clearly "the good son, compliant with his parents' will, went, though reluctantly, to Warsaw and enrolled into the law school."⁹ Irena remembered that her bro-

¹ Leopold Staff, *Nowa Kultura*, issue 1, (1954): 1. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish]

² Artur Sandauer, "Julian Tuwim," in *Poeci trzech pokoleń*, ([Warsaw]: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1973), 77.

³ See Aneta Wiatr, "Ekspres Tuwim," *Twórczość*, issue 5, (2001): 41–53; the conclusion "possibly the greatest after Lesman" (*ibid.*, 53) was presumably intended to add Tuwim magnificence, though it seems pointless to put above him even the entire output of the author of *Łąka*.

⁴ Cf. Anna Dzieniszewska, "«Kwiaty polskie» Juliana Tuwima. Próba interpretacji," *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, issue 2, (1963): 79; Ryszard Matuszewski, "Poeta rzeczy ostatecznych i rzeczy pierwszych (o recepcji twórczości Juliana Tuwima)," in Julian Tuwim, *Wiersze 1*, edited by Alina Kowalczykova (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1986), 94. A. Sandauer used a fitting designation of "overarching lyricism"; Sandauer, *Julian Tuwim*, 66.

⁵ Cf. Dzieniszewska, „«Kwiaty polskie»,” 79; Anna Węgrzyniak, *Ja głosów świata imitator. Studia o poezji Juliana Tuwima* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Śląsk, 2005), 13.

⁶ Węgrzyniak, *Ja głosów świata*, 11. The poet thus confessed on 20 January 1941 in Rio de Janeiro: "I think this is going to be the most important thing I would have written in my life" – [J. Tuwim], "W 74 rocznicę urodzin. Listy Tuwima do siostry," submitted for print by Irena Tuwim, *Polityka*, issue 37, (1968): 7. He was right.

⁷ Vide Dzieniszewska, „«Kwiaty polskie»,” 89, 91; Matuszewski, *Poeta*, 88; Krystyna Żywulska, "Modlitwa," in *Wspomnienia o Julianie Tuwimie*, edited by Wanda Jedlicka, Marian Toporowski (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1963), 231–237; Piotr Michałowski, "Wstęp," in Julian Tuwim, *Kwiaty polskie*, introduction and edited by Piotr Michałowski (Kraków: Universitas, 2004), 58; Jadwiga Sawicka, *Julian Tuwim* (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1986), 276; Krzysztof Zajczkowski, *Westerplatte jako miejsce pamięci 1945–1989* (Warsaw: IPN, 2015), 153.

⁸ See Zajczkowski, *Westerplatte...*, 153.

⁹ Irena Tuwim, "Czarodziej," in *Wspomnienia...*, 13; (cf. also Alina Kowalczykova "Tuwim – poetyckie wizje Łodzi," *Prace Polonistyczne*, series LI (1996): 17), according to whom it was Tuwim's father who mostly prepared him for a legal career.

ther “did not treat his studies seriously” and “thinking in legal categories was throughout his life something emphatically contrary to him.”¹⁰ With all due respect to Mariusz Urbanek and his efforts to promote knowledge about Tuwim, I regret that he accepted Irena Tuwim’s words indiscriminately and he only modified his own assumptions¹¹; having said that, I cannot be sure whether the term “boring legal studies”¹² applied to every student of that school or only Tuwim for whom they “stopped (...) were no longer necessary”¹³ – with that I can agree. He had the right to abandon his legal studies and transfer to Polish studies. The fact of coming into contact with the law coupled with his brilliant mind and artistic sensitivity were enough for the poet to feel *lex* and *ius*, and to masterfully include them in his works. I do not share Irena’s conviction that Julian did not think in legal categories. He may not have think mainly through them, but they were an important element. He was not indifferent to the law.

Tuwim moved to Warsaw in 1916 “to start legal studies.”¹⁴ That and other similar seemingly descriptive statements are actually revealing as they unambiguously prove that the boring and unnecessary studies (according to Urbanek) became, even if only partially, the reason why Tuwim left his family town, established the Skamander poetic group, and could develop his great poetic talent.

Nie miałem serca dla Warszawy,
Gdy opuszczałem miasto Łódź,

My heart was not set for Warsaw,
When I was leaving the city of Łódź,

he recollected years later,¹⁵ as he left the city to study law. That was because one could not do that in Łódź: The University of Lodz and its Faculty of Law and Economics at that time with courses in law and administration, law and economics, and law and judiciary was established only in 1945.¹⁶

¹⁰ Tuwim, *Czarodziej*, 13.

¹¹ Cf. Mariusz Urbanek, *Tuwim. Wylękniony bluźnierca* (Warsaw: Iskry, 2013), 34–35.

¹² *Ibid.*, 34.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 35. Yet he presumably remembered about them when creating his excellent “translations” of Latin definitions, expressions and legal maxims or the delicious aphorism “Court: a group of people deciding which party had the better lawyer” – vide Piotr Szczepański, “«Niech prawo zawsze prawo znaczy, a sprawiedliwość – sprawiedliwość» – od prozaicznego żartu aż po dogłębną refleksję nad prawem w twórczości Juliana Tuwima,” in *Prawo i literatura. Szkice drugie*, edited by Jarosław Kuisz, Marek Wąsowicz (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2017), 100–103.

¹⁴ Kowalczykova, *Tuwim...*, 7; similarly, Krystyna Ratajska (*Kraj młodości szczęśliwy. Śladami Juliana Tuwima po Łodzi i Inowłodzu* ([Łódź]: Wydawnictwo Literatura, 2002), 189) – he left Łódź “to start legal studies and the University of Warsaw”; also Joanna Podolska, Igor Rakowski-Kłos (*Spacerownik. Śladami Juliana Tuwima* (Łódź: Agora, 2013), 96) – “he came to Warsaw (...) to study at a university the kind of which was not available in Łódź at that time.”

¹⁵ J. Tuwim, *Kwiaty polskie*, edited by Tadeusz Januszewski (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1993), 171. Consecutive quotations from the narrative poem will come from this edition.

¹⁶ See Józef Chwieśko, “Zarys dziejów Wydziału Prawa Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego,” in *Dwadzieścia lat Wydziału Prawa Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego* (Łódź: Stowarzyszenie Absolwentów Wydziału Prawa i b. Wydziału Prawno-Ekonomicznego Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1967), 7; Józef Litwin, “Znaczenie Wydziału Prawa Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego dla naszego miasta i jego okręgu,” in *ibid.*, 26; Stefan Lelental, “Kalendarium,” in *70 Lat Wydziału Prawa i Administracji Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego*, edited by Agnieszka Liszewska, Anna Pikulska-Radomska (Łódź:

Tuwiim's life and artistic work were stretched between three journeys: the already mentioned journey in the autumn of 1916 from Łódź to Warsaw, the multi-stage journey in 1939–1941 from Poland (through several intermediate European states) to Brazil and eventually to the United States, and, finally, in the spring of 1946 from the United States to Poland.

"There are no laws" – Tuwim wrote that on 5 July 1917.¹⁷ That ambiguous statement cannot be easily shrugged off or passed over in silence as it was made by a person who was already an adult, a co-founder of the Skamander group, who recently wrote *Wiosna* (though very recently), a Varsovian, and, quite importantly, someone with already some experience with and disappointment in the fundamentals of legal studies, still inclined for provocation.¹⁸ Was it he who had no rights, not any, any at all, rights *in genere*, or was the soon-to-be author of *Czyhanie na Boga* alluding mainly to the anti-Polish laws of Russia and those of the German General Governor of Warsaw? Years later he admitted in *Kwiaty polskie* that he did not like lawyers, that he disliked the "gosudarstwo" just like he disliked beaches and spinach; roast, too, "if it's not tender," while he loved *Pan Tadeusz*, the influence of which on *Kwiaty...* was overwhelming.

II.

Tuwim's Łódź character can and should be discussed from various points of view: firstly, considering the topography of the city and its "bad beauty," *strictissime* the addresses associated with the poet's life¹⁹ (including the place where he was born²⁰), or his participation in the literary life of the

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2015), 9; Bohdan Baranowski, Krzysztof Baranowski, *Pierwsze lata Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego (1945–1949)* (Łódź: Uniwersytet Łódzki, 1985), 20–33, 101–115. The first attempts in Łódź to train lawyers and offer legal supplementary training for officials date back to 1928 when the Institute of Administrative Law and a Division of the Free Polish University were established – vide B. Baranowski, K. Baranowski, *Pierwsze lata...*, 13–19; K. Baranowski, *Oddział Wolnej Wszechnicy Polskiej w Łodzi 1928–1939* (Warsaw–Łódź: PWN, 1977), 9–31, 64–67.

¹⁷ Julian Tuwim, "[Myśli urywkowe]," in *Juwenilia 2*, edited by T. Januszewski, Alicja Bałakier (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1990), 296.

¹⁸ Cf. Maciej J. Nowak, "Utarczki z miejscowymi kretynami. Rzecz o Tuwimie," *Przegląd*, issue 11, (2019): 40–41.

¹⁹ See Tuwim, *Czarodziej*, 9–10; Ratajska, *Kraj...*, 10, 12, 56; Podolska, Rakowski-Kłos, *Spacerownik...*, 20, 32–46, 52–83; Janusz Stradecki, "Kalendarium życia i twórczości Juliana Tuwima," in Julian Tuwim, *Wiersze 1*, 121–122, 126; Ryszard Bonisławski, *Łódzkie adresy Juliana Tuwima* ([Łódź]: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Łodzi, 1995), and *passim*; Ryszard Bonisławski, "Łódzkie adresy Juliana Tuwima," in Julian Tuwim, *Biografia – twórczość – recepcja*, edited by Krystyna Ratajska, Tomasz Cieślak (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2007), 9–18; Ryszard Bonisławski, *Łódź Juliana Tuwima. Łódzkie korzenie poety* ([Łódź]: Wydawnictwo Hamal Andrzej Machejek, 2013), and *passim*; Katarzyna Badowska, Karolina Kołodziej, *Przewodnik literacki po Łodzi* (Łódź: Centrum Inicjatyw na rzecz Rozwoju „Regio,” 2017), 353–362; Zdzisław Konicki, *Ulice Łodzi. Ulice w szachownicę...* (Łódź: Wojciech Grochowalski, 1995), 7, 19, 23, 27; Dariusz Kędzierski, *Ulice Łodzi* (Łódź: Dom Wydawniczy Księży Młyn, 2009), 51.

²⁰ See Ratajska, *Kraj...*, 10; Podolska, Rakowski-Kłos, *Spacerownik...*, 32; Badowska, Kołodziej, *Przewodnik...*, 353; Bonisławski, *Łódzkie adresy...* (1995), 11–13; Bonisławski, *Łódzkie adresy...* (2007), 12; Bonisławski, *Łódź...*, 11–13; Ratajska, Cieślak, "Wprowadzenie," in Julian Tuwim, *Biografia...*, 5. Vide also *vota separata* by Konicki (*Ulice...*, 7) and Jerzy Widok ("Łódzkie

city²¹; secondly, considering Łódź references in the poet's works (mostly in *Kwiaty...*²²); and thirdly, by seeing in Łódź a special never-fading value present in the poet's life and works, and which is extremely significant also for me, as I dedicated this paper to Łódź and its inhabitants.

III.

Kwiaty polskie are considered an example of a non-Tyrtean *inter arma* view on the homeland from the perspective of forced emigration, of the author on himself as a wanderer and a pilgrim,²³ but also a sign of a belief in a better future.²⁴ Tuwim expressed that emotion in his letter to the Minister of Culture and Art excusing his absence from the 1st Rally of the Polish Writers' Professional Union (Krakow, 30 August–2 September 1945)²⁵ in the following manner: "When building the future of the nation on the graves of millions of martyrs we must create a masterpiece which will survive as an eternal monument to all the fallen for Poland, a monument which for future generations will be a source of knowledge and inspiration."²⁶ That was clearly "a powerful inflow of political awareness: acute, fresh, high emotions," as Tuwim wrote to Staff.²⁷

In *Kwiaty...*, as well as in *My, Żydzi polscy*, a narrative poem he wrote that same year, Tuwim's Jewishness took an extremely mature expression; that is true if considered as an outcome of an escape from a previous assimilational indemnification (*Giełdziarze*), but an escape which was

akcenty w poezji Juliana Tuwima. «Jakby tu miasto przystroić w rym?»," *Kronika Miasta Łodzi*, issue 2, (2000): 171), who indicated a different address of the poet's birth than most authors.

²¹ More in Władysław Andrzej Kempa, "Tuwimiana łódzkie (szkic biograficzno-literacki)," *Prace Polonistyczne*, series XXII (1966): 128–139.

²² More in Ratajska, *Kraj...*, 77–110; Ryszard Wierzbowski, "Łódzkie realia *Kwiatów polskich*. Rekonesans," in *Literatura i język Łodzi. Materiały z sesji naukowej w Muzeum Historii Miasta Łodzi zorganizowanej w dniach 18–19 kwietnia 1978 r.*, edited by Antoni Szram, Jerzy Weinberg, Mieczysław Kucner (Łódź: Instytut Filologii Polskiej Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Łodzi, Muzeum Historii Miasta Łodzi, 1978), 63–89. On the famous bench in front of Łódź City Hall Julian Tuwim holds a volume of *Kwiaty polskie* – vide Badowska, *Kołodziej, Przewodnik...*, 58.

²³ Cf. Józef Olejniczak, "Z perspektywy XX wieku," in *Opowieść historię. Prace dedykowane Profesorowi Stefanowi Zabierowskiemu*, edited by Beata Gontarz, Małgorzata Krakowiak (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2009), 123–124.

²⁴ Cf. Wiesław Wróblewski, "Druga wojna światowa w literaturze i sztuce," in *Vir bonus dicendi peritus. Praca dedykowana Profesorowi Henrykowi Komarnickiemu*, edited by Łukasz Tomczak (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2005), 436.

²⁵ The first moments back in Poland when the poet returned on 7 June 1946, in particular the days between 7 and 11 June he spent in Sopot, Tuwim's first Polish *pied-à-terre* were accounted in Gabriela Pawińska, "Julian Tuwim, poeta," in Gabriela Pawińska, Grażyna Antoniewicz, *Sopot. Śladami znanych ludzi* (Gdańsk: Polska Press, 2019), 163–167.

²⁶ As quoted in: Krzysztof Woźniakowski, "Początki działalności Związku Zawodowego Literatów Polskich po wyzwoleniu (sierpień 1944 – wrzesień 1945)," in *Prace ofiarowane Henrykowi Markiewiczowi*, edited by Tomasz Weiss (Krakow–Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1984), 370.

²⁷ Tuwim, "letter to L. Staff of 31 August 1947," in Leopold Staff, Julian Tuwim, *Z tysiącem serdeczności... Korespondencja z lat 1911–1953*, edited by Tadeusz Januszewski, Irena Maciejewska, Janusz Stradecki (Warsaw: PIW, 1974), 34.

well-thought-of, mature and marked by the stigma of the Holocaust.²⁸ That was an attitude completely different from the terror with which Bolesław Lesman reacted to his own Jewishness,²⁹ who in fact scolded Tuwim's early works *de haut en bas*, and who, unlike Tuwim,³⁰ finished his law school and practised law (though, in my opinion, that entered into the spirit and the letter of poetry only slightly.³¹) *Kwiaty polskie* constituted, and rightly so, a place of expiation for the lack of either revolutionary instinct or Jewish self-awareness during the interwar period,³² yet Tuwim used to be "late" even before, e.g. expressing a pacifistic attitude only in 1929, though with the superb work "Do prostego człowieka,"³³ considerably different from the earlier panegyric "Józef Piłsudski."³⁴ Both works corresponded to the dramatic *Pogrzeb prezydenta Narutowicza* and to a far less known poem which he wrote by the end of 1918, i.e. "Na wiecu," which also discussed the political system of the state being an acute satire, though not necessarily as Władysław Andrzej Kempa wrote "of the Polish parliamentarism of the initial years after regaining independence,"³⁵ but rather of the social engineering technique used during the first Polish campaign conducted before the elections to the Legislative Sejm. The poetic texts founded on the poet's

²⁸ Janusz Dunin ("Tuwim jako Żyd, Polak, człowiek," *Prace Polonistyczne*, series LI, 1996) was correct in writing that Tuwim "had never renounced his Jewishness" (p. 82), and in emphasising that the poet "remained outside the circle of the Jewish culture" (90). The fascinating *Pieśń o biciu* proves that unequivocally – vide Kowalczykowa, *Tuwim...*, 15. More on Tuwim's Jewishness – vide Artur Sandauer, "O człowieku, który był diabłem (Rzecz o Julianie Tuwimie)," in *Poeci...*, 79–86; cf. also Krystyna Ratajska, "Czym są *Kwiaty polskie* Tuwima?," *Czytanie Literatary*. *Łódzkie Studia Literaturoznawcze*, issue 7, (2018): 364; Małgorzata Szotek-Ostrowska, "Człowiek zaczarowany?" *Więź*, issue 12, (2005): 125–131.

²⁹ Cf. Dariusz Szczukowski, *Niepoprawny istnieniowiec. Bolesław Leśmian i doświadczenie literatary* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2019), 93–94.

³⁰ See Stradecki, *Kalendarium...*, 127.

³¹ Cf. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel, "Leśmian przed Prawem. Wartość życia i wzniosłość prawa," *Czytanie Literatary*. *Łódzkie Studia Literaturoznawcze*, issue 7, (2018): 11–29. There was a similar issue with Jan Brzechwa, a lawyer and Lesman's cousin, as *Przygody Pchły Szachrajki* was an excellent illustration of the rules of social coexistence, their violations, and the related sanctions.

³² Naturally, also for leaving the country when trying to save one's own life – vide Elżbieta Cichła-Czarniawska, "«Słów szukając dla żywego świata»," in Julian Tuwim, *Poezje*, selected and introduction by Elżbieta Cichła-Czarniawska (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1991), 19.

³³ Cf. Edward Balcerzan, "Dialektyka polskiego dwudziestolecia międzywojennego," in *Prace ofiarowane...*, 274.

³⁴ Julian Tuwim, "Józef Piłsudski," in *Idea i czyn Józefa Piłsudskiego* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Dzieł Naukowych, 1934), 245. I agree that Tuwim had replaced the cult following of Piłsudski with "a similarly fervent following of Stalin" (Wojciech Ligeza, "Fascynacje i egzorcyzmy. Tuwim i twórczość Tuwima w kręgu pisarzy emigracyjnych," *Prace Polonistyczne*, series LI (1996): 49), yet I reject the unequivocally negative evaluation of Tuwim's neophyte attitude drawn by Piotr Matywiecki, *Twarz Tuwima* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2008), 331–378. I cannot refrain from quoting the words of Ryszard Daniel Golanek ("Twórczość dedykowana – zagadnienia metodologiczne," in *Kompozytor i jego świat. Bronisław Kazimierz Przybylski in memoriam*, edited by Ewa Kowalska-Zajac, Marta Szoka (Łódź: Akademia Muzyczna im. Grażyny i Kiejstuta Bacewiczów w Łodzi, Katedra Teorii Muzyki, 2012), 145) on the multitude of "works dedicated to Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union or to John Paul II in Poland since 1989": "despite some seeming differences in the pre-conditioning of the authors who have devoted their works to those two figure (...) the contexts and the reasons for dedicating works to them seem fairly similar," and apart from opportunist and egotistic reasons "in both cases (...) there have also been situations of devotion, admiration and adoration."

³⁵ Kempa, *Tuwimiana...*, 131.

knowledge of the state law devoted to the office of the prime minister and its occupants did not condemn evil directly: the comedic monologue "Exposé pana prezydenta"³⁶ or the lyrics of "Dokoła Bartel, incipit" „Jak trudno jest premierem być” „Walery Sławek,” which has been ascribed to Tuwim, though the poet's constitutional knowledge proved useful in his bold protest against the disgraceful violation of the rights of deputies interned at the Brest stronghold.³⁷ The excellent 1932 satire „Popierajcie LOPP” did not herald a major change yet, though some indication of a change in the poet's position was visible in the poem "Powody. Piosenka na majową melodię" (1933)³⁸ and a moving series "Z wierszy o państwie" (1935)³⁹; 1936 and *Bal w Operze*⁴⁰ marked a turning point in Tuwim's view of Poland. It, and other bitter texts from that time, revealed, as Tadeusz Januszewski aptly noted, "instances of oversensitivity of a hypersensitive poet."⁴¹

IV.

As one might expect from a digressive poem, the story of *Kwiaty...* is feeble. Its associations with *Pan Tadeusz* are known and obvious,⁴² yet it would be impossible to develop a legal analysis of the story of Tuwim's narrative poem similar to the excellent and vivid analysis developed by Stefan Breyer regarding the legal intrigue in Mickiewicz's epic poem.⁴³ Apart from various subplots, as the issue reported by Ignacy Dziewierski to Piotr Konow, Esq., of the change of the former's granddaughter's surname,⁴⁴ *Kwiaty...* lack the elements of positive law or specific legal actions (more instances of legal dogma in practice and, importantly, Łódź-centric can be found in Reymont's *Ziemia obiecana*⁴⁵). As for Kon, a defender in political trials before

³⁶ That refers to the President of Ministers, as was the official title of the chief of the government when the office was held by, e.g. Leopold Skulski, the protagonist of the monologue - vide [Januszewski], "Przypisy," in Julian Tuwim, *Utwory nieznanne. Ze zbiorów Tomasza Niewodniczańskiego w Bitburgu. Wiersze. Kabaret. Artykuły. Listy*, edited by Tadeusz Januszewski (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Wojciech Grochowalski, 1999), 298.

³⁷ See Julian Tuwim, in "Pisarze o Brześciu," *Wiadomości Literackie*, issue 2, (1931): 3.

³⁸ Cf. Tomasz Cieślak, "Dziwna piosenka Juliana Tuwima," *Czytanie Literatury. Łódzkie Studia Literaturoznawcze*, issue 3, (2014): 57-63.

³⁹ More in Węgrzyniak, *Ja głosów świata...*, 109-128.

⁴⁰ Cf. Sandauer, *Julian Tuwim*, 63.

⁴¹ Tadeusz Januszewski, "Nieznane utwory Tuwima," in Tuwim, *Utwory nieznanne...*, 17.

⁴² Cf. Dzieniszewska, "«Kwiaty polskie»," 76, 94; Węgrzyniak, *Ja głosów świata*, 12, 15; Szotek-Ostrowska, *Człowiek*, 129; Sawicka, *Julian Tuwim*, 258, 261; Michałowski, *Wstęp*, 37-38, 49-51; Alina Kowalczykowska, "Jak Julian Tuwim swój młodzieńczy wizerunek korygował," in *Studia o poezji Juliana Tuwima*, edited by Ireneusz Opacki, *Skamander*, vol. 3 (1982): 84; Krystyna Ratajska, "Kwiaty polskie - utwór zagadkowy i kontrowersyjny," *Czytanie Literatury. Łódzkie Studia Literaturoznawcze*, issue 2, (2013): 355-356, 365; Jerzy Paszek, "Blask Kwiatów polskich," *Śląsk*, issue 4, (2018): 60; Jan Tomkowski, "Julian Tuwim: od piosenki do eposu," *Nauka*, issue 1, (2013): 94, 95.

⁴³ Stefan Breyer, *Spór Horeszków z Soplicami. Studium z dziedziny problematyki prawnej "Pana Tadeusza"* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, 1955).

⁴⁴ See Wierzbowski, *Łódzkie realia*, 75.

⁴⁵ See Aleksander Ujazdowski, "«Chcę, żeby moja Łódź rosła...» - aspekty prawne w *Ziemi obiecanej* Władysława Stanisława Reymonta," in *Prawo i literatura. Szkice*, edited by Jarosław Kuisz, Marek Wąsowicz (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2015), 36-51.

military courts operating in a special mode in a state of emergency,⁴⁶ Tuwim drew his character in a more favourable manner than he had done in reference to other servants of the law, making ironic remarks in "Adwokaci" and "Referent," or when developing "Przestępca...," "Patriota," "Sprawa Trio Trombini," "Sąd," and "Cud z komornikiem."⁴⁷

Among all the *Kwiaty* ["flowers" in English], there is also the European goldenrod [commonly referred to in Poland as a "mimosa"] (in the epilogue of vol. I), though I mentioned that only to refer to the better known *Mimosae* in Tuwim's output: those "with which autumn begins" as does the poem "Wspomnienie." The poet had the right to disregard botanical knowledge (poetic license!) and order European goldenrods, which flower in spring, to herald autumn⁴⁸; similarly, he had the right to concoct the story that Ira Aldridge did in fact perform in Łódź and that he died 17 years later than he actually did,⁴⁹ so I have absolutely no claims against the master poet that his reflections on the state and law had more of an artistic rather than professional jurisprudential nature. According to Anna Dzieniszewska, *Kwiaty...* are far from intellectualism,⁵⁰ while Krystyna Ratajska argued that the events mentioned in the book "are not a true reproduction of reality," but rather constitute its "poetic transformation,"⁵¹ which is why the treatment of the narrative poem "as a historical source is doomed to fail, even though at some instances one could talk about a high level of fidelity to actual events."⁵² Yet Józef Hurwic, a professor himself, aptly noted that Tuwim "was not only a grand poet but also a true scholar"⁵³ and that "he could have (...) easily lectured from a university pulpit"⁵⁴; instead of a chair, he received a *honoris causa* doctorate from the University of Lodz⁵⁵ in 1949, a recognition of a scholar nonetheless, a distinction just as important as the Literary Award of the City of Łódź (1928, 1949),⁵⁶ twice awarded by his beloved city in celebrating him as an artist. To Tuwim, a scholar and a poet, Łódź also honoured him after his death.⁵⁷ The tribute to him in the form

⁴⁶ See Ratajska, *Kraj*, 76–77; Wierzbowski, *Łódzkie realia*, 74.

⁴⁷ Cf. Marek Wąsowicz, "Obraz prawa w literaturze dwudziestolecia międzywojennego. Uwagi wstępne," in *Prawo i literatura. Szkice drugie*, 17, 19.

⁴⁸ More in Małgorzata Kita, "«Mimozami jesień się zaczyna»... O pewnej zagadce botanicznej w wierszu Juliana Tuwima «Wspomnienie»," in *Spotkanie. Księga jubileuszowa dla Profesora Aleksandra Wilkonia*, edited by Małgorzata Kita, Bożena Witosz (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2005), 245–252.

⁴⁹ See Ratajska, *Kraj*, 91–94; Wierzbowski, *Łódzkie realia*, 67–70.

⁵⁰ Cf. Dzieniszewska, "«Kwiaty polskie»," 95.

⁵¹ Ratajska, *Kraj*, 94.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 109.

⁵³ Józef Hurwic, "Redaktor «Tamtego działu»," in *Wspomnienia*, 292.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁵⁵ See Stradecki, *Kalendarium...*, 180; *Doktorzy honoris causa łódzkich uczelni 1945–2005* (Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2005), 23–24; Grażyna Kobojeck, *Łódź – Kalendarium XX wieku*, (Łódź: Piątek Trzynastego Wydawnictwo, 2002), 79. In 1949, Tuwim surely recalled his words which he had uttered many years before: "I abandoned (...) the university and the law school I had started. I'll until I receive a *honoris causa* doctorate," as quoted in: Szczepański, *Niech prawo...*, 94.

⁵⁶ See Stradecki, *Kalendarium...*, 144, 181; Kobojeck, *Łódź...*, 41.

⁵⁷ See Tadeusz Chrościelewski, *To i owo, a już historia. Wspomnienia łódzianina* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Literatura, 1997), 114–118.

of a state funeral (1954)⁵⁸ was an outcome of the Golden Academic Laurel (1935) award and the State Award (1951)⁵⁹: it was a gesture of the state in celebration of the poet.

Boys laws – I am charmed by them, that they match perfectly to the requirements of legislative technique.⁶⁰ Just as the drama *Terror* by Ferdinand von Schirach⁶¹ is a quasi-judicial masterpiece, *Kwiaty polskie* is a masterpiece of quasi-legislative literature; yet it differs from *Terror* in not only that it belongs to the realm of poetry, but also the presumed *ex definitione* infantilisation expressed both in the subject of the “legal” regulation and in the replacement of legal language with common language, and most significantly in the version of the boys. The a priori infantilisation of the lexis does not clash with the gravity of the regulation, though it could be considered an indication of a pastiche of the emphatic vocabulary typical for actual normative acts. The boyish code, written in dziewięciozłoskowiec (a Polish type of tetrameter), opens with the excellently constructed intitulation, written in *pluralis maiestatis* with a devotional form (“My, z bożej łaski...” [We, of God’s grace]). It is proceeded with 19 passages (the basic editorial units of an act) numbered with Roman numerals (4 are divided into points, while point 3 of passage XVIII, i.e. of the Tram Statute, is further divided into letters a–g),⁶² and then the unique eschatocol appears, which combines the elements of a preamble and an appreciation. Finally, the signature (“Jan IV Dobry...”), corroboration and the unexpected *in fine* invocation (“Teraz, Młodości...” [Now, Youth...]). A majority of the passages express sanctioned “legal” norms: be it those allowing certain types of behaviour (e.g. passages II and V), prohibiting others (e.g. passages VII and the already-mentioned XVIII point 3), or those combining consent with prohibition (e.g. passages I and VII) or mandate (passage VIII); therefore, they constitute *leges imperfectae* as they are devoid of sanctioning understood as a specification of a negative conduct in violation a “legal” norm.⁶³ Passages XIV, XVII and XIX points 1–2 are of a non-typical and non-imperative nature. In those, “the legislator” refers to his own lack of competence or the fact of not considering certain requests: the unwillingness to offer an unequivocal decision or as an indication of care for the movers. The diversity of regulations reaching all the way

⁵⁸ More in Maciej Kijowski, “Prawnofinansowy aspekt pogrzebu Juliana Tuwima wobec ówczesnych pochówków. W hołdzie Poezie w 65. rocznicę śmierci,” *Rocznik Łódzki*, vol. LXVIII (2018): 243–257.

⁵⁹ See Stradecki, *Kalendarium...*, 155, 183; *Nagrody Państwowe w latach 1948–1955, 1964–1972. Informator*, edited by Janina Adamowiczowa, Marian Kotowski (Ossolineum: Wrocław-Warsaw-Krakow-Gdańsk, 1973), 87.

⁶⁰ See Sławomira Wronkowska, Maciej Zieliński, *Komentarz do zasad techniki prawodawczej z dnia 20 czerwca 2002 r.* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2004).

⁶¹ Cf. Johanna Hirsch, “*Terror* by Ferdinand von Schirach,” in *Prawo i literatura. Parerga*, edited by Joanna Kamień, Jerzy Zajadło, Kamil Zeidler (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2019), 379–390.

⁶² The systematisation of contemporary Polish legal acts is, *mutatis mutandis*, quite similar, yet their articles fulfil a role analogous to the passages of the boyish laws – see Wronkowska, Zieliński, *Komentarz...*, 135–145.

⁶³ See Kazimierz Opalek, Jerzy Wróblewski, *Zagadnienia teorii prawa* (Warsaw: PWN, 1969), 55–66; Jerzy Wróblewski, “Przepisy i normy prawne,” in Wiesław Lang, Jerzy Wróblewski, Sylwester Zawadzki, *Teoria państwa i prawa* (Warsaw: PWN, 1979), 312–317.

to the models of maritime law (a reference to Hugo Grotius in passage IV) or the currency and civil laws (the mutual exchange rate of two kinds of nibs as the objects of barter in passage XVI) is delightful; moreover, the lexis (among all the archaisms and regionalisms, in passage XIII there is the Łódź-specific “drach”⁶⁴ [a kite]) and mostly the mastery in imitating the lofty authenticity of legalese is extremely attractive⁶⁵; only passage XIX point 3 should constitute a separate passage (due to an incoherence between its content and the “header”: an introduction to an enumeration). Since Kamil Zeidler aptly argued that versification as a formal trademark of a genre in the language of poetry is the equivalent of an organisation of a text into editorial and systemic units in the legal language,⁶⁶ the boyish law constitutes a combination of both modes of organising a text. They refer to Tuwim’s other prose pieces: “Regulamin i cennik Pikadora” (1918),⁶⁷ and the literary humoresque *P.U.R.S. Rozporządzenie* (1931). *Sub specie legis lationis* are most brilliant gems; Tuwim’s co-authorship of *Regulamin...* is undoubted,⁶⁸ though it was probably Tadeusz Raabe, a popular lawyer and a proficient property manager,⁶⁹ who was the formal editor of the “act”; Tuwim himself shaped *P.U.R.S.* to resemble a normative act divided into paragraphs. Yet he was also a “serious” legislator: during a national debate on the project of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Poland (1952), he not only published a paean praising the fundamental law in *statu nascendi*,⁷⁰ but he also motioned a correction to Art. 65 of the project,⁷¹ among the other 2821 proposed written corrections motioned during the debate,⁷² not to mention those motioned by Joseph Stalin.⁷³ Tuwim rarely referenced legal acts *expressis verbis*, yet if he did, he did it masterfully: in the comedic sketch “Przestępca. Scenka z sądu na Polesiu” he made the judge quote Art. 564 of the Russian Penal Code

⁶⁴ Latawiec [a kite] – vide Elżbieta Umińska-Tytoń, “«Łódzka mowa» oczami Juliana Tuwima (na przykładzie *Kwiatów polskich*)”, in *Julian Tuwim. Biografia...*, 166, 171.

⁶⁵ Because of him the common conviction that “legal regulations are not literature” (Natalia Dobrowolska, *Status prawny kota w Polsce* ([Brzezia Łąka]: Wydawnictwo Poligraf, 2019), 59) seems false.

⁶⁶ Cf. Kamil Zeidler, *Estetyka prawa* (Gdańsk–Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego – Wolters Kluwer Polska, 2018), 226.

⁶⁷ “Regulamin i cennik Pikadora,” *Wiadomości Literackie*, issue 51–52 (1926): 3.

⁶⁸ See Janusz Stradecki, *Julian Tuwim. Bibliografia* (Warsaw: PIW, 1959), 148.

⁶⁹ See Tadeusz Raabe, “Trzy spotkania,” in *Wspomnienia*, 84–90; Antoni Słonimski, “Historja «Pikadora»,” *Wiadomości Literackie*, issue 51–52 (1926): 2; Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, “Ze wspomnień,” *Nowa Kultura*, issue 2 (1954): 1, 4.

⁷⁰ Julian Tuwim, “Data, która przejdzie do dziejów narodu,” in “Głosy w dyskusji nad projektem Konstytucji,” *Trybuna Ludu*, issue 37 (1099) (6 February 1952): 3.

⁷¹ Julian Tuwim, in “Obywatele zgłaszają wnioski i poprawki do projektu Konstytucji,” *Trybuna Ludu*, issue 41 (1103), (10 February 1952): 3. Tuwim’s proposed correction, in Stradecki’s bibliography (*Julian Tuwim...*, 427) erroneously referenced to the poet’s text referenced in note 70 (he actually published many other texts entitled *Data, która przejdzie do dziejów narodu*), deserves a more detailed consideration.

⁷² See Andrzej Gwiżdż, “Organizacja i tryb przygotowania i uchwalenia Konstytucji Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej,” in *Sejm Ustawodawczy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1947–1952*, edited by Marian Rybicki (Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków–Gdańsk: Ossolineum, 1977), 320, 322.

⁷³ See Krzysztof Persak, “«Troskliwy opiekun i światły doradca Polski Ludowej» – poprawki Józefa Stalina do Konstytucji PRL z 22 lipca 1952 roku,” in *PRL – trwanie i zmiana [Tom dedykowany profesorowi Marcinowi Kuli]*, edited by Dariusz Stola, Marcin Zaremba (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Przedsiębiorczości i Zarządzania im. Leona Koźmińskiego, 2003), 187–209.

of 22 March 1903.⁷⁴ Tuwim was also interested in the very legislative mode, consider, e.g. the satire „*Mein Liebchen was willst du noch mehr*”

(I senat sejmowi, jak bratu, [And senate for Sejm, like for a brother.]
Zatwierdzi, co chcesz – tylko kaź [Shall ratify whatever you wish – just
mandate it]),

also, a promulgation of law (“Z wierszy o państwie”)⁷⁵ or personal aspects of sejmokracja [a common designation of the political system of the Republic of Poland between 1921 and 1926] (*Nominacje*).⁷⁶ Since I discussed the presence of legislative procedures in Tuwim’s works, I should also mention the chancellery procedures delightfully used in the narrative poem “Z wierszy o Małgorzacie,” in which the sense of the hostility of an office towards citizens is more important than the act of juggling the journal numbers “in the KiP.”⁷⁷

V.

The inclusion of the Revolution of 1905 in *Kwiaty...*, an event which in Łódź is considered almost like an uprising,⁷⁸ cannot be considered as detached from its legal/systemic dimension understood through the prism of the demands of the emerging nation (a fight for human rights) and its impact on both revolutions of 1917 (the February one and the October one) in the Russian empire, and, in a longer perspective, on the resulting shapes of the political systems of socialist states. That text even more so requires me to appreciate the masterful use of the chorus of the song “Czerwony sztandar” [“The Standard of Revolt”] with Polish lyrics by Bolesław Czerwieński, which was a transcript of *Le drapeau rouge*, a song by Paris Communards from 1871.⁷⁹ And what about “[r]ewolucyjna czarna pięść”? Plus, the extended reflection on social inequalities, on “[z]decydowany podział ludzi: [sharp division of people]

⁷⁴ *Kodeks Karny z r. 1903 (przekład z rosyjskiego) z uwzględnieniem zmian i uzupełnień obowiązujących w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 1 maja 1921 r.* (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości, 1922), 193. I am not certain why Szczepański („*Niech prawo...*” 112) placed the word *legal regulation* in quotation marks in this context, as if doubting its affiliation to the so-called Tagantsev Code. Tuwim wrote about the passages of the code in 1931 in *Kinochamy*, to welcome the arrival a year later of the so-called Makarewicz Code with an epigram entitled *Na nowy kodeks karny*.

⁷⁵ See Węgrzyniak, *Ja głosów świata...*, 103–104, 118, 122. The poet’s daughter offered an interesting interpretation of the series; she emphasised the apology of justice and argued, e.g. “that the people’s strive to become richer should not be assigned the merit of some grand principle as it usually occurs at a high price; the ‘treasury of human souls’ bears then the burden of loss,” a letter from Ewa Tuwim-Woźniak to me of 28 January 2020.

⁷⁶ See Sawicka, *Julian Tuwim*, 327. Per Stradecki (*Julian Tuwim*, 94) *Nominacja*.

⁷⁷ See Węgrzyniak, *Ja głosów świata*, 75; Szczepański, „*Niech prawo...*” 119–120.

⁷⁸ See Roman Kamienik, “Czerwcowe powstanie zbrojne na tle walk proletariatu łódzkiego w rewolucji 1905–1907 roku,” in *Rewolucja 1905–1907 roku na ziemiach polskich. Materiały i studia* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1955), 387–430; Paweł Korzec, “Łódzka klasa robotnicza w rewolucji 1905–1907 roku,” in *Z dziejów ruchu robotniczego w Łodzi. Materiały do szkolenia partyjnego* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1967), 133–186.

⁷⁹ See Józef Kozłowski, *Pieśń Bolesława Czerwieńskiego* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1966), 49–51, 69, 72; *Śpiewy proletariatu polskiego* (Warsaw: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1977), 43–44, 53 note 10. Tuwim referenced *Le drapeau...* already in 1932 in his melodeclamation *Melodia Warszawy*.

Od frontu <pan> przychodził, <pani>, [From the front <master> comes,
<mistress>]
Od kuchni – <człowiek> lub <kobieta>⁸⁰... [From the kitchen – <hu-
man> or <woman>]

Since Kazimierz Wyka claimed that the beautiful and startling apostrophe in “Chmury nad nami...”⁸¹ (which A. Dzieniszewska considered “a superbly Romantic invocation”⁸²) a moving manner defined the “poet’s political stance,”⁸³ then I could not agree with that more, provided that a country’s political system can be covered by the motion of politics. And yes, I am certain it can! I cannot agree with Piotr Michałowski who accused the apostrophe of having an utopian character⁸⁴ (the poet’s deeply experienced wartime trauma and an aversion, to say the least, to Germans entitled him to offer bold geopolitical visions), while Artur Sandauer was right in arguing that in the role of *summum bonum* a “veracity of words”⁸⁵ appears in the apostrophe: should one restore it against all crooks, the law shall always mean the law and “justice shall mean justice.” The truth vs. lies opposition is one of the key thoughts of the apostrophe.

„Lud prosty – p r a w n i k z krwi i kości, [Simple people – a flesh and bone lawyer]
Nie z praw pisanych, lecz z prawości”⁸⁶ [Not made of written laws, but
from righteousness].

When Tuwim wrote about his (people’s) natural sense of harm and justice (there is more of it in the reference to the people “than in your judgments and laws”) that “peasants in Poland should judge courts” and that they themselves that “gloomy law” and a punishment, “though without fault”

„Przyjdź, Sprawiedliwie! Rządź, Robocze! [Come, the Just one! Rule, the
Working one!]
Pieczętuj wyrok, Czarnoziemne!”⁸⁷ [Seal the judgement, the Black
earth’s one!]),

I consider two aspects of that entreaty. The first one, strictly related to the poet’s ideological reorientation, is an apotheosis of the proletariat’s dictatorship,⁸⁸

⁸⁰ Tuwim, *Kwiaty polskie*, edited by Tadeusz Januszewski, 243.

⁸¹ Not quite aptly referred to as *Modlitwa* [A Prayer] (see, e.g. J. Tuwim, “Modlitwa (Fragment z poematu «Kwiaty polskie»),” in *Poezja polska 1939–1944* (Moscow: Związek Patriotów Polskich w ZSRR, 1944), 72–74); Tuwim wrote at least two other poems entitled *Modlitwa*.

⁸² Dzieniszewska, “«Kwiaty polskie»,” 91.

⁸³ Kazimierz Wyka, “Bukiet z całej epoki,” *Twórczość*, issue 10 (1949): 110.

⁸⁴ Cf. Michałowski, *Wstęp*, 35–36. That is a reference to the Russian context, not the generation of money from money, for which Zdzisław Cackowski rebuked modern capitalism using Tuwim’s words, in “Okragły Stół po dwudziestu latach,” *Res Humana*, issue 1 (2009): 2.

⁸⁵ Sandauer, *Julian Tuwim*, 57.

⁸⁶ Tuwim, *Kwiaty polskie*, edited by Tadeusz Januszewski, 254.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁸⁸ Cf. Mariusz Gulczyński, “Karol Marks o klasowym charakterze państwa,” in *Państwo i konstytucja. Zbiór studiów*, edited by Wojciech Sokolewicz (Wrocław-Warsaw-Krakow-Gdańsk-Lódź: Ossolineum, 1989), 70–74; Jerzy J. Wiatr, “Myśl polityczna Karola Marksa

including within the area of the judiciary.⁸⁹ The other, more complex one is the concept expressed in the apostrophe of the people's⁹⁰ (the society's⁹¹) legal awareness, which can be reduced *grosso modo* to a statement that "we are all lawyers"; regardless of whether a person completed (or even started) legal studies, that remark may apply to individuals (Tadeusz Boy-Zeleński was an excellent example of that),⁹² yet Tuwim intended a broader context mandating the consideration of every proletarian, labourer or peasant as a lawyer, since they all – like all of us – are aware of the law, be it through intuition⁹³ or through everyday observance and application of the law, and sometimes even through co-establishing it.

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From among all the alternate texts which were not included in the narrative poem, the axiological basis of Poland's political system was not discussed, despite the suggestion from the incipit, in the well-known autograph "Irusiu! Jaki ustrój kraju"⁹⁴ [Irena! What system of the country], and mostly "I jakaż ona będzie? Bo miała być – mesjańska" [And what is it going to be? Because it was supposed to be messianic]:

"Nie masz w innych narodach, żeby tyle o grobach, [In no other nation
do they talk so much about graves]
Żeby tyle o ranach, a tak mało o wrzodach" [So much about wounds,
and so little about abscesses],

and that the nation "się tak (...) w żałobie rozłajdaczył"⁹⁵ [scoundreled itself so much in mourning]. *Nihil magis, nihil minus eo*. Those words are bitter and, sadly, still quite applicable. Just as *Kwiaty polskie* were, as a whole, moving for a lawyer, a humanist, and a human.

It is Tuwim, nonetheless.

a problem dyktatury proletariatu," in *Karolowi Marksowi w 175 rocznicę urodzin i 110 rocznicę śmierci. Księga pamiątkowa* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Marksistów Polskich, 1994), 74–80.

⁸⁹ Cf. Leon Schaff, *Proces karny Polski Ludowej. Wykład zasad ogólnych* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, 1953), 141–145.

⁹⁰ Cf. Maria Borucka-Arctowa, "Czynniki kształtujące świadomość prawną robotników – wnioski końcowe," in *Świadomość prawna robotników*, edited by Maria Borucka-Arctowa (Wrocław-Warsaw-Krakow-Gdańsk: Ossolineum, 1974), 153–163.

⁹¹ Cf. Maria Borucka-Arctowa, "Świadomość prawna społeczeństwa polskiego," *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny*, issue 1 (1980): 153–165; Lang, "Świadomość prawna," in Lang, Wróblewski, Zawadzki, *Teoria...*, 463–473.

⁹² Cf. Tadeusz Piernikarski, "Boy – prawnik (Wspomnienie)," *Państwo i Prawo*, issue 7 (1946): 38–40; J. Litwin, "Lenin jako prawnik," *Państwo i Prawo*, issue 11 (1960): 711–712.

⁹³ Cf. Jerzy Stelmach, "Intuicja prawnicza," in *Dziedzictwo prawne XX wieku. Księga pamiątkowa z okazji 150-lecia Towarzystwa Biblioteki Stuchaczów Prawa Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* ([Krakow]: Kantor Wydawniczy Zakamycze, 2001), 31–40.

⁹⁴ Tuwim, "Dwa fragmenty spoza I tomu poematu (ogłoszone za życia poety)," in *Kwiaty polskie*, edited by Tadeusz Januszewski, 288.

⁹⁵ The text was published in: Węgrzyniak, *Ja głosów świata*, 7; [Tadeusz Januszewski], "Fragmenty nie zlokalizowane, wiersze powstały na marginesie poematu i okrucy poetyckie," in Tuwim, *Kwiaty polskie*, edited by Tadeusz Januszewski, 556–557.

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Maciej Kijowski – University of Occupational Safety Management in Katowice. Author's main research focus areas: maritime public law, relationships between the law and literature and music, in the past also constitutional law, funeral law. Author of *Udział Sejmu i Senatu w ratyfikacji umów międzynarodowych (1919–2003)*, Rzeszów 2004; *Prawne aspekty śmierci człowieka. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Rzeszów 2013; "Władysław Broniewski wobec ustroju państwa," *Rocznik Towarzystwa Naukowego Płockiego*, vol. IX (2017); "Prawnofinansowy aspekt pogrzebu Juliana Tuwima wobec ówczesnych pochówków. W hołdzie Poezie w 65. rocznicę śmierci," *Rocznik Łódzki*, vol. LXVIII (2018); "Powrót serca Fryderyka Chopina do Warszawy w 1945 roku. Konteksty polityczny i prawnoekonomiczny w świetle dokumentów," *Studia Chopinowskie*, issue 1 (2009); "O uznaniu za zmarłego człowieka, który zaginął w czasie podróży morskiej w związku z katastrofą statku (okrętu) albo w związku z innym szczególnym zdarzeniem na morzu," *Metryka. Studia z zakresu prawa osobowego i rejestracji stanu cywilnego*, issue 1 (2019).
E-mail: maciej.kijowski@onet.pl

ELŻBIETA SIDORUK
University of Białystok

 0000-0002-6132-5808


Member since 2019
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“Ten sam odwieczny wróg niebezpieczny.”¹ The Universal Dimension of Tuwim’s Satire

SUMMARY

In the article, the author analyses the satirical works by Julian Tuwim published in his poetic collections. By indicating the strong bonds between poetry and satire in the poet’s works, the author explains the phenomenon of the unwavering topicality of Tuwim’s satire having generalising ambitions. She has considered the poet’s masterful combination of the poetic perspective with the attitude of a satirist as a factor which enables the generalisation of the critical diagnosis. However, she argues that the universal dimension of his wide-scope satirical works is mainly determined by the poet’s worldview-based horizons, which constituted the point of reference for his critical evaluation of the existing social reality, which exposed the destructive influence of a community on an individual. She also stated that he was able to peer deep into the mentality of the mindless members of the “tyrannous community” by virtue of his distance towards himself, in turn being the result of his sense of the absurdity of his own existence.

Keywords

Polish poetry, satire, satirical discourse, poetry, literary circulation

¹ “The same eternal dangerous enemy.” [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish]

Julian Tuwim's works – commonly known and appreciated in elite, popular and village fair² circles – clearly prove that satire is a phenomenon with fluid borders, and one which is multifunctional and diverse in terms of the genres and styles it utilises.³ The relationships between Tuwim's poetic, satirical and stage texts – the quintessential example of which is *Bal w Operze*, one of his most renowned works – have been convincingly documented and the poetics of the texts “borne from a different spirit and in a different poetic climate”⁴ has impacted the shape of various works Tuwim included in his poetic collections. The satirical force is clearly visible in all of them⁵. When the poet himself published *Jarmark rymów* [Rhymes' Fair] in 1934, he indicated in the preface that it carried a different character than the collections of “lyrical” poems he had released earlier, though did also admit that:

Of course, it would be difficult to define a precise borderline between this and that “kind”; the old volumes certainly include poems which could be included in it, and there are also the rare few for which there would be a place in the previous books. There is a predominance of satirical items in it (once again, a term which is unstable and extensive!), often associated with an outworn note of currentness, and sometimes with a further and more durable reach. A few of those, but no more than there are fingers on one hand, were once spoken or sang on the stages of Warsaw's street theatres. I am emphasising that to clearly stress that those did not include

² See Tomasz Stępień, “O satyrze skamandryckiej. (Wokół „Wstępu” do „Jarmarku rymów” Juliana Tuwima),” in idem, „O satyrze” (Katowice, 1996) As the researcher noted Tuwim's “‘comedy show’ numbers written under a dozen or so different noms the plume” had “to some extent the status of folkloric texts. (They circulated as copies, they were modernised by new performers, and as anonymous content they ended up in pirate brochures operating within rowdy circles)” (ibid., 259–260).

³ See T. Stępień, “Satyra jaka jest każdy widzi? O satyrze i satyryczności w polskiej świadomości literackiej XIX i XX wieku,” in idem, „O satyrze”..., 19–80; E. Sidoruk, *Granice satyry* (Białystok, 2018), 17–123. In this article, as in the referenced book, I shall consider satire as a discursive practice with a broad reach, the domain of which covers both literary and non-literary texts. As Simpson argued convincingly, the category of ‘discourse’ proves extremely convenient when discussing complex relations between a comedian, recipients and the object of the criticism (see P. Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire. Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humor* (Amsterdam–Philadelphia, 2003), 69–109). In reference to the proposition formulated by Dustin Griffin, who polemised with the so-called “moral” concept of satire, I shall assume that a comedian does not need to operate from the position of a moralist certain of their argument who presents arguments leading to some definite conclusions (see D. Griffin, *Satire. A Critical Reintroduction* (Kentucky, 1994), 35–70). I also consider Frederic Bogel's concept that the attitude of a comedian towards the object of criticism is marked with ambivalence as it fluctuates between identification and opposition as accurate. According to him, satire is not so much the reaction of a comedian to the noticed difference between them and the object of their criticism, but rather it consists of creating that difference, an act which is triggered by an unease caused by an identification in themselves similarities to the object (see F. Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes. Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron* (Ithaca–London, 2000), 41–83).

⁴ J. Tuwim, *Jarmark rymów*, edited by J. Stradecki (Warsaw, 1991), 5.

⁵ Anna Węgrzyniak's studies (*Dialektyka organizacji językowej tekstu w poezji Tuwima* (Katowice, 1987), and *Ja głosów świata imitator. Studia o poezji Juliana Tuwima* (Katowice, 2003)) and Tomasz Stępień's (*Kabaret Juliana Tuwima* (Katowice, 1989)) offer the most valuable contributions to the study of Tuwim's work in this respect. See also E. Sidoruk, *Groteska w poezji Dwudziestolecia. Leśmian – Tuwim – Gaczyński* (Białystok, 2004).

neither the so-called "cabaret numbers" nor the texts of Pikador's satirical nativity plays or the *Cyrulik Warszawski*, which I wrote many together with friends.

The book concludes in a few columns and humoresques written in prose.⁶

When focussing on the "quotation-mark character of genological definitions" and the lack of accuracy of the terms used by Tuwim, Tomasz Stępień has read the poet's explanations not only as an indication of the problems with the categorisation of his own output, but he also considered that as an indication of a general state of literary awareness of the interwar period.⁷ According to the researcher, the classification of literary and quasi-literary forms outlined in the introduction to *Jarmark rymów* emerged from an evident hierarchy: at the top there were collections of "lyrical" poems, below them there were rhymed "satirical pieces" and columns and humoresques written in prose, with "the natural space being the pages of satirical weeklies or satirical sections and columns in other periodicals,"⁸ and the lowest level was occupied by stage pieces, "unworthy of including them in any collection signed with a poet's name."⁹ Those remarks have led to the following ascertainment:

Satire, therefore, would be located between the "needed" and prestigious poetry, and the embarrassing, though necessary for (a quite convenient) life, serial and commercial stage productions. Printed in specialised periodicals and publications, it had the nature of single-use literature, which is why the appearance of "satirical items" in a book edition required a special justification in the author's preface.¹⁰

Though the publication of *Jarmark rymów* as a separate collection with the included preface might offer some reason for drawing such a conclusion, the fact that Tuwim published in his poetic collections such poems as *Walka* (*Wierszy tom 4*, 1923) *Quatorze Julliet* (*Słowa we krwi*, 1926), the *Trzy wiersze o fryzjerze triptych* (*Rzecz czarnońska*, 1929), *Złota polska jesień*, *Apokalipsa*, ...*Et arceo*, *Magazyn gastronomiczny*, *Wiosna chamów*, *Wiec*, *Do prostego człowieka*, *Luksus*, *Mieszkańcy* (*Biblia cygańska*, 1933), *Ruch*, ***[*Znów to szuranie, bełkotu chór...*], or the *Z wierszy o państwie* series (*Treść gorejąca*, 1936), which clearly included instances of satirical force, complicate the hierarchy outlined by Stępień. The appearance of the listed works next to "lyrical" poems indicates that the issue of the position occupied by the broadly understood satire in Tuwim's output is much more complex. As indicated by the above enumeration, *Biblia cygańska*, published a year prior

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ T. Stępień, „O satyrze skamandryckiej. (Wokół „Wstępu” do „Jarmarku rymów” Juliana Tuwima)”, ..., 259.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 260.

to the publication of *Jarmark rymów*, was a volume in which the satirical character was particularly strong. What is noteworthy, the collection included the poem "Plajta. Kuplety," in which "the pathos of satirical vilification" was "filtered through the carnivalesque poetics of satirical nativity play and cabaret."¹¹

Unlike in the case of "Plajta," which was excluded from later releases of *Biblia cygańska*, the *Z wierszy o państwie* series included in *Treść gorejąca* – in which "Tuwim utilised all the available instruments of political satire" differentiating the critical tone depending on the importance of the object¹² – was consistently reprinted in consecutive full editions of the collection. As Anna Węgrzyniak noted, the analytical vision of the structure of the series "implies the question why a work in which the satirical force triumphed" was included by the poet in *Treść gorejąca*.¹³ According to the researcher, that was caused by the hierarchy of the importance of the juxtaposed lyrical and satirical elements throughout the whole:

Wiersze o państwie mocked and condemned the language of "state-building ideology" of the Sanation movement in defence of the irrefutable religious values of national culture. The "distorting mirror" of satire supports in this case a positive program; the mocking negation fulfils a key yet not a superior role in the work. Hence, some sections of the series are devoid of satirical instances, and in the surrounding parts they are non-existent. As a result, the structure of the whole breaks into two separate spheres: poetry and satire, where poetry fulfils a superior role, while satire is ancillary to the expression of poetry rationale.¹⁴

I believe that the decision to include the series in a poetic volume was justified not so much by the superiority of the lyrical perspective as the nature of satire, the scope of which, as indicated in Węgrzyniak's in-depth analysis, despite its clear grounding in historical facts was broader than one might expect from a cursory reading. I would venture an argument that, from today's perspective, when individual references to the political situation in which the work was created are no longer clear, the general dimension of the criticism included in the work become more distinct. The clash between the languages of poetry and political satire was used to juxtapose "two worlds: the institutionalised world of state operations hostile towards humans and the world of personal values, in which humanitarian 'sulkings' matter."¹⁵ The disapproval of the state, which was depicted as a "company" not respecting the interests of people, matched the stream of "the broadly defined reflection on the world in the poet's works, within which any organised collective destroys people condemning them for a removal of their identities," which is why "Tuwim's 'theory of the state and the political

¹¹ T. Stepień, *Kabaret Juliana Tuwima* (Katowice, 1989), 164.

¹² A. Węgrzyniak, *Ja głosów świata imitator. Studia o poezji Juliana Tuwima...*, 116.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

system' did not consider the differences of individual groups."¹⁶ The fifth fragment of the series proves that emphatically:

Karności ucz, urabiaj, mustruj,
Zarządzaj, sądz i skazuj, ustrój;
Tak każe racja stanu, ustrój;
Lepszy czy gorszy – mniejsza z tem.

Teach discipline, mould, muster,
Control, judge and sentence, systematise it;
Thus, requires *raison d'être*, the system;
Better or worse – it doesn't matter.

W każdym jest śmieszność, grzech
[i zgroza,
I groteskowej mocy gest.
Szubienicznego splot powroza
Gordyjskim jego węzłem jest.

In each there is comicality, sin and terror,
And the grotesque power's gesture.
The threat of the gallow's line
Is its Gordian knot.

A sprawiedliwy niech nie wini
Mocy o przemoc. Tak ma być.
Sprawiedliwemu – na pustyni
Do gwiazd o sprawiedliwość wyć!

And may the just not blame
Power for violence. That's how it's
[supposed to be.
The just one – in the desert
May call to the stars for justice!

W państwowym Samotników sztandar
Noc go otuli. Będzie sam.
Chociaż... kto wie?... czasami żandarm
Służbowo zajrzy nawet tam.¹⁷

In the state standard of Loners
The night shall envelop him. He will be
[alone.
Though... who knows?... sometimes an
[officer
On duty may even pop in.

According to Węgrzyniak, the included in the poem "assessment of the *stricte sensu* state reality is mediocre" as Tuwim with his "extensive experience in professing pro-governmental political satire" which allowed "criticism from the position of a Sanation sympathiser" did question its "mistakes without disavowing the system."¹⁸ By expressing disapproval of the state's institutions, he discussed them from the perspective of a poet; he "spoke not as a politician but rather as a defender of the value of words, a spokesman of national interests," for which more evil was carried not by the consequences of violence inscribed in the essence of the rule of law (e.g. "prisons" and "penal expeditions"), but by unjustifiable evil, which is brought about by "forging words," and the appropriation of the language of Romantic poetry for the purposes of state-building ideology.¹⁹

One could, of course, debate whether in the *Z wierszy o państwie* series Tuwim disavowed the system itself grading "thorough evil" which he saw "w rządach, władzach i urzędach / I w tych co światem rządzić chcą"²⁰ [in

¹⁶ Ibid., 112–113.

¹⁷ J. Tuwim, "Z wierszy o państwie," in idem, *Wiersze zebrane*, edited by A. Kowalczyk, vol. II, 245–246.

¹⁸ A. Węgrzyniak, *Ja głosów świata imitator. Studia o poezji Juliana Tuwima...*, 115.

¹⁹ Ibid., 126.

²⁰ J. Tuwim, *Z wierszy o państwie...*, 250.

governments, authorities and offices / And in those who wish to rule the world] or only seemingly justified state-sanctioned violence ("A sprawiedliwy niech nie wini / Mocy o przemoc. Tak ma być. / Sprawiedliwemu - na pustyni / Do gwiazd o sprawiedliwość wyć" [as translated above]), through irony expressing his conviction that, from the perspective of an individual, every state system is oppressive and unjust. Clearly, it does not include such a radical criticism of the Sanation ideology and the general mechanisms of government as in the delayed for its obscenities *Bal w Operze*, in which Tuwim not only ruthlessly uncovered the omnipresence of state propaganda, but he also emphatically illustrated the dangerous consequences of the state's instrumental utilisation of the language of Romantic poetry:

Płynie na czcionki drukarska farba:	Printing ink flows onto the sorts:
IDE	IDE
OLO	OLO
„Ile Rabarbar?”	“How much is the rhubarb?”
Karna	Disciplined
Kadra	Staff
Ducha	of the Spirit
Czynu	of Action
„Proszę za dziesięć groszy kminu”	“I’ll have ten groszys’ worth of cumin”
Miecz	Sword
Krzyż	Cross
Duch	Spirit of
Dziejów	History
„Proszę za dziesięć groszy kleju”	“I’ll have ten groszys’ worth of glue”
Ducha	Spirit of
Dziejów	History’s
Karne	Disciplined
Kadry	Staff
„Proszę za dziesięć groszy [musztardy”	“I’ll have ten groszys’ worth of [mustard”
Czerep rubaszny	Rowdy mug
Paw narodów	Peacock of nations
„Proszę za dziesięć groszy lodów”	“I’ll have ten groszys’ worth of ice cream”
Jeden	One
Tylko	That’s it
Jeden	One
Cud	Wonder
- „Ober, jeszcze butelkę na lód!”	- “Keeper, one more bottle on ice!”
I bac! bac!	And pow! pow!
I plac opustoszał,	And the square is suddenly empty,
I do bramy wloką truposza.	A corpse is dragged into a gateway.
I bac, bac! zza rogu, z sieni,	And pow! pow! from around the corner,
	[from the vestibule,

I w bruk, w bruk tętniącemi
Kopytami bac po głowie

Ka
Wa
Le
Ryjskimi!
Raz!
Dwa!

Hurra, panowie!
Malo, panowie!
Brawo, panowie!

I bac, bac!
Słońce na ziemi!
Człowiek na ziemi!
I krew na ziemi!²¹

And into the cobbles, into the cobbles
[pulsating
With hooves pow over the head

Ca
Va
L
ry!
One!
Two!

Hurray, gents!
Malo, gents!
Bravo, gents!

And pow, pow!
Sun on the ground!
Man on the ground!
And blood on the ground!

Certainly the *Z wierszy o państwie* series, heralding with its poetics the masterful *Bal w Operze*, is a work that has grown the more time has passed blurring the clarity of the references to a specific historical reality and which owes its general dimension to the clash of two perspectives: that of a poet and that of a satirist. Yet I do not think that the former, despite its lyrical framework created by the first and final fragments, is superior in reference to the latter. It is rather the masterful combination of complementing elements, the lyrical and the satirical, that aids the generalisation of the work's critical diagnosis, which has remained unnerveingly relevant.

Yet the universal character of the satirical works which Tuwim included in his poetic volumes is mostly ensured by the problems raised and the worldview of the critical attitude manifested in them towards the reality. Tuwim's satire – which has had generalising ambitions, and which emerged from the poet's aversion to any and all institutionalised forms of life – is not only laced with a fear of community having a destructive impact on human personality, as well as a sense of the absurdity of human existence. By operating as a supercilious observer and a judge of the present donning the costume of a prophet, Tuwim the satirist, driven by an eagerness which proved his emotional attitude towards the object of his criticism, exposed that which terrified him the most: the mentality of humans unwittingly submitting to the rule of popular opinion, a complete ignoramus susceptible to ideological manipulation. Such a figure is not quite comical, but rather dangerous in their idiocy as represented by the caricature in the poem "Mieszkańcy" where the "straszni mieszczanie" [dreadful townspeople] are mumbling and raving all day long:

²¹ J. Tuwim, "Bal w Operze," in idem, *Wiersze wybrane*, introduction and edited by M. Głowiński (Wrocław, 1986), 272–273.

(..) patrząc – widzą wszystko oddzielnie:
 Że dom... że Stasiek... że koń... że drzewo...

Jak ciasto biorą gazety w palce
 I żują, żują na papkę pulchną,
 Aż papierowym wzdęte zakalcem,
 Wypchane głowy grubo im puchną.

I znowu mówią, że Ford... że kino...
 Że Bóg... że Rosja... radio, sport, wojna...
 Warstwami rośnie brednia potworna
 I w dżungli zdarzeń widmami płyną.²²

(..) when looking -- saw everything
 [separately:
 One house... one Stasiek... one horse...
 [one tree...]

They take newspapers in their hands like
 [cake
 And they chew, chew to spongy pulp,
 Until bloated with paper sad cake,
 Their stuffed heads swell thick.

And they continue, one Ford... one cinema...
 One God... one Russia... radio, sport, war...
 Terrible nonsense grows in layers
 And they flow like spectres in the jungle
 [of events.

In emphatically depicting the futility and automatism of the existence of the “dreadful townspeople,” who cared mostly for their “reverent property and holy acquisitions” and only about the potential loss (“Pod łożka włązą, złodzieja węższą, / Łbem o nocniki chłodne trącając”²³ [They crawl under their beds smelling a thief, / Smacking their heads on the cool pots]) of that which was “theirs, exclusive, earned,” Tuwim gave vent not only to his contempt-laced aversion to community, but also, or rather mainly, to his fear of the “dreadful nonsense” spread by those who strode in “deserving steps” on the earth which was “so well-known, so round,” who “saw everything individually”²⁴ and who constituted the sustenance for ideological manipulators of the “mętny henio” [murky Henry] type, scathingly portrayed in “Wiec,” most depressing, similarly to the well-known poem “Do prostego człowieka”²⁵, for its unrelenting validity:

Ziało brednią, gorącem, czerwienią,
 Febrą trzęsło i kołem szło.
 Nie wiadomo kto, jakiś henio,
 Zaczął pleść niewidomo co.

Przerzucało się gorączkowo
 Wypiekami z twarzy na twarz.
 Straszny henio z zadartą głową
 Wykrzykiwał, że jós, że czas!

There blew nonsense, heat, redness,
 There shook with fever and rolled with
 [a wheel.
 No one knows who, some henio,
 Began blabbering no one knows what.

Feverishly there jumped
 Blushes from face to face.
 Dreadful henio with his head kept high
 Shouted that nowses, that timeses!

²² J. Tuwim, “Mieszkańcy,” in idem, *Wiersze zebrane...*, vol. II, 182–183.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The poem became popular because of the band Akurat, which in 2003 created music to it. On YouTube there are several versions of the work performed by various artists.

Przysięgali mętnemu heniowi,
Kluski zdań wycharkując z grdyk,
I wpatrzeni z zachwytem krowim
Na komendę rzucali ryk.

They swore to murky henio,
Spitting balls of words from their throats,
And staring in bovine admiration
They threw their shouts when ordered to.

I zaczęli się tłoczyć i spiętrać,
W piramidę gramoląc się wzwyż,
I tak rosła brednia coraz większa,
A na szczycie stał – nieomal krzyż.²⁶

And they began to press and pile,
Clambering upwards into a pyramid,
And thus, an ever bigger nonsense grew,
And at the top there stood – almost a cross.

The “dreadful townspeople” with intellectual horizons shaped by newspapers, suppressing their existential fears with automatically mumbled prayers “...od nagłej śmierci... / ...od wojny ...od głodu ...odpoczywanie”²⁷ [from sudden death... / ... from war ...from hunger ...rest] are “dreadful” because of their susceptibility to the propaganda of those who say “no one knows what,” primitive, “some Henry” under whose influence they turn into a despicable and dangerous crowd. The caricatural depiction and the derisive tone belittling the object of criticism are a form of defence through attack, which is indicated by the poem’s closing sarcastic exclamation of the speaking persona presenting themselves as a potential victim of the followers of the “murky”:

- Tak chamjo rozdziawione i ciemne,
Chamjo z akcentem na o,
Rozwrzeszczało te czasy niktzemne
W heniowate nie wiadomo co.

- Thus, oh boorish, spread and dull,
Boorishly with a stress,
Squalled these despicable times,
Into this Henio’s no-one-knows-what.

Grzmij, tryumfuj, najplugawsze zło,
My będziemy twoim żerem i pastwą!
A ty – krwią uświetnione żelastwo
Po muzeach rozwieszaj, chamjo!²⁸

Roar, triumph, oh, the foulest of evils,
We shall be your prey and quarry!
And you – iron stuff celebrated with blood
Hang through every museum, oh boorish!

One should note that in prophesying the triumph of boorishness perceived as “the foulest of evils,” the blinded dull crowd, the poet juxtaposed that not with an “I” but with “we” which would become its “prey and quarry.” The answer to the question among whom the speaking persona considered themselves could be suggested by the motto of the poem ***[Znów to szuranie, bełkotu chór...]: *Surgunt indocti et rapiunt coelum – et nos cum scientia nostra mergimur in infernum*. In the context of the whole work, the maxim borrowed from St. Augustine in which ignorance brings one closer to God (“niewykształceni powstają i zdobywają niebo” [the uneducated rise and conquer heaven]) and knowledge condemns one to hell (“a my z naszą wiedzą toniemy w piekle” [and we with our knowledge drown in hell]) resonates ironically. In Tuwim’s poem, hell on Earth is represented by a “tyrannous

²⁶ J. Tuwim, “Wiec,” in idem, *Wiersze zebrane...*, vol. II, 175.

²⁷ Idem, *Mieszkańcy...*, 183

²⁸ Idem, *Wiec...*, 175-176.

community,” to use an expression from the poem ...*Et arceo* – a mindless “nightmare” not seeing the futility of its existence:

Znów to szuranie, bełkotu chór,
Znów na ulice wylazło z nór
Dwieście tysięcy, trzysta tysięcy
Poprzebieranych świątecznych zmór.

Zieje pustynią zeszkłały wzrok,
W otchłań zapada każdy ich krok,
W ultra-kolorach, w meta-ubiorach
Łażą rozwlekłe przez cały rok.

To oni – sprawcy brzuchatych bab,
Sznycła, gazety, tryumfów, klap,
Skrótów, paszportów. Forsy i sportów,
Słowa „gustowny” i słowa „schab”.

To oni – naród, społeczność, wiek,
Styl i epoka, i dziejów bieg,
Ten sam odwieczny wróg niebezpieczny,
Podśluch powszechny, masowy szpieg.

Rozstąp się, bruku upiornych miast!
Rozstąp się, niebo, zbrojownio łask!
Biesa tępego, biesa głupiego
Oświeć i przeraź gradem swych gwiazd!²⁹

Again that shuffling, the chorus of gibberish,
Again there emerged from their dens into
[the streets
Two hundred thousand, three hundred
[thousand
All dressed up holiday nightmares.

The frozen sight emanates emptiness,
Their every step falls into an abyss,
In ultra colours, in meta clothing
They stroll around all year round.

It is them – the perpetrators of pregnant
[women,
Of pork chops, newspapers, triumphs,
[failures,
Abridgements, passports. Cash and sports,
Of the word “fancy” and the word “pork
[loin.”

It is them – the nation, community, age,
Style and epoch, and the course of time,
That same eternal dangerous enemy,
Bugs tapping everything, a massive spy.

Part, oh cobbles of dreadful cities!
Part, oh sky, you armoury of graces!
The blunt fiend, the stupid fiend
May you illuminate and terrify with a hail
[of your stars!

The community depicted in the poem is a multiplying crowd of aimlessly moving pawns hidden underneath bright costumes giving the appearance of diversity,³⁰ whose internal emptiness is revealed by their “frozen sight.” Those are consumers devoid of a sense of metaphysical dread, unaware of the fact that an abyss spans underneath their very feet, for whom material prosperity and social position are the measures of their lives’ success. Finally, those are (which stirs in the poetic person not only aversion but

²⁹ J. Tuwim, “***[Znów to szuranie, bełkotu chór...],” in idem, *Wiersze zebrane...*, vol. II, 242.

³⁰ The motif of pawns in Tuwim’s poetry was analysed in detail by Piotr Matywiecki, who referenced such poems as ***[Znów to szuranie, bełkotu chór...] as examples of the application of the motif functioning as a sociological metaphor. See P. Matywiecki, *Twarz Tuwima* (Warsaw, 2007), 588–591.

also unrest) the guardians, who violate others' right to privacy, of common opinion – "the eternal enemy" of those who do not submit to its rule. The poem's closing grandiloquent exclamation, in which the crowd seems to be the incarnation of a blunt and stupid fiend, reveals the worldview-based horizons of Tuwim's criticism of community: the tendency to yield to the pressure of a "tyrannous community" appears to be the result of a disappearance of metaphysical emotions. Those "unenlightened" by the "hail of stars" – not experiencing the terror of existence, or rather trying to suppress it – cannot see that from between all forms of social life "chaos and terror, and a deadly emptiness"³¹ emerge. Those who can notice that emptiness can only cry in vain for the enlightenment of the "blunt fiend" or resort to a seemingly cool contempt in Horace's style:

<p>I w tym hucznym stuleciu tyrańskiej [wspólnoty, Śród głupich wielkorządców i tępej hołoty, Gdzie patos lwii rozdyma mrówcza [krzątanię, Gromadząc ludzkość w nudną, [mieszkańską rodzinę, Gdzie pustego kościoła krzykliwi papieże Na gruzach Babilonu – babilońskie wieże Wznoszą pośród szwargotu [wyszczekanych maszyn, A chciwa czerń szpieguje samotność serc [naszych, W tym wieku rozjątronym, wydętym, [okrutnym – Przechodzę, mijam, milczę: obcy, zimny, [smutny.³²</p>	<p>And in this thunderous century of [tyrannous community, Among stupid grand rulers and blunt [riffraff, Where a lion's pathos blows the hustle and [bustle, Gathering humanity into a boring [bourgeois family, Where the empty church's shouty popes On the rubble of Babylon – raise Babylon [towers Among the jabber of loud machinery, And the greedy blackness spies on the [loneliness of our hearts, In this rankled, bulging, cruel century – I walk by, pass, keep my silence: alien, [cold, sad.</p>
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Yet it is difficult to maintain a cool distance when one is constantly being attacked and excluded. Tuwim's satire certainly owed its momentum to its inherent defence mechanism. His aversion to the community, which he manifested so emphatically and ruthlessly, seems laced with a fear that his existence was not more authentic than the lives of the characters he portrayed, e.g. the "biedny ojciec beznadziejnych pociech, / Mąż zahukany" [poor father of hopeless children, / Cowed husband] experiencing a moment's happiness in a hotel toilet in the poem "Luksus," or the character in *Trzy wiersze o fryzjerze* compensating for his "wewnętrzna pustkę działaniami zastępczymi"³³ [internal emptiness with substitute activities]. As Agnieszka Czyżak noted in her interesting interpretation of the triptych:

³¹ J. Tuwim, ... "Et areco," in idem, *Wiersze zebrane...*, vol. II, 154.

³² Ibid.

³³ A. Czyżak, "Substancja miasta – wokół „Trzech wierszy o fryzjerze” Juliana Tuwima," *Czytanie Literatury. Łódzkie Studia Literaturoznawcze*, issue 3 (2014): 51.

The universal dimension of Tuwim's remarks, so often extremely pessimistic, in today's reception is sometimes lost in the spatial staffage, carefully erected decorations, and stage conventionality – yet the simplest attempt at cracking the visions meticulously constructed by the poet may lead to unexpected interpretative discoveries.³⁴

When reading the poem in the context of postmodern reflections on urban space, the researcher noted that the protagonist of *Trzy wiersze o fryzjerze* who "according to Tuwim's intentions was supposed to be (...) an example of a typical human pawn stripped of any dignity or humanity, (...) not quite guilty of his condition," could be "considered a prototype of many modern 'prisoners of space' – including those limiting themselves or being limited to virtual space."³⁵ According to Czyżak, such a consideration of Tuwim's protagonist could trigger new interpretative contexts: "The persistence of the human predisposition to produce projections and scripts of substitute lives independent of changing historical and social conditions or social norms, or of the available means supporting their creation, could prove one of those."³⁶

The fact that, despite the outdated decorations, the satirical portraits of human pawns reveal their universal dimension could be explained with an obsessive sense of the lack of obviousness of one's "own existence as a human and a poet,"³⁷ which Tuwim tried to evade by surprising "his contemporaries with bright costumes selected for roles played in various rituals. Throughout his life and with his whole life he participated in a theatre of myths. The stage for those rituals were his works."³⁸ Unlike his protagonists, the poet saw, as indicated in the self-critical "Wiersz z głuchym końcem," not only the dread of empty existence, but also the salvaging power of metaphysical terror³⁹:

Ratuje – strach, rosnący w piersi,
Zabobon, szczurem biegający,
Rozpacz i łaska zimniej śmierci,
O! nie karzącej. Drwiącej tylko.⁴⁰

Saves – fear, growing the chest,
Superstition, running as a rat,
The despair and grace of cool death,
Alas! not punishing. Only mocking.

*

In Tuwim's output, there are so strong bonds between poetry and satire that many of the works published in his poetic collections cannot be classified as unequivocally poetry or satire. The perspectives of poet and satirist complement each other, and it is often difficult to establish whether

³⁴ Ibid., 50.

³⁵ Ibid., 54.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ P. Matywiecki, *Twarz Tuwima...*, 721.

³⁸ Ibid., 719.

³⁹ See T. Stępień, *Kabaret Juliana Tuwima...*, 134–135; A. Węgrzyniak, "«Wiersz z głuchym końcem». O rytmie śmierci w poezji Tuwima," in *Julian Tuwim. Biografia – twórczość – recepcja*, edited by K. Ratajska, T. Cieślak (Łódź, 2007), 86–87. An interesting attempt at explaining the essence of Tuwim's "dread" was undertaken by Tomasz Wójcik in the study "Nic Juliana Tuwima (dwie wykładnie)," *Czytanie Literatury. Łódzkie Studia Literaturoznawcze*, issue 3 (2014).

⁴⁰ J. Tuwim, "Wiersz z głuchym końcem," in idem, *Wiersze zebrane...*, vol. II, 115.

one dominates over the other.⁴¹ That is more of a question of the personal reflections of readers. However, the clash of those two perspectives seems to cause one to make a generalisation about the prevalence of the satirical nature, though the universal dimension of Tuwim's satire is mainly determined by its worldview-based horizons and the fear-laced aversion to community which has a detrimental impact on human personality. The sense of the absurdity of one's own existence, which produced for Tuwim distance not only towards the society but also from himself, enabled him to peer deep into the mentality of the mindless members of the "tyrannous community." The striking topicality of the critical diagnosis is both shocking and painful.

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⁴¹ This phenomenon was not specific only for Tuwim's works. Such tendencies could be found in the poetry of Heinrich Heine or Alexander Pushkin, whose works Tuwim translated. As I have tried to indicate in my previous works, the lines between poetry and satire prove to be fluid, e.g. in the poetry of Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński (see E. Sidoruk, *Groteska w poezji Dwudziestolecia...*, 219–286) or Tadeusz Różewicz (E. Sidoruk, *Granice satyry...*, 287–332). It seems that the intertwining of the two elements in poetry, modern poetry in particular, is a rather widespread phenomenon.

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Elżbieta Sidoruk – Ph.D., assistant professor at the Department of Theory and Anthropology of Literature, Institute of Polish Philology, University of Białystok. She focusses on 20th-century Polish literature within the perspective of historical poetics, in particular such phenomena as: satire, grotesque, parody, and the phenomenon of literary space perceived within the categories of geopoetics. She is the author of the following books: *Antropologia i groteska w dziełach Sławomira Mrożka* (1995), *Groteska w poezji Dwudziestolecia. Leśmian – Tuwim – Gałczyński* (2004), *Granice satyry* (2018), and the editor-in-chief of the "Białostockie Studia Literaturoznawcze" journal, and a co-editor of a series of collective monographs: *Od poetyki przestrzeni do geopoetyki* (2012), *Geografia i metafora* (2014), *Przestrzenie geo(bio)graficzne w literaturze* (2015), and *Geograficzne przestrzenie utekstowione* (2017).
E-mail: e.sidoruk@uwb.edu.pl

REVIEWS

ANDRZEJ JUCHNIEWICZ
University of Silesia in Katowice

 0000-0001-7037-9907



All the Faces of Grochowiak

(J. Łukasiewicz, *Poeta Grochowiak*
Wrocław: Warstwy, 2019)

SUMMARY

The hereby reviewed book by Jacek Łukasiewicz entitled *Poeta Grochowiak* has been an impressive and monumental undertaking, yet it fulfils only some of the promises made by its author. According to the reviewer, the fact of its release offers grounds for a discussion of the status of theory and the validity of abandoning it in favour of a reading devoid of methodological regime which elevates the importance of pleasure. The main problem which emerges after reading Łukasiewicz's opus magnum is the issue of selecting the recipient of the monograph (a regular person or a specialist), which in turn conditions the mode of study of the poet's output. Łukasiewicz's monograph amplifies the conviction that Grochowiak's poetic works should be read using new methodologies, which could indicate the poet's innovation in terms of increasing the value of objects and animals as the most important components of his universe. According to the reviewer, what requires justification the most is the need to comment on nearly all poems from the poet's released collections, which is supposed to be facilitated by the researcher's identification of several categories around which his narration centred. The book was divided into two parts. The first part is predominantly chronological, while the second part follows a contextual organisation, which considering the book's size causes problems in the form of repeated discussions of several poems. The reviewer noted the fact that some were subjected to careful reading several times while other, especially those

not released, did not receive a sufficient amount of attention. Additionally, Łukasiewicz did not attempt to define the gravity of the topic of the most recent world war in Grochowiak's output or to reconstruct the poet's polemic with Julian Przyboś during the mature stage of the former's creative life. An in-depth analysis is also demanded for poems discussing the suffering of animals and inter-species community, which Łukasiewicz deemed noteworthy yet his comments to those do not help readers find indications of eco-critical awareness in Grochowiak's works. The new monograph devoted to the output of the author of *Kanon* sheds new light on many problems and biographical contexts as the critic knew the poet, yet some issues require further study. *Poeta Grochowiak* as the crowning of Łukasiewicz's efforts into the study of the poet's output is impressive, yet there is no doubt that a panoramic view does not guarantee noticing every detail, and it is in details that Grochowiak's poetic sensitivity is lodged.

Keywords

Grochowiak, poetry, miserabilism, war, inter-species community.

“to elevate that which is low, to embrace that which
is wretched, to mourn that which is dead”¹

Jacek Łukasiewicz's latest book *Poeta Grochowiak*² may be the major release of 2020. Its significance results from the fact that Łukasiewicz has attempted in it to read Stanisław Grochowiak's poems within a different historical setting, in another period, one which is trademarked by the ever-changing methodological turns and the constantly evolving studies into animals, objects, affects, the Holocaust, remembrance, performativeness, and imagination. Łukasiewicz not only had the task to present the “linguistic beauty” (p. 7) of the artist's poetry or the peculiarity of its poetic persona, but also faced the challenge of reconstructing the major moments which impacted the formal shape and the uniqueness of Grochowiak's idiolect and of uncovering events which constituted the starting points of the author's canonical works (the case of the *Polowanie na cietrzewie*³ narrative poem or of the *Z porannych gazet* poem).

¹ Beata Mytych-Forajter, *Czule punkty Grochowiaka. Szkice i interpretacje* (Katowice: The University of Silesia Press, 2010), 134. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish]

² Jacek Łukasiewicz, *Poeta Grochowiak* (Wrocław: Warstwy Publishing House, 2019). Throughout the text I shall reference quotations from this book by providing page numbers directly after the quoted fragments.

³ Łukasiewicz thus wrote: “In *Polowanie na cietrzewie* there is a first-person narrator. One could assume, then, that it is the author's persona who tells the events from his life. There were even those who assumed that it was a praise of hunting; other, though, thought that the poet acted in defence of animals – the latter were correct. In reality, the first-person narrator was aligned with the author only to some extent; by using him the author has showed how easy it is to succumb to the craze of killing and how easy it is to become infected by it. How easily one can yield to the influence of a higher ranking blood-thirsty officer, a gamekeeper in this case. Actually, the narrative poem is rather an allegory with clear political references to the state-sanctioned killing in Gdynia and other events in the Polish seaside and. It is both

Considering the scale and the argumentation, *Poeta Grochowiak* could be compared to *Twarz Tuwima* by Piotr Matywiecki, as well as the works by Jerzy Kwiatkowski (*Świat poetycki Juliana Przybosa, Poezja Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza na tle dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*). Its significance increases even more considering the fact that 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the publication of *Wybór poezji* [Selected Poetry] in the National Library's series of which Łukasiewicz was the editor. In discussing the details of how the book was developed, the researcher admitted that originally he intended it be smaller and to constitute the form of an introduction to a forthcoming edition of Grochowiak's *Wiersze zebrane*⁴ [Selected Poems]:

When the 40th anniversary of the poet's death was nearing, Jarosław Borowiec, the manager of the Warstwy Publishing House at that time, came to me with a project to publish Grochowiak's *Wiersze zebrane*. I was very pleased. Yet I accepted the task of writing the introduction to the edition with some hesitation. I thought that I would not be able to come up with anything new, that whatever I have ever had to say about his poetry I had already written and published. Yet when I started writing that preface, it started growing and slowly it spread into this hereby book. At this point, I am more than twice as old as Grochowiak was when he died. And throughout those forty years, a new era came. I felt that I was reading those poems somewhat differently, and surely that was the case (490).

Therefore, *Poeta Grochowiak* is a summary of Łukasiewicz's previous studies of Grochowiak's output.⁵ Many fragments can be identified and referenced to their original publications, yet once merged into a larger whole they have their special-purpose associated with their original function (i.e. of a critical commentary or a crowning of an edition of works in the form of an afterword). When summarising his decades-long reading of Grochowiak's poems, Łukasiewicz emphasised the evolution of the poetry of one of the representatives of Pokolenie "Współczesności" [the generation of Polish writers who debuted around 1956]. He was interested in an unbiased view of the poet's output as a whole and therefore he divided the study into two complementary parts: in the first one, he offered an overview of all Grochowiak's poems arranged chronologically; while in the second part, he identified four categories (two relational and two autonomous) which focussed the discussion of Grochowiak's imaginative predisposition. That strategy

a private account, a personal confession of the narrator, and a generalization – that is because it could be, and rightly so, applied to all similar major events in the world. The date inscribed in *Bilard* underneath the poem (Grochowiak rarely placed a date if it was not necessary) is significant. Sadly, though, and I am surprised by that, this was rarely read this way, i.e. it was read incorrectly," (247–248). The narrative poem *Polowanie na cietrzewie* was also discussed by Anita Jarzyna, *Post-koiné. Studia o nieantropocentrycznych językach (poetyckich)* (Łódź: The University of Lodz Press, 2019), 311–329.

⁴ Stanisław Grochowiak, *Wiersze zebrane*, vol. 1–2, selected and edited by Beata Symbier, introduction by Jacek Łukasiewicz (Wrocław: Warstwy Publishing House, 2017).

⁵ Vide also Jacek Łukasiewicz, *Grochowiak i obrazy* (Wrocław: Wrocław University Press, 2002).

enabled Łukasiewicz to thoroughly discuss almost all Grochowiak's poems and extract the poet's worldview, and to defend the poet's distinct idiolect in which other researchers saw references to, e.g. the Baroque⁶, Surrealism,⁷ Avant-Garde attitudes stemming directly from Julian Przyboś,⁸ and broadly-defined tradition,⁹ thus defining Grochowiak's poetry as being "syncretic."¹⁰ The best summary of Grochowiak's poetic strategy was offered by Jan Pieszczachowicz, who juxtaposed his works with the works by Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz:

J.M. Rymkiewicz misses the old order and hopes it could be reintroduced today, even at the cost of ironic dissonance and distance. Grochowiak has no such delusions. He remembers that that is only a mythical construct constantly being modelled anew. His works constitute a requiem for paradise. His intention is to strip the fake gold plating of the paradise props by introducing them into a different context, by clashing them with ugliness and brutalising conventional beauty. Kwiatkowski was correct in arguing that the poet enjoyed the effect of surprise, incredibility even, that he loved violent oppositions, and that he married the tragic with the comical and the exalted with the prosaic. As a result, there exists a complex dialectic of oppositions, a disharmonious harmony if you will, and the higher the strength of an opposition, the calmer, paradoxically, the poems seem. Different spheres attract as opposing electrical charges.¹¹

The contradictions discussed by Pieszczachowicz were also emphasised by Łukasiewicz: "The contrasts in *Ballada rycerska* are sometimes already there, nestled in culture. That is the juxtaposition of Sancho Panza and Don Quixote (*Don Quixote*). He rejects the exhausting Romantic love hankering. He chose not the gallant dreamer knight-errant but the boorish squire full of coarse realism" (23). In the introduction to *Wybór poezji* the researcher enumerated several series of contrasts which excluded Grochowiak from the

⁶ Kazimierz Wyka, "Barok, groteska i inni poeci," in idem, *Rzecz wyobraźni*, 2nd edition extended (Warsaw: State Publishing Institute, 1977).

⁷ Jan Pieszczachowicz, "Harmonia i dysharmonia," in idem, *Pegaz na rozdrożu. Szkice o poezji współczesnej* (Łódź: Łódzkie Publishing House, 1991), 390; Jerzy Kwiatkowski, "Ciemne wiersze Grochowiaka," in idem, *Magia poezji (O poetach polskich XX wieku)*, selected by Maria Podraza-Kwiatkowska and Anna Lebkowska, afterword by Marian Stala (Kraków: Literary Publishing House, 1995), 229.

⁸ Jacek Łukasiewicz (idem: "Wstęp," in Stanisław Grochowiak, *Wybór poezji*, Jacek Łukasiewicz (Wrocław-Warsaw-Kraków: Ossoliński National Institute, 2000), XXVIII) wrote: "Grochowiak, who thought highly of Przyboś's poetry, wanted to establish a genuine dispute, join a competition. So in *Ikar* he not only responded to the opinion journalistic *Oda do turpistów*, but also, through his poetry, to Przyboś's (entire) poetry. He juxtaposed Przyboś's beauty with his, Przyboś's autonomous vision with his, similarly autonomous and integral, and at the same time, according to himself, better related to the modern emotion." The core of the Przyboś-Grochowiak dispute consisted of a study of the condition of post-WWII poetry and of the ability to translate those experiences into poetry."

⁹ Jerzy Kwiatkowski, *Ciemne wiersze Grochowiaka*, 231.

¹⁰ Jan Błoński, "Fetyszysta brzydoty," in idem: *Zmiana warty* (Warsaw: State Publishing Institute, 1961).

¹¹ Pieszczachowicz, *Harmonia i dysharmonia*, 385–386.

circle of poets suspected of their affinity towards socialist realism: "All of Grochowiak's works feature a poetic persona who is, on the one hand, sick and marked by disability and ugliness, and, on the other, healthy and full of virility and strength. One who is driven by self-destructive forces on the one hand, and who displays extreme vitality on the other. Together both sides form a rebel poetic persona."¹²

One could find many more instances of contrast. Those apply to both the selection of forms (the turn to haiku in the poet's late period) and his intentional selection of extensive narrative poetry. Those contrasts also helped him assume to appropriate position regarding the issue of solidarity with the oppressed (*Wykorzystanie muła*), the role of art (*Ikar*), and, finally, to merge Western and Eastern traditions in *Haiku-images*.

The monograph of Grochowiak's works offers a chance to view him as an engaged poet who supported a vision of the world in which the top position is occupied by miserabilism¹³ and everything which is frail, weak or, as a result of the prevailing conviction of human dominance, marginalised. The body and eroticism give way to other topics, though they are not ousted entirely. Grochowiak's almost every poem presents a different vision of corporeality, which lead to musings orbiting the issue of the passage of time, women's changing beauty (*Dwunasty listopad*), absence (*Wdowiec*¹⁴), or the possibility of art (*Gdy już nic nie zostanie*). Some visions are more persistent than others and they must be studied again (the image of women¹⁵ walking over the poet who were as "beautiful as vases," which opens the poem *Czulość albo Guliwer* from *Kanon* volume). One could venture to define two areas which in Grochowiak's poetry may be interconnected. One applies to the problems of death, mourning, *tempus devorans*, and the failings of the body and its aesthetic potential. The other collects all that applies to the community, history, and the past war. To be able to talk about some completeness one would need to consider the face of Grochowiak the aesthete and Grochowiak the moralist. The latter the poet revealed in *Agresty*:

Such poems as *Potów*, *Kolęda*, which has received various interpretations, or (bombarded) *Miasto* [City] carry an air of terror; they feature

¹² Jan Łukasiewicz, "Wstęp," in Stanisław Grochowiak, *Wybór poezji*, XIX-XX.

¹³ The poet used the term when commenting upon poems by Białoszewski: "How else can you understand the attraction of Białoszewski's initial poems if not because of their special kind of miserabilism, which in this country has always been an experience shared by all?"

¹⁴ He thus remarked on *Wdowiec* by Przemysław Czapliński: "Therefore, man for another man is food, that is why remembrance turns into physical non-satiation, which settles for material substitutes. Longing, pain and suffering have their sources in the corporeal experience of non-satiation and hunger, and all emotions related to the deceased become translated into the language of the body, into somatics." Idem, "Śmierć, albo o znikaniu - Stanisław Grochowiak," in idem, *Mikrologi ze śmiercią. Motywy tanatyczne we współczesnej literaturze polskiej* (Poznań: Poznań Polish Studies, 2001), 54. The poem was also discussed carefully in: Ewelina Suszek, *Figuracje braku i nieobecności. Miłobędzka - Białoszewski - Kozioł* (Kraków: Universitas, 2020), 267-284.

¹⁵ A study of Grochowiak's poems which feature submissive women subject to the will of a director enables one to conclude that the poet was inspired by the Surrealists.

transformations of the recollections of a child which survived the Warsaw Uprising. There are also moral situations, which can be related to the modern history of the 20th century. Those poems touch upon eschatology: a futile redemptive sacrifice (*Kołęda*) or the deceit of Moses who in the poem did not part the waters of the Red Sea but he allowed Jews to die in its waves saving himself (*Połów*) (107).

If one adds to this listing the poems *Penelopa przyniesie*¹⁶ (remaining in its manuscript form, concluding with a frenetic ending: „Penelopa przyniesie mężulkowi i cukier / Gdy mężulek ma pracę nad zarżnięciem Żydka” [Penelope shall bring her hubby sugar, too / When the hubby has to work to kill the Jew]) and *Placz Żyda*¹⁷ from *Ballada rycerska volume*, a broad array of topics emerge in which borderline situations and their consequences constituted Grochowiak’s *idée fixe*. Łukasiewicz rarely commented upon poems which applied to wartime recollections, though he did indicate the significance of the poem “Mamy tych braci...,” the poet’s reaction to the events of March 1968, and the keen interest in the manner of the functioning of a Nazi in situations which required complete devotion (the novel *Trismus*). Many poems devoted to the Second World War were based on the mood, e.g. *Ile może człowiek*: “A za nim płonęło stutysięczne miasto / Żołnierze ostrzyli na progach bagnety / Na rozgrzanych dachach tańczyły niedźwiedzie / I dęba stawały gwałcone kobiety”¹⁸ [And behind him a city of 100,000 people burnt / Soldiers sharpened their bayonets on thresholds / Bears danced on the hot roofs / And raped women stood straight]. The *Wiersze nieznanne i rozproszone* collection includes a poem *W porządku*, which assumed the form of a faux dialogue between God and people and features a distinct discrepancy between two enumerations depicting humankind and the special concessions and promises concluding in a confirmation of the reason behind giving humans a state susceptible to being harmed (“wasze ciała wystawione są na wiatr, bakterie i automaty” [your bodies are exposed to the wind, bacteria and machine guns]) and the elimination of any delusions regarding the application of any concessions, respectively: “Ale kiedy wam daję jeszcze dziesięć lat życia, / Obiecuję piękne kobiety, piwniczkę z burgundem i Riwierę, / Kiedy każdemu wmawiam duszę, sublimację i marzenie / A kobietom

¹⁶ Stanisław Grochowiak, “Penelopa przyniesie,” in idem, *Wiersze nieznanne i rozproszone*, selection, introduction, and commentary by J. Łukasiewicz (Wrocław: Society of the Friends of Polish Studies in Wrocław, 1996), 181.

¹⁷ Kazimierz Wyka thus commented on the poem: *Placz Żyda*, filled with genuine human compassion, is clearly based on the covert structure of a monologue by a Jew delivered in poor and ridiculous Polish, in a language and expressions which could be arguments offered by zoological anti-Semites. This particular contrast makes the reading significantly new and fairly typical for Grochowiak, one which is truly his. Somewhat like *Dwojra Zielona* in Nałkowska’s *Medallions*, translated into poetry.” Idem, “Barok, groteska i inni poeci,” in idem, *Rzecz wyobraźni*, 193. It could be difficult to avoid the impression that that which for the critic was a clear asset today might be an argument in support of the thesis about a breaking of an ethical line as the “Jewspeak” tainted the Jew’s monologue and assigned a particular classification in the eyes of a goy who did not experience his fate.

¹⁸ Stanisław Grochowiak, “Ile może człowiek,” in idem, *Menuet z pogrzebaczem* (Kraków: Literary Publishing House, 1958), 30.

czas wolny od gwałtu i rodzenia, / Kiedy maluję obraz ziemi bez waszych zbrodni i cierpień, / Powiedzmy: bez tych większych, sięgających w miliony – / Wtedy / Na pewno nie jestem w porządku. // W porządku / Stworzenia”¹⁹ [But when I give you another ten years, / When I promise you beautiful women, a cellar with Burgundy and the Riviera, / When I convince every one of you of having a soul, sublimation and a dream / And I promise women time free of rape and childbirth, / When I paint an image of the Earth without your crimes and suffering, / Let’s say: without those major ones, reaching millions – / Then / Surely I’m not all right // All right / Creatures]. The poem was written in the period 1957–1963, so it could be included in one of the first volumes or it could extend the list of poems in the *Agresty* collection, which focussed on moral dilemmas.

Grochowiak suggested that the fact of the emergence of humans at the final stage of God’s creative work in the Book of Genesis should put them in self-wonderment and cause them to use the term “the crown of creation.” The poet once again exceeded his time placing animals in the centre of his universe making them susceptible to harm and assigning to them the imperative of care. A fragment of the *Zen* haiku summarises the discussion of the true nature of humans and their inclination to assign human qualities on animals: “Pomówiliśmy zwierzęta o nas samych – a one nas nie odepchnęły”²⁰ [We accused animals of being like us – and yet they did not reject us].

It is clear, then, that the poet equally diagnosed human physical and moral conditions; he left no illusions to his readers when he wrote his poems *Stary, Wykorzystanie muła*,²¹ *Lekcja fauny*,²² and *Ogród malca*,²³ in which animals know more yet they remain under human control, a fact which is best illustrated by the first text: “Mięso jego dadzą psom / Ze skóry zrobią rzemienie / Z włosia wyciory do armat / Z zębów guziki // Tyle ludzie z konia umieli wycisnąć / I tyle tylko dla dobra ojczyzny”²⁴ [They’ll give his meat to the dogs / They’ll make straps from his skin / Cannon ramrods from his hair / Buttons from his teeth // That’s how much humans could squeeze out of a horse / And just so much for the good of the homeland]. His poems about animals could be divided into two groups: the first consists of all the narratives about “the lives of the martyrs,”²⁵ while the other consists of all those which emphasised animals’ defencelessness (*Elegia oborska, Żółw*). *Haiku-images* features actual animals and symbolic ones, wild animals and those which had been tamed, and animals which remained autonomous and those which had been anthropomorphised. It was the poet’s final posthumous collection that Łukasiewicz discussed in a comprehensive manner considering references to earlier poems, which has been completely satisfying because of the assumed micrological perspective. In the researcher’s interpretation, every

¹⁹ Grochowiak, “W porządku,” in idem, *Wiersze nieznanne i rozproszone*, 140.

²⁰ Grochowiak, “Zen,” in idem, *Wybór poezji*, 262.

²¹ The poem was included in the collection *Menuet z pogrzebaczem*.

²² Printed: *Nowa Kultura*, issue 13 (1964).

²³ Printed: *Życie Literackie*, issue 16, (1976).

²⁴ Grochowiak, “Stary,” in idem, *Wiersze nieznanne i rozproszone*, 127.

²⁵ Éric Baratay, *Zwierzęta w okopach. Zapomniane historie*, trans. Barbara Brzezicka (Gdańsk: Publishing House in the Courtyard, 2017).

word requires reflection and philological exposition, though he did not avoid the danger of literariness when discussing the word “obracać”: “«Obracać kogoś» in the vulgar colloquial vernacular means to have sex with someone, though that may be understood in a much more general manner” (261). It is puzzling why his first association was one which has little to do with wandering instead of an association with the shape of a circle, which is extremely significant in the interpretation of *Wędrowiec*. It is surprising how close to each other in Łukasiewicz’s book there appear fragments which indicate his respect for Grochowiak’s poetry, based on which one could call the researcher a spokesperson of the poetry, and failed fragments which tell readers more about the interpreter than about the poetry.

Grochowiak’s output also includes two poems about human-animal friendship between a dog and a human.²⁶ Łukasiewicz treated them with restraint. He has not assigned them the status of texts focussed on ethological details defining the trajectory of post-humanistic imagination, one which is hospitable and centred on figures which usually remain outside the frame.

Both came from the mature period of the poet’s creative life and they remained in their manuscript form. Also, both are associated with the aspect of human corporeality, which was probably the most important for Grochowiak, i.e. the smell (the poems *Czyści* and *Tęsknota za świeżością*). In *Suka*, the lyrical narration is conducted in third person singular; the title ‘suka’ [a bitch] “nie opuści żadnej z przewin ani grzechów”²⁷ [shall not omit any trespass or sin] even though “prosi o parol” [she asks for password/word of honour] (dictionaries indicate at least two meanings of the word: a secret password or a word of honour). She is touching, disciplined, and devoted. Grochowiak drew a portrait of a silent friend for whom the olfactory domain is the most important since smell is a special kind of identification, and the sense of smell enables one to study who leans towards naturalness and who towards artificiality, and the poet did not evaluate sweat (and other smells) negatively. Grochowiak was also the author of one of the most poignant poems written from a dog’s perspective:

Przychodzę do Tego Dużego -	I come up to the Big One -
Co jest TAJEMNE -	Which is SECRET -
Czym dziwniej tym bardziej	The stranger it is, the more
Ma nakazów wiele:	Commands there are:
DAJ ŁAPĘ DAJ GŁOS NIE DOTYKAJ	PAW, BARK, PLEASE DON'T TOUCH
[PROSZĘ	master
pan	
(..)	(..)

²⁶ Grochowiak, “Pies z tarasu nad jeziorem,” in idem, *Nie było lata* (Warsaw: Czytelnik Publishing House, 1969), 55–56.

²⁷ Grochowiak, “Suka,” in idem, *Wiersze nieznanne i rozproszone*, 325.

A teraz usiadł Przygarnął mnie bokiem Bierze w dwa dotyki moją dolną szczękę	And now he sat down He pulled me to his side Takes in two touches my lower jaw
Ach jak wybornie znalazł CIEPŁE [GNIAZDKO MIĘDZY FAŁDĄ GARDŁA i mrowiskiem [pcheł Jakże tam wsunął Swoj pękaty palec pan	Oh, how perfectly he found A WARM [NEST BETWEEN THE THROAT FOLD and [a nest of fleas Oh, how he slid there His bulging finger master
Lekki podmuch potu Przewaga [- i mięśnie Których się boję Bo gdyby TAK ścisnął Byłoby WSZYSTKO czego nie rozumiem	A slight whiff of sweat Dominance - and [muscles That I'm afraid of Because if he decides to squeeze There would be EVERYTHING I don't [understand
On zaś - że samotny - długo krąży dłonią (Tym pięciomięsem które lubi psisko)	And he - being lonely - circles his palm [long (That five meater that the dog likes)
(...) ²⁸	(...)

The dog watches its master attentively and carefully smells him. It is devoted and selfless. The result Grochowiak achieved is a mirror image of all the narratives in which humans try to guess animals' thoughts and intentions, yet the poet used a special measure of a dog's engagement, i.e. smell. The attempt to assume the perspective of another being is credible and touching; especially the fragment about the strength residing in human hands which can be released at any moment makes one think about the narrow cognition of the animal, which places in humans all its love and yet it is afraid of death at the hand of its master. For the animal, death would be everything there would be, yet it cannot imagine the complete experience of the transition. The word "wszystko" connotes brutality, i.e. the act of attacking a friend, with which the animal is not familiar. For Grochowiak, the dog was the embodiment of goodness and truth while the possible consequences of actions, remorse and suffering inscribed in agony were suggestively indicated in that "wszystko," which exceeds a dog's perception, and in the case of humans it appears too little too late.

The one who was the defender of animals and the spokesman of all frail beings said about himself: "Ja - który ptakom paznokcia nie złamię" [I, who

²⁸ Grochowiak, „Pies i Mozart,” in idem, *Wiersze nieznanne i rozproszone*, 221-222.

would not crack a bird's nail] (396). That is one of the major self-depictions of the poetic persona of Grochowiak's poetry, someone who is strong and certain of their merit on the one hand, yet who is lost and who wished for all the sources of evil to be eradicated, on the other. Animals in Grochowiak's poetry constitute a fascinating topic and still demand a separate study²⁹, yet Łukasiewicz made the issue more familiar and assigned it the proper status despite not having the appropriate bibliography or coherence (the topic of animals appears in several fragments and is clearly dispersed). The most important discussion of the animal element in Grochowiak's poetry is included in the final chapter of the first part, which was supplemented in the second part with a separate commentary on animals and angels. The small part devoted to *Haiku-images* offers a complete view of the phenomenon and enables one to trace the affiliations between individual poetic volumes, and it offers other researchers and essayists a starting point for further supplements and commentary.

Haiku-images includes a different view of animals, which are particularly valuable participants of the metaphorised world of the poetry (vide 270); Łukasiewicz thus explained the phrase "Nie mam nic lepszego do usprawiedliwienia" [There is nothing better to excuse] which appears in *Biżuteria, Chrabąszcze, Ptaki* and *Pisarstwo*:

Initially, it may seem that that is an instance of grammatical incorrectness, that it should read "na usprawiedliwienie" [for an excuse]. Yet later you realise that one needs to justify "driving oxen" in a harness or locking beetles in cages, otherwise those actions of mine would remain unrighteous. But you could also read it like this: "rustling boxes" are not cages in which beetles are tormented, but rather they are favourable and tender to them short yet capacious *haiku-images* and their cycles (270).

His limitless imagination (both in aesthetic and moral terms) made Grochowiak one of the most original poets of *Pokolenie Współczesności*, as well as ensured for him a place in the canon of 20th-century poetry. When browsing the poems collected in his initial poetic volumes one could venture a statement that Grochowiak was always interested in modern times even though he often used poetic costumes and stylisation, which generated for him both supporters and opponents.³⁰ According to Grochowiak poetry is not a simple act of giving an account of emotions and moods but it is often a masterful act of constructing equivalent images which are more effective than if framed *expressis verbis*.

²⁹ Beata Mytych-Forajter, *Czule punkty Grochowiaka*, 87–108, 119–135.

³⁰ His poetry became the focus of various attacks, e.g. in 1974 by Julian Kornhauser and Adam Zagajewski in *Świat nie przedstawiony*. Łukasiewicz defends Grochowiak's independent imagination: "At the turn of the 1970s new-wave critics often interpreted those intermediations as acts of avoidance, instances of conformism, and a shift of ethics to the background to highlight poetics, which could not have been true as in the years of the "thaw" each instance of choosing patterns other than those of socialist realism became an act of political rebellion (obvious for readers). In fact, the very fact of creating such a role each time had a moral character. It was associated with a moral and political strategy within a totalitarian system," (508).

It was sometimes intimate and restrained, while in other instances it was exuberant and it exceeded the limits defined in the poems from the collections *Ballada rycerska*, *Menuet z pogrzebaczem* or *Kanon*.³¹ Despite everything it was always sensory, focussed on details, and it hailed the intimate parts of the human body which regardless of the context were always intriguing or even beautiful, e.g. the back as an erogenous zone, yet also physically burdened and strained; they appeared in the poem *Oda – plecy*: “Maleńki, ogłupiały – z ogarkiem drżącej świecy / Przekradam się przez plecy”³² [Tiny, bewildered – with a stub of a trembling candle / I sneak over the back], in *Ikar*: “Kobieta czuje kręgosłup jak lunę”³³ [The woman feel her spine like a glow], and in *Elegia oborska*: “Więc niech będą błogosławione plecy: rozległe plantacje nerwów”³⁴ [So may the back be blessed: an extensive plantation of nerves].

Therefore, one could consider Grochowiak as the originator of the apoloia of the beauty of the human body which despite including some defects, being tired and exhausted (as in the poem *Bellini 'Pieta'*), retains its undeniable charm (the poet usually indicated the details of a woman's face within a macro scale, as in the poem *Pocątunek – Krajobraz*).

Łukasiewicz devoted a separate chapter to the notion of somaticity of Grochowiak's poetry (*Człowiek – zewnętrzne obrazy ciała*); in the manner of an overview, he discussed in it the quantitative and qualitative advantage of specific elements of human physiognomy in individual poetic volumes. One could, of course, inquire about the legitimacy of comparing the images of the human body, yet the intuition that it is that particular item that holds the whole of human morality, that through the medium of the body it is possible to apply solidarity with the weaker and the rejected, and, finally, that it is necessary to come to terms with the inevitability of one's fate and the process of decay after their death, legitimises the researcher's stock taking. The act of tracing the images of the body (with particular focus on the face, the back, nostrils, and lips) is usually accompanied by a commentary which considers the significance of a specific part of the body. An undeniable advantage of Łukasiewicz's monograph is its appreciation of touch, which in Grochowiak's poetry dethrones sight:

It is not sight, or hearing, or smell, but rather touch that appears most important in this poetry; it decides about its tension, dynamics, and, in combination with the experiences from other senses, it adds to its originality proving its value. The touch of lips, while remaining intimate, somewhat verifies bonds between others. It applies to all relations in this poetic world: with people, animals, and objects – everything that a tender (sensitive) touch can experience and reciprocate in such a tender touch (320).

³¹ Jacek Łukasiewicz, “Allende – czyli o umieraniu,” in idem, *Oko poematu* (Wrocław: Lower Silesian Publishing House, 1991).

³² Grochowiak, “Oda – plecy,” in idem, *Menuet z pogrzebaczem*, 38.

³³ Grochowiak, “Ikar,” in idem, *Agresty* (Warsaw: Czytelnik Publishing House, 1963), 8.

³⁴ Grochowiak, “Elegia oborska,” in idem, *Wybór poezji*, 185.

It is around touch that Grochowiak's main category of tenderness is centred, having the traits of an ethical imperative.³⁵ "Dignity requiring distance and tenderness striving for intimacy are Grochowiak's major two virtues, two human needs, two conditions of humanity – which demand a source confirmation in Transcendence," (429).

Łukasiewicz has argued that Grochowiak's poetry could be read through the prism of proxemics, a fact he indicated several times, yet the poet's works are also open to post-humanistic readings and readings with the application of *non-violent civil resistance studies* (Łukasiewicz only signalled that possibility). The release of the new monograph on Grochowiak's poetry is a pretext to pose a question about the validity of the selection of one of two narrations: one (hermetic) would focus only on literary output, while the other would discuss contexts and utilise the latest methodologies. It is also worth indicating that many of the problems which pestered Grochowiak's time have remained valid, and that his works emerged at a special time when the memories of a past war existed side by side with the oppressive nature of socialist realism and the so-called March events. Additionally, many poems which have been considered canonical still require micrological readings and embedding them within the context of the works of Grochowiak's peers and philosophy, while Łukasiewicz's study constitutes in this respect "an invitation to the topic." An author who decides to take a position regarding such an extensive and already commented upon output has to make the decision whether to downsize the material and the selection criterion should be the degree of its study in previous compendia or approach the entire output (which would require the author to consider all research positions). Łukasiewicz made meticulous references to studies by Anna R. Burzyńska³⁶, Beata Mytych-Forajter³⁷, Michał Nawrocki³⁸, and Piotr Łuszczkiewicz³⁹, yet he did not hide the fact that his readings would be a kind of a recapitulation of his previous studies of Grochowiak's poetry and that it would be "tainted" due to his long-term familiarity with the poet. Therefore, the researcher made the following conclusion in the initial sections of his book:

We were eleven when I met him. I read many of his poems before they were published. I have discussed Grochowiak's poetry, also in print, many times, both while he was still alive, and after his death. In terms of my date of birth, and certainly in mental terms, I belong to his era. That is why I cannot identify with today's young readers who start at a different

³⁵ The category of tenderness was discussed by B. Mytych-Forajter, *Czułe punkty Grochowiaka*, 27–42.

³⁶ Anna Róża Burzyńska, *Małe dramaty. Teatralność liryki Stanisława Grochowiaka* (Kraków: Academic Bookshop, 2012). See also idem, *Maska twarzy. Twórczość dramatyczna Stanisława Grochowiaka* (Kraków: Academic Bookshop, 2011).

³⁷ Beata Mytych-Forajter, *Czułe punkty Grochowiaka*.

³⁸ Michał Nawrocki, "Tego się nauczą każdy, kto dotykasz próżni." *Rzecz o poezji Stanisława Grochowiaka* (Kraków: Arcana Publishing House, 2007).

³⁹ Piotr Łuszczkiewicz, *Książę erotyku. O poezji miłosnej Stanisława Grochowiaka* (Warsaw: Latona Press, 1995).

time, with their generational experiences, their education, formation, internal problems, and mostly with the types of their sensitivity and with the reception of poetry (6).

That confession is key as it explains why Łukasiewicz decided in the first part to discuss Grochowiak's works volume by volume, while in the second part he applied a different model of reading (clearly a more fortunate one).

A re-reading of Grochowiak's poems should consider both the principle of close reading, and the opportunities offered by modern humanities.⁴⁰ Łukasiewicz has stressed many times that he is interested in a comprehensive grasp of Grochowiak's poetry, which is why in various instances he returned to poems which had already received excellent studies only to compare them and global conclusions. For instance, that applies to parts devoted to the categories of homeland, which for Grochowiak was significant both in personal and community terms, as well as to the categories of *mise en abyme*, and meta-literariness.⁴¹ Even though neither of the monograph's parts departs from the standards of academic writing, the problem-focussed part which abandons the chronological order may not be more important but it certainly is more ingeniously developed; that sense may be triggered by the array of topics raised in it, and the realisation that a story must come to an end as its protagonist gradually departs.

Łukasiewicz has a genuine talent for narration. The second part is not modelled on the principles of classical hagiography; it includes details regarding the poet's alcohol abuse and his painful experience of losing his child and his sister, coming to terms with the events which occurred in his lifetime, and the recollections of his childhood. Grochowiak was a person who conveyed the tumultuous nature of his life in his poems. Writing was actually in his case an act of 'życiopisanie' [writing equalling the writer's life] and Łukasiewicz emphasised that quality of the complementing nature of biography and output. In the *Poeta Grochowiak* monograph, it would be difficult to find some emotional shallows, easy evaluations, or unjust opinions. Everything is settled with philological precision, thanks to which the book adds many valuable details to the existing bibliographies on Grochowiak's works. The value of Łukasiewicz's book should be measured in the layers which he keeps uncovering within the process of micrological readings of Grochowiak's poems. The more he uncovers, the greater the surprise is in the image of Grochowiak that emerges. One cannot avoid the temptation to term it as a valuable journey to the source of Grochowiak's poetry.

⁴⁰ Ryszard Nycz, *Kultura jako czasownik. Sondowanie nowej humanistyki* (Kraków: The Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2017).

⁴¹ The category of meta-poeticness in Grochowiak's output was the focus of a doctoral dissertation by Patrycja Kaleta-Łuczynowicz entitled *Metapoezja. O świadomości twórczej Stanisława Grochowiaka*. Many of her findings and acute readings of meta-poetic forms supplement Łukasiewicz's discussion. The analytical and interpretative sections devoted to the *Haiku-images* collection are particularly significant and excellently documented. They extract the uniqueness of Grochowiak's creative strategy in the context of other authors who utilised the genre of haiku.

In *Poeta Grochowiak*, the interpreter's passion is combined with the stipulation to remember the poet as a superior organiser of cultural life who suffered more than most and who died prematurely. As Łukasiewicz knew Grochowiak personally,⁴² he seems the best candidate to write a book about the life and works of one of the most diligent Polish writers of the 20th century (his writing was not limited to poetry: he was also the author of plays,⁴³ short stories,⁴⁴ novels,⁴⁵ and an apocrypha micro-novel⁴⁶; his works surviving in manuscript and those published in journals total several hundred poems⁴⁷). The poems surviving only in manuscripts are in no ways inferior to the poems included in poetic collections. The extent of Grochowiak's imagination was impressive as each collection brought formal, genological and thematic changes, deviations from the *début* volume, new self-thematic forms, and new ways of supporting moral order. Łukasiewicz's division, which he proposed in the introduction to Grochowiak's *Wybór poezji*, still holds:

Grochowiak's works could be divided into several periods: the early period, which concluded in the 1956 collection *Ballada rycerska*; the second period – a period of mature grotesque or “turpist” period, covering *Menuet z po-grzebaczem*, *Rozbieranie do snu* and the first part of *Agresty*; the third period – a period of classicisation, which began with the second part of *Agresty* (sonnets and narrative poems), covering the *Kanon* volume and finding its fulfilment in *Nie było lata*, and, finally, the fourth period, the final one, which began with *Polowanie na cietrzewie* and which lasted until his death.⁴⁸

Yet those periods function only as waypoints within his artistic biography; the poet often made references in new stages to his works from his previous stages (the recurring theme of Burns and several images of Virgin Mary, e.g. in *Modlitwa*, *Madonna obrażona*, *Antyfona* and in the poem *Bellini 'Pieta'*, and poems which applied conversations with God). Przemysław Czapliński offered a similarly apt opinion about the periodisation of Grochowiak's poetry:

(...) in *Kanon* and in the *Nie było lata* collection the New Poet was born – not only meaning a poet who wrote differently, who practised poetry differently, but also meaning someone who was aware of his distinctness and

⁴² Grochowiak dedicated the poem *Ogród* from the *Rozbieranie do snu* collection to Łukasiewicz.

⁴³ Stanisław Grochowiak, *Rzeczy na głosy* (Poznań: Poznań Publishing House, 1966); idem, *Dialogi* (Warsaw: State Publishing Institute, 1975).

⁴⁴ Grochowiak, *Lamentnice*, afterword by Stanisław Rembek (Warsaw: PAX Publishing Institute, 1958). Vide also idem, *Prozy*, edited by Jacek Łukasiewicz (Warsaw: Atena Publishing House, 1996).

⁴⁵ Grochowiak, *Plebania z magnoliami* (Warsaw: PAX Publishing Institute, 1956); idem, *Karabiny* (Warsaw: MON Publishing House, 1965).

⁴⁶ Grochowiak, *Trismus* (Warsaw: Iskry Publishing House, 1963). This apocryphan was discussed by, e.g. Edward Balcerzan, “Przygoda trzecia: apokryfy niemieckie,” in idem, *Przygody człowieka książkowego (ogólne i szczególne)* (Warsaw: PEN Publishing House, 1990).

⁴⁷ Jacek Łukasiewicz, “Wstęp,” in S. Grochowiak, *Wiersze nieznane i rozproszone*.

⁴⁸ Łukasiewicz, “Wstęp,” in S. Grochowiak, *Wybór poezji*, XVIII.

who wanted that change to be read from his poems. That change, within the dimension of worldview – which is most interesting for me – applied mainly to his attitude to death: death became the source of new wisdom impelling him to seek values which exceed life. Transcendence, previously excluded or negated by Grochowiak, returned under various guises and in various areas. In aesthetic terms, *natura devorans* gave way to *natura docta*, and also the truth of meat, ugliness and blood flow, i.e. a special manner of understanding realism, lost its dominance, and the place of acute aesthetic categories, included within the realm of turpism (or anti-aestheticism), was taken by gravity and loftiness. Grochowiak strived to retrieve absolute meaning.⁴⁹

The change identified by the author of *Poruszona mapa* also applied to other topics, e.g. attitude towards women (poems from his mature period are dignified, the women are subject to self-nominisation, and they no longer act as per the instructions of the director), poet's obligations, his place in the world and the society, and his lost childhood. All those topics did appear, of course, with different intensities in his earlier creative periods yet in his mature works the change applied to the tone even if the props and the scenery did not always change.

The poet remained in a constant dialogue with Przyboś. In *Kanon* he referred to the poem *Jesień 1942* as the second poem of the collection, which is absent from the 2000 *Wybór poezji*. The avant-garde artist's version reads: "Oto / trzymam w dłoni jabłko tak prawdziwie, / że władam, / rzeczy tknięte moim wzruszeniem przytaczają się słownie –"⁵⁰ [Here / I hold in my hand an apple so true, / that I wield, / things touched by my emotion cite themselves in words –]. During the Second World War, Przyboś did not change his poetics. His poems were dominated by optimism, which was a trademark of the poet in a period which was marked by moderation and extinguishing egocentric attitudes. The poem begins with an introduction, which located the poet in the centre of fateful events: "Nadciąga zagłada! – / a ja kłonię gałąź jabłoni: / ukrywam się w podziwie..." [Extermination is coming! – / and I'm bowing an apple tree's branch: / I'm hiding in admiration...]. Grochowiak's apple did not connote royalty, but it rather referred to the category of tenderness: "Tylko jabłko wstydliwie czeka przy mej twarzy / Struchlała główka / Tej przyszłej staruszki"⁵¹ [Only the apple waits shyly by my face / Blenched head / Of the future old timer]. The poem is an amalgam of several images and two portraits: a dreamed one and a real one, searching for bodily "sensitive points." Grochowiak did not follow Przyboś's victorious path – when facing war all you can do is protect that which is frail and tiny and turn towards everydayness. They both found ways for coping with war, though one of them turned to the macro scale (see Przyboś's poem *Niosąc ziemię* on the sense of titanichness), while the other turned to the micro

⁴⁹ Przemysław Czapliński, *Śmierć, albo o znikaniu*, 41.

⁵⁰ Julian Przyboś, "Jesień 1942," in idem, *Rzut pionowy. Wybór wierszy* (Kraków: Czytelnik Publishing House, 1952), 158.

⁵¹ Grochowiak, "Jabłko," in idem, *Kanon* (Warsaw: State Publishing Institute, 1965), 7.

scale. Przyboś took control in unfavourable conditions while Grochowiak enacted an apologia with a different scope. Such polemics revealed not only the differences in the modes of talking about that which was painful but also the differences resulting from the characters of both poets, the time, and the place from where they watched the outcomes of war. Optimism was confronted with despair. It is worth noting Marian Kisiel's remark who when discussing the canonical *Modlitwa* from Grochowiak's debut collection stressed its entreating character:

Modlitwa is an invitation to read, *Ballada rycerska*, Stanisław Grochowiak's first poetic collection, something of the *artis poeticae* sort (that phrase, which later became famous, about "ciemne wiersze" [dark poems]), and, at the same time, a natural prayer for "even the slightest glare" in poems which emerged from the tempest of despair. That final trait, though not always a fundamental element of critical studies, is extremely important. It refers to the beginning of Grochowiak's writing and to his generation, the beginnings so strongly marked by political pressure. "Dark poems" emerged then as a natural counterbalance for "wiersze świetlane" [luminous poems] (in the socialist realism style); they contained the potential of unrest which could not be expressed in any other way.⁵²

The juxtaposition of the two worldviews revealed two completely different modes of perception of art. According to Przyboś, art could not be deprived of its proper entourage (hence, the attitude of an archpoet uncertain of the near future yet domineering and, at the same time, liberated, unburdened by the crimes of humans against other humans), while according to Grochowiak "an artist is obliged (...) to keep his feet on the ground, which is why poetry should always be the act of learning to walk."⁵³

Despite the fact that the new monograph on Grochowiak's poetry restores his proper place in literary history and defines the trajectories of possible new interpretations of his poetic output, a few fragments raise some doubts, though not considering their underlying concepts or the accuracy of the readings of individual poems, but considering the attempt to decrease the value of the poet's words. After quoting Grochowiak's words from the text *Za każdym razem prawo do rozumu*, in which the poet discussed the events from April 1943 outside the context of the nationalities of those who died and those who were observed, which should not be surprising as that is a manner which offers more benefit when trying to come closer to the experiences of the victims than categorisation.

By choosing universalistic narration, Grochowiak avoided polarisation, which normally triggers stereotypes (ungrateful Jews, indifferent/hostile Poles) explaining that he stood among people who watched the deaths of people being killed by other people, a fact on which Łukasiewicz thus

⁵² Marian Kisiel, "Ciemność i blask. O Modlitwie Stanisława Grochowiaka," in idem, *Między wierszami. Jedenaście miniatur krytycznych* (Katowice: The University of Silesia Press, 2015), 91.

⁵³ Czapliński, *Śmierć, albo o znikaniu*, 53.

commented: "So that way of thinking of a child (devoid of any national labels – comment by A. J.) had to be verbalised by the adult author of the article. It was he who thus remarked on that recollection, he recalled that impression of a child watching horrible events," (507). The final sentence/paragraph, which summarises the discussion of the recollections of the ghetto uprising, reads: "He was already drinking a lot at that time, he had vodka-induced delusions," (507). One can only assume whether that was an editorial error or an intentional tagline of the fragment; regardless, some unpleasant taste after reading it remains. The combination of the uprising and a remark about delusions could be explained as a result of abbreviation since the final part of the book assumed the form of a chronological reconstruction of the poet's biography, yet in further parts Łukasiewicz juxtaposed Grochowiak with other poets who debuted in 1956, and he also noted Grochowiak's reaction to the events of March 1968. Grochowiak's discussed text was published in 1960, i.e. sixteen years prior to his death, so anyone would be hard-pressed to consider it an outcome of his sickness.

Another surprising element is the attempt to juxtapose Grochowiak's prose and poetry based on the criterion of inspiration: "To put things simply, one could talk about two different Grochowiaks' approaches to the literary genres practised by him: about the «inspired» poet and prose writer, playwright and commentator who cherished craftsmanship more. (...) The act of developing stories mainly belonged to the technique, it was on the part of work, but also play. Commissioned work for a radio show or a script were also aspects of craftsmanship," (439). A bit further the researcher continued: "Here (in poetry – A. J.) the starting point is not an idea – thus understood as craftsmanship – but a special internal need to express oneself. The poet himself realised that late in his life. What is «inspired» is the poetic «self», violently uneasy in itself, and that is moral, aesthetic, and emotional unrest. That unrest has two inseparable emotions: fear and love" (441). It would be difficult to consider the division proposed by the researcher as a fortunate one. Suffice to note that many of the poems collection in the *Wiersze nieznanne i rozproszone* volume, which Łukasiewicz prepared, had not been previously released as Grochowiak was not satisfied with them. The commentary to that edition explains that the ingenious quality of Grochowiak's texts was an outcome of the interplay between inspiration and craftsmanship:

He appreciated craft, clarity, convention, and appropriate stylisation. Yet dark images and unclear visions kept flooding in. One could accept them, as Rimbaud, Norwid, and Gajcy did. But even sentences, arranged properly, grammatically – they ruffled. The words in them, verbs in particular, changed their functions and shifted their meanings. Nowhere is it visible as clearly as in his abandoned manuscripts.⁵⁴

The fact of abandoning their release enables one to conclude that poetry is subject to the same writing procedures as prose. One could term

⁵⁴ Łukasiewicz, "Wstęp," in S. Grochowiak, *Wiersze nieznanne i rozproszone*, 7.

Grochowiak a visionary; so did Łukasiewicz, without forgetting the fact that through texts the talent of craftsman was also revealed. The core of the division is the identification by the researcher of the autobiographical nature of poetry and the act of intimate dissection, which is every instance of writing a poem, and the fact of emphasising the extroverted epic nature of prose (see 443). This division is excessively simple and simplistic, and it follows two principles: the equalling of the poetic persona and the poet, and the splitting of the author from the characters of their prose. To indicate how unfounded Łukasiewicz's assumptions were, it is enough to quote one passage:

In *Komendantowa* a former prostitute, now a partisan sutler, becomes Fury and Egeria spurring boys to fight, and embracing them tenderly when the fight is over. The release of the short story in 1956 in issue no. 7 of the *Twórczość* journal was major event. *Lamentnice*, and later *Czarna żona*, a story of the love between a young husband and his "black wife," a Jew, who lived on a headland, also mainly depicted the emotions of the characters: his love and her fear. In those short stories (least in *Mord*, styled to resemble a Russian realist classic) the characters are subjective, emotional, and yet allegorical. He controls them like a true poetic persona (179).

Two elements appeared which establish a poetic situation – love and fear – its source is inspiration. So, would prose be devoid of the element of writer's labour and toil? Quite the opposite. The fragment is an indication of a processing of an "inherited" memory of the Holocaust⁵⁵. One could assume that it is *Czarna żona*, the story of a relationship between a Jewish woman and a man in love with her, which illustrated Grochowiak's fears by using the war theme and continued the line of settling the score with broken human morality during the trying period of the Holocaust. For the sake of clarity, one could add that the artist followed a false vision of Sonderkommando when reconstructing the fortunes of Kasia: "My wife is Jewish. During the war she was in a Sonderkommando. They gassed Jews. So, one Dutch woman hid underneath a pile of clothes of her compatriots being gassed. Other Jews in the Sonderkommando found her there. And they stuck a pitchfork into that naked girl while she was still alive. And they tossed her onto a bonfire of clothes from another transport. And my wife attended that."⁵⁶ Jews in Sonderkommandos were sadists. That image might have resulted from the attempts to throw all the responsibility on Jews for killing their confreres.

An intrepid reader might decide to search for the inspiration of the title of Łukasiewicz's monograph. It would be hardly satisfactory to simply conclude that poetry was Grochowiak's area and that it constituted the best part of his output. Yet if one recalls the beginning of Grochowiak's self-themed poem *Recenzja*: "Stworzenie świata było procesem poetyckim / We

⁵⁵ Sławomir Buryła, *Rozrachunki z wojną* (Warsaw: The Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2017).

⁵⁶ Grochowiak, "Czarna żona," in idem, *Prozy*, 30.

wszystkich błędach / blaskach / I ornitologii”⁵⁷ [The creation of the world was a poetic process / In all its mistakes / brilliance / And ornithology], Łukasiewicz’s decision becomes sound.

One should also note the researcher’s terminological inventiveness as he wrote about the label assigned to Grochowiak:

Two divergent meanings of Grochowiakian “turpism” become apparent. Turpism as social criticism: it is a landfill replacing a garden. From the side of **constructivist** optimistic **turpism**, it is an installation or a sculpture. In the case of the former, the poetic persona exists outside the image presented in the poem, while in the latter he belongs to that world as part of the installation representing its originator. That work of art is all creation. It is a constructed garden, which is a sharp objection, surely involuntary for the author, a protest of art against the triviality of life severing its ties to it, destroying the relationship of subordination. I create art – from scratch. There are no attempts at mediation here between art and life as forks, knives, a saw with hardened gypsum, and a broken deck chair – that’s just material which once transformed, becomes something else in an installation. At any moment, though, the context of the wretched country may be evoked. Then one will not be defenceless against it, as they will have achieved in their work, in their art strength and power (480–481, emphasis – A. J.).

Some still favour the lingering conviction that Grochowiak praised ugliness, and his success was based on aesthetic scandal. It would be difficult to agree with that considering such poems as *Rozbieranie do snu*,⁵⁸ *Płonąca żyrafa*, *Wstępowanie*, and *Mikroliryka*. The term “constructivist turpism” indicates the poet’s awareness in terms of the utilisation of objects commonly considered as unpoetic. Finally, it indicates the richness of his imagination and the validity of a search for intersections between Grochowiak’s poetry and the achievements of avant-garde artists.

The study of Grochowiak’s output impresses not only considering the scale of the project (*Poeta Grochowiak* is five-hundred and thirty pages long!), but also considering Łukasiewicz’s attempt to embed the poetry in the context of the events which surrounded the development of consecutive collections. *Poeta Grochowiak* as an attempt to organise all the topics which emerged throughout the nearly two decades between the 1956 *Ballada rycerska* and the 1975 *Bilard* is intriguing and aspires to be considered as one of the most important syntheses devoted to Grochowiak’s output. The fact that Łukasiewicz’s monograph was released at a time of increased interest in Grochowiak’s works proves that his poetry has survived the test of time and that it still welcomes new interpretations. With great satisfaction, one notes the polemic potential of the monograph by the Wrocław-based researcher, a fact which makes it more attractive. In trying to fill the gaps in the

⁵⁷ Grochowiak, “Recenzja,” in idem, *Wiersze nieznanne i rozproszone*, 139.

⁵⁸ Stanisław Grochowiak, “Turpizm – realizm – mistycyzm.” In *Debiuty poetyckie 1944–1960. Wiersze, autointerpretacje, opinie krytyczne*, edited by Jacek Kajtoch, Jerzy Skórnicki (Warsaw: Iskry Publishing House, 1972), 366–372.

reception of Grochowiak's poetry Łukasiewicz often evaluated the quality of the poems Grochowiak published, which only proves that his engagement was genuine and it carried the trademarks of a true passion. One objection which could be formulated upon the reading of *Poeta Grochowiak* is the fact of limiting the poetic material in the poet's surviving manuscripts to the minimum, which is a clear signal that Łukasiewicz mainly appreciates Grochowiak's released poetry. It would be difficult to agree with the statement that "If the poet left religious poems (of various kinds) in non-released collections, then his meta-poetic poems could be found mainly in his released collections" (452). That can be easily verified considering such works as *Dwie poezje*, *Rozchylene*, *Sowa*, and *Hymn*.

There are things of which Łukasiewicz could be accused, e.g. that his narration is anthropocentric or that he often omitted significant details, yet he equally often uncovered previously unrealised analogies, and he fulfilled the promise of uncovering the mystery of the craft of Grochowiak the poet, included explicitly in the title.

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Andrzej Juchniewicz – M.A. in Polish philology. He focusses on Polish poetry of the latter half of the 20th century, Jewish themes in Polish literature, and the relationships between imagination and the Holocaust. He is currently studying narrations in which the fortunes of animals and people are

intertwined in borderline situations (during wars and natural catastrophes), and the archive and the literary and plastic outputs of Erna Rosenstein. He cooperates with such journals as "Nowe Książki," "Twórczość," "Śląsk," and "Znak." He has published in such journals as "Teksty Drugie," "Narracje o Zagładzie," "Postscriptum Polonistyczne," "Śląskie Studia Polonistyczne," "Wielogłos," "Rana," "Opcje," and "Maska." He defended his dissertation entitled "Poetyki Zagłady. Przemoc - afekt - wyobraźnia" [Poetics of Shoah. Violence, affect, imagination] under the supervision of Professor Marian Kisiel. In the 2018/2019 he received a scholarship from the Chancellor of the University of Silesia for exceptional students. He is preparing a book for publication on the experience of the Holocaust and violence in the poetry at the turn of the 21st century.

E-mail: andrzejjuchniewicz@o2.pl

MYKOŁA ZYMOMRIA

Ivan Franko Drohobych State Pedagogical University (Ukraine)



The Rules of How Reality Works Through the Prism of Post-Postmodern Prose

(D.I. Drozdovskyi, *Problematic-Thematic Units and Philosophical-Esthetical Parameters of the British Post-Postmodern Novel* [Проблемно-тематичні комплекси й філософсько-естетичні параметри британського постпостмодерністського роману]. Kiev: Samit-knyha, 2020)

SUMMARY

The reviewer analyses the monograph *Problematic-Thematic Units and Philosophical-Esthetical Parameters of the British Post-Postmodern Novel* (Kyiv, 2020) written by Dmytro Drozdovskyi, a Ukrainian scholar from Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, member of The European Society for the Study of English (Bulgarian branch). In the monograph, the author has outlined the theory of the post-postmodern novel based on the analysis of the key novels of contemporary British fiction (David Mitchell, Ian McEwan, Sarah Waters, Mark

Haddon, etc.). The review states that the Ukrainian scholar has developed the theory proposed by Fredric Jameson regarding the post-postmodern features of *Cloud Atlas* and also discusses the concept of meta-modernity as one of the sections in the post-postmodern literary paradigm in the UK. Drozdovskiy argues that meta-modernism cannot be the only term that explains all the peculiarities of contemporary British fiction, which also cannot be outlined as meta-modern but as post-postmodern. The scholar provides a new theory of the novel based on the exploitation of real and unreal historical facts and imagined alternative histories and multifaceted realities. Furthermore, the reviewer pays attention to the contribution this monograph has for world literary studies spotlighting the theory of literary meta-genre patterns, as Drozdovskiy provides a theory according to which literary periods can be divided into those in which the carnival is the dominant meta-genre pattern (like postmodernism) and those that exploit the mystery as the meta-genre pattern (post-postmodernism). The reviewer analyses the key thematic units explained by Drozdovskiy as the key ones that determine the semiosphere of the contemporary British novel (post-metaphysical and post-positivist thinking of the characters, medicalisation of the humanitarian discourse, and the representation of the temporal unity of different realities). The scholar also states that the post-postmodern British novel exploits the findings of German Romanticism and Kant's philosophy.

Keywords

philosophy of literature, British post-postmodern novel, Dmytro Drozdovskiy, carnival, mystery, German Romanticism, theory of the contemporary novel

The reviewed monograph deserves a closer examination considering its theoretical and practical advantages, and its innovative approach to the development of postmodernism in British novels. Its author is a theoretician of literature with considerable experience. Dmytro Drozdovskiy, a doctor of philology, has already proven himself a mature researcher; he is affiliated with the Shevchenko Institute of Literature, Department of Western and Slavic Literatures, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. It is important to note that his study *Problematic-Thematic Units and Philosophical-Esthetical Parameters of the British Post-Postmodern Novel* is a conceptually coherent project. He has defined the study subject clearly: the literary process (of writing novels) in one of Europe's leading literatures, British literature. The researcher convincingly discusses individual British novels that feature most emphatically the worldview and philosophical changes occurring in modern cultural theory in general, and in literary theory in particular.

For the study, he carefully established a reliable corpus of theoretical literature applicable to the problem area. The author mainly capitalises on the widely respected academic compendium of British theoretical thought *The Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Literary Fiction*,¹ and on impor-

¹ *The Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Literary Fiction*, edited by Daniel O'Gorman and Robert Eaglestone (London–New York: Routledge, 2018). The compendium provides a complex outlook on the most representative tendencies in contemporary fiction in the UK and the USA. The concept of post-postmodernism occurs in various chapters of this anthology.

tant studies (in terms of worldview) by noted foreign researchers² as well as Ukrainian ones.³ Starting with fundamental studies, which had a major impact on the development of Ukrainian English/British studies, Drozdovskyi notes the transformations of tendencies occurring at the current stage of 21st-century British novel, e.g.: exploitation of mystery as a meta-genre phenomenon; combination of (pseudo)positivist and metaphysical worldviews, etc. The scholar discusses concepts within the area of 21st-century British literature of the traditions of scepticism⁴, philosophy of corporeality,⁵ and Kantianism⁶, and he has furthered and amplified Jameson's theses regard-

² These works of noted researchers include: Nealon, Jeffrey. *Post-Postmodernism: or, The Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012). Nealon is the first one to propose the concept of post-postmodernism as a term for culture of the 21st century. Drozdovskyi develops Nealon's ideas in his monograph. See also: Jameson, Fredric. *The Antinomies of Realism* (London–New York: Verso, 2015); Jameson provides an outlook on "Cloud Atlas" and its post-postmodern composition. Drozdovskyi exploits the philosophy of Mitchell's novel and analyses the Kantian paradigm in the British novel. See also: Vermeulen, Timotheus, van den Akker, Robin. "Notes on Metamodernism," 1–14. *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, vol. 2, issue 1 (2010); Samuels, Robert. *New media, cultural studies and critical theory after postmodernism. Automodernity from Zizek to Laclau* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). In his monograph, Drozdovskyi opens the discussion with Vermeulen and van den Akker regarding the term "metamodernism" explaining why it cannot be applied to the contemporary British novel and why this term does not include all the specific features of the post-postmodern British novel.

³ These Ukrainian researchers include: Bovsunivska, Tetiana. *Teoriia romanu; navch. posib. [Theory of the novel; teach. manual]* (Kyiv: VPTs "Kyivskiy universytet," 2017). Taking into account Bovsunivska's theory of the post-postmodern novel, Drozdovskyi provides a systematic analysis of the British novels that cover the post-postmodern worldview and exploits a typology of features that give grounds for scholar's theory of the post-postmodern novel. See also: Tatarenko, Alla. *Budivnychi muzyky i di-dzhei: funktsiia muzyky u formuvanni poetyky postmodernizmu ta postpostmodernizmu (na materialy serbskoi literatury)* [Construction musicians and DJs: the function of music in the formation of poetics of postmodernism and post-postmodernism (based on the material of Serbian literature)], 241–252. *Musical texture of literary text Intermedial studios* (edited by S. Matsenko) (Lviv: Apriori, 2017); Ovcharenko, Natalia. *Post-colonial projections of Canadian prose* (Odesa, 2018). Drozdovskyi develops his theory of the post-postmodern novel taking into account the scientific findings from other world literatures, like Serbian or Canadian. Besides, the scholar develops the theoretical implications of Tetiana Bovsunivska and Natalia Ovcharenko who represent the academic schools of Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University and Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

⁴ Drozdovskyi in his monograph provides an academic discussion with Miroshnychenko developing and reestablishing her theory of scepticism in contemporary British fiction: Miroshnychenko, Liliia. *Projections of skepticism in contemporary British novel: genesis, tradition, poetics* (Kyiv, 2015). See also: Boinitska, Olha. *English historiographical novel of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries: the philosophy of the genre* (Kyiv, 2016).

⁵ Felix Shteinbuk in Ukrainian theory exploits the concept of "тілесно-міметичний метод" based on the analysis of literary texts that represent the literary process of late 20th century. Drozdovskyi develops Shteinbuk's theory grounding on the contemporary British novel. See also: Shteinbuk, Felix. *Konverhentsiia toposu identychnosti u suchasnyy svitoviy literaturi [Convergence of the Identity Topos in Contemporary World Literature]*, 106–112. *Naukovyi chasopys Natsional'noho pedahohichnoho universytetu imeni M. P. Drahomanova. Seriya 8: Filolohichni nauky (movoznavstvo i literaturoznavstvo)* [Scientific Bulletin of M. Drahomanov Pedagogical University. Philological Issues (Linguistics and Literary Studies)] (Kyiv Vyd-vo NPU imeni M.P. Drahomanova, 2017), Vyp. 8.

⁶ In Ukrainian literary discourse, Borys Shalahinov exploits the ideas of Kantian philosophy in the contemporary (modern and post-modern) texts of the 20th century. Drozdovskyi develops Shalahinov's views and reinforces his ideas about the carnival and mystery as literary meta-genres. See also: Shalahinov, Borys. *Romantychnyi slovnyk: do istori i poniaty terminiv rannoho nimetskoho romantyzmu* [Romantic dictionary: towards a history of concepts and terms in

ding the novel *Cloud Atlas* (first published in 2004) as one of the first British novels with clear post-postmodern philosophical and narrative features.

In the monograph, Drozdovskiy carefully studies twenty novels, including: *Amsterdam, Atonement, Saturday*, (Ian McEwan); *Cloud Atlas* (David Mitchell); *The Little Stranger* (Sara Waters), *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (Mark Haddon), and *The Cleft* (Doris Lessing), and discusses a series of key notions, undeniably important for the purposes of the development of comparative literary theory. Most of all, he identifies the carnival and the mystery as meta-genre forms of common culture and literature, specific for national literatures throughout various cultural and historical periods. To a considerable degree, the concept justifies the reinterpretation of certain genres in the history of literature, which is why Drozdovskiy's monograph may help researchers of other European literatures. Thus, its author has helped to correct the theory of periodisation of literary and historical epochs by complementing the findings of Dmitriy Lichaczow,⁷ Dmytro Ciževskij,⁸ and Дмитро Наливайко.⁹

According to Drozdovskiy, in light of the proposed theory of the carnival and the mystery as forms of meta-genres, which have the foundations of cultural and historical periods, it is also possible to differentiate post-postmodernism from postmodernism. The carnival proves a major worldview represented in postmodern works, while in post-postmodernism Drozdovskiy has found elements which confirm the notion of the mystery as the matrix which defines generic and narrative qualities, and in particular, he observes them in British novels written since 2000. This, in turn, is related to the presence of mythological plots and motifs. Nonetheless, Drozdovskiy concludes that today the mystery mainly updates the Christian paradigm (the motif of redemption in a protagonist's life) in works of literature, and the particularly significant notion (for Christianity) of resurrection expressed, e.g. in *Cloud Atlas*. Resurrection is a major theme of Easter and is key in the Christian world, as it reflects the model of a journey led by Christ.

Other qualities identified by Drozdovskiy which differentiate postmodernism from post-postmodernism include: epistemological inability to verify the reality (using the laws of mathematics, physics, biology, etc.) and characters in search of truth; the fact of combining several stories to create grand narratives; metaphysical determinism which explains the logic

early German Romanticism] (Kyiv: Vydavnycho-polihrafichnyit sentr NaUKMA, 2010); Shalahinov, Borys. "Karnaval i misteria: rozdumy pro istorychni doli dvokh metaform yevropeiskoho mystetstva" [Carnival and Mystery: Reflections on the Historical Destiny of Two Metaforms of European Art], *Vsesvit*, no. 3-4 (2011): 249-255.

⁷ Lichaczow, Dmitriy, *Развитие русской литературы X-XVII веков*, 1973, https://www.gumer.info/bibliotek_Buks/Literat/lihach/2_02.php Lichaczow classified all literary periods according to the fact whether they belong to the category "первинний стиль" or to the category "вторинний стиль."

⁸ Ciževskij, Dmytro. "Outline of Comparative Slavic Literatures," in *Survey of Slavic Civilization* (Boston (Massachusetts), 1952), vol. I. Ciževskij developed his theory of literature as a one based on the principle of pendulum.

⁹ Наливайко, Дмитро. *Теорія літератури й компаративістика [Theory of literature and comparative literature studies]* (Київ: Вид. дім «Києво-Могилянська академія», 2006). Nalyvaiko developed his classification of cultural-historical periods in Ukrainian literary theory.

behind the functioning of the world and the certainty that its existence has some superior aim, which cannot be explained through science as human beings do not possess the appropriate tools to do that; a play with reality and, at the same time, a belief in the existence of meaning in that play; the utilisation of media and scientific topics and problems; representation of a new type of the Other (a character suffering from Asperger's syndrome or autism); the fact of combining various Romantic, modernist and postmodern ideas; the creation of characters longing for transcendence, who also profess Buddhist views and a scientist's vision of the world; and the use of Kant's philosophy and the notion of the unity of the universe.

The researcher set the ambitious task for himself of developing his argument on the basis of a broader corpus of texts. He manages to make his conclusions, which he has drawn from his study of British post-postmodern novels, convincing: from the works he has extracted the epistemological searches for characters and narrators focused on explaining how human reality works (corporeality and consciousness). It is noteworthy that in a 2019 article, i.e. one which was published prior to the publication of the monograph, Drozdovskiy attempted to prove the theory by comparing an Italian novel by Paolo Giordano *The Solitude of Prime Numbers* and a novel by Mark Haddon *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Naturally, singular comparisons are not enough to verify a theory, though one has to admit that tragic apotheoses are present in many modern works (I am referring to the utilisation of the motif of a tragic encounter of a protagonist with reality which results in a fundamental rethinking of the experience of "future" life, as it was the case in Shakespeare's *King Lear*). The author argues that a tragic apotheosis is one of the elements of the genre model of mystery, that it changes the existential parameters of both worldviews and the artistic image, which in turn indicates one's departure from the postmodern model.

In that sense, Drozdovskiy has expanded on the argument of Tetiana Pontitseva,¹⁰ who – as one of the first Ukrainian researchers – noticed that British post-postmodernism entails an epistemological immersion in existence. That means not only epistemological relativism, but also several other serious issues, which are definable in more detail by that specific prism of British post-postmodernism. Therefore, the author's contribution to literary theory seems significant. The researcher argues in favour of the accuracy of the term British literature. On the basis of the published material of British literature of the early 21st century, he develops a theoretical concept of the post-postmodern novel; he defines in detail the difference between post-postmodernism and meta-modernism¹¹; he defines the philosophical specificity of the artistic post-postmodern space as a metabolic one; and he identifies the strategies of representation and reinterpretation of subjectivity in post-postmodern novels, which enables the

¹⁰ Potnitseva, Tetiana. *Izbrannyye istorii iz istorii literatury: monografiya. [Selected Stories from the History of Literature: monograph]* (Kyiv: Izdatelskiy dom Dmitriya Burago, 2019).

¹¹ The concept of meta-modernism is discussed in the first manifesto of this cultural philosophy: Vermeulen, Timotheus, Van Den, Akker, Robin. "Notes on Metamodernism," *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 2.0 (2010): 1-14.

amplification of psychological traits in contemporary British novels. He notes that the characters in post-postmodern novels seek out ways to rationally overcome the chaos in their internal worlds as they cannot achieve that in their external worlds because they do not understand the rules which govern the functioning of consciousness and the body.

At the same time, the characters assume that more complex laws governing their realities (the universe and humans) exist. It should be noted that the presence of chaos in the realities surrounding the characters forces them to seek out autonomous resources in themselves (independently from any higher powers, belief in magic, or references to mysticism), which would enable them to overcome the chaos at least psychologically (*Saturday* by I. McEwan, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by M. Haddon, *Cloud Atlas* by D. Mitchell). Drozdovskyi attempted to reinterpret Kant's vision of the co-existence of humans and reality, which, per the philosopher's doctrine, is revealed to one's consciousness as chaos. That is why the consciousness of people who act are determined by the need to assign it meaning by transforming a "play with chaos" in post-postmodernism per the vertical paradigm and not the horizontal one which is specific for postmodernism.¹² The author arrives at the conclusion that unlike in postmodern reality, what changes in post-postmodernism are the forms of intellectual organisation of reality, since the chaotic nature of life surrounding the characters becomes structurally complex (e.g. *Cloud Atlas* by D. Mitchell).

In summary, allow me to emphasise once more: in the monograph *Problematic-Thematic Units and Philosophical-Esthetical Parameters of the British Post-Postmodern Novel*, its author has accurately defined the discourse of rationalism (the motif of a sceptical consideration of reality by characters, and the political notions of colonialism, slavery, and mass consumption, as it has been done in *Cloud Atlas*) as a feature of the post-postmodern British novel. The researcher conducts a systematic analysis of the particular modes of thinking of the characters of the novel *Cloud Atlas*, in which protagonists possess a special ability enabling them to avoid social tensions and conflicts, and view the world in unity with the bio-physical and socio-psychological processes and phenomena. He has proven that the reinterpretations of the philosophical principles by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and John Locke play a major role in British literary post-postmodernism. The reviewed work constitutes a major contribution to Ukrainian literary theory. It is undeniably valuable for its theoretical generalisations and the philosophical and aesthetic concepts presented in it. Regrettably, the researcher focusses

¹² Drozdovskyi, Dmytro. *Problematic-thematic units and philosophical-esthetical parameters of the British post-postmodern novel* [Проблемно-тематичні комплекси й філософсько-естетичні параметри британського постпостмодерністського роману], academic editor P. Iwanyszyn (Kyiv: Samit-knyha, 2020), 20. Drozdovskyi proves that the characters in the contemporary British novels demonstrate the intention to analyze the misunderstandings and life misfortunes they experience from the rational positions taking into account the idea of the Universe as a system. Understanding one element and its bonds it is possible to understand the surrounding elements and have a clear vision of the reality as a system. Post-postmodern British fiction exploits the idea of combination of (pseudo)positivism based on rational reasons and metaphysical feelings of the characters.

less on the poetologic aspects of the British novel; they could certainly be the topic of his new studies. Drozdovskyi has enriched the Ukrainian literary science with the inclusion of a study of contemporary general literature, which is mainly focused on British literature – its character, and its philosophical and aesthetic originality.

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Mykoła Zymomria (30.11.1946) – Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor of Germanic Studies, Comparative Literature and of Theory of literature; full professor, head of the Department of translation studies of Ivan Franko Drohobych State Pedagogical University (Ukraine).

E-mail: zimok@ukr.net

CONVERSATIONS
(NOT ONLY) ABOUT READING

“I think that poets and, more broadly, all artists have some certain cognitive impatience in them”

An Interview with Professor Jerzy Kandziora about
Stanisław Barańczak, Conducted by Karolina Król

SUMMARY

The interview covers the subject of Stanisław Barańczak and his works. Pondering on the way the poet pictures the existence of God in his poems is an important part of the text. Another crucial subject is the way Barańczak deals with his illness and portrays it in his poetic works. In the interview Jerzy Kandziora – an exquisite researcher of the poetry written by Barańczak and Jerzy Ficowski – mentions his private relationship with both Barańczak and his wife.

Keywords

Stanisław Barańczak, poetry, illness, God

Karolina Król: How did you meet Professor Barańczak? During the discussion panel devoted to this poet, you mentioned that initially your relationship was established on official university grounds. When did this relationship shift to the personal level?

Jerzy Kandziora: I started my studies in 1973. Stanisław Barańczak and his wife Anna were then employed as assistant lecturers at the Polish Philology in Poznań. At the end of 1973, Barańczak received his doctorate on the basis of his doctoral dissertation on Miron Białoszewski. On a private basis, we met after I had completed my studies in 1977. Barańczak had already been a member of the Workers' Defence Committee and he had been removed from his work at the university, against which we, students, protested by signing a joint letter. I should speak for myself, but I could testify that, as students, we were all deeply concerned about the dismissal of Barańczak from the university. When we left the auditorium after the graduation, I approached Ania and Staszek – still for me Dr Barańczak and his wife – and handed them my graduate flowers. I was extremely excited and, at the same time, uncomfortable so I was only able to say a few words of thanks for his opposition activities. Barańczak somehow managed to relieve my tension. We talked for some time and it became clear that Staszek and Ania wanted me to visit them in private. After that, my visits to them began, first in Staszek's mother's flat, on Kościuszki Street, and later in the Kopernika estate. We met till the Barańczaks headed for the United States in March 1981.

K.K.: Did you visit them in the USA?

J.K.: No, I did not visit them, but we kept in touch through correspondence. Initially, the exchange of letters was quite intensive, as it was also connected to professional matters, the registration of his foreign publications for the Polish Literary Bibliography, in the team of which I worked at that time. Besides, thanks to Staszek, I received copies of some of his books from the publishers, such as *Tablica z Macondo* [A License Plate from Macondo], translations of English-language poetry or Shakespeare. I, in turn, gave him my texts on his poetry.

K.K.: Did Barańczak comment on them in any way?

J.K.: He did. On the one hand, I regret that I did not bring these letters with me today to show you. On the other hand, perhaps it is better because they were full of kindness and compliments, and it does not seem appropriate to boast too much. On a more serious note, Barańczak liked what I wrote about his poetry. I sent him early excerpts from my later book about him published in magazines. He reacted very spontaneously. It seemed he somehow needed my writing. I also sent him my reflections on poems by Merrill in his translation, which he received very kindly.

K.K.: Did he in any way take these comments into account? In his correspondence with Miłosz, there are also references to various translations, but Barańczak never used the advice given by the Nobel Prize winner. How was it in this case?

J.K.: No, that was not an option at all. Barańczak never asked for any comments, I was simply reacting to his texts which had already been published. As for his relationship with Miłosz, I think that he did not want to give in to any suggestions made by others, and that possible questions about his opinion might have been more of a courtesy. But that is just my hypothesis. What is interesting, however, is that in response to my ideas about reading his texts, he would make his own self-interpretations. I was looking through our correspondence the other day and realised how extensive those self-interpretations were: one was a page and a half long. I may one day decide to publish these letters, but for the time being I am not quite ready to do so. Too little time has passed since Stanisław's death.

I exchanged the bulk of the letters with Barańczak in the period following his departure until the symptoms of his illness got more severe. Over time, all selfless friendly correspondence faded into the background, as the disease forced Staszek to keep it to a minimum. And yet, even in this difficult period, he was able to send a single poem or translation, signed less and less legibly, as a sign of friendship.

For me, the most important period of our friendship was after 1977 till 1981 when I was able to meet with the Barańczaks in person in their flat. That was the period, to be more precise, until August 1980 when Staszek was 'illegal', surveilled, bugged, and when my visits at his place were of great significance to me. I felt that it would be wrong of me if I did not call on Ania and Staszek. In the beginning, there were two parallel feelings. On the one hand, it was simply human fear. I was aware that I was inevitably getting into police records. It was a completely new experience for me. At the same time, I could not stop going to Ania and Staszek Barańczak because I simply needed it, and it seemed to straighten me out in terms of my own dignity. After every visit I felt that I had overcome this fear, that I was myself, that I was not losing my identity because of it. I felt lifted up, as I recall.

K.K.: Could having contact with Barańczak alone be dangerous?

J.K.: I was aware that I was putting myself at risk in a way by contacting him. The Security Service followed all his activities. Shortly afterwards, I was summoned to the provincial police headquarters where attempts were made to interrogate me and I was offered in a veiled manner to snitch on others. Back then, in 1978, such a summons was very stressful, although I had already known how to deal with informal summons, that they should be questioned and that they could be grounds for refusing to answer questions. And that was what I stuck to. There were also visits made by officers to my place of work, signalling to my superiors that there was a 'threat' on my part. At the time, the problem was that I felt somewhat lonely: I did not want to say anything to my parents so as not to worry them.

K.K.: Did your conversations with the Barańczaks concern everyday life? Or were they perhaps rather focused on literature-related themes?

J.K.: Staszek was very inspiring as he had access to many books and was happy to give me the titles of other items worth reading. With due justification, of course. He lent me some of them. I also bought books published outside of the censorship from the Barańczaks. Including the Workers' Defence Committee Newsletters in greater numbers. I was lucky because he had lent me for one night the first issue of *Zapis*, which was then typed in the A4 format. Of course, I particularly value his own volumes with dedications published outside of the censorship which he offered me at the time: *Sztuczne oddychanie* [Artificial Respiration] in a samizdat version (a typescript with handwritten corrections!), *Tryptyk z betonu, zmęczenia i śniegu* [Triptych with Concrete, Fatigue and Snow], translations of Brodsky and Mandelstam.

What did we talk about? We discussed current events, we laughed at certain political issues. I remember that Staszek had a propaganda poster issued for the 30th anniversary of the Citizens' Militia and Security Service on his wall in the Kościuszki Street flat. We were obviously joking about this.

In the late 1970s, I worked at the Poznań Puppet and Actor Theatre. The job involved organising artistic work as well as advertising, and I spoke, for example, about how I took art programmes, playbills and posters to the censorship office in Mickiewicza Street. I gave accounts of my conversations with censors, including the story of a new poster not being approved for the Theatre because the visual artist designed it in B1 format. I was told that posters for a play titled *Tygrzysek i Koziołki z wieży ratuszowej* [A Tiger and the Poznań Goats] could not appear in that format as it is reserved for mobilisation announcements only. These were quite grotesque matters, of which we laughed. I knew that Staszek was writing columns from the series of *Książki najgorsze* [The Worst Books]. I once brought him a book of texts of the Gałęda scout group, which he also used in one issue of *Biuletyn Informacyjny*.

Years later, when I gained access to my file at the Institute of National Remembrance, I found in it transcripts or extracts from my wiretapped conversations with the Barańczaks. They were quite distant from the truth, and I was alleged to have promised Staszek to print some leaflets or materials outside of the censorship, because I had contacts with printing houses. I indeed had some contacts, but only as a client representing the puppet theatre. As it is known today, Security Service officers fabricated the contents of files so as to have a pretext to carry out some checks, 'describe risks', open new cases and have some topics for reporting.

My conversations with the Barańczaks were not strongly political in nature. We often talked about everyday matters, about books, I used to tell them, for example, various funny stories about actors and events in the theatre, Ania would attach rings to new curtains, we listened to music. Nevertheless, my visits were of interest to the Security Service. The authorities wanted to cut Barańczak off from all of his friends. This is why officers paid visits to my superiors at the Theatre.

K.K.: Did Barańczak mention the books that he dealt with in his essays, such as *Escape from Freedom* by Fromm or Bonhoeffer's letters, during the university classes which he conducted?

J.K.: My studies in the field of Polish philology lasted four years, and not, as before and as today, five. The canon of reading has always been very extensive in Polish philology. At the time when the length of studies was officially shortened, which was part of the authorities' levelling policy, it became virtually impossible to read everything and discuss certain issues in class. In addition, further purely ideological subjects were introduced back then, taking up valuable time that could have been devoted to the discussion of major books. In the first year, Stanisław Barańczak had a one-hour weekly seminar with us on the literature of the interwar period. It was the academic year 1973/1974, thus referring to your question, Barańczak's text about Bonhoeffer may not have even been written back then. It was published in *Student* at the end of 1974. However, we heard about Fromm during those classes back then. It seems to me that it was at the time when we discussed the fascination of the Italian futurists with fascism. My second encounter with Barańczak as a lecturer took place at the end of my studies, when, shortly before his repressive dismissal from the university, he had a series of non-compulsory lectures on mass culture and popular literature in the autumn and winter of 1976. At that time, he spoke more broadly about the mechanisms of political persuasion, rhetoric, and it was invaluable for understanding the reality of the People's Republic of Poland and, of course, literature. He presented the concepts put forward by Fromm, American General Semantics, McLuhan or Morin; he spoke of books by Orwell and Klemperer, song lyrics and football banners. He drew examples from his own sketches from the cycle *Od-biorca ubezwłasnowolniony* [Incapacitated Recipient] printed slightly earlier in the Poznań-based *Nurt*. These lectures were immensely popular. Barańczak was already a founding member of the Workers' Defence Committee and his writing was subject to censorship. I was extremely lucky to have been able to listen to those lectures as a young man. I still have notes from them.

Returning to your question, it is difficult for me to say whether, outside of the activities in which I participated, Barańczak had made references to Bonhoeffer and Fromm or analysed with students the attitudes of Naphta and Settembrini from *The Magic Mountain* before he was dismissed from Adam Mickiewicz University. I think this is very likely. His essays including *Zapiski na marginesie Bonhoeffera* [Notes on the Margins of Bonhoeffer] and *Zmieniony głos Settembriniego* [The Changed Voice of Settembrini] from the mid-1970s had a much wider intellectual impact: they were a certain projection and, at the same time, a project of the opposition's mental and ethical attitude towards the political reality of the time (I devoted a separate session paper to this issue).

K.K.: With reference to your paper, I would like to ask about the essay titled *Zmieniony głos Settembriniego*. You wrote that Barańczak treats fascism as a certain cognitive problem of the 20th century in this text. Why was it that *The Magic Mountain* became the inspiration for the programme sketch and not some of Mann's other works, such as *Doctor Faustus*? It seems that the latter novel, which deals with Nazi Germany, could well serve as a starting point for a reflection on worldview.

J.K.: To be more precise, I wrote that both these essays speak of 20th century fascism. The text on Bonhoeffer obviously makes this clearer. As for the choice by Barańczak of *The Magic Mountain*, rather than the other book by Mann which you have mentioned: I should think that the figure of Naphta is extremely suggestive and firmly rooted in a certain reality, is a figure of an authoritarian personality, contrasting with the openness of a liberal such as Settembrini. This was probably the reason why Barańczak chose these characters for his deliberations. The path to this essay could have led both through *The Magic Mountain* by Mann and Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* published in Poland in 1970, where this type of personality was presented. *Doktor Faustus* by Mann makes, in turn, a reference to fascism in Germany through the prism of *Faust* by Goethe. Barańczak would probably not have been interested in adding some kind of third degree metaphor to this novel, which is somehow linked to the romantic fantasy of the German prototype. In the years before *Zmieniony głos Settembriniego* was written, several important books encouraging reflection on totalitarianism had been published in Poland, although they only seemingly referred to the realities of Nazi Germany. These included, apart from *Escape from Freedom*, Bonhoeffer's texts edited by Anna Morawska and her book about him titled *Chrześcijanin w Trzeciej Rzeszy* [A Christian in the Third Reich] as well as books by Stanisław Tyrowicz titled *Światło wiedzy zdeprawowanej* [The Light of Depraved Knowledge] or Bogusław Drewniak's *Teatr i film Trzeciej Rzeszy* [Theatre and Film of the Third Reich]. They all provided tools to analyse human attitudes in the conditions of the People's Republic of Poland and were important for the emerging opposition.

These two essays by Barańczak, ideological in a sense, were – as was often the case with his critical speeches – the forerunner of a new literary and political turning point. They preceded the events in Radom and Ursus and initiated the ethos of an independent writer, a paradigm of opposition literature, which was born in 1975–1976 together with Memorial 59, the establishment of the Workers' Defense Committee, underground publishing and the *Zapis* magazine. Barańczak's extraordinary ear for history was also revealed before the events of March 1968, when his article titled *Nieufni i zadufani. Rzecz o walce romantyków z klasykami w poezji najnowszej* [Distrustful and Conceited. A Thing about the Struggle of the Romantics with the Classics in the Latest Poetry] appeared less than a year before, and still earlier his pamphlet on Kazimiera Hłakowiczówna's volume titled *Szeptem* [In a Whisper] was published. The notion of 'mistrust' became essential for both the new poetry and the participants of the March events. The draft *Nieufni i zadufani* was the founding text for the 1968 generation of poets, later referred to as the New Wave. In turn, a volume of poetry by Barańczak titled *Tryptyk z betonu, zmęczenia i śniegu* was published in the late 1970s, shortly before August 1980. In the most hopeless, final period of the decade of Gierek, it depicts in a few poems the monochromatic, winter aura, from beneath which flashes the gaudiness and wilderness of the natural world. Again, we are faced with some kind of a premonition of a breakthrough in the real world on the part of Barańczak, namely the outbreak of the "Solidarity" movement. And also with the first symptoms of a change in diction and poetic sensitivity.

However, I would like to avoid talking about prophetism and putting Barańczak in the Romantic paradigm, as was the case with many scholars. If I were to look for the sources of this poet's intuition and forward-looking abilities, I would associate them with his extraordinary sensitivity to the exhaustion of the existing language for describing the world in the social space. It was, I suppose, the source of these predictions, when nothing had yet heralded the change in the visible sphere. The realised need to use a different, new language was a signal of the ongoing changes, a catalyst for new diagnoses and it generated new representations also in the area of essay writing for Barańczak. This is a separate problem which I have touched upon in the sketch *O przepowiedniach Stanisława Barańczaka* [On the Prophecies of Stanisław Barańczak] in the anthology titled *Metafora – tekst – dyskurs* [Metaphor – Text – Discourse].

K.K.: The question of God's presence in later volumes of Barańczak is indeed puzzling. In one of your sketches about this poet, you wrote that Barańczak would still like to have this dialogue with God in the scientific world. I wonder if, in a sense, it would not be possible to observe similar principles to those described by Miłosz in *Ziemia Ulro* [The Land of Ulro], yet leading to the opposite conclusions? It did happen that both poets looked at some issues in a different way, as evidenced by their rather minor dispute over how to read the poetry by Larkins. Where could Barańczak's need for this constant contact with the Absolute come from? Writing of *Ziemia Ulro* by Miłosz, he refers to himself as an agnostic.

J.K.: Perhaps by describing himself as an agnostic, Barańczak means his lack of faith in eschatology and the redemptive role of Christ. This is, however, an attempt to explain this world and to rise to the problem of why humankind is different from other creatures, from that background that exists outside it. Barańczak sees the divine element in the human being and it is this element that drives him in the poetic sense. This human duality is constantly returning, with good, love, altruism, sacrifice, cognitive expansiveness on the one hand, and evil, destruction, destructive fury on the other. The existence of both these potentials in an equally extreme, precisely divine intensity which is unknown to other creatures.

K.K.: Hence could the need to talk to God be simply a natural human need?

J.K.: In this concept of God, it is just inevitable that the human being asks questions and talks to Him. In any case, this dialogue is also very fruitful when it comes to poetry. Speaking of God in Barańczak's works, we are constantly moving in the space of a certain rationality. The poet firmly drew the line at mysticism, but never at metaphysics. I think that it is in this distinction that the key to reading his theological imagination lies. More broadly speaking, Barańczak belonged to the secular left, which, nevertheless, did not cut him off from theological reflection, paradoxically making this reflection non-imitative, renewing his thinking about God. Perhaps a priest

who is in the current of mysticism is unable to say anything new about the Absolute that someone from outside the circle of people under constant religious influence is capable of saying. Barańczak could repeat the reflections of 17th-century English metaphysicians, and yet he has to explain it all to himself anew, as a modern man.

K.K.: And still, without any doubt many common points can be found, for example the figure of *Deus Absconditus*, the hidden God.

J.K.: Yes, researchers saw it quite early on. I think that poets and, more broadly, all artists have some certain cognitive impatience in them. Elevating the human being to the rank of a person worthy of talking to God is, as I said, very poetic. Many of Barańczak's works have a palimpsest structure, in which apparently ordinary, everyday matters are discussed, and it is only through more careful reading that one can see the deeper, metaphysical dimension of the situations described. In my book I wrote, for example, about an excellent poem titled *Pierwsza piątka* [The First Five], in which the hidden Genesis dimension can be seen.

K.K.: Are the previous volumes also worth analysing in a similar way?

J.K.: Yes, they are, particularly *Tryptyk z betonu, zmęczenia i śniegu*. I feel a need to write another sketch about this volume, which foreshadows, in a way, Barańczak's American poetry. There is not much linguism or carnivalisation known to the readers from the volumes titled *Ja wiem, że to nie-słuszne* [I Know it is Not Right] and *Sztuczne oddychanie*. It is possible to see in *Tryptyk z betonu, zmęczenia i śniegu* what will later characterise Barańczak's poetry: an increased receptivity to the world and intense descriptiveness present in his American poems, such as *Atlantyda* [The Atlantis] or *Pan Elliot Tischler* [Mr Elliot Tischler].

Interestingly, this volume is, in a sense, twinned with the later volume titled *Podróż zimowa* [Winter Journey]. Both collections are monochromatic: *Tryptyk* is dominated by the greyness of urban concrete whereas the whole landscape in *Podróż zimowa* is covered by snow. One volume was written just prior to the beginning of American life, while the latter is in a sense its coda, although it was followed by *Chirurgiczna precyzja* [Surgical Precision]. There is already a whole spectrum of colours in other poems written in the United States. It is possible to see all those incredible hues there, which must have struck someone who came to the USA from a socialist country.

K.K.: During the panel devoted to Barańczak, you argued that writing about *Podróż zimowa* today, the subject of illness-related suffering should be raised. Could I ask you to develop this thread?

J.K.: I have the feeling that this cycle is also, in a very intimate sense, a poetic response to the progressing disease of Barańczak, although of course there is no mention of the disease anywhere.

In this volume I am most fascinated by a poem written to the melody of Schubert's third song¹:

A może myśmy wcale
nie mieli wznieść się nad
ten jeden, ten widzialny,
ten tymczasowy świat?
ten taki sobie świat?

But what if we weren't destined
at all to rise above
this one, this visible,
this temporary world?
This mediocre world?

A może wzrost nad ziemię
na metr z czymś lub sześć stóp –
to już wniebowstąpienie?
Dopiero po nim grób?

Perhaps just growing six feet
Above the brittle earth
Equates to our ascension?
And only then the grave?

I może tym niebiosom
przez siedemdziesiąt zim
zamilkłym z zimna głosem
śpiewamy dźwięczny hymn,
śpiewamy, dźwięczny hymn?

And what if we, our voices still
for three score years and ten
are singing to these heavens
a rousing, soulful hymn?
a rousing grateful hymn?

I może słowo „losem”
w wersyfikacji zim
tak z „lodem” jak i z „mrozem”
poprawny tworzy rym,
dokładny tworzy rym?

Perhaps the bleak word 'chilling',
in winter poetry
for 'thrilling' and for 'killing'
would form a proper rhyme?
would form a flawless rhyme?

“Growing six feet above the brittle earth” naturally refers to the height of an average person. I think that this poem contains a refreshing reflection that there will be no resurrection and that the short moment that is given to us on Earth is the best that could happen to us, that is our Ascension. It is possible to see in this thought how far Barańczak is moving away from this certain sensitivity that his poetry had in the domestic New Wave period, focused on a human being in the grey of an oppressive system, ‘caught’ in sadness or loneliness. I think there may be an element of self-persuasion in this recognition, an attempt to convince oneself that the world does not exist on account of the human being. Because of the autonomy of this world, all human claims make little sense. This kind of thinking is often triggered when a person suddenly realises that he or she will soon be gone.

K.K.: Are the works of Barańczak and the reflection contained in them still up-to-date today?

J.K.: It really depends on the sensitivity of each reader: one person will favour early Barańczak, another one will prefer his later works. In terms of

¹ The translation of the poem was retrieved from <http://www.konieczny-napierala.art/en/lyrics/> (access 30.09.2020.)

the relevance of the world described in his poetry to the present day, later volumes are certainly much more up-to-date. Their greater attractiveness is also confirmed by the history of the reception of this poetry. On the other hand, I have the impression that Barańczak's diagnosis of life in the People's Republic of Poland is painfully up-to-date in some aspects. Wherever the mechanisms of conformism, aggressive propaganda, manipulation of emotions, a kind of political shamanism appear in public space today, those old, New Wave poems that look deep into the soul of the hero may turn out to be unexpectedly topical today.

Jerzy Kandziora – habilitated doctor, professor at the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. His research interests focus on authors and literary phenomena entirely or partially burdened by an experience of the totalitarian system, settling accounts with the discussed system; authors, whose works require familiarity with the political contexts of post-war communism in Poland in order to be fully understood. Kandziora devoted his first book *Zmęczeni fabułą* [*Tired by Fiction*] (Wrocław 1993) to the diary-like autobiographical prose of Brandys, Konwicki and Woroszyński. The majority of the analysed works were either published outside Polish official system or in the West. Stanisław Barańczak, a poet representing the generation of 1968, since 1981 an émigré writing in the United States, is the protagonist of the monograph *Ocalony w gmachu wiersza* [*Saved in the Edifice of the Poem*] (2007). Jerzy Kandziora's latest book *Poeta w labiryncie historii* [*A Poet in the Labyrinth of History*] (2018) examines the literary roles of Jerzy Ficowski (1924–2006), distinct poet and scholar of the works of Bruno Schulz, whose creative activity is permeated by the spirit of freedom and intellectual independence. Kandziora's output also includes the bibliography *Bez cenzury 1976–1989* [*No Censorship 1976–1989*] (1999; co-authors: Zyta Szymańska and Krystyna Tokarżówna), which he supervised. Covering literature, publishing and theatre, it registers the books and magazines (plus their content) put out by underground publishing houses in the People's Republic of Poland. The work received the Aleksander Brückner Scientific Award of the I Department of Social Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences in literature and philology.
E-mail: jerzy.kandziora@ibl.waw.pl

Karolina Król – a student of Polish philology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. In 2019, she became a laureate of the 'Best Student Grant' programme and she carried out the project titled "Czesław Miłosz and Stanisław Barańczak: Parallels and Splits as Exemplified by the Reception of *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann in the Works of the Two Poets." She is interested in the 20th- and 21st-century poetry as well as works centred around the issue of the Holocaust.
E-mail: karolina.krol@onet.pl

“The greatness of a writer consists in articulating the eternal problems and dilemmas of humanity”

An Interview with Professor Hubert Orłowski,
Conducted by Karolina Król

SUMMARY

The interview focuses on Thomas Mann, his oeuvre and the reception of his works. The dispute around Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, started by Stanisław Barańczak, is an important context of the text. In the interview an essay *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (yet untranslated into Polish as a whole) is mentioned.

Keywords

Thomas Mann, Stanisław Barańczak, *The Magic Mountain*

Karolina Król: In 1975, Stanisław Barańczak wrote *Zmieniony głos Settembriniego* [The Changed Voice of Settembrini]. Could you tell us what, in your opinion, might be the probable reasons for referring to *The Magic Mountain* rather than a different work from Thomas Mann's extensive literary output?

Hubert Orłowski: It is worth stressing from the very start that in Poland interest in *The Magic Mountain* was also present in earlier years, including the interwar period. There was no need, however, to read this book in a political

way at that time, that is to say, with reference to some reflection on the direction in which the development of political forces in Europe might have gone. I think that the discussion between Barańczak and other New Wave poets should be seen as the practical use of certain metaphorical ammunition called Thomas Mann. This allowed for an indirect interpretation of the reality of the People's Republic of Poland. Due to this, he was able to publish his text in *Literatura*, a legally published magazine, which reached a wider audience. On the one hand, 1975 was the time of the apogee of Gierek's little stability and, on the other, the memorable events in Ursus and Radom were soon to take place. It is precisely in such an atmosphere that Barańczak published his text, encouraging us to look closely at reality.

It was not so much that Stanisław Barańczak had in mind Thomas Mann as such and *The Magic Mountain*: he used the name of the great German Nobel Prize winner, an émigré, to show by the force of his authority that there had already been debates about the different types of involvement of the intellectual in the political reality.

It is worth interpreting the essay by Barańczak by means of certain categories known from scholarly literature. The year 2001 saw the publication in Poland of a selection of texts by the eminent German historian and semantic, Reinhart Koselleck, dealing with the meaning and evaluation of concepts. Back in the 1970s, he introduced two new categories: the 'space of experience' and the 'horizon of expectations'. These are extremely handy tools for exploring historical prose, both fiction and, for example, essay writing. To my mind, the categories proposed by Koselleck allow us to make very apt observations on *Zmieniony głos Settembriniego*.

While interpreting this text, the space of experience can refer to all those lessons of life that young Barańczak took: being a young writer, an intellectual, an analyst of the reality. The essay that we are talking about comes from an early period of Stanisław's work, when he was still a young man. In the 1970s, we lived on the same Kopernik housing development in Poznań. He often brought me different samizdat volumes. We knew each other from university because we worked at one faculty at the time when the Polish philology and neophilologies were located in one building.

As for the figure of Thomas Mann: this writer continues to fascinate me and that is why I return to his literary output and write more texts about it. I have been dealing with the reception of Mann's works and I think that the dispute in the mid-1970s was one of the most interesting debates taking place around Thomas Mann. I leave aside the question of whether it did deepen the analysis of *The Magic Mountain* as such. It showed one thing, however: the power of great literature, which can be read in different ways and adapted to different polemic situations. Some people say that ancient drama is so vital because all human dilemmas and aspirations are present in it. I believe that this interpretation is still valid and can also be applied to contemporary literature. The greatness of a writer consists in articulating the eternal problems and dilemmas of humanity. Thomas Mann was certainly one of those writers who answered – not always with the best result – fundamental questions. There are many issues that can be disagreed

with, but it is the questions posed by great literature that are of paramount importance.

The Magic Mountain, written shortly after the First World War, became resounding and extremely useful in contemporary debates on the situation of the intellectual, writer and publicist during the late era of the People's Republic of Poland. The discussion of New Wave poets is a debate of eminent Polish writers rather than experts in German literature and art or the works of Thomas Mann. The task which I set for myself was not to assess to what extent the analysis of Barańczak and other Polish writers corresponds to the reading of *The Magic Mountain*, but to what degree it became an inspiration for our Polish reflections.

Barańczak used a great name and a monumental novel which features a duel between Settembrini and Naphta. He used the names of Settembrini and Naphta as certain ideal types, to quote Max Weber's terminology. In the case of *The Magic Mountain*, readers tend to have little affection for either of them. Surely the character of Naphta cannot count on a favourable reception. Likewise, Settembrini does not seem to fully meet the expectations of the reader: he is a kind of antiquarian figure, failing to match the 1920s, when fascism was born and Bolshevism was already well established.

When I was writing my PhD thesis nearly twenty years after the publication of *Doctor Faustus*, at least fifty other dissertations had already been written on Thomas Mann worldwide. At the moment, it would be difficult to cram all the publications devoted to this writer in one room. I think that the main task of a researcher thinking about Barańczak's text is not to check how faithfully the world of the novel is transferred in it, but to look at the postulates proposed by the Polish poet.

I looked at the impact of Thomas Mann's work from the perspective of Polish intellectuals. The reception of Mann kept changing, starting from the first raptures of Stanislaw Brzozowski just after the publication of *Buddenbrooks* in 1901 – nobody thought of this young man as a literary genius back then. Many other Polish readings followed, mainly due to the theme of tuberculosis and treatment in the sanatorium, which appeared in *The Magic Mountain*. The problem was social, medical and ethical since treatment could not be afforded by everyone at the time as it was only available to the richest. Poles went to Zakopane to be treated and it was said to be our Polish Davos.

Major Polish writers, great names such as Bruno Schulz, were all interested in Mann. This is an important issue demonstrating the eminence of Mann, whose works were read not only by graduate students writing their dissertations, but also by the greatest writers whom Mann interested and indeed inspired.

The growing interest in the writer was accompanied by further translations of his works. I was encouraged to publish in *Poznańska Biblioteka Niemiecka* the essay by Thomas Mann titled "Reflections of an Unpolitical Man" translating this book from German. I refused because I believe that this text would be difficult for the average Polish reader to understand, and that if someone really took an interest in this stage in Mann's work, it is always

possible to read these rather lengthy reflections in German. Mann's essays written before and during the First World War, for example "Frederick and the Great Coalition," can be found in the volume *Meine Zeit* [My Time]. The dispute with his brother, which took place before he wrote his essay on Frederick the Great, became a kind of springboard, enabling a slow transition to republican views. Mann falls into the category of conservative revolution.

K.K.: At which point did Thomas Mann begin to function in Poland as a kind of figure? His name was often used in the public discourse not necessarily referring to specific literary works.

H.O.: I wrote about five stages of the Polish reception of Thomas Mann in one of my texts. The core of your question relates primarily to the situation just after the war. Individual references to Mann's work still appeared in the notes of various writers before the end of the Second World War and the fall of Nazi Germany.

We most often use great names, such as Mann or Dostoyevsky, not because they are eminent German or Russian writers, but in order to explain the current reality, using a prominent name. The perception of the figure and work of each writer is changing. A good example of this can be the idea of accepting Thomas Mann to the Polish PEN Club, an idea which initially met with considerable resistance. Later, however, the attitude towards him changed and references were made to Mann to show that there are other Germans too, uncontaminated by Nazism. This was useful while the German Democratic Republic was being established, when the cry of "He was ours" was coined with regard to the fact that Mann had never supported National Socialism. Attempts were made at the time to show that Mann belonged more to the German Democratic Republic than to the Federal Republic of Germany, which was surely a misunderstanding. Nevertheless, Mann's name was distinctly present in political journalism, which made many people bear a grudge towards him.

He and his wife acquired American citizenship, but during the Cold War he no longer felt at home in California where he bought a house. He wanted to return to Europe, but instead of coming back to his homeland he chose to settle in Switzerland. Hence, he was first a citizen of the German Empire, then of the Weimar Republic, and a Nazi German expatriate citizen until 1936. He cut himself off from Nazi Germany in 1936. He later became a citizen of Czechoslovakia, the United States and Switzerland.

Being a citizen of different countries and changing documents several times brings to my mind the biography of my parents and myself. I was born in Warmia, where my family had been living from at least the 1820s. My parents were citizens of the Kingdom of Prussia, while I was born in 1937 already as a citizen of Nazi Germany. We were a Polish minority, but my birth certificate has a Nazi eagle on it. I was later a citizen of the People's Republic of Poland, and then of the Republic of Poland. I see the issue of Mann's belonging to different countries as part of my reflection on my own

life. Perhaps that is why I am so eager to deal with his works and their reception.

The Cold War and German politics after the Second World War had a great influence on the reception of Thomas Mann's literary output. It was hoped that the writer would present important diagnoses concerning contemporary times. In 1947, when everyone knew that Thomas Mann was writing a major novel about the causes of the degradation of humanism in Nazi Germany, it seemed that if such a great writer dealt with a very important subject, he would surely convey nothing but the truth formulated in the right way. At the time, Mann did not quite manage to do so, since it was not possible. Readers, in turn, expected Mann to tell the Germans what had actually happened to them and how the nation of writers and poets had turned out to be a nation of judges and executioners. A nation that brought the greatest writers and philosophers such as Kant, Fichte and Hegel into the world. It is not my intention to belittle English or French philosophers, but in systemic terms, it was German philosophers who created the largest philosophical systems.

K.K.: Since you pay a lot of attention to the years after the Second World War, I would like to ask you about one of the more sensitive issues relating to that period. What can be said about Jewish motifs in Mann's work? Did the writer identify himself to any extent with the anti-Semitic narrative prevailing in Nazi Germany? The description of Naphta seems to contain a lot of stereotypical elements related to the Semitic appearance of this character.

H.O.: "Deep is the well of the past" for it goes back to the mythical past of the Israelis, a good example of which is the Biblical tetralogy titled *Joseph and His Brothers*. In my opinion, however, the Jewish theme is absolutely not a key one for Mann; it is rather featured as a secondary topic. Looking at the confession recorded in church books, Mann was a Protestant. The whole city of Lübeck, where he was born, was Protestant. However, I would say metaphorically that Mann floated over the waters of several confessions.

He was going to write a drama on Luther. Some fragments of it have even been preserved. I wonder what would ultimately have resulted from this: after all, Luther is the central figure of the Reformation. Mann was writing this drama later in his life, but reflections on Luther had already appeared before.

Mann was often asked to comment on various topics. This became particularly frequent after he had received the Nobel Prize. He wrote a total of around 300 sketches in which he presented his views. He was also asked about his attitude to religion. His answers were evasive; he was not an ardent believer (although it is worth noting that Protestantism does not force worshippers to attend services regularly). Mann writing on religious topics is actually Mann writing Biblical tetralogy. It is a very interesting work yet difficult to read as it is filled with many reflections and acquired wisdom.

Many people criticised the writer, saying that he was not a *poeta natus* but a *poeta doctus* – not a writer who brings out a given way of seeing and

interpreting the world from the richness of his soul, but a person who places in his works reflections that he read or heard somewhere. Mann's collection of materials, which he used for writing individual books, has survived to this day. It was often the case that he had read some interesting anecdote in a newspaper or found an intriguing name in it, which he later used in his novels. He was a sort of collector.

Hundreds of dissertations have been written about Mann's literary output; there will certainly be even more of them. It seems to me, however, that the very issue of the dispute between Settembrini and Naphta is already settled/closed in our literature. Of course, there is a possibility that the day will come when these categories will be again interpretatively fruitful and will be used by writers for further reflection; still, for the time being, I do not see any sign of a return to this dispute from the 1970s.

Hubert Orłowski – Professor Emeritus of Adam Mickiewicz University, a full member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, a Germanist (specialisation: the history of German literature and culture), a literary scholar.

His most important publications include: *Literatura w III Rzeszy*, Poznań 1975, second extended edition 1979; *“Polnische Wirtschaft.” Zum deutschen Polendiskurs der Neuzeit*, Wiesbaden 1996; *Wobec zniewoleń “krótkiego stulecia.” Szkice o literaturze austriackiej i niemieckiej*, Wrocław 1997; *Polnische Wirthschaft. Nowoczesny niemiecki dyskurs o Polsce*, Olsztyn 1998; *Literatur und Herrschaft – Herrschaft und Literatur. Zur deutschen und österreichischen Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin 2000; *Z modernizacją w tle. Wokół rodowodu nowoczesnych niemieckich wyobrażeń o Polsce i Polakach*, Poznań 2002; *Zrozumieć świat. Szkice o literaturze i kulturze niemieckiej XX wieku*, Wrocław 2003; *Die Lesbarkeit von Stereotypen. Der deutsche Polendiskurs im Blick historischer Stereotypenforschung und historischer Semantik*, Wrocław 2004; *Deutsche und Polen: Geschichte, Kultur und Politik* (co-editor), München 2006; *Dzieje kultury niemieckiej* (in cooperation with Czesław Karolak and Wojciech Kunicki), Warsaw 2006, second extended edition 2015.

The editor of 50 volumes in the series *Poznańska Biblioteka Niemiecka*; in cooperation with Christoph Kleßmann from volume no. 1 to 35. He edited twenty two collective volumes and sixteen anthologies; the author of over four hundred and forty articles.

E-mail: orlowhub@amu.edu.pl

Karolina Król – a student of Polish philology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. In 2019, she became a laureate of the ‘Best Student Grant’ programme and she carried out the project titled “Czesław Miłosz and Stanisław Barańczak: Parallels and Splits as Exemplified by the Reception of *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann in the Works of the Two Poets.” She is interested in the 20th- and 21st-century poetry as well as works centred around the issue of the Holocaust.

E-mail: karolina.krol@onet.pl

VARIA

ANETA STAWISZYŃSKA

Łódź



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Odnośnie artykułu Katarzyny Kuczyńskiej-Koschany *„Panienka, Godzina Polski, 1916: Irena Tuwim’s Literary Debut”*

STRESZCZENIE

Poszukiwanie debiutu Ireny Tuwim nie należy do rzeczy łatwych. Jej pierwsze utwory, pisane w wieku młodzieńczym publikowane były na łamach prasy łódzkiej, często pod pseudonimami, nadanymi przez jej brata, Juliana, który w tajemnicy przed siostrą zanosił jej wiersze do zaprzyjaźnionych redakcji. W świetle dzisiejszej wiedzy za najwcześniej opublikowane wiersze poetki należy uznać utwory „Przy kominku” oraz „Szczęście” zamieszczone w pierwszej połowie 1914 r. na łamach jednodniówki literackiej „Życie Łódzkie” pod red. A. Nullusa, współtworzonej przez J. Tuwima. Wspomniane wiersze zostały podpisane pseudonimem „Ira Blanka”. Ponadto wiersze zostały opatrzone przypisem, z którego wynikało, że ich autorka miała 15 lat a wiersze zostały opublikowane bez jej wiedzy.

Słowa kluczowe

Irena Tuwim, literatura łódzka w XX wieku

W numerze 8/2019 „Czytanie Literatury. Łódzkie Studia Literaturoznawcze” ukazał się artykuł autorstwa prof. dr hab. Katarzyny Kuczyńskiej-Koschany „*Panienka, Godzina Polski, 1916: Irena Tuwim’s Literary Debut,*” poświęcony młodzieńczej twórczości młodszej siostry Juliana Tuwima. Do lektury

wspomnianego tekstu zasiadłam z zainteresowaniem, gdyż od lat interesuje mnie twórczość poetki, zwłaszcza w kontekście miasta jej urodzenia.

Analizując treść artykułu niewątpliwie należy zauważyć, że Autorka sięgnęła po kilkanaście różnych prac poświęconych rodzeństwu Tuwimów, które ukazały się na przestrzeni ostatnich lat – zarówno tych zwartych, jak i artykułów¹. Paradoksalnie, wspomniana kwerenda opracowań, a jednocześnie brak kwerendy prasy z lat młodości Ireny, przyczyniły się do powielenia po raz kolejny, błędu dotyczącego faktycznego debiutu poetki, który wbrew komunikatowi zawartemu w tytule artykułu, ani nie miał miejsca w 1916 r., ani też nie był związany z wierszem *Panienka*, zamieszczonym na łamach dziennika „Godzina Polski” (11 VI 1916, nr 162, s. 8).

Aby zapoznać się z faktycznym debiutem nastoletniej Ireny, której próby poetyckie prawdopodobnie ograniczały się wcześniej do „pisania do szuflady”, należy cofnąć się do pierwszej połowy 1914 r., kiedy to ukazała się jednodniówka „Życie Łódzkie” pod redakcją znanego łódzkiego literata Andrzeja Nullusa. Na łamach publikacji oprócz utworów łódzkiego literata oraz publicystów, znajdujemy dwa wiersze – autorstwa niejakej Iry² Blanki (s. 16). Wspomniane utwory są utrzymane w typowym dla ówczesnej twórczości Tuwimówny, melancholijnym nastroju:

Przy kominku

Na kominku brązowym ogień skrzy się, pali...
 Patrzę na płomień, co gore czerwono – niebieski.
 I układam zeń baśnie, dziwne arabeski.
 A za oknem płacznie tęsknota się żali...
 Fioletowa iskierka błyszczy się i skacze,
 Po węglkach czerwonych, migając wokoło,
 Ogień mruży coś, nuci i trzaska wesoło,
 A za oknem tęsknota, skarży się i płacze....

Szczęście

Gdy szczęście do mnie przyszło piękne, jaśniejące
 Gdy rozwarło mi wrota kryształe, tęczowe -
 Jam spojrzała mu z dumę w twarz jak w złote słońce
 I odeszłam z pogardą, w tył rzuciwszy głowę.
 A gdy gwiazda zalśniła w górze ponademną,
 By rozświetlić promiennie mi życia bezdroża -
 Jam Odeszła w krainę zła i bólów ciemną,
 Gdzie tęsknoty i żalu szemrzą wielkie morza.

¹ Autorka w bibliografii wymienia m.in. biografię poetki *Irena Tuwim. Nie umarłam z miłości* autorstwa Anny Augustyniak (Warszawa 2016), a także mój artykuł, „Życie literackie Łodzi w czasie I wojny światowej”, *Acta Universitatis Lodzensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica*, t. 18 (2012), s. 67–84.

² W domu rodzinnym Irena, często nazywana była Iryą.

Obydwa utwory opatrzone zostały przypisem redakcyjnym następującej treści: „Na tem miejscu winniśmy małe omówienie: utwory *Szczęście* i *Przy kominku* wyszły z pod pióra młodziutkiej, bo zaledwie 15³ wiosen liczącej autorki. Sympatycznej poetce, której utwory mieliśmy przyjemność poznać, życzymy serdecznie jak najlepszej przyszłości i prosimy o wybaczenie, iż poważyliśmy się (sic!) zdradzić jej sekret przed czytelnikami. RED.”

Osobą, która dostarczyła redakcji jednodniówki wiersze Ireny był zapewne, współtworzący publikacje jej brat Julian, który na łamach jednodniówki zamieścił swoje utwory tj. wiersze *Panny* i *Żle* (s. 15) pod pseudonimem „Roch Pekiniński”. Warto w tym miejscu przypomnieć, że brat Ireny interesował się twórczością siostry, czemu wyraz dawał przepisując do swych kajetów bez wiedzy autorki jej wiersze i nadając im tytuł *Sancta simplicitas* („Święta naiwności”)⁴.

Przedstawione powyżej argumenty wskazują na to, że rzeczywistym debiutem literackim Ireny Tuwim, nie był wiersz *Panienska* opublikowany w 1916 r. w czasopiśmie „Godzina Polski”, a dwa wiersze: *Szczęście* i *Przy kominku* opublikowane pod pseudonimem: Ira Blanka w jednodniówce „*Życie Łódzkie*” pod redakcją Andrzeja Nullusa w pierwszej połowie 1914 r.

BIBLIOGRAFIA

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Aneta Stawiszyńska (1983) – w 2015 r. uzyskała na Wydziale Filozoficzno-Historycznym UŁ stopień doktora na podstawie rozprawy *Łódź w latach I wojny światowej*. Jest autorką dwóch książek (*Ruda Pabianicka. Echa przeszłości*, Łódź 2009 oraz *Łódź w latach I wojny światowej*, Oświęcim 2016) i ponad 90 artykułów naukowych i popularnonaukowych poświęconych dziejom Łodzi i regionu.
E-mail: anetas83@wp.pl

³ Wiek Iry Blanki zgadza się z wiekiem Ireny Tuwim, która urodziła się 22 sierpnia 1898 r., a więc w momencie wydania jednodniówki jeszcze miała 15 lat.

⁴ A. Augustyniak, *Irena Tuwim...*, s. 52-53.

