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THE CLEANLINESS OF LORD SINGELWORTH

The protagonist of *Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth* [*Lord Singelworth's Secret*] is an Englishman who indulges his passion for hot air ballooning in Venice. He is misunderstood by the local residents, wants to be regarded as a serious thinker, but even the narrator seems to mock him. The novella has been interpreted insightfully¹, and more recently there have been attempts to analyse the cleanliness/uncleanliness relationship that seems to obsess the main character². This issue has also intrigued me³, but from a slightly different perspective. The message of the work has to a large extent already been unveiled by scholars. A complete, closed exegesis, obviously and thankfully, is not possible, but it seems to me that the catalogue of interpretations is worth completing with an explanation of why the protagonist of the novella is an Englishman. The image of this character seems to have been sketched in accordance with ideas derived from 19th-century imagol-

¹ M. ADAMIEC, "Tajemnica lorda Singelworth albo metafizyka balonu," *Studia Norwidiana*, 3-4: 1985-1986, pp. 201-215, E. DĄBROWICZ, "'Tajemnica lorda Singelworth' Cypriana Norwida – strategia publicznego mówienia," *Studia Norwidiana*, 3-4: 1985-1986, pp. 221-223, K. TRYBUŚ, "Maska lorda Singelwortha," *Studia Norwidiana*, 14: 1996, pp. 96-97, M. GRABOWSKI, "Topografia pamięci w 'Tajemnicy Lorda Singelworth' Norwida," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 2016, Issue 4, pp. 79-95, Z. DAMBEK-GIALLELIS, "Tajemnice 'Tajemnicy Lorda Singelworth,'" *Studia Norwidiana*, 35: 2017, pp. 185-198.

² E. KAĆKA, "Świat wzniosłych uczuć i dobrych manier, czyli Norwidowskie prawo inwersji," *Studia Norwidiana*, 38: 2020, pp. 99-109.

³ I would add that the first version of this text was written before the publication of Eliza Kaćka's interesting, erudite text in last year's *Studia Norwidiana*.

ogy⁴. Tracing the threads opened up in this way makes it possible to answer why Norwid linked the problem of cleanliness with religious movements, as well as why Singelworth practised aeronautics and why rumours about the reasons for flying centred around his gastric problems. The purpose of my analysis, however, is not simply to show that the Englishman's figure was constructed based on national stereotypes. Indeed, this character seems well grounded in the depicted world, in the Venice of the time "before the transformation." All this, together with the fact that *Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth* is one of the last texts of an age-wise and literary experienced author, led me to consider that the Englishman could be a kind of a self-portrait of Norwid. A partial self-portrait, whose, I believe, *pendant* is the image of Toni di Bona Grazia. More has been said so far about the latter, hence I will concentrate on completing the image of the British lord.

BALLOONING AND GASTRIC PROBLEMS

The essential plot of the novella, hot air balloon travel, is presented by the narrator as a well-known phenomenon, explaining that aeronautics "kilkadziesiąt lat temu nie była powszechną tak rzeczą, jak ona dziś komu wydawać się może" [was not such a widespread thing a few decades ago as it may seem to someone today] (DW VII, 220). Although no information about the time of the action is given in the text, the Austrians occupied Venice until 1866. On the other hand, the first hot air balloon flight in the city took place shortly after the Parisian ascent – in April 1784⁵; this activity was not continued by the Italians, however; perhaps because they were not the ones leading the race for dominion in the skies. There are lists of aeronauts active between 1783 and 1850, which show that for a long time the skies were dominated by the French, who at the end of this period gave priority to the English. As calculated, at that time, of the 500 hot air balloon pilots, 313 were from the British Isles⁶. Recorded in documents of the period and widely

⁴ Joep Leersseen presented both an outline of the history of imagology as "a factual inventory of foreign characters and descriptions of foreigners in the existing literary corpus," which, however, "constituted the object of naïve essentialism," and also presented it as an interesting research method. J. LEERSSEEN, "Imagologia: o zastosowaniu etniczności do nadawania światu sensu," *Porównania. Czasopismo poświęcone zagadnieniom komparatystyki literackiej*, 2017, Vol. 21, Issue 2, pp. 9-29.

⁵ LYNN M. R., *The Sublime Invention: Ballooning in Europe*, London 2010, p. 16.

⁶ I would add that there were 104 French names on the lists. The development of ballooning was rapid since, by 1820, the number of all aeronauts did not exceed 200. At that time, the French were most represented, followed by 12 Italians, 10 Austrians, 11 people from German-speaking countries, 4 Russians and 3 Poles. *Ibid*, p. 62.

known, so probably also familiar to Norwid, the information about the prevalence of the British among the aeronauts may explain why the hero of the Venetian adventure is one of them.

The nationality of the title character explains the presence of yet another cultural context in the novella. The hot air balloon was only one of the objects, although undoubtedly the main one at the turn of the 18th/19th century, of the new field of science, aeronautics, it also provided entertainment, and the spread of ballooning – an elitist activity, but one that was observed eagerly and in large crowds – left its mark on the culture. The narrator in the novella, summarising the rumours surrounding the reasons for the Englishman’s passion for flying, mentions, in addition to the most important uses of balloons at the time⁷, a mocking detraction. Eagerly picked up by gossip columnists, the French journalist’s suggestion that Singelworth had found an original way to deal with his gastric problems is sustained by a report from Russian military observers confirming the aeronaut’s possession of a vessel similar to “etruskiej okrągłej wazy, albo porcelanowej” [an Etruscan round vase, or a porcelain one] (DW VII, 221), while invalidating the suspicion of a military purpose for the flights. “A professor in Heidelberg” instead gave a scientific reason – the study of atmospheric pressure over cities. This opinion, however, did not eliminate from public circulation the rumour of more down-to-earth reasons for Singelworth’s ballooning passion.

For what reason is the unpleasant gossip so vital? And why did such a problem find its way into the novella? Characteristically of Norwid’s texts, we can find a plausible explanation for this plot in 19th century popular culture. It may seem strange, but digestive processes and gastric problems were not only of interest to physicians at the time. Already at the end of the 18th century, the study of the nutritional needs of man was taken up by chemists, including Justus von Liebig, who in the 1840s published the now common knowledge of the nutritional value of food.

Slightly earlier, before the mid-18th century, scholarly texts appeared that recognised melancholy, spleen, nervous disorder, and depression as ailments particularly common to the inhabitants of the British Isles. A telling example is the treatise *The English Malady or a Treatise of Nervous Diseases of all Kinds as Spleen, Vapours, Lowness of Spirits, Hypochondrical, and Hysterical Distempers, etc.* by George Cheyne, published in 1734, which begins with an explanation of the title:

⁷ On the scientific uses of balloons, especially their use in meteorological research (and the development of such research owing to them): R. GILLESPIE, “Ballooning in France and Britain, 1783-1786: Aerostation and Adventurism,” *Isis*, 2: 1984 (75), pp. 249-268. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/231824, accessed 12 May 2020, pp. 253-254, J. TUCKER, “Voyages of Discovery on Oceans of Air: Scientific Observation and the Image of Science in an Age of ‘Balloonacy’”, *Osiris* 11: 1996, pp. 144-176. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/301930, accessed 15 August 2020.

The title which I have chosen for this treatise is a reproach universally thrown on this Island by foreigners, and all our neighbours on the Continent, by whom nervous distempers, spleen, vapours and lowness of spirits, are in derision, called the ENGLISH MALADY⁸.

Among the sources of the mentioned mental maladies of his countrymen, the author included “the rankness and fertility of our soil, the richness and heaviness of our food,” as well as “the humour of living in great, populous and consequently unhealthy towns”⁹. Causes of mental problems indicated by Cheyne: city life and indigestion caused by unhealthy food, are found in the novella. One of the characters in *Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth*, similarly pragmatic to Cheyne, drew attention to the same sources of digestive difficulties (admittedly more vaguely than he did) in explaining the reasons for Singelworth’s daily hot air balloon flying:

– Wyznać wszakże należy – mówił D*** – że są na globie miejsca tak bardzo niezdrowe z różnych powodów, iż owdzie nie byłoby wcale dziwactwem uregulować co dnia siłę trawienia w warunkach swobodniejszych, powracając przeto i silniejszym, i zdrowszym. (DW VII, 226)

– But it must be confessed – said D*** – that there are places on the globe which are so unhealthy for various reasons, that here it would not be at all strange to regulate the strength of digestion every day in freer conditions, returning therefore both stronger and healthier.

The recognition of heavy eating as a cause of mental anguish may be surprising, but Cheyne was not the only scientist at the time to recognise this connection as obvious. Most, of course, pointed to a more straightforwardly observable cause-and-effect relationship between hunger and anger, yet the author of *The English Malady* wrote in the introduction quoted above about wealthy, opulent Englishmen. Similar observations were recorded by Sydney Whiting in *Memoirs of a Stomach, Written by Himself, that Al. Lwio Eat May Read* (1853) – a grotesque novel, although based on the most up-to-date findings of the time, pretending to be a learned medical treatise on the viscera and digestive problems, in which the stomach is the seat of noble feelings (as opposed to the heart), its condition determines the disposition of the brain, and English cuisine is a negative example of nutrition. Whiting’s text was a kind of literary summary of the proliferation of scientific texts from the late 18th century on the effects of gastric problems on other organs and mental health. At the beginning of the 19th century, the health of representatives of different nations also began to be analysed and the most common ailments statistically linked to the place of residence and regional dietary

⁸ G. CHEYNE, *The English Malady or a Treatise of Nervous Diseases of all Kinds as Spleen, Vapours, Lowness of Spirits, Hypochondrical, and Hysterical Distempers, etc.*, London 1734, p. i.

⁹ G. CHEYNE, *The English Malady or a Treatise*, pp. i-ii.

traditions (and possibilities). Thus, starting with works such as John Abernethy's *The Surgical Works* (1815), which presented the state of knowledge of diseases associated with gastric indisposition in France, the German-speaking countries (where such studies had appeared earlier) and England, analysis of the condition of British stomachs also began. As a result, in the 1830s, gastric problems were recognised as a national affliction of the English. The spread of this belief was not only the result of statistical observation, but also of subsequent scientific articles. Many of them wrote about the prevalence of this affliction, such as William Beaumont's *Experiments and Observations of the Gastric Juice and the Physiology of Digestion* of 1838; sometimes, as in a text in the *Dublin Journal of Medical Science* of the same year, there was a phrase that had previously been used to describe melancholy and similar conditions: "the national malady of Britain"¹⁰. Thus, not only was melancholy a disease of the English, but gastric problems were causally linked to it. Relevant to the analysis of *Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth* is the fact that this belief belonged to the core repertoire of imagistic notions and therefore such an identification was obvious to Norwid's contemporary readers. Although in none of the texts indicated above did I find even a mention of the alleviating effect of aeronautics on dyspepsia, it is likely that such appeared, since one of the characters – a physician – hints at such a possibility:

– Wielce przepraszam, że zaprzeczę! — odpowiedział kawaler di San Luca, wzięty wenecki doktor. — Lord, chociażby nawet rzeczywiście miał jedynie na celu uregulowanie żołądka swojego przez heroiczną a periodyczną zmianę atmosfery, nie zasługiwałby bynajmniej na pośmiech u pokornie i nieco głębiej zastanawiających się nad człowiekiem!... (DW VII, 225-226)

– I am very sorry to deny it! – replied the Chevalier di San Luca, the esteemed Venetian doctor.
– The lord, even if he were really only to regulate his stomach by a heroic and periodic change of atmosphere, he would by no means deserve to be laughed at by those who are humbly and somewhat profoundly thoughtful of man!...

Another character in the novella, D***, cited above, hiding behind an initial because of his social position ("a great Venetian name"), expressed a similar opinion. Singelworth, a somewhat grotesque eccentric who was suspected of being mainly concerned with seeking relief for his inefficient viscera, practising unintelligible moralising, is sometimes taken seriously by other characters. The entrusting of the Englishman with the main role in the text, his characteristics and his attitude to a city "frozen in time," composed of mementos of historical glory and filth, provokes a juxtaposition with the author of the novella himself.

¹⁰ I. MILLER, *A Modern history of a Stomach*, New York 2016, p. 19.

ENGLISH MORALITY ACCORDING TO NORWID

Singeworth's aversion to the uncleanness of the city is a metaphor for his moral beliefs. These kinds of issues, as we know, troubled Norwid most often. Let us therefore look at his depiction and assessment of what he considered to be British morality.

The poet stayed in Great Britain twice. First, while awaiting transport to the United States, he spent a few days in London. He arrived in the city on 3 December and left on 13 December, only managing to visit the Crystal Palace¹¹. He came back to London after returning from the USA, at the end of June 1854, but this time for a little longer. He stayed in the city almost until the end of December, when he left for Paris (PWsz XI, 185). This half-year stay in the British capital was enough for it to become a figure of modernity for the Polish poet, at least according to how he perceived it. He expressed his critical opinion in the poem *Larwa* [*Larva*], beginning with an evocation of the "śliski bruk w Londynie" [slippery cobblestones of London]. I will briefly recall the lyrical context. A passer-by in the fog appears to the speaking subject as a ghost, and his disturbed perception makes him appear to simultaneously have contradictory qualities: those Christ-like and those of a mad iconoclast. Thus, in Norwid's characteristic manner, the character could be compared to "Biblii księgi / zataczającej się w błocie" [a book of the Bible / reeling in the mud] (PWsz II, 30). The theme of the work is the immorality of the economic and social system, which results in "despair" because the rules are regulated by "pieniądz" [money] (PWsz II, 31). Such a clear opinion provokes one to check whether it has not influenced the depiction of the protagonist of *Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth*. Poetically sketched with the use of a few words and associations, the passer-by is a sombre figure, although for a moment he gives the impression of a Christ-like victim ("Czoło ma w cierniu?" [His brow is in thorns?]). The lyrical subject does not blame him, but rather sympathises with him, all the more so because he seems to be a madman.

However, there are no direct parallels between the character in the poem and Lord Singelworth. The latter is not a madman, rather a freak or a unique specimen. Admittedly, one could try to see the hot air balloon flying and the morally motivated aversion to dirt as tropes of the Jesus figure popular in the 19th-century culture¹², but it would be difficult to defend such an interpretation in view of the

¹¹ Z. TROJANOWICZOWA, Z. DAMBEK in collaboration with J. CZARNOMORSKA, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, Vol. I: 1821-1860, Poznań 2007, p. 534.

¹² Among other things, I wrote about such transformations in my book entitled *Przywłaszczenie i strata. Romantyczne transfiguracje Jezusa*, Toruń 2014.

narrator's ironic distance from this figure. Seeking such associations, one could also consider the tandem of Lord Singelworth and the event commentator Bona Grazia – as a 19th-century variant of the “Jesus of the new age” and its prophet. At first glance, support for such a speculation could be provided by the English meaning of “Lord” – Lord (God) and the Italian Bona Grazia – Good Grace, but the validity of following this lead is undermined by a closer look at the names. “Buonagrazia” also means good manners¹³. Nor would such a reading be defensible by the meaning of the Englishman's surname: it does not so much indicate “worth” – “value” – as it emphasises its reduction to “single” – “singularity.”

Making a British man the main character brings in negatively charged meanings. A peculiar commentary on *Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth*, given the protagonist's English background and his obsessive focus on “cleanliness” (“Przyczyną główną [...] jest moje *pojęcie o czystości*. Celem – jest *czystość*” [The main cause (...) is my *idea of cleanliness*. The goal – is *cleanliness*; DW VII, 230) is the 1865 poem *Purytanizm* [*Puritanism*]. It is dominated by associations with purity and a drastic reduction in the range of values: “Na purytanizm, jak na rzecz obrzydłą, / Czemu? się gniewam (pytasz). *Primo*: wcale / Że się nie gniewam na najczystsze mydło, / Którego pianę, to jest: wartość, chwale – / Pozwól mi tylko gęsim skreślić piórem / (Które pluskało się przez żywot cały), / Że mydło – nie jest rzeźbiwym marmurem; / Dobrze na bańki, nie – na ideały!” [At Puritanism, as at abominable thing, / Why? am I angry (you ask). *Primo*: not at all / I am not angry at the purest soap, / Whose foam, that is: its value, I praise – / Let me only write with a goose quill / (Which has been splashing in water all its life), / That soap – is not a carving marble; / Good for bubbles, not – for ideals!] (PWsz II, 67). Five stanzas later we find a passage that could be a commentary on Singelworth's escapes from “unclean” reality: “*Ergo*: uważam za istne prawidło / (W którego kole się zaklętym kręcę), / Że marmur – marmur, zaś mydło jest mydło, / Że – robić z mydła, to – umywać ręce!” [*Ergo*: I consider it a veritable law / (In whose vicious circle I spin), / That marble – is marble, while soap is soap, / That – to make of soap is – to wash one's hands!] (PWsz II, 68).

The title of the poem leaves no doubt that it is not talking about maintaining hygiene. The opinion on Puritanism is unfair in its simplistic one-sidedness, but was nevertheless one of the poet's fixed beliefs. A year before writing the referenced poem, Norwid shared similar thoughts with Władysław Zamoyski. He graphically highlighted a fragment of a statement concerning the issue analysed here: “czemu purytanizm nawet w religii jest herezją???”

¹³ I owe my reflections on the meaning of Toni's name to Olga Płaszczewska, for which I am grateful to her.

[why is Puritanism a heresy even in religion???] (PWsz IX, 131). To this he added a virulent comment, confirming the negative opinion of the inadequacy of this religious movement in the face of changing reality, and of its reductive doctrinalism: “Nawet w religii purytanizm doprowadziłby zawsze albo do żydostwa, albo do archeologii, i skończyłoby się na tym, że Kościół byłoby to muzeum starożytności!” [Even in religion, Puritanism would always lead either to Jewry, or to archaeology, and it would end up with the Church as a museum of antiquity!]. Archaeology and the museum of antiquity are allegories of ossification. It is noteworthy that Norwid rounded off this passage of his epistolary statement with a seemingly strange remark: “Nieuwerkerke byłby Papieżem!” [Nieuwerkerke would be a Pope!] (PWsz IX, 131). Indeed, he remained within the sphere of the same associations, linking the “new church” with Count Alfred Émilien de Nieuwerkerke – sculptor, collector, admirer of antique art and, from 1849, conservative director of French museums, a few years later an important figure in the political world of the Second French Empire. I believe that in this way Norwid emphasised the programmatic confinement of museums to the safe world of works from the distant past and the propagandistic use of such models in shaping the imperial image of France under Napoleon III. In his customary manner, the poet thus combined aesthetics with ethics, emphasising the social mission of art.

Count Nieuwerkerke, however, was not Singelworth’s prototype. Instead, the allegory of archaeology took on a slightly different meaning when the novella’s narrator used it to refer to a European religious tradition:

[...] improwizator *Toni di Bona Grazia* [...] głosił, że ulatujący podróżnik jest mężem *misji*, jest uprzedzicielem i zwiastunem Wielkiej Epoki nowej, która ma stać się dla ludzkości całej rodzajem puryfikacji i czymś do *Revivalu* amerykańskiego podobnym... *Revivalu*, o którym (mówiąc i szczerze, i na stronie) ani nasz stary, *ukształcony i niewolniczy* kontynent nie ma słusznego pojęcia, ani byłby na siłach, ażeby go u siebie spróbować i zaszcześcić!... Archeologia tu raczej, lubo *wstecz*, ale żywo i świetnie — działa [...] (DW VII, 232).

[...] the improviser *Toni di Bona Grazia* [...] proclaimed that the ascending traveller is a man of *mission*, he is the anticipator and herald of the new Great Age, which is to become for mankind as a whole a kind of purification and something akin to the American *Revival*... a *Revival* of which (speaking both openly and indirectly) neither our old, *educated and slaveholding* continent has a fair idea, nor would it be in a position to try and inculcate it at home!... Rather, archaeology here, though *backwards*, works vividly and brilliantly [...]

The juxtaposition of a negatively understood “purification” with a positive opinion of *Revival*, the American religious renewal, makes one wonder. Following Victor Weintraub, one could argue that Norwid could not have spoken complimen-

tarily about *Revival*¹⁴. It seems to me, however, that the opinion on the subject is doubly ironic – Toni di Bona Grazia’s statement and the narrator’s commentary on it can be read in this way.

The improviser, like Singelworth, is not a clear-cut character, but it is he who is given the role of commentator of events in the text. In the surrounding reality, Toni reads the signs foreshadowing inevitable changes. Bona Grazia’s preoccupation with the prophetic mission of the aeronaut is, however, disavowed by the narrator, who expresses his satisfaction with the dominance of religious tradition in Europe (not only in Venice). Nevertheless, the entire text is a record of the situation in the city just before the transformation, the symptoms of which are beginning to become apparent. Zofia Dambek-Giallelis recalled that Zenon Przesmycki, in his commentary on Norwid’s *Pisma zebrane* [*Collected Writings*], mentioned nostalgia for Venice from before it became part of a united Italy in 1866, among the reasons for the creation of the “Italian Trilogy.” The researcher added two pieces of information important from my perspective – “the loss of autonomy and the gain of a new life in a young political community.”¹⁵ We have to remember that both Puritanism and the genetically related American *Revival* were religious movements with a very strong influence on political life. What seems more important to me, however, is the use of the word *revival* in the concluding line of the text, which speaks of religious renewal.

The American religious *Revivals* had three iterations. The Polish poet certainly noticed the effects of the second one during his stay, and he could also experience the atmosphere growing before the third one, as he appeared on its threshold (its beginning dates, somewhat conventionally, to 1855) in one of its centres – New York. The first of these is sometimes referred to as the *Evangelical Revival*. It embraced English Protestants both on the Isles and in the British colonies in America. The name is generally used to refer to events in Britain, but in a then-read publication on the history of these events, published in 1845, it was recalled that one of the theologians who influenced it, Jonathan Edwards, spoke of “The Revival of Religion in New England in 1740.”¹⁶ I mention this because the term “Awakening” was more likely to have been used at the time. It is tempting to suppose that Norwid nevertheless used the name *Revival* to exploit the English meaning to emphasise that the text also speaks of a religious transformation.

¹⁴ W. WEINTRAUB, “Norwid i Ameryka,” *Studia Norwidiana*, 14: 1996, p. 18.

¹⁵ Z. DAMBEK-GIALLELIS, p. 185.

¹⁶ J. TRACY, *The Great Awakening. A History of the Revival of Religion in the time of Edwards and Whitefield*, Boston – New York – Philadelphia, 1845, p. iii.

However, let us return to the allegory of archaeology. Venice in the novella is a city that has resisted change through its history, customs and current situation. Modernity “standing at the gates” is, in fact, also held back by the presence of the occupying army. The resulting restriction of freedoms is an element of transitional period, since by limiting the contacts of a traditionally open commercial city, it supports the conversion of Venice into a “museum” of its past. On the other hand, the city defends its autonomy with its history. Its traces are inscribed in the urban fabric, reminding of glorious events but also of assimilated patterns from other cultures:

[...] Wenecja, nazbyt będąc oryginalną, ażeby mogła być ostatecznie ujarzmioną, pozostawała tym samym dziwnym miastem.

Miastem, w posadach swoich mającym pierwowieczną lakastralną konstrukcję na palach; potem targiem-rybaków i uskoków schronieniem; potem jeszcze miastem kramarzących z fenicka przedsiębiorców, zawiązanych nareszcie w Republikę, bynajmniej spartańską, ale owszem noszącą bisior szeroki, który leniwo włókł się za złotym jej sandałem, nieco na azjacki lub wschodni sposób szpiczastym i w górę podkrzywionym. Miastem – które zaiste że przeżyło *idyllę*, *dramę*, nadużyło *tragedii* i *komedii* i które, jako znudzona już wszystkim wielka dama, pozostało piękne i czarowne [...] (DW VII, 223-224).

[...] Venice, being too original to be finally tamed, has remained the same strange city.

A city which in its foundations had an original lacustrine construction on stilts; then a fishermen’s market and a shelter for refugees; then a city of Phoenician traders’ stalls, joined at last into a Republic, by no means Spartan, but wearing a byssus-shaped broadcloth which lazily trailed behind its golden sandal, somewhat pointed and upwardly curved in an Asiatic or Eastern manner. A city – which has indeed lived through *idyll*, *drama*, abused *tragedy* and *comedy*, and which, as a great lady already bored with everything, has remained beautiful and charming [...]

Viewed in this way, “archaeology” is built from overlapping layers of the past – “okrytych kurzawą palimpsestów” [dust-covered palimpsests] (DW VII, 223) and “butwiejących kart kronik Rzeczypospolitej” [the decaying pages of the chronicles of the Republic], through which “dawnego życia obrazy przeświecały” [images of former life shone through] (DW VII, 223). Persistence, however, is a time of barren stasis, lacking “dziedziny politycznego i literackiego życia” [the domain of political and literary life] (DW VII, 222). Although Toni di Bona Grazia is the only one among the characters who understands that a time of change is coming, in his role as an urban improviser whose prophecies are customarily treated with indulgence, he is part of the traditional order. This order is upheld by convention, to which the Austrian soldiers also conform. The donning of masks, the poses, the rituals make it a game, devoid of its original, deeper content. Convention replaces memory, monuments cease to be memories of important events and become urban

attractions, “dla których jednakże podziwu się ma więcej niż żywego społecznia człowieka!...” [for which, however, one has more admiration than true human sympathy!...] (DW VII, 224). The dirt and smells of the sewers, replacing the traditional streets in this city, which are its material and portable foundations, are neither seen nor felt. Ritual makes one indifferent both to suicidal people jumping from famous buildings and to unpleasant sensations, the canals are covered up by a shaky structure made of gondolas – a popular means of transport and one of the symbols of the city:

U mostu wysokiego – u *Rialto* – flagi wszystkich barw, chorągwie wszystkich wieków i ludów grały wstęgami w wietrze – małe maskaradowe okręta, wyzłacane nawy z różnych epok, galery pstre herbami, czarne gondole i rozmaite statki spotykały się tak nieraz żebrami boków swoich, iż suchą nogą mogłeś przejść całą kanału szerokość, tam i napowrót. (DW VII, 233)

At the high bridge – at the *Rialto* – flags of all colours, banners of all ages and peoples played with ribbons in the breeze – small masquerade ships, gilded aisles of various epochs, galleys spotted with coats of arms, black gondolas and various ships met so often with the ribs of their sides that you could walk the whole width of the channel there and back with a dry foot.

Bona Grazia looks at his city critically, sees its flaws but resignedly accepts them, recognising them as part of the complex character and historical heritage of the place. A sad, wisecracking jester, indulgently regarded by his audience. Singelworth, on the other hand, is one-sidedly radical. His supposed high origins are not questioned by anyone, he is received with honours by the city’s elite, but no one grasps his eccentric views either. He is therefore regarded as a harmless ballooning maniac. Both are treated with mockery because of lack of understanding, but it is of the Lord that Toni says: “Lecz nie należałoby właściwiej podzielić i uzasadnić mniemanie, iż powietrzny *latawiec* ma jedną z tych głębokich historycznych tajemnic, które się dopiero po wiekach wyjaśniają?” [But would it not be more appropriate to share and justify the notion that the aerial *kite* hides one of those profound historical mysteries which are only revealed after centuries?] (DW VII, 223).

It is hard to resist associating this unequivocal assessment of the protagonist with Norwid’s belief in the lack of understanding on the part of his contemporaries, combined with a belief in the correct reading of his message by posterity. Let me add a few elements to this association. If we consider that the author endowed the English lord with some of his traits, then Singelworth’s conservative morality, almost natural haughtiness, and finally – escapism – could be considered a kind of self-criticism or even self-irony. However, both the title character of the novella and Norwid retained a conviction of the missionary nature of their own actions.

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CZYSTOŚĆ LORDA SINGELWORTHA

Streszczenie

W artykule poddano analizie postać głównego bohatera *Tajemnicy Lorda Singelworth* z perspektywy XIX-wiecznej imagologii. Z tej analizy wynika, że postać została skonstruowana z rozpowszechnionych w ówczesnej Europie stereotypów na temat Brytyjczyków. Tłumaczą one dziwactwa Singelwortha: latanie balonem, obsesję czystości. Wyjaśniają również, dlace-

go większość obserwatorów balonowej pasji lorda zgodnie przyjmowała zaskakujące jej wyjaśnienie – pragnienie uregulowania kłopotów gastrycznych. Uzupełnia ten zestaw charakterystyczna wyniosłość, moralna motywacja działań, poczucie misji i eskapizm. Autor tekstu stawia tezę, że tak skonstruowana figura Anglika, umiejscowiona w Wenecji u progu historycznych zmian mogła być literackim autopreterem Norwida.

Słowa kluczowe: imagologia; aeronautyka; *English malady*; *American Revival*.

THE CLEANLINESS OF LORD SINGELWORTH

Summary

The paper presents an analysis of the protagonist of *Tajemnica Lorda Singelworth* [*Lord Singelworth's Secret*] in terms of the 19th-century imagology. The analysis shows that the character was created on the basis of stereotypes of the British that were popular in Europe at that time. They account for Singelworth's oddities such as flying in a hot air balloon or his obsession with cleanliness. They also explain why the majority of those who observed Lord's balloon passion unanimously accepted its surprising justification – the need to deal with his gastric problems. This is then complemented by the peculiar arrogance, moral motivation for action, sense of mission and escapism. The author of the paper assumes that the character of an Englishman developed in such a way and placed in Venice on the threshold of historical changes might be a literary self-portrait of Norwid.

Keywords: imagology; aeronautics; *English malady*; *American Revival*.

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