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MICHAŁ KLECZKOWSKI – THE PARALLEL LIFE OF NORWID’S COUSIN¹

[With patience, work and perseverance, I rarely miss a goal I set for myself]²

1. PARALLEL LIVES

There are clear parallels in the biographies of Michał Kleczkowski (1818-1886) and Cyprian Norwid (1821-1883), mainly due to their family and social positions and, above all, the place and time in which they were born. Until late adolescence, these were “parallel lives”, while later on the cousins chose different life paths, which would ultimately bring one of them recognition and respect during his lifetime (but oblivion after death), while the other would live in misery and die in a poorhouse (but would be remembered by posterity). Norwid’s biography is already quite well studied³, meanwhile that of his cousin still presents a research challenge. For all the differences that divide the stories of these two lives, I believe that readers of this article will be able to notice the similarities that link them.

¹ The author would like to thank the Princes Czartoryski Museum Library for providing the manuscripts used in writing this article.

² Letter from M. Kleczkowski to Ludwik Bystrzonowski of 21 March 1857, Princes Czartoryski Museum, manuscript ref. 6896.

³ See Z. TROJANOWICZOWA and Z. DAMBEK in collaboration with J. CZARNOMORSKA, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, Vol. I: 1821-1860; Z. TROJANOWICZOWA, E. LIJEWSKA in collaboration with M. PLUTA, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, Vol. II: 1861-1883, Poznań 2007.

Kleczkowski was three years older than his (now more famous) cousin and outlived him by three years. He lost his parents even earlier than Norwid – his father when he was two years old⁴, and his mother when he was three. His father, Józef Adolf, was 39 years old at the time of entering into a marriage and had been decorated with the War Order of *Virtuti Militari*, but was still only a second lieutenant in the Invalids Corps; his mother, Julia, née Sobieski, was 33 and dependent on the family. The late age at which the marriage took place suggests that neither of the parents were wealthy⁵, so they probably did not leave any significant assets to their son either. Józef's son could not count on a pension from his father, as the regulations did not provide for such pensions for the wives and children of Invalids Corps officers⁶.



Portrait of Michał Kleczkowski accompanying the article: Pług A., *Michał Aleksander Count. Kleczkowski*, „Kłoso”, Warszawa 10.06.1886, p. 356; public domain.

⁴ Józef Adolf Kleczkowski died on 2 July 1820. „Rozkazy dzienne,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, Issue 86, 17 July 1820, p. 1525.

⁵ In other words, none of them “were a good match”, which sadly allows us to conclude that Miss Julia was not particularly pretty either.

⁶ K. KRZYŻEWSKI, „Życie rodzin wojskowych podczas powstania listopadowego,” *Res Historica* 2015, Vol. 38, p. 108.

There is no information about Kleczkowski’s childhood and youth⁷, it is not known which relatives took care of little Michał, nor where he went to school. The time when both he and his cousin Cyprian went to school was during the November Uprising and, as a result of post-revolt repressions, a very good system of education in the Congress Kingdom, including the University of Warsaw, was dismantled. Despite this, Kleczkowski was decently educated, in particular linguistically— he spoke Polish, Russian, German, English and French. In 1840, he left for France, never to return to Poland (he also spent some time in England, as evidenced by emigration documents). Norwid left two years later and the cousins met in 1842 in Dresden. Kleczkowski’s period of European peregrinations was shorter than Norwid’s. In the same year, he already began studying Chinese with Antoine Bazin⁸ at the *École nationale des langues orientales vivantes*.

2. THE CHINESE PATH...

The choice was definitely unusual – in entire Europe only a handful of people learned Chinese at the time. In France, there was a single department of Chinese (from 1814); in the UK such departments were only established in 1876 (Oxford) and 1888 (Cambridge). Where did the idea for such an unusual study come from? Had Kleczkowski been English or French, the choice of a career in the colonies, for an indigent young man with little to lose and a potential career to gain, would have been fairly typical. Hundreds like him ventured beyond the seas – where most died of fever, but a handful made fortunes. In 1842, China was “popular”—two years earlier, the British had won the First Opium War and forced the opening of five ports to European trade; the Qing Dynasty Empire, which had successfully resisted the temptations of the Europeans for two centuries and imposed its terms of trade on them, was forced to make concessions.

However, for a man from Central Europe, from a country without a tradition of transoceanic trade, this choice was not so typical. A factor that may have pushed Kleczkowski in this direction was his position as an immigrant. As a doctor or lawyer, he would have had to compete with thousands of other doctors and lawyers, better established and better embedded in French society. In a “niche” area,

⁷ A. PŁUG, „Michał Aleksander hr.Kleczkowski,” *Kłosy*, 1886, Issue of 10 June, p. 356.

⁸ Antoine-Pierre-Louis Bazin (1799-1863), French sinologist, professor of Chinese at the *École nationale des langues orientales vivantes* from 1840. Author of, *inter alia*, Chinese grammar and many translations of classical Chinese literature.

the potential competition was smaller, given the aforementioned risks and the lack of an active French policy towards China.

The decision may also have been influenced by the policy of Prince Adam Czartoryski, who supported the education of young Polish immigrants in directions he considered necessary for the future Polish state. A Chinese translator in French diplomacy could have been a potentially interesting contact for the Hotel Lambert faction, and the Czartoryskis' network of contacts would have reached far to the east. The rather intimate contacts between Kleczkowski and the Czartoryski family are evidenced by the cordial tone of his letters, in which he addresses the son of Prince Adam as "Dear Władysław".

Kleczkowski completed his studies in the prescribed time and immediately afterwards, in 1847, went to China as an interpreter. He got the job owing to the fact that a member of the French Parliament, Desmousseaux de Givré⁹, introduced him to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, François Guizot¹⁰, which indicates that Kleczkowski knew how to seek and use contacts that provided such opportunities (he also mentions help from Baron de Givre in a letter to W. Czartoryski¹¹). Nonetheless, patronage could at most have provided him with a foothold, but not permanent employment – an impoverished immigrant did not have such support. He expressed his opinion on patronage quite emphatically in a letter to Ludwik Bystrzonowski: "...I do not attach so much importance to any kind of patronage. The person of whom the colonel [i.e. Bystrzonowski – B.Z.] writes to me cannot deny me either my abilities or my work, nor can he deny the merits that I have already given and that I do not cease to give here [...] What I am, I owe only to myself; to my work. I started my career without patronage – I do not think patronage is necessary"¹².

⁹ Bernard Jean Erhard Desmousseaux de Givré (1794-1854), French politician and diplomat, secretary of the diplomatic missions in London and Rome, member of parliament for the Eure-et-Loir constituency.

¹⁰ François Guizot (1787-1874), French historian and politician, from 1820 professor of history at the Sorbonne, from 1830 member of parliament; minister of education (1832-1837), then ambassador to London (1839), minister of foreign affairs (1840) and prime minister (1847-48); author of, *inter alia*, *Cours d'histoire moderne* (6 vols.), *Histoire de la civilisation en France* (4 vols.), *Histoire de la civilisation d'Angleterre* (2 vols.). M. BASTID-BRUGUIÈRE, *L'origine polonaise de l'enseignement universitaire du chinois moderne en Europe: Michel Alexandre Kleczkowski (1818-1886)*, in: *Ex Oriente lux: księga pamiątkowa dla Romana Ślawińskiego*, ed. H. Baszak-Jaroń, Krakowskie Tow. Edukacyjne, Kraków 2005, p. 8; A. PŁUG, *Michał Aleksander hr. Kleczkowski*, also mentions support from the Czartoryski family.

¹¹ Letter from M. Kleczkowski to Władysław Czartoryski of 2 February 1853, Princes Czartoryski Museum, manuscript ref. 7230.

¹² Letter from M. Kleczkowski to Ludwik Bystrzonowski of 21 March 1857, Princes Czartoryski Museum, manuscript ref. 6896.

Undoubtedly, Kleczkowski’s conviction of his own worth is clear in this passage, as it was the case with the other quote I used as a motto for this article. Moreover, the still junior diplomat attributed credit to himself, underestimating other factors that influenced his employment. We are actually dealing here with the building of his own legend, an element of self-creation.

In fact, Kleczkowski knew how to ask for favours, but he also knew their limitations. In a letter dated 10 May 1854, asking Duke Władysław Czartoryski to recommend Mr Kościłowski as a translator for the French service during the Crimean War, he explains that he would do it himself verbally and in person, but in writing he is not allowed to; he also does not want to offend the sincerely kind Drouyn de Lhuys¹³, who, if he were to hear his name, then only “attached to some official merit already rendered in China”. This letter shows that Kleczkowski knew how to repay (in this case – to Kościłowski), but also indirectly that he was writing the truth about his diligence and perseverance. To Kościłowski he owed the improvement of his Russian, which he had “fairly forgotten”¹⁴. In other words, the translator of Chinese, during his short stays in France, took care to maintain his Russian conversation skills. These skills were to come in handy a few years later, when – owing to his fluency in Russian – he won the favour of Tsarist diplomats and organised the delivery of French diplomatic mail through Russia by the faster land route, instead of the sea route used normally¹⁵. Interestingly, he also studied Japanese for some time – in preparation for a mission to that country, the plan for which he created, but another diplomat was eventually sent there¹⁶.

An element of self-creation can be seen in Kleczkowski’s rather casual attitude to his status as a nobleman. His nobility was officially confirmed¹⁷ and he liked to emphasise it (e.g. by carefully stamping his letter paper with the Cholewa coat of arms). He also exaggerated his status by attributing to himself the title of count and was known as *Comte* Kleczkowski, a fact perpetuated in later descriptions of his activities (e.g. in the aforementioned work by

¹³ Edouard Drouyn de Lhuys (1805-1881), French diplomat; ambassador to the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom, three-time minister of foreign affairs (1848-49, 1852-55 and 1862-70).

¹⁴ Letter from M. Kleczkowski to Władysław Czartoryski of 10 May 1854, Princes Czartoryski Museum, manuscript ref. 7323.

¹⁵ M. BASTID-BRUGUIÈRE, *L’origine polonaise de l’enseignement universitaire*, pp. 45-46.

¹⁶ M. BASTID-BRUGUIÈRE, p. 39.

¹⁷ *Spis szlachty Królestwa Polskiego z dodaniem krótkiej informacji o dowodach szlachectwa*, Drukarnia S. Orgelbranda, Warszawa 1851, p. 100.

H. Cordier¹⁸), and in his official death certificate he is recorded as “Cholewa, comte de Kleczkow Kleczkowski, Michel Alexandre”¹⁹. At the same time, when he applied for French citizenship during the Second Republic, which abolished titles of nobility, he declared that he had renounced his noble status²⁰. He built his true status on his work as a translator-diplomat.

Kleczkowski understood perfectly the challenges of his era, operating at a time when translators, especially of oriental languages, played a key role in the development of European foreign contacts (and colonialism). In today’s era of universal foreign language proficiency, it is difficult for us to imagine a situation in which the state prohibits the teaching of their own language to foreigners under penalty of death – and this was the policy of the Chinese Empire for 200 years. Without their own translators, merchants and diplomats arriving from afar clashed with a wall of misunderstanding²¹.

The right time and place, however, are not sufficient conditions. Without commitment and diligence, without professionalism, Kleczkowski would not have been promoted so regularly. Despite his naturalisation in 1850, his position as an immigrant, was always somewhat weaker. Marianne Bastid-Bruguière mentions in her work the problems that Kleczkowski faced because of his origin. He himself complains about the difficulties caused to him by a “certain person” in a letter (quoted above) to Bystrzonowski²². Although he could sometimes count on support from politicians sympathetic to the Poles, such as Drouyn de Lhuys, Édouard Thouvenel²³, for instance, overlooked Kleczkowski, as the only one of the secretaries of all the French missions, for promotion to a higher post. He was then supported by his immediate superior in China, Alphonse de Bourboulon²⁴, who personally knew

¹⁸ H. CORDIER, “La politique coloniale de la France au début du second empire (Indo-Chine, 1852-1858) Chapitre XIX. Mission du Comte Kleczkowski (Suite),” *T’oung Pao* 1910, Vol. 11, Issue 5, pp. 567-582.

¹⁹ Death certificate no. 352, 16 arrondissement, Paris, dated 16 March 1886, issued by the Mayor of Paris.

²⁰ M. BASTID-BRUGUIÈRE, *L’origine polonaise de l’enseignement universataire*, p. 35.

²¹ For an interesting study of this topic, see R. A. ROLAND, *Interpreters as Diplomats: A Diplomatic History of the Role of Interpreters in World Politics*, Ottawa 2008.

²² He is probably referring to the then acting member of parliament for China, A. de Codrika.

²³ Édouard Antoine de Thouvenel (1818-1866), French diplomat, ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (1855-1860) and foreign minister (1860-1862).

²⁴ Alphonse de Bourboulon (1809-1881), French diplomat and traveller. Appointed ambassador to China, he originally resided in Macao, then moved to Shanghai (as soon as the threat from the Taiping uprising ceased – incidentally, he was one of the first European diplomats to contact the Taipings directly). In 1860, he moved to the embassy in Beijing established after the

Kleczkowski and the quality of his work. Kleczkowski’s previous boss, Charles de Montigny²⁵, was also satisfied with his work and spared no praise for him. It was with de Montigny that Kleczkowski survived an attack by pirates in 1849, which they bravely repulsed together, while defending a convoy of eight junks²⁶, and in 1851 they sailed together to Korea, where they successfully pleaded for the release from prison of survivors from the French whaling ship “Narval”, arrested by the local authorities²⁷. In 1857, the French consul trusted Kleczkowski enough to give him independent command when the need arose to intervene in Vietnam²⁸.

Therefore, it was rather to his professionalism and hard, systematic work that Kleczkowski owed his career, which, it is worth noting, endured four eras of French politics, including three radical systemic shifts. He became an interpreter during the July Monarchy (1830-48), obtained citizenship during the Second Republic (1848-52), was promoted to the diplomatic corps in 1854, thus already during the Second Empire (1852-70), during which Kleczkowski also reached the peak of his career in China as *chargé d'affaires* of the French embassy, but he was also abruptly recalled from China. However, he was not harmed by the advent of the Third Republic, for in 1871 he took up the chair of professor of Chinese at the *École nationale des langues orientales vivantes*, a post he held until 1883.

3. ANOTHER PATH

The initially overly similar biographies of the cousins begin to diverge in 1842. While Kleczkowski was studying in Paris, Norwid continued his European per-

Second Opium War (which Kleczkowski had organised, as *chargé d'affaires*). After completing his mission in China, de Bourbolon and his wife returned to France by an overland route, which was little known to Western Europeans, through Siberia and Central Asia, and later wrote a book about their travels.

²⁵ Charles de Montigny (1805-1868), French diplomat. Participated in the negotiation of the first treaty between France and China in 1844; in 1849 obtained the purchase of land in Shanghai under an extraterritorial French concession. Consul in Shanghai until 1853 and then 1858-59; in 1857 he signed a treaty with Siam, but similar attempts in Cambodia and Vietnam failed. In 1863 he became consul in Tianjin, the post he held until his death.

²⁶ B. ZEMANEK, *Z ziemi chińskiej do polskiej. “Wiarus” ks. Prusinowskiego o Chinach, piratach i sinologach*, “Przegląd Orientalistyczny” 2018, Issue 1-2 (265-266), pp. 183-195.

²⁷ R. NEFF, “An Expedition to Korea to Rescue the Crew of The Narwal in April 1851,” *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch* 2008, Vol. 83, pp. 27-72.

²⁸ H. CORDIER, *La politique coloniale de la France au début du second empire (Indo-Chine, 1852-1858) Chapitre XIX. Mission du Comte Kleczkowski (Suite)*.

egrinations, interrupted by rather short periods of study in Florence and Berlin. He did not complete them with an official diploma, nor did he obtain employment as a result.

An artist who does not have sufficient wealth of his own has in principle three possible paths: to become a professional artisan, working on commission; to find a patron who will provide the artist with the means to live and practice his art; or to work for a living, making art “after hours”. Norwid, it seems, chose the fourth and riskiest path – that of the fully independent artist, deciding fully autonomously what and how he would create. I am not suggesting here that he lacked skills, but he was rather unwilling to create “on someone else’s terms”. He failed, for example, to develop a career as an illustrator, as described by Edyta Chlebowska²⁹. It is worth recalling that the 19th century was an era of great development in this branch of art and the more popular illustrators made a really good living – Achille Devéria in the 1830s earned as much per day as a labourer earned for a month³⁰. Norwid only really made a systematic living from printmaking during his time in America³¹. An indirect clue as to how infrequently he occupied himself with it in France is the fact that his name is missing from the thirteen-volume dictionary of printmakers and illustrators published by Henri Beraldi between 1885 and 1892³².

Norwid was very proud of his status as an “artist”, which to some extent was at the root of the conflict between the cousins in 1868, when Kleczkowski commissioned “nice and pleasant” pictures from Norwid for anonymous sale. Kleczkowski evidently felt that in ordering a particular work he had the right to indicate the method of execution and the main subject, in other words he treated Norwid like a craftsman, who, in his agitated response, insisted that he was an “artist”³³. The status of an artist conceived in this way was not held in high esteem by Kleczkowski since it did not bring tangible benefits and did not involve a change in social status (as in the case of aforementioned Devéria).³⁴

²⁹ E. CHLEBOWSKA, „Norwid wobec ilustracji i sztuki ilustratorskiej,” *Sztuka Edycji* 2014, Vol. 5, Issue 2, p. 39.

³⁰ S. BANN, “Achille Devéria and French Illustration in the Romantic Period,” *Print Quarterly* 2012, Vol. 29, Issue 3, pp. 288-297.

³¹ H. WIDACKA, „Grafika Cypriana Norwida,” *Studia Norwidiana* 3: 1985, pp. 153-180.

³² H. BERALDI, *Les Graveurs du XIXe siècle: guide de l'amateur d'estampes modernes*, Librairie L. Conquet, Paris 1885.

³³ E. LIJEWSKA, „Kuzynki Norwida: Euphemia Tudor Kleczkowska i Ketty Kleczkowska-Kierpatrick,” *Studia Norwidiana* 34: 2016, pp. 169-185.

³⁴ An interesting contribution to Kleczkowski’s biography and an insight into the world in which he lived is the fact that Achille’s son, Gabriel, succeeded Kleczkowski as translator in

Kleczkowski was not indifferent to art, otherwise he would not have amassed a collection of beautiful Chinese porcelain, some of which was exhibited at the *Musée des Arts décoratifs*.³⁵ Nor was the status of a professional, a craftsmandoing specific work according to order, anything offensive to him – on the contrary, his whole life ethos was based on it, and he was proud of the duties he diligently fulfilled, whether as a diplomat or, later, as a teacher.

Norwid was proud of Kleczkowski’s achievements, but probably did not fully understand what his work involved and the effort it entailed. The cousins seem to have adhered to different value systems. Norwid adhered to the ideal of the amateur (in the original sense of the word: “admirer”); a versatile man, an 18th-century *dilettante*. Such is the character of his ethno-historical and linguistic notes, his broad historiographical vision of *Album Orbis*. Kleczkowski was a specialist and a professional. Norwid – as he himself wrote – knew twelve languages, but the question of how many of them he really knew well remains unanswered³⁶. Kleczkowski knew few, but to a degree that allowed him to conduct political negotiations at the highest level on his own.

When one considers the effort Kleczkowski put into getting to his position and his delicate status as an immigrant among reluctant French diplomats, it is easy to understand why he reacted so sharply when Norwid offered him a share in Colonel Falkowski’s “business”. For the financially naïve Norwid, this was a chance to rid himself of financial worries at one sweep. For Kleczkowski, the attempt to broker the sale of a building at an inflated price for the Japanese representation posed a significant risk of losing the fruits of his 25-year work: his salary, his professional position and the status associated with being a member of the diplomatic corps; the potential scandal would probably prevent him from obtaining another, equally well-paid and equally prestigious job. Finally, for a man who had spent his life building contacts with representatives of very foreign nations, the idea must have been highly inappropriate. He had probably seen enough of all sorts of dishonesty in the Far East, and had probably fallen victim to more than one when an “enterprising” impostor sold him something for ten times the price. He probably interpreted Falkowski’s plan – whether rightly or wrongly – as an offer to stoop to the level of such undignified behaviour. The idea that he would deceive

Beijing and as professor of Chinese in Paris. See H. CORDIER, “Gabriel Devéria,” *T’oung Pao* 1899, Vol. 10, Issue 5, pp. 481-486.

³⁵ “Moniteur des Paris,” *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel*, 1884, Issue of 25 January, p. 218.

³⁶ Translation mistakes in *Notatki Etno-lingwistyczne* indicate that he was not fully fluent in English.

a bona fide envoy from Japan, a country with which he had himself devised a plan to establish diplomatic relations, must have been highly disconcerting for him, which he conveyed to Norwid in unambiguous terms³⁷.

4. FINANCIAL ISSUES...

To date, the poet's biographers have presented Norwid's cousin and diplomat in a rather unfavourable light. In a note devoted to him, J. W. Gomulicki clearly suggests that Kleczkowski treated Norwid very instrumentally, maintaining contacts with him as long as he saw a personal benefit in it, and when he had already gained a high position and "he no longer needed numerous and important social contacts [with Norwid]", he *de facto* broke off relations with him. As for the help in the form of a "meagre pension (50 francs)", Gomulicki suggests that Kleczkowski wanted "to be left in peace by him [i.e. Norwid]" (PWsz XI, 377). The consequence and ultimate effect of this attitude on the part of his cousin was to place Norwid in a poorhouse, where he died in poverty and loneliness.

Undoubtedly, unlike his cousin, Kleczkowski knew how (but also only to a certain extent) to look after his money, evidence of which can be found in letters preserved in the Princes Czartoryski Museum. He brought back gifts from China ("pewter and bamboo sticks"), but also greater goods. In 1853, he "had the honour of sending the Princes [Anna Zofia Czartoryska – B.Z.] a gown, which he could give away for 250 francs", which was the price of the gown in China, exclusive of duty, which he did not pay³⁸ (perhaps by using diplomatic baggage). In subsequent correspondence, he mentions a list of items totalling 1,000 francs, which Princes Czartoryska was to review and decide on the purchase – if she were to buy all of them, including the aforementioned dress, she should issue a cheque for 1,250 francs. At the same time, he notifies her of the resignation of the flat he was occupying at the time and asks the princes not to inform "either compatriots or foreigners" of this fact³⁹. This may indicate Kleczkowski's financial troubles, which forced him to leave the flat and which he did not want to be known about.

³⁷ See Z. TROJANOWICZOWA, E. LIJEWSKA in collaboration with M. PLUTA, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, Vol.II, pp. 292-294.

³⁸ Letter from M. Kleczkowski to Anna Czartoryska of 28 April 1853, Princes Czartoryski Museum, manuscript ref. 6667.

³⁹ Letter from M. Kleczkowski to Anna Czartoryska of 11 May 1853, Princes Czartoryski Museum, manuscript ref. 7032 T. 3.

He also asked that the cheque be written not in the name; such a form would make it easier for him to pass it on, perhaps to repay some debt.

It remains unclear to what extent Kleczkowski’s marriage to the heiress of the “ice fortune”, Euphemia (Effie) Tudor, was a testament to financial foresight. On the one hand, this was a fairly typical situation for the time – a European count, a diplomat, marrying an American woman with money. On the other hand, as Elżbieta Lijewska points out, the marriage was rather happy⁴⁰. The couple built, most likely with his wife’s money, a beautiful villa in Dinant; interestingly, it remained Effie’s property after Kleczkowski’s death, and passed “on the distaff side” to the second daughter, Éléonora. The French inheritance law at the time provided for an equal division of property between heirs – the fact that this was different in this case suggests that Euphemia retained control of her money, perhaps through financial instruments located outside France.

Indeed, Kleczkowski’s financial situation was not as good as Norwid’s biographers had assumed. From the beginning of his work, he was earning quite well – his original remuneration was 4,000 francs a year, which was doubled in a short time. However, as M. Bastid-Bruguière notes, unlike the British one, the French mission in China could not count on the support of the merchant community, as there were very few French merchants in Shanghai. Montigny and Kleczkowski had to build the outpost relying on their own resources and their living costs were much higher than those of their British colleagues – making the purchasing power value of Kleczkowski’s salary *de facto* four times less. Ultimately, he returned from China with huge debts (123,000 francs!). He probably lived “beyond his means”, incurring excessive “representational expenses” for the sake of building his career⁴¹.

Had Michał Kleczkowski had full control over his wife’s money, he could have used it to cover his debts, but apparently he was unable to do so. A plausible explanation could be a properly executed prenup, which could have been handled by Euphemia’s father, an extremely experienced businessman. It is possible that the desire to settle the debts and – perhaps – not to burden the heirs with them, led Kleczkowski, three years before his death, to sell the aforementioned collection of Chinese porcelain.

The fact that Kleczkowski had debts, and serious ones at that, puts the question of his financial assistance to Norwid in a new light. It is known that for six or seven years (1859-1867) Kleczkowski paid Norwid a pension of 50 francs a month. The authors of *Kalendarz* also mention several times Norwid’s trips for

⁴⁰ E. LIJEWSKA, „Kuzynki Norwida: Euphemia Tudor Kleczkowska i Ketty Kleczkowska-Kierkpatrick”.

⁴¹ M. BASTID-BRUGUIÈRE, *L’origine polonaise de l’enseignement universitaire*.

medical treatment and other expenses, probably covered by his cousin⁴². When Norwid eventually ended up in St. Casimir's House, his cousin would pay for his stay for six years, at the same rate of 50 francs per month. In total, Kleczkowski supported his cousin regularly for 12 years.

How large and important was this help? It is difficult to make a realistic assessment, not least because it is difficult to assess the income of an artist living from casual work, and therefore the extent to which Norwid needed this assistance. Looking from Kleczkowski's point of view, assuming that at the beginning of the 1860s he earned 8-10 thousand a year, the 600 francs paid to his cousin amounted to 6-7.5% of his salary – a not insignificant percentage⁴³. One should also ask about the purchasing power of these 50 francs per month. In those years, a worker in Paris earned 3-6 francs a day (75-150 francs a month)⁴⁴, which could support a family of four. Norwid had no dependents; on the other hand, the cost of living for a single person is somewhat higher than for a family member. It can be conservatively estimated that these 600 francs a year secured him an existential basis – he had to earn the rest himself. Whatever that money was worth, on the one hand it was important to Norwid, providing him with, if not comfort, then at least a sense of some stability and security; on the other hand, it put him in a position of dependence, which for such a proud man must have been difficult to bear. In addition, Norwid, himself a nobleman, emphasising the long history of his lineage and sensitive to his social position, aspired to a higher social status than was guaranteed by his pension, the equivalent of the annual remuneration of a Parisian servant in 1878⁴⁵.

The ultimate humiliation that the rich Kleczkowski was to “inflict” on the poor Norwid was to place the latter in a poorhouse. However, even here the situation is not so obvious. First of all, the legitimacy of using the term “shelter for the poor” to refer to the St. Casimir's Institution should be considered. It is consistent with the nomenclature of the period and with the statute of the institution itself, which was to “provide a shelter [...] for orphans [...] to give accommodation to the sick and crippled from the veterans of the Polish exile”⁴⁶; the term is also used by Norwid's

⁴² Z. TROJANOWICZOWA, E. LIJEWSKA in collaboration with M. PLUTA, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*.

⁴³ Half-jokingly, if he was earning 12,000 francs he would be giving away 5 per cent of his income as required by the Qur'an.

⁴⁴ L. DE RIETMAITEN, “*Monnaies, salaires et prix à travers l'histoire*,” *Journal de la société statistique de Paris*, 1944, Vol. 85, pp. 7-20.

⁴⁵ Ministère de l'agriculture et du commerce, Service de la statistique générale de France, *Annuaire statistique de la France*, Paris 1878, p. 388.

⁴⁶ J. SZCZEPAŃSKI, *Weterani powstań narodowych w Zakładzie św. Kazimierza w Paryżu*, Warszawa 2011, p. 22.

biographers, Mieczysław Inglot⁴⁷ or Zbigniew Sudolski. On the other hand, Jerzy Szczepański in his study on the shelter mentions that, apart from material benefits, gaining the status of a veteran and being admitted to the shelter was also associated with a certain splendour, which does not fit in very well with today’s connotations of the word “shelter”, as does the fact that each resident was to be personally introduced by Prince Czartoryski or his plenipotentiary⁴⁸. The residents of the shelter comprised a cross-section of the Polish emigration, not excluding the so-called “upper classes”. As Szczepański meticulously enumerates, St. Casimir’s Institution housed, among others, three generals (among them Józef Wysocki), 20 colonels and majors, and 89 lower-ranking officers, three dukes (including Henryk Lanckoroński), 8 priests, 15 landowners and citizens (i.e. owners of municipal estates), as well as a significant group of representatives of the intelligentsia, such as Professor Aleksander Chodźko or Norwid’s friend from the Institute – Tomasz Olizarowski⁴⁹.

There were twenty rooms for veterans in the Institution (from 1866). It was not, therefore, an “institution for masses”, and staying there was not particularly cheap either – initially the annual cost of living was 500 francs, later, during Norwid’s stay there – 600 francs. Of course, the residents were obliged to abide by the rules and regulations, which, *inter alia*, stipulated returning before 10 p.m., eating together at certain times of day and remaining sober. For an individualist like Norwid himself, such discipline could be difficult, just as being condemned to a particular company that he could not choose for himself. However, the above requirements did not differ significantly from the rules of boarding houses or nursing homes then, or even today.

It must be remembered that Norwid lived in a time when one’s own property or family was the only form of social security. Those who did not have these assets died in slums. The social state did not emerge in France until after the poet’s death. The authorities of the Second Republic and the Second Empire routinely marginalised the problem of the tragic living conditions of the poor strata of society, recognising, in a tone of moral superiority, that a small group of “honest poor”⁵⁰ – widows, orphans and cripples who had, through no fault of

⁴⁷ *Cyprian Norwid*, ed. M. Inglot, Warszawa 1991, 1st ed., p. 197, series: “Biblioteka Polonistyki”.

⁴⁸ J. SZCZEPAŃSKI, *Weterani powstań narodowych*, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁹ J. SZCZEPAŃSKI, pp. 36-39 and 51.

⁵⁰ The English-language sources use a neat term with Victorian origins: “deserving poor”, as opposed to the “underserving poor” who were themselves to blame and who were often penalised for their poverty. C.D. O’ SHEA, “*Deserving poor*,” in: *Encyclopedia of World Poverty*, ed. M. Odekon, Calif 2006, pp. 256-257.

their own, lost their livelihood – would be provided for by traditional charitable institutions. Kleczkowski's approach to such conventionally conceived charity seems to have been equally conventional, dictated by the requirements of his social position. Surviving letters to Princess Czartoryska indicate that he probably donated small sums every year to the poor staying under the princess' care⁵¹. The same correspondence indicates that Euphemia also participated in lotteries and fund-raisers organised by the princess – thus fulfilling her social duty. Kleczkowski's refusal to help Ludwik Norwid, who, having squandered his property (his own and that of his wife), did not qualify as an "honest poor" deserving of support, can be viewed in the same light.

In keeping with the spirit of 19th-century capitalism, Kleczkowski seemed to value people who were moral and useful. He initiated a programme to train young translators in China, but even before it was approved, in 1854 Kleczkowski, at his own expense, sent to China a fifteen-year-old orphan, Gabriel Lemaire⁵², whom he later taught Chinese and English in Shanghai. Similarly, the revocation of Norwid's pension in 1867 can be viewed as a consequence of his prior designation of the funds for the children of another of his cousins, Kornel Kleczkowski, who had died in Amoy (Xiamen) at the time. This decision was not driven by malevolence, but rather by the intention to provide for the children of his relative. Kornel's orphaned 16-year-old son, Alfred – like Lemaire – belonged to the category of "honest poor". Family obligations to his cousin Cyprian and nephew Alfred were similar, but the orphaned boy "won" the competition with the able-bodied adult male. The utilitarian philosophy popular at the time said that any aid should be a kind of social investment – the careers of Lemaire and Alfred Kleczkowski⁵³ seemed to confirm the validity of these utilitarian assumptions.

Arguably, Kleczkowski could have helped more – there would probably have been some room in the villa in Dinant where Norwid could have stayed, without having to go to St. Casimir's Institution. On the other hand, one might brutally ask: Why would Kleczkowski do that? Starting from the same or even worse posi-

⁵¹ Kleczkowski's letter to Princess Czartoryska of 21 January 1873 mentions a cheque for 200 francs (Princes Czartoryski Museum, manuscript ref. 7388); a letter of 16 December 1876 for 100 francs, the same – a letter of 17 December 1878; a letter of 21 December 1879 for a "modest sum" (Princes Czartoryski Museum, manuscript ref. 7465).

⁵² Victor-Gabriel Lemaire (1839-1907), sinologist and French diplomat; interpreter in Shanghai from 1855, then in Guangzhou, consul in Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Calcutta; 1883-1886 represented France in Vietnam; after a short mission in Zanzibar, he was ambassador in Beijing (1887-1893).

⁵³ Alfred Kleczkowski (1851-1911?) served as French consul, first in Quebec, then in Egypt and Uruguay.

tion than Norwid⁵⁴, owing to his hard work he achieved prestigious and lucrative positions; why should he be then responsible for a man who, as a result of his financial ineptitude, did not earn anything, and what he had, he lost? We should also think about the possible tensions between the cousins. Norwid had a difficult character and often had disagreements with those who helped him. Kleczkowski’s help may have been “conventional”, but he nevertheless provided decent care for his cousin. It is not the purpose of this work to provide a detailed account of the socio-economic circumstances of the impoverished residents of 19th-century Paris (a comprehensive understanding of this topic can be found in Ann-Louise Shapiro’s study⁵⁵), however, it can be reasonably asserted that an independent, clean space with three meals a day was an unattainable luxury for the majority of the population.

5. SUMMARY

There is no doubt that relations between the cousins were often tense. Neither of them was a person easy to get along with. It seems, however, that the previous view of Michał Kleczkowski – exclusively “from Norwid’s perspective” – has been decidedly unfair and, above all, ahistorical. One hundred and fifty years ago, Norwid’s greatness was “not yet known”, Paris was full of similar aspiring artists. 19th-century French society, adhering to liberal and utilitarian ideas, valued those who were able to achieve greatness through their own work; conversely, those who were unable to do so were regarded as being responsible for their own failure. The careers of Kleczkowski and Norwid exemplified both of these models. However conventional Kleczkowski’s behaviour may have been, he did quite a lot for his cousin Cyprian – he had helped him considerably for 12 years and thereby ensured him a decent standard of living in his old age.

Michał Kleczkowski himself deserves a full biography – the sketch presented here serves as an announcement of such a project. This émigré nobleman had a difficult start, with few assets at his disposal, but he made the most of those he had. He lived at a time when a class of professional diplomats was taking shape, imbued with professional *esprit de corps*, owing their careers and postings to their professionalism and skills, and not – as had previously been the case – to their status as aristocrats. Although he emphasised and “bolstered” his nobility,

⁵⁴ The fact that Norwid was able to travel around Europe for five years is testament to the small fortune he originally possessed.

⁵⁵ A.-L. SHAPIRO, *Housing the Poor of Paris, 1850-1902*, Wisconsin 1985.

Kleczkowski was precisely a representative of this new category. Loyal to his new homeland, he built up its position in China, while also ensuring a supply of highly qualified professionals to support this – something he would later continue to teach successive generations as a professor at the *École nationale des langues orientales vivantes*. He was a man of his era, but that era – of great social change, the “opening up of China”, colonialism and imperialism – offered great opportunities to people who knew how to seize them. Michał Kleczkowski was undoubtedly one of them.

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MICHAŁ KLECZKOWSKI – KUZYNĄ ŻYWOT PARALELNY

Streszczenie

Michał Kleczkowski, kuzyn Cypriana Norwida, wybrał nietypową karierę sinologa. Jako zawodowy tłumacz i dyplomata w służbie francuskiej, osiągnął ostatecznie stanowisko *chargé d'affaires*, a po powrocie z długoletniej (1847-63) służby w Chinach – konsula generalnego ds Chin, a następnie profesora języka chińskiego w *École nationale des langues orientales vivantes*, którym był lat dwanaście. Reprezentował nowy typ dyplomaty-profesjonalisty, a choć korzystał ze wsparcia wpływowych osób, karierę zrobił głównie dzięki pracowitości i zaangażowaniu. Postawa profesjonalisty i prawdopodobnie dość konwencjonalna moralność powodowały napięcia w jego stosunkach z Norwidem, wyznającym nader odmienny ideał wolnego artysty, niegodzącego się na rzemieślniczą pracę na cudzych warunkach. Artykuł próbuje równoważyć dotąd negatywną ocenę postawy Kleczkowskiego wobec Norwida, wskazując na fakt, że kuzyn poety wspierał go finansowo przez 12 lat, przeznaczając na to znaczący odsetek własnych dochodów; dyskutuje też kwestię statusu Domu Św. Kazimierza, jako godnej szacunku instytucji, zapewniającej swym podopiecznym stosunkowo godny byt, zwłaszcza w porównaniu z warunkami, na które skazani byli niemający wsparcia paryscy ubodzy. Tezy artykułu są ilustrowane korespondencją Kleczkowskiego zachowaną w Muzeum Czartoryskich w Krakowie.

Słowa kluczowe. Michał Kleczkowski; Norwid; Chiny; konsul.

MICHAŁ KLECZKOWSKI – THE PARALLEL LIFE OF NORWID’S COUSIN

Summary

Cyprian Norwid’s cousin Michał Kleczkowski chose an untypical career of a sinologist. As a professional translator and diplomat in the French service, he was finally awarded the position of *chargé d’affaires*, and after a long time spent in China (1847-63) he was made consul-general for Chinese affairs, eventually becoming professor of Chinese at the *École nationale des langues orientales vivantes* for a period of twelve years. He represented a new type of professional diplomat, and although he would receive support from influential figures, he owed his career mainly to his diligence and engagement. His professionalism and probably rather conventional morality created tension in his relations with Norwid, who professed a much different ideal of a free artist and would not accept technical work on conditions dictated by others. The article attempts to balance the previously negative assessment of Kleczkowski’s attitude to Norwid by indicating that the poet’s cousin supported Norwid financially for twelve years, passing to him a significant portion of his own income. Further, the article challenges the negative view of St. Casimir’s House, showing that it was a respectable institution that granted its inhabitants relative dignity, especially in comparison with the conditions suffered by the Parisian poor who had no support. Theses formulated in the article are illustrated with passages from Kleczkowski’s correspondence, which is preserved in the Princes Czartoryski Museum in Kraków.

Keywords: Michał Kleczkowski; Norwid; China; consul.

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