

Olga Wiktoria Wybodowska

***Juliusz Słowacki's only letter to George Sand – monographic analysis***

1. George Sand as addressee of Słowacki's letter – which factors allowed Leopold Meyer to qualify the French author as the addressee?
  - As Meyer argued: Słowacki highly appreciated the outstanding French author and already after her first books mentioned her in letters to his mother – and perhaps could say only of her that „her voice is liked in Poland”.
  - The publisher or romantic poets' letters doesn't cite further arguments. However, it is hard to doubt reliability of the editor, who showed extraordinary sensitivity in his care to precisely show the character and content of published letters. As Agnieszka Markuszewska wrote: *[Meyer] understood that the authenticity of epistolographic message, its „purity” and literary orientation, facilitate reaching deeper semantic structures, uncover hidden meanings, an existential experience recorded in letters, and allow reading them as an artistic whole, a novel with its own rules. At the same time he took into consideration the standards of modern scientific editorship and – with his care for comprehensible form – was not afraid of new graphical and textological solutions.*
  - Because of these factors, in my presentation I accept the thesis that the intended recipient of the letter was indeed George Sand.
  - What did Słowacki know about the French writer? From letters to his mother:
    - Letter from March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1834: „There is a new lady writer in France, who will soon eclipse Mrs. Staël – a kind of female Byron, a Byron in prose, I mean. It is still not clear what is her real name, because she's hiding under the male name of George Sand – but it's known that she's a woman. Some newspapers said her name is Mrs. Dudevant. She wrote three lovely romances: *Indiana*, then *Valentine* and now the third, *Leila*. The first two are lovely, the final strange – more resembling an epic poem than a romance. This is a piece of literary news which should be of interest to ladies. Try, Mom, to read one of her books, particularly one of the first two”.
    - Letter from September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1834: „This new author's real name is Mrs. Dudevant. As far as I have been able to learn about her, she doesn't care much about public opinion. She abandoned her husband and lives with a young man from University of Paris – a student of law. But still there is some mystery

covering her, nobody knows her in person, nobody can say for sure who has written these rapturous romances”.

- Letter from May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1838: „(...) For me she is the greatest French poet – she has by far outweighed Mrs. Staël. I have met her once, wearing male clothes, on a steamboat on Lake Geneva, but my heart was so occupied by other things, that I never approached her. Who knows whether, at such a moment, her words wouldn't have given a different direction to my feelings. (...) Now it's too late for all metamorphoses”.

## 2. Słowacki's political letters – how does the letter to George Sand differ?

- The following texts by Słowacki are considered political in their character by researchers: two letters to Prince Adam Czartoryski, as well as texts such as *To the Emigration about the need for ideas* and *Voice of exile to brothers in homeland*. The letters to Czartoryski were, in fact, written as an open manifesto. As Katarzyna Westermark notices: „A visible aspect of these letters is avoidance of the specific, hermetic language of Słowacki's mystical teachings, beginning with *Genesis from the Spirit*, which is so prominent in unpublished dramas or philosophical prose written in the same period. The need for action, for an immediate response to important political events, forced the author to express his thoughts as precisely and completely as possible”. A similar strategy can be seen in the letter to George Sand. Słowacki's style is very different from the one known, for example, from *Uniform dialogue with Helion and Helois*, written at the same time. In fact, Słowacki even tries to anticipate the addressee's potential accusations about mystical tendencies, when he writes: „I would have said even more, if I wasn't anxious to draw the banal accusation of mysticism on myself”.
- An obvious difference between the letter to Sand and letters such as those to Prince Czartoryski, is that the former was probably never sent, nor published – at this point it is important to note that Słowacki made several revisions of the text, introduced corrections and crossed out some phrases, which is meticulously annotated by Meyer in footnotes.

## 3. Rhetoric measures and autocreation of the subject. Relation between sender and addressee:

- Słowacki „introduces himself” as a person unknown to Sand, the letter was also not signed, even though a signature is announced in the text: „Finally, I sign this letter, already too long, with a name which will anyway be unknown to you (...)”. As we can learn from Sand's diaries – she was familiar with the name of Juliusz Słowacki. We should therefore consider whether the author truly assumed that Sand may not have heard of him, whether it was another rhetoric game, or perhaps whether he wanted to sign the letter with a different name.
- The poet also uses several courteous, honorific expressions, which doesn't seem another typical rhetoric measure – it may indicate authentic respect of Słowacki for Sand and her views.
- The diversity of rhetoric figures and diligence in precisely explaining his concepts to the addressee show how meaningful was this letter to Słowacki. In this perspective it is particularly puzzling that the letter was never sent.

#### 4. Letter to Sand and letters to other women

- There is a clear difference between the letter to Sand and letters to women such as Zofia Węgierska or Salomea Bécu (the poet's mother). In the latter, Słowacki, in a way, puts himself into a position known from his mystical writings – „Translator of the Word”. Such tendencies are hard to notice in the letter to Sand. Słowacki doesn't put himself into the position of a master who explains the meaning of history. This attitude can result from two reasons: Słowacki treated Sand as equal to other (male) figures of public life, of this stance was another rhetoric measure, aimed at persuading the addressee to accede to his request.